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EUROPE
& PACIFIC
WEEKEND
EDITION

MOVIES
'Judas and the Black Messiah'
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PATRICK SEMANSKY/AP

President Joe Biden speaks to Department of Defense personnel Wednesday during his first visit to the Pentagon as commander in chief.

Meeting 'the China challenge'

Biden launches task force, Pentagon review of US strategy toward country

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Defense Department task force will review national security strategy toward China, President Joe Biden announced Wednesday during his first visit to the Pentagon as commander in chief.

The task force will assess Defense Department policies, programs and processes on China and provide "recommendations on key priorities and decision points to meet the China challenge," according to a Pentagon fact sheet.

"It will require a whole of government effort, bipartisan cooperation in Congress and strong alliances and partnerships. That's how we'll meet the China challenge and ensure the American people win the competition of the future," Biden said during the speech to Defense

RELATED

■ Biden, Harris pay tribute to role of Black service members during Pentagon visit

■ President raises concerns over human rights, trade in call with China's Xi

Page 4

Department personnel.

Before his speech, Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris met with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and other senior military and civilian personnel, and Biden spoke to them about his national security priorities.

The Pentagon has been focused on China's growing influence in the world for the past several years. The 2018 National Defense Strategy established under the Trump administration shifted the military's focus from counterterrorism operations to "great power competition" with China and Russia. China's modernization of its military and push for greater regional and international influence are major concerns for the U.S. military, according to the

SEE CHALLENGE ON PAGE 4

IMPEACHMENT

Democrats say rioters acted on Trump's 'orders'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Democrats prosecuting Donald Trump's impeachment said Thursday the Capitol invaders believed they were acting on "the president's orders" to storm the building and stop the joint session of Congress that was certifying Democrat Joe Biden's election.

The prosecutors are wrapping up their opening presentation, describing in stark, personal terms the horror they faced that day and drilling down on the public and explicit instructions Trump gave his supporters — both in the weeks before the Jan. 6 attack and at his midday rally that unleashed the mob on the Capitol. They presented videos of rioters, some posted to social media by the rioters themselves, talking about how they were doing it all for Trump.

"They truly believed that the whole intrusion was at the president's orders," said Rep. Diana DeGette of Colorado. "The president told them to be there."

Trump's lawyers will launch their defense on Friday.

At the White House, President Joe Biden said he believed "some

SEE ORDERS ON PAGE 10



SENATE TELEVISION/AP

In this image from video, Rep. Diana DeGette, D-Colo., speaks during the second impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump at the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Thursday.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Germany	\$2.736	\$3.122	\$3.379	\$3.076	Azores	..	..	\$3.279	..
Change in price	+5.2 cents	+5.5 cents	+5.3 cents	+6.3 cents	Change in price	..	..	+5.3 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$3.716	\$4.017	\$3.803	Belgium	..	\$2.642	\$2.871	\$2.826
Change in price	..	+10.6 cents	+10.1 cents	+10.6 cents	Change in price	..	+58.2 cents	+62.2 cents	+57.7 cents
U.K.	..	\$3.021	\$3.278	\$2.975	Turkey	..	..	\$3.164	\$3.685*
Change in price	..	+5.5 cents	+5.3 cents	+6.3 cents	Change in price	..	..	+5.3 cents	+17.8 cents

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Japan	..	\$3.169	..	\$2.869	South Korea	\$2.539	..	\$3.179	\$2.879
Change in price	..	+5.0 cents	..	+7.0 cents	Change in price	+5.0 cents	..	+5.0 cents	+6.0 cents
Okinawa	\$2.529	..	..	\$2.869	Guam	\$2.539	\$2.919	\$3.179	..
Change in price	+5.0 cents	..	..	+7.0 cents	Change in price	+5.0 cents	+5.0 cents	+5.0 cents	..

*DieselEFD **Midgrade
For the week of Feb. 12-18

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (Feb. 12)	\$1.18	Bahrain(Dinar)	.3770
Dollar buys (Feb. 12)	0.8035	Britain (Pound)	1.3813
British pound (Feb. 12)	\$1.35	Canada (Dollar)	1.2683
Japanese yen (Feb. 12)	102.00	China(Yuan)	6.4579
South Korean won (Feb. 12)	1083.00	Denmark (Krone)	6.1293
		Egypt (Pound)	15.5954
		Euro	.8240
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7529
		Hungary (Forint)	294.94
		Israel (Shekel)	3.2497
		Japan (Yen)	104.70
		Kuwait(Dinar)	.3024
		Norway (Krone)	8.4616
		Philippines (Peso)	48.03
		Poland (Zloty)	3.71
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7511
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3246

South Korea (Won) 1103.75
Switzerland (Franc) .8903
Thailand (Baht) 29.85
Turkey (NewLira) 7.0249

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

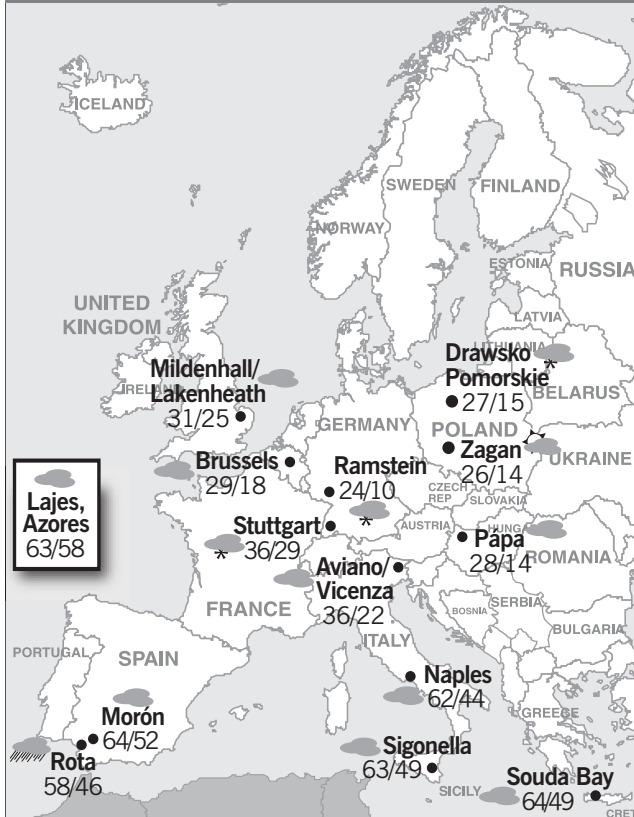
INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	3.25
Interest Rates Discount rate	0.75
Federal funds market rate	0.05
3-month bill	0.05
30-year bond	1.92

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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PCSing? STARS AND STRIPES RELOCATION GUIDE

Every Friday in the European and Pacific editions of Stars and Stripes AND online daily at www.stripes.com/relo



MILITARY

Berlin confirms no double tax allowed for troops from US

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The treaty that allows U.S. forces to operate in Germany protects them from having to pay German income taxes, the Federal Finance Ministry said this week, in a statement that puts localities imposing huge tax penalties on military families at odds with Berlin.

“The Federal Government takes the view that, in a uniform interpretation and application of the relevant provisions of the agreement between the parties to the NATO Status of Forces treaty ... there will be no double taxation,” the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

The ministry did not elaborate on what, if any, steps it was prepared to take to bring local tax offices into compliance on an issue that the U.S. government says violates Germany’s collective defense obligations.

The Finance Ministry also stopped short of rendering an opinion on pending cases in regions where U.S. troops have faced hardball tactics from tax collectors, result-

ing in six-figure tax bills for some military families.

“Going forward, the matter will continue to be examined in consultation with the U.S. Embassy,” the Finance Ministry said, declining to put a timeline on when action could be taken.

In December, U.S. officials met with their counterparts in Berlin to lodge an official complaint with Germany’s Foreign Office, which directed federal finance officials to look into the issue. The move came after Stars and Stripes highlighted the difficulties faced by military families who have been forced into lengthy legal battles or been pressured to pay hefty tax penalties.

Some German tax authorities have claimed that income tax exemptions spelled out in the SOFA treaty are void if a military member has motivations for being in Germany beyond solely their job.

German authorities have built hundreds of tax liability cases against troops, Defense Department civilians and contractors around circumstances such as being married to a German, extend-



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

The Federal Finance Ministry, which meets in this building in Berlin, said this week that the Status of Forces agreement protects U.S. forces in Germany from having to pay German income taxes.

ing tours, owning property or sending children to German schools.

To avoid taxes, a person must prove “a willingness to return” to the United States, even though tax authorities have continued to pursue cases against some people after they returned stateside. The policy also puts German tax clerks in the position of guessing the intentions and future lifestyle decisions of troops, which critics have

said is arbitrary and legally problematic.

The majority of cases are connected to military members in the Landstuhl-Kusel area, near Ramstein Air Base, but cases have also been reported in Kaiserslautern, Stuttgart and Wiesbaden.

The issue has gotten the attention of some lawmakers in the U.S., who raised concerns with the Pentagon.

Former Acting Defense Secre-

tary Christopher Miller said in a Jan. 7 letter to Pennsylvania Republican Rep. Mike Kelly that the U.S. government was working to ensure the “appropriate tax exemptions for U.S. personnel covered under the SOFA and its supplementary agreements.”

Stars and Stripes reporter Marcus Kloeckner contributed to this story.
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GAO: Pentagon can't track sexual misconduct reports filed by civilians

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department has no ability to track exactly how many workplace sexual assaults are reported by its civilian population, according to a new Government Accountability Agency report published amid the military’s high-profile fight against sexual misbehavior among its troops.

The majority of DOD’s 900,000 civilians have fewer means of reporting allegations of sexual misconduct to authorities than their uniformed colleagues, the GAO concluded in its report published Tuesday. The Pentagon also lacks universal tools and guidance across its massive bureaucracy to fully track reports of sexual assault or harassment involving its civilians, according to the Congress-mandated report.

“Without guidance that addresses these areas, DOD does not know the extent to which its civilian workforce has reported work-related sexual assault worldwide,” GAO concluded.

The Pentagon, under pressure to act from Congress and others, has taken great strides in recent years to attempt to track every re-

port of sexual assault among its uniformed troops. But it does not track sexual assault cases involving most of its civilians in its centralized database, called the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database, or DSAID. It also doesn’t mandate that its components — like agencies outside of the military services — track such occurrences.

“Limited guidance on tracking reported incidents hinders DOD’s visibility over such incidents,” the GAO report read. “Moreover, not all DOD components have access to the department’s centralized database for the collection and maintenance of information regarding reported sexual assaults, which limits visibility.”

In fiscal year 2018, for example, the Defense Department estimated that nearly 6% — about 49,700 — of its civilians experienced sexual harassment at work and about 2,500, or about 0.3%, experienced workplace sexual assaults that year, based on employee surveys. But the DOD tracked a total of only 370 civilian work-related sexual assaults through official channels during the five-year period from 2012 to 2019.

GAO issued 19 recommenda-

tions to the Defense Department to correct the problems, including issuing common guidance across the department to allow for comprehensive tracking of work-related sexual assaults involving its civilians, enhancing its anti-harassment training programs for civilian workers and conferring with Congress about expanding civilians’ avenues for reporting sexual assaults.

Among GAO’s recommendations for the Pentagon: to improve its reporting practices in DSAID to ensure certain categories of civilian workers were properly tracked. For example, military dependents, such as spouses, who are DOD civilian employees and report sexual assault are often entered into the system only as dependents.

Another issue: Because the Pentagon limits the ways U.S.-based civilian employees can report allegations of sexual misconduct, most cannot be automatically entered into DSAID.

“A Victim Reporting Preference Statement is needed to enter a sexual assault incident into the DSAID database, but only those eligible to file an unrestricted report can file that statement,” GAO

reports.

Only service members, their adult dependents, civilian employees stationed outside the United States and Air Force civilians can file a Victim Reporting Preference Statement, which indicates whether they want to make a restricted or unrestricted report. A restricted report is submitted confidentially and does not trigger a criminal investigation. An unrestricted report launches an official investigation into an incident and provides the alleged victim access to several avenues for support, including counseling and legal and advocacy services.

Most U.S.-based civilians’ only avenue to report sexual misconduct is through one of the military’s three investigative services — the Army’s Criminal Investigation Command, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service or the the Air Force Office of Special Investigations — GAO said. Civilians can also report such allegations to local or other federal law enforcement. Typically, a military investigative organization would not probe allegations of sexual assault involving civilian workers not on a military post, even if the assault occurred dur-

ing a work-related function. Thus, the Pentagon would not have any ability to internally track that case.

The GAO found that some DOD agencies were tracking civilian reports of sexual assault independently, including the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Defense Logistics Agency. Those agencies are not bound by policy to track such incidents, GAO said.

Those agencies also do not have access to DSAID to report their own cases, however, or to determine whether any of their civilian workers accused of sexual misconduct had been implicated for similar offenses while working for other DOD components.

“Officials from the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Defense Logistics Agency stated that access to DSAID would be helpful to more effectively track and have oversight over reported sexual assaults involving their employees,” the GAO said. “However, since [Pentagon officials have] not granted them access to DSAID, they continue to track such incidents independently.”

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MILITARY

Biden, Harris honor role of Black troops

By MISSY RYAN
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris paid tribute to the contributions of Black service members, acknowledging the barriers they have faced in uniform, on Wednesday during their first official visit to the Pentagon.

Speaking to reporters, Biden referred to the service of African Americans from the Revolutionary War to the conflicts of the modern era, even though their actions, as Biden put it, “were not always recognized or honored appropriately.”

The president noted that more than 40% of active-duty troops are people of color, a share that remains underrepresented at the military’s highest levels.

“It’s long past time that the full diversity and full strength of our force is reflected at every level of this department,” said Biden, standing alongside Harris, the country’s first female, Black and Asian American vice president, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, its first Black defense secretary.

Biden and Harris later visited an area of the Pentagon that honors pioneering African American troops, including the Tuskegee Army, a mostly Black aviator unit that flew sorties during World War II, when the military was still segregated.

The visit further signals the Biden administration’s intent to illustrate a break with its predecessor by elevating gender and racial diversity in government ranks. Under President Donald Trump, most of the Pentagon leadership was white and male.

Austin, who was the first Black Army officer to serve in a number of roles, has also taken charge of an effort to reckon with the military’s troubled legacy of racism, gender discrimination and far-right extremism.

Those problems have been highlighted over the last year, first by the civil unrest caused by police violence against African Americans and more recently by the participation of veterans and a handful of service members in the Jan. 6 Capitol riot.

The Biden administration also has moved to reverse a Trump-era policy that imposed strict limits on service by transgender troops and taken greater action to address the military’s long-standing problem with sexual harassment and assault.

Speaking before Biden, Harris said that Black troops who fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill and in the Civil War “didn’t just join to make history, they joined to serve, and all of you joined to serve.”

Biden said he was the first president in 40 years whose son or daughter has served in a war zone. His late son, Beau, deployed to



PATRICK SEMANSKY/AP

President Joe Biden tours the African Americans in Service Corridor at the Pentagon with Vice President Kamala Harris, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley, on Wednesday, in Washington.

Iraq as a member of the Delaware Army National Guard.

“This is personal for me,” he said.

Biden has decades of experience on foreign policy from his years in the Senate and his involvement in military-related issues, including the U.S. war in Iraq, as vice president during the Obama administration.

Addressing U.S. troops, Biden again attempted to distance himself from Trump, who bucked traditional limits governing presidential interactions with the military and often treated troop events like campaign rallies.

“I will never, ever dishonor you. I will never disrespect you. I will never politicize the work you do,”

he said.

Biden’s administration is expected to stay the course on many major policy issues, first among them the Pentagon’s effort to devote greater resources to competing with China after years of focusing on the counterinsurgent wars that followed the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

As part of that effort, Biden announced a new Pentagon task force to assess where the military stands vis-a-vis China and its large, rapidly modernizing military. The panel, which will include 15 uniformed and civilian officials, will be headed by a top China official, Ely Ratner, the Pentagon said in a statement before Biden’s announcement.

The task force, whose establishment was first reported by the Wall Street Journal, is expected to deliver its assessment within four months.

Republicans have accused Biden of being soft on China. Former secretary of state Mike Pompeo said in an interview last month that Beijing is looking for a “soft underbelly” in Biden’s China policy.

Biden administration officials have said that they are concerned about China. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in an interview with CNN this week that the Trump administration was “right to take a tougher approach to China” but that the Biden administration wants to do so differently.

Challenge: Task force to focus on defense relations

FROM PAGE 1

National Defense Strategy.

The 15-person Department of Defense China Task Force will be composed of military and civilian DOD employees from Austin’s office, the Joint Staff, combatant commands, the intelligence community and the military services, according to the fact sheet. It will be led by Ely Ratner, special assistant to the defense secretary and an expert on China.

The task force will study force posture, defense relations with China, U.S. alliances and partnerships, intelligence and operational

concepts. The Pentagon’s review is part of a larger look by the administration at how the U.S. government handles China.

The task force’s recommendations will be aligned with other agencies, so the Pentagon continues to support “the whole-of-government approach toward China,” according to the fact sheet.

The task force will submit its final findings by June to Austin and Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks.

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Biden pushes on human rights, trade in call with China leader Xi

Associated Press

Joe Biden had his first call as president with Xi Jinping, pressing the Chinese leader about trade and Beijing’s crackdown on democracy activists in Hong Kong as well as other human rights concerns.

The two leaders spoke Wednesday just hours after Biden announced plans for a Pentagon task force to review U.S. national security strategy in China and after the new U.S. president announced he was levying sanctions against Myanmar’s military regime following this month’s coup in the southeast Asian country.

A White House statement said Biden raised concerns about Beijing’s “coercive and unfair economic practices.” Biden also pressed Xi on Hong Kong, human rights abuses against Uighur and ethnic minorities in the western Xinjiang province, and its actions toward Taiwan.

“I told him I will work with China when it benefits the American people,” Biden posted on Twitter after the call.

China’s state broadcaster CCTV struck a mostly positive tone about the conversation, saying Xi acknowledged the two sides had their differences, and those differ-

ences should be managed, but urged overall cooperation.

CCTV said Xi pushed back against Biden’s concerns on Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang, saying the issues are China’s internal affairs and concern Chinese sovereignty. He warned, “The U.S. should respect China’s core interests and act with caution.”

Biden, who had dealt with the Chinese leader when he served as Barack Obama’s vice president, used his first three weeks in the White House to make several calls with other leaders in the Indo-Pacific region.

PACIFIC

Report: US nears cost-sharing deal with Seoul

Stars and Stripes

The United States and South Korea are just weeks away from coming together on a new cost-sharing deal for stationing 28,500 U.S. troops on the peninsula, CNN reported Wednesday.

The report, which cited five anonymous sources familiar with the discussions, said the contract

taking shape is a multiyear deal that increases Seoul's contribution by about 13%.

"The final agreement could include mandated increases in South Korea's defense budget," the report said, "as well as an understanding that Seoul will make certain military equipment purchases."

South Korea has offset the costs for hosting U.S. troops under a contract called the Special Measures Agreement since 1991. Negotiations over the amount have always been contentious, but they reached a breaking point in 2018 when former President Donald Trump reportedly demanded up to \$5 billion per year, a fivefold in-

crease.

Previous contracts have lasted for five years, but the allies agreed to a retroactive, one-year stopgap measure for 2019 after failing to meet the end-of-year deadline.

That deal expired on Dec. 31, 2019, eventually prompting U.S. Forces Korea to place more than 4,000 local base workers who pro-

vide food and administrative services — nearly half of its workforce — on unpaid leave. The furlough was lifted in June after South Korea agreed to pay \$200 million for salaries through the end of this year. Another furlough looms if a deal cannot be struck.

news@stripes.com

Coast Guard receives newest fast-response cutter bound for Guam

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

The Coast Guard in Key West, Fla., took delivery Thursday of its newest fast-response cutter, which is bound for Guam to counter an increasingly assertive China, according to a Coast Guard news release.

The 154-foot Sentinel-class cutter Frederick Hatch will be homeported in Guam this summer, joining its sister ships Myrtle Hazard and Oliver Henry, which arrived on the island in September and December, respectively.

The Coast Guard did not specify when the Frederick Hatch would arrive in Guam. Twenty-four crewmembers and about 100 dependents will move to the island with the ship, according to the release.

The three fast-response cutters

are replacing older, 110-foot patrol boats previously stationed in Guam and "boast a wide array of improvements over [their] predecessors including advanced command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems," according to the statement.

Fast-response cutters are designed for missions beyond the Coast Guard's traditional search-and-rescue work, such as homeland security and defense.

"The fast-response cutters in the Pacific are a game-changer for the Coast Guard," Cmdr. Josh Empen, deputy commander of Coast Guard Sector Guam, said in the statement. "These cutters are conducting longer missions over greater distances than the older patrol boats they are replacing."

The Frederick Hatch's delivery



U.S. Coast Guard

The Coast Guard's fast-response cutter Frederick Hatch will be homeported in Guam this summer, joining its sister ships Myrtle Hazard and Oliver Henry.

by Bollinger Shipyards fulfills a promise in October 2019 by Coast Guard commandant Adm. Karl Schultz to homeport three new fast-response cutters in Guam "in the face of coercive and antagonistic behavior from China," he said at the time.

The move is meant to help the Coast Guard police China's illegal fishing in the region through "fisheries patrols, enhance maritime domain awareness and enforcement efforts" with U.S. part-

ners in the Western Pacific "who have limited offshore surveillance and enforcement capacity," then-national security adviser Robert O'Brien said Oct. 23.

The new ships will also take on more traditional Coast Guard roles. The Myrtle Hazard and Oliver Henry "have already saved mariners in distress at sea, intercepted narcotics, and boarded several vessels to deter illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in Oceania," Empen said.

The Hatch's namesake received the Coast Guard's Gold Lifesaving Medal in 1884 for rescuing a schooner's crew during an October gale, according to the Coast Guard statement.

Hatch received another Gold Lifesaving Medal after rescuing those aboard a grounded schooner near the Cleveland Breakwater lighthouse in 1890.

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US and Japan 'making progress' on military support agreement

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Negotiators are making headway but have yet to clinch a deal over Japanese support for approximately 54,000 American troops in the country, according to the State Department.

"We continue Host Nation Support negotiations with Japan and are making progress, but there is no agreement yet," a department spokesman at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo said Thursday in an email

to Stars and Stripes. The spokesman asked not to be named because negotiations are being led by the State Department in Washington, D.C.

The allies have agreed to extend the current deal on Japanese support for U.S. troops in the country, which expires next month, according to a Kyodo news agency report earlier Thursday.

Under the agreement, Japan would pay roughly \$1.91 billion toward the cost of utilities, labor

and training for American military personnel during the 2021 fiscal year, around the same level as the previous year, Kyodo reported.

Cost-sharing talks will resume in April, the report said.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi discussed host nation support with newly confirmed Secretary of State Antony Blinken by phone Jan. 27, according to a Japanese government statement that day.

The pair "discussed that we

would like to accelerate discussions to be able to swiftly achieve an agreement," Motegi said in the statement.

Former President Donald Trump's efforts to induce Japan to pay more for its defense weren't appreciated by Japanese people, Jeff Kingston, director of Asian studies at Temple University's Tokyo campus, said July 19.

Trump had demanded Japan pay \$8 billion a year for hosting U.S. troops in the country, former national security adviser John

Bolton wrote in his memoir, "The Room Where It Happened," published in June.

Reports of progress in negotiations are good news for bilateral ties, Kingston said Thursday.

"Trump's plans to quadruple the amount were damaging and exorbitant and seemed to be taking advantage of [Japan's] vulnerabilities," he said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Hana Kusumoto contributed to this report.
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MILITARY



FRANCISCO DIAZ JR./U.S. Marine Corps

Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II stealth fighters fly over Wake Island in 2018.

USAF wants to know if key airfield could disappear under rising sea

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force is spending \$1.75 million to gauge the effects of future sea-level rise at Wake Island Airfield, located on a remote Pacific atoll that is a key asset in America's missile defense system.

The "inundation study" was contracted out by the Pacific Air Forces Regional Support Center in September and is slated for completion in March 2022, Pacific Air Forces said in a statement provided Wednesday to Stars and Stripes.

"The purpose of contracting this study is to gather data and better prepare for future military construction projects," the statement said.

Jupiter, a climate analytics firm based in San Mateo, Calif., has been subcontracted to conduct the comprehensive study that will "anticipate future sea-level rise and flooding" on the airfield in Micronesia, the company said in an announcement last week.

Wake Island is about 1,500 miles east of Guam and 2,300 miles west of the Hawaiian Islands.

The remote airfield "holds great significance to the Air Force be-

cause it serves as a trans-Pacific refueling depot for military missions in addition to being a military training and missile testing location," the Air Force said in a news release in October.

The 9,800-foot runway — described in the news release as "the longest in the Pacific Islands" — has deteriorated after many years of use.

Roughly 500-600 aircraft use the airfield each year, the Air Force said.

Radar on Wake Island is routinely used in tests of America's ballistic missile defense system.

"Having the data that this project will yield will enable the Air Force with strategic asset planning," Jupiter said in its announcement. "With these data, the Air Force will be able to prepare for and mitigate anticipated consequences of severe weather events."

Those steps could include "hardening" airfield facilities to withstand flooding or relocating them, Jupiter said.

The commencement of the sea-level study comes after the Air Force has already spent millions on upgrades on the airfield.

In the October news release, the Air Force said the airfield was undergoing \$87 million worth of "critical airfield construction" that began in March 2020 and was expected to be completed by this spring.

The Defense Department has been aware for years that coral reef atolls in the Pacific are threatened by sea-level rise due to climate change.

A Pentagon-backed study by the U.S. Geological Survey completed in 2017 analyzed risks of rising sea level to the Marshall Islands, which are home to the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site. The study concluded that in the near term, those islands would be dealing with larger waves that crash farther inland. In the longer term, some islands could be permanently inundated.

The study said that further analysis was needed on effects of rising sea level on Wake Island, which is roughly 600 miles north of the Marshall Islands, because it has a different coral reef ecosystem.

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Marine moms have year to get back in shape

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Marine Corps is giving women more time to get into physical shape after childbirth, according to a new policy change.

Once a pregnancy is confirmed, the woman is exempt from taking a fitness test or participating in the Body Composition Program or the Military Appearance Program. Those programs are aimed at Marines who are not meeting the service's fitness and appearance standards.

After the birth of the child, the woman has at least 12 months to

meet fitness and appearance standards, according to the new update posted Monday, which goes into effect immediately.

The extension was made in recognition of the individual circumstances of each Marine's pregnancy and postpartum time, and to alleviate the stress of returning to the service's standards.

"Affording a postpartum Marine more time before mandating fitness testing and body composition compliance will allow a fuller recovery, lower injury risk, prevent potential long-term persistent factors and eliminate potential impact to breast milk production

due to rapid weight loss," Capt. Sam Stephenson, a spokesman for Marine Corps Training and Education Command, said in an email Tuesday.

The Marine Corps expects women to continue physical fitness routines during their pregnancies, citing new science that has shown it is good for their health and that of their children. The announcement also states that new mothers should start a gradual and appropriate exercise program as soon as their doctor approves.

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Light vehicles, long punch give Marines a better tank killer

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Marine Corps experiments show that lightweight vehicles mounted with long-range weapons can take out enemy tanks at a distance 15 to 20 times greater than a Marine tank could, a top general said this week.

The anti-tank mission was one of the examples cited by Lt. Gen. Eric Smith, deputy commandant for combat development and integration, for how the service is reshaping to create a "light, lethal and austere" force by the end of the decade.

Smith's comments, made Wednesday at the International Armoured Vehicles Conference hosted by Defence IQ, were first reported by USNI News.

The Marine Corps began divesting its heavy tanks last year, following guidance from Commandant Gen. David Berger.

Law enforcement, cannon artillery, infantry and conventional aircraft units are also being cut or restructured, and officials expect to cut 12,000 Marines from the service's troop strength by 2030.

It's all in preparation for a future battlefield where U.S. forces expect to face more conventional forces with capabilities similar to their own.

To combat these "near-peer adversaries," the Marines could employ groups of about 75 Marines on the first island chain off the coast of mainland Asia and outfitted with their own aircraft and surface ships, to maneuver quickly and keep their enemy's resources tied up trying to hunt them down.

"In the past, you would think, 'Well, there's 75 Marines in location X, they're not a threat,'" Smith said, as quoted by USNI News. But "if I can sink one of your billion-and-a-half-dollar warships with a one-and-a-half-million-dollar missile, I am a threat."

That kind of capability "may change the calculus, if I can do that and rapidly move using things like our Joint Light Tactical Vehicle and make it incredibly hard for you to find me," Smith said. "You have to respect that very small unit, of which we will have dozens and dozens and dozens placed strategically."

U.S. forces have witnessed that kind of imbalance firsthand over the past 20 years, as insurgents used cheap improvised bombs to kill or wound troops and disable

their expensive hardware

Now, tiny drones that can be easily purchased and weaponized pose the greatest tactical threat to U.S. forces since the roadside bombs began proliferating, Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie Jr., head of U.S. Central Command, said earlier this week.

The Marines plan to use more drones and robotics themselves for combat, as well as for resupplying food, water and munitions, and as potential decoys, Smith said.

A nimbler Marine Corps, capable of hit-and-run style tactics, would take away the "luxury" an enemy might have of focusing its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance on "a few key warships or a few key larger formations who may be closing in on the area," he said.

The service is fielding long-range precision weapons that can be fired from mobile platforms like the JLTV and aircraft, as well as ground-based anti-ship missiles it could use to stop enemies hundreds of miles from a piece of contested territory. That would free up Navy ships to focus on controlling the sea, Smith said.

But while experiments have shown that a JLTV could "kill armor" at far greater distances than a tank, Smith said the service didn't decide to divest its hulking M1A1 Abrams fleet because they weren't good tank-killers. Rather, it's a matter of logistics.

"We can kill armor formations at longer ranges using additional and other resources without incurring a 74-ton challenge trying to get that to a shore, or to get it from the United States into the fight," he said. "You simply can't be there in time."

Still, the Corps' changes have been criticized by some tankers, such as former Marine armor officer Dan Grazier, a military fellow at the nonprofit watchdog Project on Government Oversight, who spoke to Stars and Stripes last fall about his misgivings about the redesign's rationale.

"This whole idea of gearing the Marine Corps entirely toward fighting an island campaign against China, I think is greatly misguided, not least because the kind of conflict that envisions is extremely unlikely," Grazier said.

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MILITARY

Base barbers to reopen as virus ebbs in Germany

BY BRIAN FERGUSON
AND KARIN ZEITVOGEL
Stars and Stripes

Haircuts will be available again at barbershops and beauty salons on U.S. military bases in Germany beginning March 1, the Army and Air Force said Thursday, following the host nation's lead and lifting some coronavirus restrictions as infections tumbled.

But while German schools have been given the green light to reopen starting next week, it remained unclear when students and teachers at Defense Department schools will return to in-class learning.

A letter from the superintendent for the region that includes Germany said remote learning would continue through Feb. 19, but did not mention when schools would reopen.

"We will continue to work with our military and public health officials to monitor the situation and will provide updates as nec-

essary," Steven Sanchez, superintendent of Department of Defense Education Activity's Europe East district, said in the letter released Thursday.

"For further information regarding the return to schools, please reach out to your school administration," he wrote.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and the heads of Germany's 16 states agreed Wednesday that elementary school students can resume in-class learning starting next week. The decision on when to reopen will be left to state leaders, Merkel said.

In a speech to German lawmakers Thursday, Merkel said priority had been given to reopening day care facilities and schools "because the effects of weeks of closures are present and palpable, on both children and parents."

German barbershops and hair salons can reopen next month, when the key weekly rate of new infections per 100,000 people is



JENNIFER H. SVAN/Stars and Stripes

Kaltrian Ibrij shaves off Senior Airman Jeremiah Lamb's hair at the barbershop on Ramstein Air Base, Germany, in May when it had just reopened after being closed during the first wave of the pandemic.

expected to have fallen even further from where it stood Thursday — 64 cases per 100,000.

Barbershops and hairdressers on Ramstein Air Base and in the U.S. military community in Stuttgart, which is home to U.S. European and Africa commands will also be allowed to reopen March 1, with some restrictions, Army and Air Force officials said.

"The shops will follow the same COVID guidelines of distance and mask wearing, as well as by-appointment-only service that they followed prior to the recent

closure," USAG Stuttgart said in a statement.

Haircuts will be available at barbershops and hairdressers in Ramstein's Exchange provided they comply with strict hygiene requirements, the Air Force base said on its website.

But the U.S. military is likely to follow the Germans' lead on other aspects of the 2-month-old lockdown and keep restrictions in place until at least March 7.

"We won't do anything to get ahead of the Germans," said Maj. Selwyn Johnson, spokesman for

the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, which includes soldiers assigned to U.S. Army Garrison Rheinland-Pfalz.

Johnson added that soldiers under the 21st TSC should continue to follow the order issued by Maj. Gen. Christopher Mohan on Dec. 17, when the German lockdown began.

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Tokyo's coronavirus cases stay below 500 for a fifth day

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The U.S. military in Japan reported three new coronavirus cases as of 6 p.m. Thursday as the capital city went a fifth day with fewer than 500 newly infected people.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government reported another 434 people with the coronavirus, 57 more than the previous day, according to public broadcaster NHK and metro government data.

The city has passed five days with new patients numbering less

than 500 each day. The rolling seven-day average stands at 508 people in the city contracting the virus each day.

Of U.S. military installations in the country, only Kadena Air Base on Okinawa and Naval Air Facility Atsugi outside of Tokyo reported new infections.

At Kadena, one person tested positive this week before exiting quarantine after recent travel outside Japan, according to a Facebook post Thursday. At NAF Atsugi, two individuals who had close contact with previously infected

people tested positive Thursday, base spokesman Sam Samuelson said.

As those infected from a viral surge that started in mid-December recover, the number of COVID-19 patients at NAF Atsugi has fallen from 12 cases to two since Feb. 1, Samuelson said. COVID-19 is the respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus.

The remaining U.S. installations in Japan were silent Thursday, except to update a loosening of restrictions on permitted travel areas or progress on vaccinating

their people against COVID-19.

Yokota Air Base on Wednesday reported no new coronavirus cases on the base between Saturday and Tuesday, according to a Facebook post. The base has three patients under observation.

A U.S. service member at Camp Humphreys tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday during a medical screening, according to a U.S. Forces Korea news release. USFK and South Korean health authorities are tracing the soldier's contacts, the command said Thursday.

South Korea reported 504 individuals tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday, a fourth day of increases from a daily low of 288 on Monday, according to the Central Disease Control Headquarters and World Health Organization.

U.S. Forces Korea reported no new infections Thursday but Wednesday said a report Feb. 4 of a service member infected by the coronavirus was a false positive.

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Pentagon may move forward without JEDI cloud computing contract

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is preparing for the possibility that it will have to move on without the long-fought JEDI cloud computing contract, as an impending court decision threatens to leave the embattled procurement even more bogged down in litigation than it already is.

The weight of two long-running lawsuits has the Defense Department openly questioning whether JEDI will still be worth the trou-

ble if the court seeks to depose former President Donald Trump and other former officials. And the success of some of the Pentagon's other, quieter cloud initiatives is lending new weight to the idea that JEDI's one-cloud-to-rule-them-all strategy may not be necessary in the first place.

One senior defense official told The Washington Post he thinks the department's enterprise cloud should draw from more than one tech company, breaking not only with past statements from the

Pentagon but also with a central aspect of how JEDI was designed.

"If I were to make a decision today to create an enterprise cloud, I would totally think of having a multi-cloud approach. For reasons of diversity, avoiding lock-in," said Nic Chaillan, a former entrepreneur who is the Air Force's chief software officer.

In a statement, the Pentagon's acting chief information officer, John Sherman, said his team still wants to move forward with JEDI but is also looking for other ways

to meet the military's needs.

"The Department is fully committed to meeting our warfighters' urgent and unmet cloud requirements — we hope through JEDI Cloud — but other elements of DOD's Cloud Strategy requirements, such as cloud-based storage and cloud-enabled software development, are still moving forward," Sherman said.

JEDI, which stands for Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure, was conceived in 2017 as part of a broader set of technology

investments meant to help the United States win an artificial intelligence arms race with China.

It is meant to create a cloud-based central operating system for the U.S. armed forces that will bring new technologies to the battlefield, as well as provide new ways to protect and share classified intelligence. It is worth up to \$10 billion over 10 years. Amazon Web Services, Microsoft, Oracle and IBM submitted proposals.

An Amazon representative declined to comment for this story.

VIRUS OUTBREAK ROUNDUP

US jobless claims fall slightly to 793,000 with layoffs still high

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell slightly last week to 793,000, evidence that job cuts remain high despite a substantial decline in new viral infections.

Last week's total declined from 812,000 the previous week, the Labor Department said Thursday. That figure was revised higher from the previously-reported figure of 779,000. Before the virus erupted in the United States in March, weekly applications for jobless aid had never topped 700,000, even during the Great Recession.

The job market's improvement slowed through the fall and in the past two months has essentially stalled. Over the past two months combined, employers have cut 178,000 jobs. Nearly 10 million jobs remain lost to the pandemic.

Though the unemployment rate fell in January to 6.3% from 6.7%, that was mainly because many people who had lost jobs stopped looking for one. The government doesn't count people as unemployed unless they're actively seeking work.

All told, 20.4 million people were receiving unemployment benefits in the week that ended Jan. 23, the latest period for which data are available. That's up from 17.8 million from the week before.

The job market's persistent weakness is fueling President Joe Biden's push for a \$1.9 trillion economic rescue package. Biden's proposal would extend, through August, two federal unemployment benefit programs that are set to expire in mid-March. His proposal would also raise the federal unemployment benefit to \$400 a week from the current \$300.

Oregon

PORTLAND — Gov. Kate Brown announced Wednesday that some outdoor contact sports, including high school football, can resume this week.

In addition, the Oregon Health Authority reported data shows a "sharp decrease" in daily cases, hospitalizations and deaths from the previous week.

Health and safety protocols for school sports teams are determined based on the risk level in the county.

In "lower risk" and "moderate risk" counties, practices and games for outdoor contact sports can resume. In "high risk" and "extreme risk" counties, where COVID-19 remains more wide-

spread, schools and other sports organizations can opt-in to resuming outdoor contact sports with additional protocols in place; On-site COVID-19 testing for symptomatic individuals, contact information for contact tracing and a waiver identifying health and safety risks and a commitment to isolation and quarantine if exposed to COVID-19.

Connecticut

HARTFORD — New and limited data released Wednesday from the Connecticut Department of Public Health suggests there are racial disparities in the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine in the state, mirroring what's been happening in other states where Black populations lag far behind white populations in getting the shot.

As of Feb. 3, nearly 2% of residents age 75 years and older who have received the vaccine were Black while 59.7% were white, according to the data. Meanwhile, slightly more than 1% were Asian; 2.3% were Hispanic; 6.2% were mixed-race; and 19.4% were listed as other, which includes American Indians, Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

According to 2019 U.S. Census data, 74.6% of Connecticut's population is white while 11% is Black or African-American.

Ohio

COLUMBUS — The Ohio Department of Health says as many as 4,000 COVID-19 deaths may have been underreported through the state's reporting system, and those deaths will now be added to the state's tally of deaths from the coronavirus during the coming week.

Health officials say "process issues affecting the reconciliation and reporting of these deaths" began in October, with most occurring in November and December. The department identified the problem during a routine employee training, officials said.

The department says it will continue working with the auditor of state's office, which has been doing an audit of COVID-19 data since September.

Officials say adding the deaths will inflate daily reported death counts for two or three days, but the appropriate date of deaths will be reflected on the state's COVID-19 dashboard.

As of Wednesday, the state was reporting a total of 11,856 confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths.



STEVEN SENNE/AP

A passerby walks past an employment hiring sign while entering a Target store location, Feb. 9, in Westwood, Mass.

Tennessee

Public health officials in eastern Tennessee announced Wednesday that 975 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine that went missing were likely thrown out by accident.

Knox County — which encompasses Knoxville — said the state's Department of Health confirmed that the doses were shipped to the region last week, but local officials said they have no record of receiving them.

Knox County Health Department Director Dr. Martha Buchanan said that based on GPS data, she believes the box containing the doses was probably discarded by someone who thought they were throwing out dry ice. Due to security reasons, vaccine doses are shipped without any readily identifiable information attached.

"It was a kick in the gut for all of us," Buchanan said through tears. "I apologize. Vaccinating our community is very important to us."

Louisiana

NEW ORLEANS — Hospitality industry workers who will lose income because of an upcoming bar shutdown and other coronavirus restrictions in the French Quarter can apply for five days of part-time work with the city, the mayor's office said Wednesday.

Bars are being shut down throughout the city Friday, the beginning of what is usually a raucous Mardi Gras weekend. And there will be limits on automobile and pedestrian traffic in the French Quarter, where bars usually cater to shoulder-to-shoulder crowds.

In a \$100,000 program, the city is offering up to 200 displaced workers jobs that officials say may include trash and litter pick-up and mask distribution, according

to a news release from Mayor LaToya Cantrell's administration. Workers selected can earn up to \$100 a day for five hours of work a day Friday through Tuesday.

Affected workers can apply online and will need documentation including a state identification card and a paycheck stub.

Iowa

JOHNSTON — Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds on Wednesday defended her decision to end mask requirements and other rules designed to slow the spread of the coronavirus, even as public health officials warned against ending the measures when a new more contagious variant of the virus is spreading in the U.S.

Reynolds announced Friday that she would lift a partial mask requirement, limits on crowd sizes and other mitigation measures. Asked at a news conference why she decided to end those rules, Reynolds repeated her frequent refrain that Iowa residents can make decisions without government mandates.

"I'm not saying, 'Go out there and be carefree and not be responsible.' I'm saying I trust Iowans to do the right thing," she said. "I don't think they need me to say mandate it."

Since its peak in November, Iowa has seen significant drops in hospitalizations and less robust virus spread. However, it has the highest seven-day rolling average positivity rate in the nation at just under 26%, according to researchers at Johns Hopkins University. State health departments calculate positivity rates differently across the country, but for Iowa the Associated Press calculates the rate by dividing new cases by people tested, using data from The COVID Tracking Project.

The Iowa Department of Public Health reported 1,035 new confirmed cases on Wednesday and

29 additional deaths, increasing the state's death toll to 5,174 since the pandemic began.

Texas

HOUSTON — Three mega sites to administer the coronavirus vaccine will be set up later this month at stadiums and a fairgrounds site in Houston and the Dallas area, federal and state officials announced Wednesday.

In Houston, the vaccination site will be at NRG Stadium, where the NFL's Texans play. In Dallas, it will be set up at Fair Park, home to the Texas State Fair. In Arlington, officials will set up a site at AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys. Last week, the NFL told the federal government it would make all of its stadiums available as COVID-19 vaccination sites.

The three sites, which are being set up by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in cooperation with local and state officials, are expected to be open on Feb. 24.

Kansas

MISSION — Kansas school districts are rushing to vaccinate their teachers in preparation for an eventual return to a full reopening of classrooms and before a more contagious strain of the coronavirus can spread throughout the state.

Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly told leaders of the Republican-controlled Legislature on Wednesday that about 60% of the state's school districts have started vaccinating their teachers and staff. She met with top lawmakers a day after the state Department of Education recommended that school districts allow middle and high school students resume full-time in-person instruction if precautions are taken. Several of the state's largest districts have been offering in-person classes only part-time or teaching students only online.

VIRUS OUTBREAK



SHAFKAT ANOWAR/AP

Lear Preston, 4, attends her Scott Joplin Elementary School virtual classes as her mother, Brittany Preston, assists at their residence in Chicago, on Wednesday. On Thursday, Lear will return to class as the school district slowly reopens its doors following a fight with the teachers union over COVID-19 protocols.

Is one day a week enough? Biden's school goal parsed

Associated Press

President Joe Biden is being accused of backpedaling on his pledge to reopen the nation's schools after the White House added fine print to his promise and made clear that a full reopening is still far from sight.

Biden's initial pledge in December was to reopen "the majority of our schools" in his first 100 days in office. In January he specified that the goal applied only to schools that teach through eighth grade. And this week the White House said that schools will be considered opened as long as they teach in-person at least one day a week.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki defended the goal Wednesday, calling it part of a "bold ambitious agenda." But she also said it's a bar the administration hopes to exceed.

"Certainly, we are not planning to celebrate at 100 days if we reach that goal," she said. "We certainly hope to build from that."

The White House had faced increasing pressure to explain the goal as the reopening debate gains urgency. Biden had never detailed what it meant to be reopened or how he would define success. Pressed on the question Tuesday, Psaki clarified that one day a week of in-person learning would meet the mark.

"His goal that he set is to have the majority of schools—so, more than 50%—open by day 100 of his presidency," she said. "And that means some teaching in classrooms. So, at least one day a week. Hopefully, it's more."

The goal drew criticism from Republicans who said Biden is setting the bar too low. House Minority

Leader Kevin McCarthy called it unacceptable and said schools are ready to open now. Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Mo., a former teacher, said the goal falls short of what students need.

"Having only 51% of our schools reopen for as little as one day a week is not a 'success,'" she said. "We should be working to safely get all of our children back to full-time, in-person learning"

With the new caveat, the pledge appears much less ambitious than what Biden signaled when he first made it. In December, it seemed his promise was to reopen half of the nation's more than 130,000 schools. When it was narrowed to K-8 schools only, the scope decreased to include the roughly 90,000 schools below high school.

Now, critics say, the goal has been moved so low it may already have been met. Data from Burbio, a service that tracks school opening plans, recently reported that 58% of K-12 students are learning in-person to some degree.

"The administration doesn't have to exert much effort to meet this goal," said Jonathan Butcher, an education fellow at The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

Tracking progress on the goal has been difficult due to a lack of federal data on the topic. Last week the Biden administration said it will begin collecting data from 7,000 schools showing whether they are operating online, in-person or in a combination. The Trump administration declined to gather that data, saying it wasn't the federal government's responsibility.

Some companies and researchers have sought to collect the data

on their own, including Burbio, which reported some recent progress on schools returning to in-person classes. About 42% of students were learning entirely online late last month, the company found, down from 55% during the first week of the year.

Biden's pledge is part of his broader plan to fight COVID-19 and jump start the economy. His \$1.9 trillion plan includes \$130 billion to help schools fix ventilation systems, stock up on protective gear and take other steps to open. Getting students back into the classroom is seen as a key step in getting parents back to work.

But reopening efforts have faced roadblocks due in part to slow vaccine rollouts and standoffs with teachers. While schools in some areas are teaching in-person, many remain mostly or entirely online. In cities including Chicago and San Francisco, districts have faced resistance from teachers who won't return until their demands are met.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a study last month finding that, with mask wearing and other precautions, it's generally safe to have schooling in-person. CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky later added that vaccinating teachers "is not a prerequisite for safe reopening of schools."

Republicans saw the statement as further support to reopen, but the White House declined to take a firm stance on the issue, saying Walensky made the comment "in her personal capacity." Psaki said the White House would await updated school guidance that Biden requested from the CDC. That guidance is expected to be released soon.

GOP attacks Dems' relief bill from all angles

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans are attacking the Democrats' \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package as too costly, economically damaging and overtly partisan, an all-angles attempt to derail President Joe Biden's top priority as it starts moving through a Congress his party controls only narrowly.

Five House committees worked Wednesday on their pieces of sweeping legislation that would send \$1,400 payments to some Americans. It would also provide hundreds of billions for state and local governments and to boost vaccination efforts, raise tax credits for children and increase unemployment benefits. Democratic leaders hope for House passage later this month, with Senate approval and a bill on Biden's desk by mid-March.

"This is the moment," said Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal, D-Mass., citing the pandemic's human and economic toll.

As committees worked, Republicans launched amendments spotlighting what they see as the legislation's soft spots. Their themes were clear: Democrats are overspending, hurting workers and employers' job markets, opening doors to fraud and rewarding political allies — allegations that Democrats dismiss as ludicrous.

The proposals signaled that Biden's plan faces solid Republican opposition in a House and Senate where Democrats have few votes to spare, while forcing Democrats to take positions that could tee up GOP campaign ads for the 2022 elections.

There were amendments to reduce the \$400 extra in weekly jobless benefits Democrats want to provide through August and exempt the smallest businesses from Democrats' plans to gradually raise the minimum wage to \$15 hourly from \$7.25.

Others would put strings on emergency funds to help schools reopen safely, requiring that schools offer in-person classes or give the money to parents for education savings accounts if they remain closed. Still others would have made sure assistance for renters, homeowners and the airline industry didn't extend long after the pandemic ends, and divided \$26 billion for urban transportation systems between cities and rural areas, which many Republicans represent.

"I don't know if the White House knows this, but you're supposed to be creating jobs, not killing them."

Rep. Kevin Brady
R-Texas

"I don't know if the White House knows this, but you're supposed to be creating jobs, not killing them," said Texas Rep. Kevin Brady, the top Republican on the Ways and Means panel. He said that while his party has backed over \$3 trillion in earlier pandemic relief bills, "whatever this rushed, partisan, special interest 'stimulus' package does, it comes with no bipartisan discussion, no opportunity for finding common ground."

Biden campaigned on reuniting a country riven by President Donald Trump's divisive four years. He met two weeks ago with 10 GOP senators to discuss the COVID-19 plan in a session that seemed cordial but has produced no visible movement.

Democrats say attempts to compromise with Republicans wasted time and resulted in a package that proved too small when President Barack Obama sought an economic stimulus compromise in 2009, his first year. They want to finish this initial Biden goal without any stumbles and before emergency jobless benefits expire on March 14.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said in a statement that Democrats were pushing "liberal wish-list policies" and accused them of "siding with teachers' unions," mostly Democratic-friendly organizations that have largely opposed reopening schools until they are safer.

McCarthy, eyeing 2022 elections that he hopes will make him speaker of a GOP-run House, suggested Republicans were ready to work to restore jobs, reopen schools and provide vaccines "to those who want it." But he said Democrats' "policy distractions will only make America weaker and bring our recovery to a halt." One by one, committees were rejecting GOP amendments, mostly on party-line votes.

NATION

Orders: Video from Capitol riot shown to highlight Trump impact

FROM PAGE 1

minds may be changed” after senators saw chilling security video Wednesday of the deadly insurrection at the Capitol, including of rioters searching menacingly for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence.

Biden said he didn't watch any of the previous day's proceedings live but later saw news coverage.

The never-before-seen audio and video released Wednesday is now a key exhibit in Trump's impeachment trial as lawmakers prosecuting the case argue Trump should be convicted of inciting the siege.

Democrats are using their remaining hours of arguments to lay out the physical and mental harm caused by the attack, discuss Trump's lack of action as it unfolded and do a final presentation on the legal issues involved.

Videos of the siege have been circulating since the day of the riot, but the graphic compilation shown to senators Wednesday amounted to a more complete narrative, a moment-by-moment retelling of one of the nation's most alarming days. It offered fresh details into the attackers, scenes of police heroism and staff whispers of despair. And it showed how close the country came to chaos over the certification of Trump's defeat to Biden.

The footage showed the mob smashing into the building, rioters engaging in hand-to-hand combat with police and audio of Capitol police officers pleading for backup.

It underscored how dangerously close the rioters came to the nation's leaders, shifting the focus of

the trial from an academic debate about the Constitution to a raw retelling of the assault.

Rioters were seen roaming the halls chanting “Hang Mike Pence,” some equipped with combat gear.

Outside, the mob had set up a makeshift gallows.

And in one wrenching moment, police were shown shooting and killing a San Diego woman, Ashli Babbitt, as the mob tried to break through doors near the House Chamber.

Pence, who had been presiding over a session to certify Biden's election victory over Trump — thus earning Trump's censure — was shown being rushed to safety, where he sheltered in an office with his family just 100 feet from the rioters. Pelosi was seen being evacuated from the complex as her staff hid behind doors in her suite of offices.

Though most of the Senate jurors seem to have made up their minds, making Trump's acquittal likely, they sat riveted as the jarring video played in the chamber. Republican Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma bent his head at one point, another GOP colleague putting his hand on his arm in comfort.

“President Trump put a target on their backs and his mob broke into the Capitol to hunt them down,” said House prosecutor Stacey Plaskett, the Democratic delegate representing the Virgin Islands.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, saw himself in the footage, dashing down a hallway to avoid the mob. Romney said he hadn't realized that officer Eugene Goodman, who has been praised as a hero for



A video from Donald Trump, paired with police body cam footage, is shown to senators as House impeachment manager Rep. Joaquin Castro, D-Texas, speaks during the second impeachment trial of Trump in the Senate at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, on Wednesday.

luring rioters away from the Senate doors, had been the one to direct him to safety.

“That was overwhelmingly distressing and emotional,” he said.

Earlier in the day, prosecutors laid out their case by methodically linking Trump's verbal attacks on the election to the violence that resulted. Trump did nothing to stem the violence and watched with “glee,” the Democrats said, as the mob ransacked the building. Five people died.

The goal of the presentation was to cast Trump not as an innocent bystander but rather as the “inciter in chief” who spent months spreading falsehoods about the election.

Using evocative language meant to match the horror of the day, prosecutors compared Trump to a fire chief who delights in seeing fires spread, not extinguished, and they compared his supporters to a cavalry in war.

“This attack never would have happened, but for Donald Trump,” Rep. Madeleine Dean, one of the impeachment managers, said as she choked back emo-

tion. “And so they came, draped in Trump's flag, and used our flag, the American flag, to batter and to bludgeon.”

The Trump legal team takes the floor Friday and Saturday for up to 16 hours to lay out its defense.

The difficulty facing Trump's defense became apparent at the start as his lawyers leaned on the process of the trial, unlike any other, rather than the substance of the case against the former president.

The prosecutors on Wednesday aimed to preemptively rebut arguments that Trump's lawyers have indicated are central to their defense, arguing for instance that there was no First Amendment protection for the president's encouragement of the invaders. Trump's lawyers are likely to blame the rioters themselves for the violence.

Trump is the first president to face an impeachment trial after leaving office and the first to be twice impeached. He is charged with “incitement of insurrection,” though his lawyers say his words were protected by the Constitu-

tion's First Amendment and just a figure of speech.

His lawyers also say he cannot be convicted because he is already gone from the White House. Even though the Senate rejected that argument in Tuesday's vote to proceed to the trial, the legal issue could resonate with Senate Republicans eager to acquit Trump without being seen as condoning his behavior.

While six Republicans joined with Democrats to vote to proceed with the trial on Tuesday, the 56-44 vote was far from the two-thirds threshold of 67 votes needed for conviction.

Minds did not seem to be changing Wednesday, even after senators watched the graphic video.

“I've said many times that the president's rhetoric is at time overheated, but this is not a referendum on whether you agree with everything the president says or tweets,” said Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, who was among those leading the effort to challenge the Electoral College tally certifying the election. “This is instead a legal proceeding.”

At least 5 killed in massive crash on icy Texas interstate



JAY JANNER, AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN/AP

Emergency responders work at a multicar pileup on State Highway 45 near Briarwick Drive on Thursday, in Austin, Texas.

Associated Press

DALLAS — At least five people were killed and dozens injured Thursday in a massive crash involving 75 to 100 vehicles on an icy Texas interstate, police said, as a winter storm dropped freezing rain, sleet and snow on parts of the U.S.

At the scene of the crash on Interstate 35 near Fort Worth, a tangle of semitrailers, cars and trucks had crashed into each other and had turned every which way, with some vehicles on top of others.

“The vehicles are just mangled,” said Matt Zavadsky, spokesman for MedStar, which provides the ambulance service for the area. “It's going to take a lot to disentangle this wreck.”

Thirty-six people were taken to hospitals from the crash, several with critical injuries, Zavadsky said.

“The roadway was so treacherous from the ice that several of the first responders were falling on the scene,” Zavadsky said.

He said his crews carry a sand and salt mixture in the ambulances, which they began using at the scene. At one point, he said, one of the ambulances was hit, but it sustained only minor damage and the crew members were fine.

Farther south, in Austin, more than two dozen vehicles were involved in a pileup on an icy road, and one person was injured, emergency officials said.

Elsewhere, ice storm warnings

were in effect from Arkansas to Kentucky, while another winter storm was predicted to bring snow to Mid-Atlantic states, the National Weather Service said.

More than 125,000 homes and businesses were without electricity Thursday morning, largely in Kentucky and West Virginia, according to the website poweroutage.us, which tracks utility reports. Officials in central Kentucky were urging people to stay home due to icy conditions.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear said state offices would be closed due to the weather. He declared a state of emergency, to free up funding and help agencies coordinate as they respond to slick roads and downed power lines.

WORLD



JANE BARLOW / AP

A man walks in snowy conditions in Braemar, Scotland, on Thursday.

European deep freeze serves up fun, danger

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Three workers in a boat hacked away at ice Thursday to create a watery barrier around the Dutch prime minister's office, while others in the Netherlands tentatively tested the frozen surfaces of lakes and canals to see if they were safe to skate on.

The deep freeze gripping large parts of Europe is serving up both fun and frustrations, with heavy snow cutting power to thousands of homes in central Slovakia and snarling traffic in the east of the country, while snow on Dutch roads and sidewalks allowed some parents to pull children to school on sleds instead of riding them on bicycles.

Britain experienced its coldest night for a quarter century, with the temperature falling to minus 9.2 Fahrenheit in Braemar, northeast Scotland — the lowest recorded in the U.K. since 1995, according to the Met Office weather service.

Most of Britain has experienced days of sub-zero temperatures and snowfall in the wake of winter Storm Darcy. The cold snap froze the famous fountains in London's Trafalgar Square and forced the temporary closure of some U.K. coronavirus vaccination sites.

Icicles coating a jetty on the frozen inland IJsselmeer Sea north of Amsterdam drew photographers, while those hanging on a house in the central German city of Erfurt attracted the attention of firefighters, who snapped them off.

In France, cold weather and ice alerts were in force for northern swathes of the country, as thermometers dipped well below freezing, making roads and pavements treacherous. Among the coldest places was the riverfront city of Nancy, where the weather bureau reported minus 12 degrees F before dawn on Thursday.

Berlin police said a man rescued alive from a frozen pond in the German capital has died.

Chinese spacecraft enters Mars' orbit, joining Arab ship

Associated Press

BEIJING — A Chinese spacecraft went into orbit around Mars on Wednesday on an expedition to land a rover on the surface and scout for signs of ancient life, authorities announced in a landmark step in the country's most ambitious deep-space mission yet.

The arrival of Tianwen-1 after a journey of seven months and nearly 300 million miles is part of an unusual burst of activity at Mars: A spacecraft from the United Arab Emirates swung into orbit around the red planet on Tuesday, and a U.S. rover is set to arrive next week.

China's space agency said the five-ton combination orbiter and rover fired its engine to reduce its speed, allowing it to be captured by Mars' gravity.

"Entering orbit has been successful ... making it our country's first artificial Mars satellite," the agency announced.

The mission is bold even for a space program that has racked up a steady stream of achievements and brought prestige to China's ruling Communist Party.

If all goes as planned, the rover will separate from the spacecraft in a few months and touch down safely on Mars, making China only the second nation to pull off such a feat. The rover, a solar-powered vehicle about the size of a golf cart, will collect data on underground water and look for evidence that the planet may have once harbored microscopic life.

Tianwen, the title of an ancient poem, means "Quest for Heavenly Truth."

Ethnic minorities protest coup in Myanmar as opposition grows

Associated Press

YANGON, Myanmar — Members of Myanmar's ethnic minorities marched through streets in traditional dress and floated on wooden long boats in a scenic lake Thursday to protest last week's coup, a sign of the broad and growing resistance to the military takeover.

Opposition to the coup received a major boost from abroad from President Joe Biden, who ordered new sanctions and promised more measures to come as he demanded the junta hand power back to the elected government. That's part of a growing trend, as more governments consider sanctions against the military.

The military seized power on Feb. 1, ousting leader Aung San Suu Kyi and preventing recently elected lawmakers from opening a new session of Parliament — a shocking reversal after about a decade of progress toward democracy in Myanmar. The junta said it was forced to step in because Suu Kyi's government failed to properly investigate allegations of fraud in recent elections, though the election commission has said there is no evidence to support those claims.

In response to the coup, tens of

thousands of protesters have marched daily in Yangon and Mandalay, the country's biggest cities — and the demonstrations have spread throughout the country, showing the depth of the resistance. The rallies have drawn people from all walks of life, despite an official ban on gatherings of more than five people. Factory workers and civil servants, students and teachers, medical personnel and people from LGBTQ communities, Buddhist monks and Catholic clergy have all come out in force.

On Thursday, people from Myanmar's ethnic minority groups, who are concentrated in far-flung, border states, joined in — a striking show of unity in a country where some groups have resented the Burman majority's control and have also had their differences with Suu Kyi. But their deep mistrust of the military, which has brutally repressed their armed struggles for more autonomy, has made them uneasy allies with her party.

"Our people have been oppressed by the junta for many years. They have cracked down brutally. How long are they going to keep doing this?" asked protester Naw Ohn Hla, a human rights

activist from the Karen ethnic group, at a demonstration in Yangon. "But the people understand the situation, and most of them are joining now."

There have also been reports of police officers who belong to the Kayah ethnic group risking their jobs to protest the takeover. In a video shot Wednesday in a small village in the eastern state of Kayah, 42 police officers could be seen standing together to declare their support for the protesters and refuse entreaties from a senior officer to return to duty. Residents streamed to the scene to protect the defiant officers from arrest.

In Myanmar's eastern Shan State, home to the country's largest ethnic minority group, scores of wooden long boats used for fishing and transportation on scenic Inle Lake hosted a unique floating protest, with passengers holding placards denouncing the coup and calling for justice. Some protesters squeezed messages lengthwise onto oars, including "Respect Our Votes" and "Say No to Coup."

Large rallies have also taken place in the capital, Naypyitaw — which is unusual since the planned city has a large military presence.

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WEEKEND



Weezer wends its way back to emo

Music, Page 28

An American tragedy

'Judas and the Black Messiah' tells the true story of a murdered Black Panther leader and an FBI informant both oppressed by the same system

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LaKeith Stanfield and Daniel Kaluuya

Warner Bros. Pictures, iStock photos; Stars and Stripes illustration

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

Work from home, send a hologram

3D collaborations from afar could become a common post-pandemic office reality

BY DALVIN BROWN
The Washington Post

It's a pressing question that has yet to be answered: Once the pandemic passes, what will the return to work look like for millions of Americans?

Some tech companies have said people can continue to work from home indefinitely. Surveys suggest that most others are contemplating hybrid workspaces where staffers rotate between working remotely and coming into the office. The possible post-coronavirus situation has some companies envisioning a future where people can collaborate in more interactive and engaging ways, whether they're on-site or at home. One novel approach is to use 3D holograms.

Last month, Canada-based ARHT Media launched HoloPod, a 3-D display system that beams presenters into meetings and conferences they otherwise wouldn't be able to attend. That same month, the 3D graphics company Inverse was recognized at the global tech conference CES for software that enables hologram collaboration within virtual meeting rooms. Last year, Spatial enabled holographic-style virtual meetings on Oculus Quest.

Others are racing to develop similar Web conferencing capabilities under the notion that holograms are more engaging to

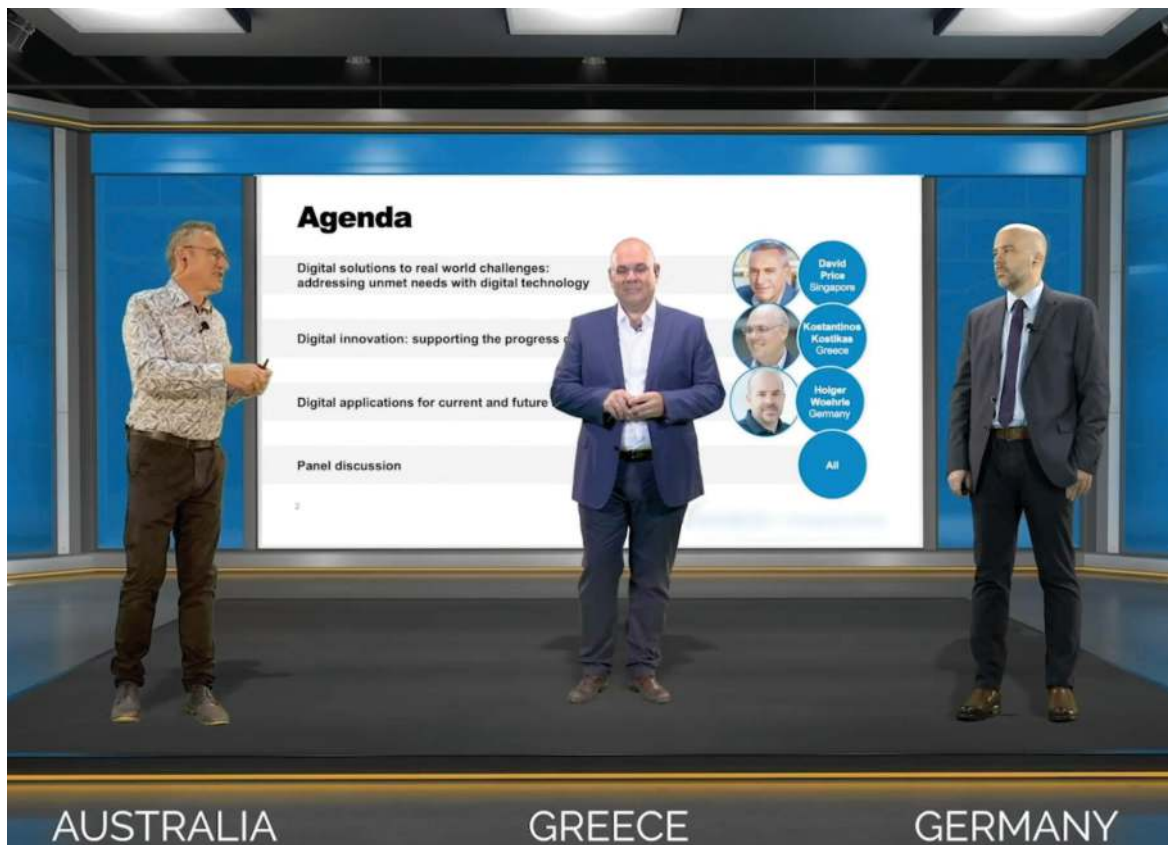
work with than tiles of faces on a computer screen. On the fringe for years, workplace holograms would enable employees to virtually re-create in-person meetings whether they're at home or in the office.

"As you look to that hybrid model, companies are going to have to innovate around that interplay between the remote employee experience and in-office employee experience," said Lisa Walker, the vice president of brand at Fuze, a teleconferencing service. "The technologies that can solve for that are going to pop."

A January workplace survey by PWC found that most executives and employees expect a hybrid workplace reality to kick off in the second quarter of this year. A separate survey by the National Association for Business Economics found that only 11 percent of the employees are expected to return to their pre-pandemic working arrangements. Corporate travel is expected to remain slashed.

Holograms might not be the next big thing, but start-ups in the 3-D space are positioning their offerings just in case.

The three-dimensional light projections have primarily been seen re-creating musicians on-stage in recent years. Companies have wanted to bring them into homes, but the projection hardware is still too expensive for



ARHT MEDIA/The Washington Post

ARHT Media brings holographic speakers from Australia, Greece and Germany together on one stage.

most people to afford. Companies, on the other hand, have larger budgets. And now software advancements are unlocking ways to use laptops, computers and smartphones to engage with and stream holograms emitted elsewhere.

In December, ARHT media showed what a hologram-enabled conference could look like as it beamed an executive from Los Angeles to Singapore to speak at an innovation summit. The event brought together a "small group" of attendees and was broadcast live to a larger audience online.

Traditionally, setting up high-definition holograms requires a team of projection technicians. However, ARHT's HoloPod was designed to be a quick-setup, plug-and-play system that's simpler to deploy.

On the remote side, a presenter would stand in front of a green screen, looking at a shot of the audience on a monitor. Meanwhile, cameras capture the speaker from all angles. At the worksite, someone could roll the HoloPod out of a closet, turn on a computer and connect to a live stream.

ARHT's software strings it all together and will enable presenters to respond in almost real time. People would then see the illusion of the presenter projected onto a reflective mesh.

In video demonstrations, the \$20,000 suite of hologram technology lacks some clarity. You can look at it and tell it's not a real person. Still, the company enables people to engage with life-size, three-dimensional representations of people who aren't

actually there.

The digital clones could surface in a variety of ways.

If they're using a smartphone camera, you could video-chat with a colleague on a computer and use your mouse to zoom in or pan around their virtual room. If you're both wearing VR headsets, you could beam yourselves into a virtual office or bring them into your living room to collaborate.

It would take a trio of cameras to enable 360-degree virtual views of your whole body, while eight cameras would enable your hologram to emit from TVs such as Sony's latest \$5,000 spatial reality display.

Inverse, which joined Microsoft's start-ups program last year, says it will launch its collaboration service later in 2021.

A home security camera with good value, plenty of features

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

These days installing a home or small business security system is common, but choosing the right one with the necessary features can be cumbersome. The Ezviz C4W is a good value and is loaded with features to achieve the coverage most need.

The smart Wi-Fi camera is perfect for either outdoor or indoor use. It's built with an IP67 rating so it's dust and moisture resistant, making it ideal for outdoor ceilings or walls.

Setup is user-friendly, working with the companion Ezviz app (iOS and Android). It must be connected to AC power (adapter included), so keep that in mind when choosing a location along with the reach of your existing 2.4GHz Wi-Fi.

The camera has dual antennas for a reliable and stable Wi-Fi connection. A 2.8mm wide angle lens can be controlled with the app for panning, zooming up to 8x and taking still images. Video recordings are done in 1080p full-HD resolution, so the image is crystal clear.

The recordings can be stored on microSD memory cards (not included) up to 256GB. An Ezviz NVR can be used for storage and a paid subscription for encrypted CloudPlay



Ezviz/TNS

The Ezviz C4W smart Wi-Fi camera offers plenty of handy features and can be used either outdoors or indoors.

Services is available. Any of the three can be used; it's your choice, or have the data saved to all three for added backup.

For the most part, the app, which can accommodate multiple Ezviz cameras, runs the show during setup and

for general settings. Once it's set up, the camera can be viewed and controlled worldwide. This includes live view, two-way audio, controlling the camera's built-in light, setting up alerts, a siren alarm and viewing recorded content.

Specific motion detection areas can be set up with the app along with setting the sensitivity to when someone enters the specific zone, the camera can be set to play sounds and flash the light along with sending a smartphone notification for instant viewing.

For even more customization, you can set up 10-second voice records, which can play from the camera's speaker.

My dogs are typically my test model for security cameras and the C4W caught them consistently, even though they were set up with dog treats. The specific areas worked well and the nighttime alarm with the flashing light and siren stopped them in their tracks.

The night vision, like any camera, shouldn't be positioned directly into light. Using it in a typical backyard with minimal lighting, night vision worked well. A lot depends on the settings chosen with recording zones, alerts, strobe light and siren. The C4W night vision system is rated to capture images at night up to 98 feet away.

Online: ezvizlife.com; \$79.99

WEEKEND: MOVIES



FOCUS PICTURES/AP photos

Robin Wright appears in a scene from "Land," the story of a woman driven by personal tragedy to live off-the-grid in the wilderness.

Observing nature's eccentricities

While making 'Land,' Wright worked with a 'mountain man' and encountered a bear

By AMY KAUFMAN
Los Angeles Times

When she set out to make her directorial debut on an 8,000-foot peak in remote Canada, Robin Wright knew the elements would prove challenging. But she hadn't anticipated the arrival of one on-set visitor: a bear.

One morning at 5 a.m., the actress was asleep in a mountainside trailer where she was shooting "Land" when she heard a shriek. When she looked out of her window, she saw the wild animal attempting to enter the craft service trailer where a crew member was preparing breakfast.

"She had this wrought iron skillet and a big spatula — silver spatula — and she was banging it on the thing and finally scared the bear away," said Wright, speaking on a virtual L.A. Times Talks @ Sundance panel. "It took about five minutes of her screaming bloody murder before that bear ran away. You know they can open doors."

In "Land," Wright stars as a woman who abandons her urban life for the wilderness after experiencing a personal tragedy. She purchases a cabin in the middle of nowhere, gets rid of her car and attempts to find her food through hunting and fishing. But with no history of living off the grid, the situation quickly becomes dangerous. That's when a stranger, played by Demián Bichir, stumbles across her cabin and helps teach her how to survive in the outdoors.

To prepare for the 29-day shoot, Wright and Bichir worked with what the director called a "mountain man," learning how to skin a deer, fish in a river and chop wood.

Wright said she found splitting logs surprisingly hard: "You have to nail it perfectly in the middle section of the wood ... I almost chopped my leg off."

The deer-skinning was so gory that she



Actor-director Robin Wright, left, and director of photography Bobby Bukowski collaborate on the set of "Land." Wright said that there is a drastic difference between the experience of directing on location and directing on a confined set.

even began thinking about going vegetarian. Bichir, however, was not similarly affected by the experience.

"I love my ribeyes. Nothing will change that. Please, medium rare," he said with a laugh. "But one thing I learned from my mountain guy — and that's something that I usually do anyway — is that I actually thanked the fish for feeding me. I actually thank the cow or the chicken, 'Thank you so much for offering your life so we can move on with ours.' I don't take that for granted."

On set, Bichir said, he had a "beautiful time" with Wright, noting he was in awe watching her "switching hats, going from director to producer to adjusting the dialogs and this and that. And then doing her thing, what she became famous for."

Initially, Wright was not interested in starring in the film. But when scheduling complications shortened the casting window, producers suggested she play the lead role. She'd been interested in directing for years, getting behind the camera to helm numerous episodes of Netflix's "House of Cards." But getting off of a confined set and onto location changed the experience drastically, she said.

"Once you get in [nature] and you start to observe it — not as a picture anymore — you're observing all of the eccentricities," she said. "It's quiet, but it's full of noise — beautiful noise. It's not mayhem until the scary part of nature blows winds that are 75 miles an hour, and they're making sounds like wolves and tigers. It's incredible the music that it puts out."

Wright makes solid debut as director

By MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN
The Washington Post

Actress Robin Wright began dipping her toe into directing with several episodes of "House of Cards," the Netflix series in which she played a conniving political wife for several seasons. With her starring vehicle "Land," the tale of a grieving woman who seeks solace — or perhaps a form of passive suicide — by going off the grid to live in a remote Wyoming cabin, she makes her solid, if only deceptively straightforward, feature debut.

For much of the film, it isn't clear what, other than misery/misanthropy, has driven Edee (Wright) to ditch everything — cellphone, car, sister — and move into a run-down shack on the side of a mountain. Fifteen minutes or so into the story, there are hints that there was once a husband (Warren Christie) and a son (Finlay Wojtak-Hissong), who appear in the form of visions, hallucinations or perhaps simply memories. Before she takes off, Edee tells her therapist that she simply can't face other people — people who invite her to share her pain or, worse, who just want her to be better. Fair enough.

And in the lean but eloquent screenplay by Jesse Chatham and Eric Dignam, Edee initially reveals little, other than a lack of preparedness for life in the wilderness that seems staggeringly naive. (In that sense, the film contains echoes of "Into the Wild," the 2007 film by Wright's former husband Sean Penn, or even the recent film "The Dark Divide," minus the comedy.) Perhaps her cluelessness is merely a measure of her staggering sorrow, but there's also a suggestion that she doesn't much care about survival.

When a hunter named Miguel (Demián Bichir) comes upon her half-dead, after her larder has been ransacked by a bear and her garden has gone bust, he notes that, "Only a person who has never been hungry would think that starving is a way to die."

It's said not without condescension — which the viewer might also be feeling — but only a whiff. For the most part, Miguel is a kind of saint — the kind who is atoning for something, as it turns out.

The setup is ripe for a story we've all seen before: one about a person in a self-destructive spiral of mourning, who recovers only by the intercession of a kind and patient stranger who also knows something about loss. And yet there are corners of this film — less a plot-driven narrative than a two-person character study — that feel powerfully true, in ways that surprise.

As the film progresses, Miguel returns again and again to the mountain, teaching Edee to trap, to hunt, and sometimes just to listen to the silence between two people. He even leaves his dog for her to take care of, before an extended absence.

When Edee first asks Miguel why he decided to help her in the first place, he says, "You were in my path," as if there were no other option. And maybe, "Land" suggests, with a simplicity that is almost profound, there isn't. "The heart wants something to be kind to," the poet Laura Fargas once wrote, "even if only a fish to sprinkle crumbs on the water for, once or twice a day."

"Land" is rated PG-13 for mature thematic elements, brief strong language and partial nudity. Running time: 89 minutes.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

'A different me showed up'

Process of acting out story of Black Panther leader made a personal impact on the actors

BY JAMIA PUGH
Associated Press

The stars of "Judas and the Black Messiah" found their own lives transformed as they immersed themselves in the story of Black Panther leader Fred Hampton.

Daniel Kaluuya said "a different me showed up" to the set when he was playing the magnetic Chicago-based activist, who was just 21 when he was killed by police in a 1969 raid. Dominique Fishback's conversations with Hampton's then-fiancee Akua Njeri taught her "who I wanted to be the most." And LaKeith Stanfield said he struggled through self-doubt and panic attacks while portraying an FBI informant who betrayed Hampton.

The film, co-written and directed by Shaka King and premiering in theaters and on HBO Max on Friday, follows the intersecting stories of Hampton and street criminal William O'Neal in late 1960s Chicago. As Hampton gained national attention as the outspoken chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party and founder of a multicultural "rainbow coalition" advocating for poor Black and Hispanic communities, O'Neal was recruited by the FBI to infiltrate the organization.

The movie marks the first time the 31-year-old Kaluuya, star of "Get Out" and "Queen & Slim," has portrayed a real person on screen.

"Reading the script and hearing his words stirred me, they moved me. ... It was almost like a call to action. I was like, yo, I'm here in the ring," Kaluuya said. "When I really understood the stakes, the cultural stakes ... I think a different me showed up."

Stanfield, who appeared alongside Kaluuya in "Get Out," delivers a twitchy performance as O'Neal, who rose to be the Panthers' head of security and took his

own life in 1990. The informant had helped the FBI sketch a floor plan of Hampton's apartment, including where Hampton slept, before agents raided it, killing Hampton and another man, Mark Clark.

"The whole time I was kind of in conflict, the whole shoot — wondering if I was doing the right thing and if I was playing this character the right way because I wanted to give humanity. But I also didn't want to give him too much," the 29-year-old actor said. "I was having panic attacks on set — hands going numb just because of the level of, I guess, internal contention and struggle I was going through."

Fishback said she was "so nervous" about the responsibility of carrying on Hampton's legacy but found a new role model in Njeri. "I learned who I wanted to be the most," she said. "I feel like I was on the threshold of some kind of womanhood and I didn't know how to cross it."

Fishback leaned into journaling and writing poetry as hobbies during the project, and requested to write a poem her character reads to Hampton in a key scene. It begins: "Like the masses, I was in awe when I first laid eyes on all the things you are."

Seeking historical accuracy, King consulted with Hampton's son Fred Hampton Jr. and Njeri, portrayed by Fishback in the film.

"I can't imagine the errors and the pitfalls we would have made had they not been involved," the director said.

Stanfield said that despite his mixed emotions while playing the character, he's glad the film can spotlight Hampton's story.

"Being Black in America means that your history is, by and large, misrepresented or not represented at all," he said. "So the only way that we're able to pass down our stories oftentimes is through storytelling. I'm grateful for that."



Dominique Fishback, left, said she was "so nervous" about the responsibility of playing Fred Hampton's then-fiancee, Akua Njeri. The role of Hampton was the first time that Daniel Kaluuya, right, had portrayed a real person on screen.



Fred Hampton Jr., left, and producer Charles D. King consult on set. "I can't imagine the errors and the pitfalls we would have made had [he] not been involved," said director Shaka King of Hampton Jr., the son of the Black Panther leader the film is based on.



WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP photos

Kaluuya, left, and LaKeith Stanfield, right, said they were emotionally affected by playing the Black Panther leader and an FBI informant in "Judas and the Black Messiah."

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW



Warner Bros. Pictures photos

“Judas and the Black Messiah” stars Daniel Kaluuya, center, as Fred Hampton in the final hours of the charismatic Black Panther Party leader’s life.

A Black Panther’s powerful close-up

‘Judas and the Black Messiah’ an electrifying recitation of leader’s final hours

BY JUSTIN CHANG
Los Angeles Times

In the coolly electrifying “Judas and the Black Messiah,” you can’t take your eyes off Daniel Kaluuya as Fred Hampton, the Black Panther Party leader who would become a 21-year-old martyr and revolutionary icon. One of the achievements of this movie, an expansive yet intimate chronicle of the events leading up to Hampton’s 1969 killing during a police raid on his Chicago apartment, is that it restores the man, for two hours at least, to some dramatic semblance of his former glory. Memorialized for his tragic death, he is reclaimed here as a figure of boisterous, defiantly big-hearted life.

Kaluuya (Oscar nominated for “Get Out”), an actor of boundless charisma and versatility, reveals the same qualities in Hampton himself. As chairman of the Black Panthers’ Illinois chapter, he is the target of much hateful scrutiny from J. Edgar Hoover (a scowling Martin Sheen), who’s shown directing his FBI underlings to take action against this potential “Black Messiah” and the various subversives he is bound to inspire. You can see why Hoover’s so rattled: The Fred Hampton we meet is a born activist, a master orator and a ferocious critic of the white power structure. He urges his fellow Panthers to embrace socialism, practice militancy and reject any culture — even traditional African culture — that might tempt them from the path of revolution.

But Fred is many other things, too: an educator of young children, feeding their bellies and minds through local breakfast programs, and a builder of diverse coalitions, forging unlikely bonds with Black, Latino and white activists across one of America’s most segregated cities. He is a cynic and an idealist, a dreamer and a doer, and a hell of a stylist, rocking a corduroy blazer in a sea of berets and black leather jackets (the work of costume designer Charlese Antoinette Jones). He has a tactician’s understanding of war but proves touchingly shy in matters of love, as observed by his fellow Panther and girlfriend, Deborah Jones (Dominique Fishback), in a flirtation scene that begins with a dual Malcolm X recitation and ends with the sweetest of kisses.

Fred, in short, is almost too singular and overwhelming a presence to be contained by a movie, which has to thread a needle common to biographical dramas of its sort. Directed with bristling energy by Shaka King, who wrote the script with Will Berson (from a story by Keith and Kenny Lucas), it uses a focused time frame to illumi-

nate broader patterns of historical meaning. As reinforced by every widescreen frame of Sean Bobbitt’s cinematography, the movie is both a portrait and a panorama, a story about Black self-determination as an individual and collective enterprise.

It also occupies a unique place in the annals of cinema devoted to the history of the civil rights movement and its place within the larger counterculture of the 1960s. Given the American film industry’s long-standing preference for reassuring, white-centered narratives of racial justice, it’s no small thing to see a major studio release place the grassroots activism and political spectacle of the Black Panthers front and center.

“Judas and the Black Messiah” opens with mock footage of William O’Neal (LaKeith Stanfield), a petty crook turned paid FBI informant, being interviewed in 1989 for the film “Eyes on the Prize II.” Even for those unaware of the events he’s about to relate, something in Stanfield’s eyes, so good at projecting unease, immediately identifies William as the Judas of the title. Soon the story flashes back to a Chicago night in 1968, when he is arrested for car theft — a crime he notably commits not with a weapon but with a fake FBI badge. His skill at impersonation thus established, he is enlisted by a real federal agent, Roy Martin Mitchell (Jesse Plemons), to infiltrate the Panthers and help bring Hampton down.

William, whose mysterious back story and fierce reflexes earn him the nickname “Wild Bill,” plays a role familiar from many films about movements and organizations: the outsider who becomes the audience’s point of narrative entry. It’s through his conflicted vantage that we get to know Fred and other party comrades, some of them fictional or composite characters, and nearly all of them destined to make painful sacrifices for the cause.

One brutal but mercifully undepicted episode — the torture and murder of Alex Rackley, a New York Panther suspected of being a police informant — raises the stakes dramatically for Bill, who lives in fear of what his comrades might do if they discovered the mole in their midst. He is, by his own admission, a model spy: a man who thinks fast and acts faster, with no apparent political allegiances or personal investment in civil rights struggles, as he reassures Mitchell early on. But “Judas and the Black Messiah” knows how close the political and the personal can be, and it doesn’t take Bill long to suspect that Mitchell’s line about the Panthers — namely, that they are as violent, extremist and morally indefensible as



LaKeith Stanfield, foreground, and Kaluuya, background, give strong performances as the film’s central characters.

the Ku Klux Klan — might be a lie concocted to secure his loyalty.

Some of the movie’s most gripping moments arise when we see that loyalty begin to weaken, especially in the heat of an explosive Panthers-versus-police standoff. When Fred’s temporary absence forces Bill to take on a larger organizational role, his true allegiance becomes even harder to determine: As Mitchell notes wryly after seeing Bill pump his fist at a Panthers meeting, either he’s joined the other side or he deserves an Academy Award. Stanfield’s performance is indeed a thing of insidious beauty, as conscience and cowardice duke it out until the cruel, bloody end.

There is nothing defensible or morally ambiguous about the FBI’s campaign, which is steeped in levels of racism so virulent that even Mitchell at one point is shocked to the core. But the acts of violence we see the Panthers commit in retaliation and self-defense are presented with cold, matter-of-fact precision: None of it is rationalized, condemned or romanticized.

“Judas and the Black Messiah” is too honest to offer reassurances or solutions, but if nothing else, its tribute to Fred Hampton does warrant the final word: “America’s on fire right now, and until that fire is extinguished, don’t nothing else mean a damn thing.”

“Judas and the Black Messiah” is rated R for violence and pervasive language. Running time: 126 minutes. Available for streaming on HBO Max and playing in theater in limited release.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Bandai Namco photos

Little Nightmares 2 is a suspense-adventure game in which you play as Mono, a young boy trapped in a distorted world. Mono and his new friend, Six, set out to make things right.

Delicious dread in every moment

Horror fairy tale Little Nightmares 2 a beautiful puzzler that even scaredy-cats should enjoy

By ELISE FAVIS
The Washington Post

In the dining room, dolls sat around a table of rotting food, their stuffing pouring out of their eye sockets. Though the scene made me uneasy, a distant ripping noise, like a doll being ripped limb from limb, terrified me. Locating the source of the sound, I found something far worse: A hunter with a sack for a face skinning animals with his bare hands. I worried he'd do the same if he caught me.

The best horror games build a sense of dread and vulnerability, and this moment from Little Nightmares 2 captures those feelings perfectly, through unsettling sound design, Tim Burton-like art direction and a slow, gradual buildup to a scare. Even when you're safe, you don't feel safe. You fear not just what is in front of you, but what is yet to come, and that's what makes this harrowing experience so effective.

Little Nightmares 2 combines intuitive puzzle design, excellent platforming and environments ripe with scares that happen so often, you can barely catch your breath. While the previous game excelled at creepy atmosphere, Little Nightmares 2 is more consistently terrifying, so much so that it can be emotionally exhausting. That's not a knock against the experience, either — but this is a petrifying game through and through, with clever homages to horror movie classics like "Silent Hill," "The Exorcist" and "Slenderman."

You play as Mono, a young boy who inexplicably wears a bag over his head (which can be swapped for other unlockable hats the more you progress). Throughout the game, Mono navigates disturbing environments — like drab apartment complexes or a hospital overrun with sentient mannequins — each filled with furniture two sizes too large.

He befriends a young girl, Six, who served as the first game's protagonist. The two endure a terrifying adventure where survival is never guaranteed.

To progress, you solve puzzles and platform over obstacles. Sometimes, Six nudges you in the right direction or picks relevant items up, serving as a helpful minimalist hint system. With little to no user interface and few prompts, you're easily absorbed by the striking environments and ambiance. The onus is on the player to carefully examine surroundings to figure out where to go and what to do next.

Sometimes it's as simple as opening a drawer to climb up a desk. Other times, puzzles involve multiple steps, such as manipulating an elevator to reach an unseen floor, distracting enemies or luring foes into traps. At some points, you have to work with Six as she gives you a boost to a higher platform or helps you across a large gap. Because puzzles rely on either a keen eye or intuition, they're incredibly satisfying to solve even if you get stumped occasionally.

By far the most arresting qualities about Little Nightmares 2 are its art and sound design. Every environment is unsettling, even in the smallest of ways. On a rainy street I found a suit, hat and tie, all perfectly placed and slumped on a bench, as if their wearer disappeared into thin air. Other moments are more explicit in their terrors, like a fumbling, massive creature chasing you, crushing every bed you crawl out from underneath. Every chase feels like a close call.

I was constantly awed by the attention to detail. For example, walking across an oversized piano, suspended in the air by two cords, would activate individual keys. When cords snapped and the piano fell, those same keys could still be played, but they were now out of tune. That transition from functional to distorted and broken



As players continue through the monstrous world, they will experience unsettling environments and discover surprising connections between the world and its characters.

reflects the game's world: One with a demented sort of beauty.

A clever addition to Little Nightmares 2 is how you hear strange, vague sounds in the distance — like a rope tightening — but you're not sure what it means, or exactly what it is. You have no choice but to follow the sound and confront it, yet you still feel helpless: the most terrifying of monsters can't be defeated directly. You find them, run and hide. Hiding doesn't always save you, however. I once hid behind a fallen bookshelf in a school, thinking I'd be safe. Yet a horrifying, puppet-like schoolteacher found me by extending her neck to unnatural proportions to see behind the bookshelf, eating me alive. I still shudder at the thought.

In a hospital level, for example, your flashlight wards off living mannequins, who freeze in their tracks if you shine a light on them. Once they freeze, you carefully navigate around them, guide them toward traps or bait them toward a certain area to solve a puzzle. But not all of the mannequins creak and squeak to life. Unpredictability only adds to the terror.

Some smaller monsters can be defeated by wielding a hammer, including disembodied hands or strange children wearing

porcelain masks. The hammer, however, is large and tough to control; it scrapes across the ground. Every swing is slow, and it isn't easy to land hits accurately. Though it can be frustrating to die frequently in these scenarios, with each death you hone your strategy to get the timing right, making it satisfying in the long run. Thankfully, checkpoints are generous, never respawning you too far from where you left off.

Although the focus in Little Nightmares 2 is excellent gameplay, there is a surprisingly engaging story that ramps up in the latter half of the game. With no dialogue, the narrative is minimalist and focused on survival, though there are fascinating connections between the monstrous world and the characters within it.

Little Nightmares 2 shattered my expectations. I expected something scary, but the impeccable sound design, terrifying enemy encounters and clever puzzles make it worth revisiting. This nightmarish experience has a lot to offer. Just don't expect to get much sleep after playing.

Platforms: PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch

Online: bandainamcoent.com/games/little-nightmares-2

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

A bleak outlook

Around the globe, virus cancels spring travel plans for millions

BY DAVID MCHUGH, CASEY SMITH
AND JOE McDONALD
Associated Press

They are the annual journeys of late winter and early spring: Factory workers in China heading home for the Lunar New Year; American college students going on road trips and hitting the beach over spring break; Germans and Britons fleeing drab skies for some Mediterranean sun over Easter.

All of it canceled, in doubt or under pressure because of the coronavirus.

Amid fears of new variants of the virus, new restrictions on movement have hit just as people start to look ahead to what is usually a busy time of year for travel.

It means more pain for airlines, hotels, restaurants and tourist destinations that were already struggling more than a year into the pandemic, and a slower recovery for countries where tourism is a big chunk of the economy.

Colleges around the U.S. have been canceling spring break to discourage students from traveling. After Indiana University in Bloomington replaced its usual break with three “wellness days,” student Jacki Sylvester abandoned plans to celebrate her 21st birthday in Las Vegas.

Instead she will mark the milestone closer to home, with a day at the casino in French Lick, Ind., just 50 miles away.

“I was really looking forward to getting out of here for a whole week. I wanted to be able to get some drinks and have fun — see the casinos and everything — and honestly see another city and just travel a little,” she said.

“At least it’s letting us have a little fun for a day in a condensed version of our original Vegas plans. Like, I’m still going to be able to celebrate. ... I’m just forced to do it closer to home.”

Flight cancellations will keep Anthony Hoarty, a teacher from Cranfield in England, from spending Easter with his family at their bungalow on the Greek island of Crete, a trip already postponed from last October. A trip to Mauritius last Easter also fell victim to COVID-19. “It’s the uncertainty,” he said. “You can’t plan things. It’s not knowing if the government is going to change its mind, if the other countries in Europe are changing their mind about travel.”

“I love going to our house — I’d walk if I could,” he said.

They could holiday in Britain, but with most people grounded, places may be booked up or expensive: “The chances of us doing anything are pretty remote, actually.”

At bus and train stations in China, there is no sign of the annual Lunar New Year rush. The government has called on the public to avoid travel following new coronavirus outbreaks. Only five of 15 security gates at Beijing’s cavernous central railway station were open this week; the crowds of travelers who usually camp on the sprawling plaza outside were absent.

The holiday, which starts Feb. 12, is usually the world’s single biggest movement of humanity as hundreds of millions of Chinese leave cities to visit their hometowns or tourist spots or travel abroad. For millions of migrant workers, it usually is the only chance to visit their hometowns during the year. This year, authorities are promising extra pay if they stay put.

The government says people will make 1.7 billion trips during the holiday, but that is down 40% from 2019.

Each news cycle seems to bring new restrictions. U.S. President Joe Biden reinstated restrictions on travelers



ANDY WONG/AP

Passengers wearing face masks walk by a Lunar New Year decoration Feb. 3 on display at the departure hall of China’s Beijing Capital International Airport. Amid fears of new variants of the virus, new restrictions on movement have hit just as people start to look ahead to what is usually a busy time of year for travel.



FIRDIA LISNAWATI/AP

A man stands next to his surfboard stall Feb. 3 as he waits for customers at a beach in Bali, Indonesia.

from more than two dozen European countries, South Africa and Brazil, while people leaving the U.S. are now required to show a negative test before returning.

Canada barred flights to the Caribbean. Israel closed its main international airport. Travel into the European Union is severely restricted, with entry bans and quarantine requirements for returning citizens.

For air travel, “the short-term outlook has definitely darkened,” said Brian Pearce, chief economist for the International Air Transport Association. Governments have poured \$200 billion into propping up the industry.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization says international arrivals fell 74% last year, wiping out \$1.3 trillion in revenue and putting up to 120 million jobs at risk. A UNWTO expert panel had a mixed outlook for 2021, with 45% expecting a better year, 25% no change and 30% a worse one.

In Europe, the outlook is clouded by lagging vaccine rollouts and the spread of the new variants.

That means “there is a growing risk of another summer tourist season being lost,” said Jack Allen-Reynolds at Capital Economics. “That would put a huge dent in the Greek economy and substantially delay the recoveries in Spain and Portugal.”

Travel company TUI is offering package vacations in the sun in Greece and Spain, but with broad cancellation provisions to attract cautious customers. Places that can be reached by car, such as Germany’s North Sea islands



GEMUNU AMARASINGHE/AP

A lone street vender cooks a meal for a customer Jan. 4 at Khao San road, a popular hangout with bars and entertainment for Thais and tourists in Bangkok.

and the Alps, are benefiting to some extent because they offer a chance to isolate. The German Vacation Home Association says the popular locations are 60% booked for July and August already.

Thailand, where about a tenth of the population depends on tourism for its livelihood, requires a two-week quarantine for foreigners at designated hotels costing about \$1,000 and up. So far, only a few dozen people a day are opting to visit. Tourist arrivals are forecast to reach only 10 million this year from 40 million in 2019.

Gerasimos Bakogiannis, owner of the Portes Palace hotel in Potidaia in Greece’s northern Halkidiki region, said he is not even opening for Western Easter on April 4 but will wait a month for Greek Orthodox Easter on May 2 — and, he hopes, the start of a better summer.

“If this year is like last year, tourism will be destroyed,” he said.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Island life slips along on lovely, sleepy Hydra

As we've had to postpone our travels because of the pandemic, I believe a weekly dose of travel dreaming can be good medicine. Here's a reminder of the fun that awaits us in Europe at the other end of this crisis.

The isle of Hydra — just an hour by fast ferry from Athens — has one town, a quaint little harbor, isolated beaches, and some tavernas. There are no real roads, no cars, and not even any bikes. Other than zippy water taxis, donkeys are the only form of transportation. Slow and steady, these surefooted beasts of burden — laden with everything from sandbags and bathtubs to bottled water — climb the island's stepped lanes. On Hydra, a traffic jam is three donkeys and a fisherman.

In addition to the tired burros, this is a land of tiny cats and roosters with big egos. While it's generally quiet, dawn has taught me the exact meaning of "cock-crow." The end of night is marked by much more than a distant cock-a-doodle-doo: It's a dissonant chorus of cat fights, burro honks, and what sounds like roll call at an asylum for crazed roosters. After the animal population gets that out of its system, the island slumbers a little longer, as if hitting "snooze."

This afternoon, I've decided to head uphill for a lazy stroll. One inviting lane after another draws me up, up, up ... At the top of the town, shabby homes enjoy grand views, burros amble along untethered, and island life trudges on, oblivious to tourism.

Over the crest, I follow a paved riverbed

down to the remote harbor hamlet of Kaminia — where 20 tough little fishing boats jostle, corralled within a breakwater. Children jump fearlessly from rock to rock to the end of the jetty, ignoring an old man rhythmically casting his line.

A rickety woven-straw chair and a tipsy little table at Kodylenia's Taverna are positioned just right, overlooking the harbor. The sun, as if promising a worthwhile finale to another fine day, commands, "Sit." I do, sipping ouzo and observing a sea busy with taxi boats, the "flying dolphin" hydrofoils that connect people here with Athens, freighters — like castles of rust — lumbering slowly along the horizon, and a cruise ship anchored as if threatening to attack.



Rick Steves

This cloudy glass of ouzo, my anise-flavored drink of choice, and the plastic baggie of pistachios I purchased back in town are a perfect complement to the setting sun. Blue and white fishing boats jive with the chop. I swear the cats — small, numerous and slinky — are watching the setting sun with me. My second glass of ouzo comes with a smudge of someone's big fat Greek lipstick. I decide not to worry about it before taking a sip that seems to connect me with the scene even more.

As twilight falls, my waiter brings a candle for my table. He tells me he returned here to his family's homeland after spending 20 years in New Jersey, where



iStock

The tiny, beautiful Greek port town of Hydra has no real roads, just lanes along which donkeys are the only form of transportation.

he "never took a nap." The soft Greek lounge music tumbling out of the kitchen mixes everything like an audio swizzle stick.

Walking back to my hotel under a ridge lined with derelict windmills, I try to envision Hydra before electricity, when it was powered only by wind and burros. At the edge of town, I pass the Sunset Bar, filled with noisy cruise ship tourists, which makes me thankful I took the uphill lane when I left my hotel.

Back in Hydra town, I observe the pleasant evening routine of strolling and socializing. Dice clatter on dozens of backgammon boards at tavernas, ball-kicking

children make a playground out of a back lane, and a tethered goat chews on something inedible. From the other end of town comes the happy music of a christening party.

Succumbing to the lure of a pastry shop, I sit down for what has become my day-ending ritual: honey-soaked baklava. I tell the cook I'm American.

"Oh," he says, shaking his head with sadness and pity. "You work too hard."

I answer, "Right. But not today."

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.

Spirit of carnival lives on in these museums, monuments

To the surprise of no one, the carnival festivities that would normally make this coming week one of the liveliest of the winter season have been canceled in 2021. Despite the lack of parades and street parties, the spirit of carnival is so intertwined with local cultures that a number of museums and monuments honor this singular, silly season and all the rites associated with it year round.

Here are a few places to feel that carnival vibe no matter the season. (The museums mentioned remain closed for now.)



Karen Bradbury

Germany

Gengenbach: This picturesque town on the western edge of the Black Forest follows Alemannic carnival traditions, known for its characters wearing hand-carved wooden masks and street celebrations with a folkloric flair. The Gengenbach

Fools Museum makes its home in the Niggel Tower, the traditional home of the Hemdeglunker, the roguish main character of Fasend traditions. As one ascends the 118-foot-high, 14th century watchtower, the masks and costumes of warty-nosed carnival witches, old women and farmers peer out from stony nooks and perches high among the rafters. Explorations continue to the viewing platform atop the tower. The museum is open 2 p.m.-5 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays from April until October, and admission costs 3 euros for adults and 1 euro for children. Online: tinyurl.com/iiflwr

Kitzingen: This small city just east of Wuerzburg in Bavaria's Franconia region makes an unexpected location for a museum covering the diverse carnival customs practiced throughout German-speaking lands. The Deutsches Fastnachtsmuseum, or German Carnival Museum, contains several thousand objects relating to carnival rites from the Middle Ages through the 19th century.



iStock

The Fastnachtsbrunnen fountain on Schillerplatz square in Mainz, Germany, has many historic, fantastical touches.

Early masks, costumed mannequins, photos and more are complemented by multimedia presentations. A highlight of a visit is the virtual "fools theater" in which 12 costumed figures representing carnival stronghold communities speak about their customs. The sound of the traditional carnival cries of "Helau" and "Alaaf" coupled with the sight of the dazzling costumes bring the carnival experience to life. The museum located at Luitpoldstrasse 4 is open 1 p.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays; entry costs 5.55 euros adults; children ages 6 and under enter free. Online: tinyurl.com/28nsyyel

Mainz: Fastnacht is never far from the minds of the residents of this relaxed city by the Rhine, and a constant reminder of the townspeople's favorite celebration dominates the Schillerplatz in the form of a 28-foot-high fountain. The Fastnachtsbrunnen, completed in 1967, features more than 200 diminutive bronze figures evoking the spirit of Mainz's carnival. Try to pick out the representations of Till Eulenspiegel holding his owl and mirror, or the Geldbeutelwascher wetting his purse to ensure his good fortune. Mainz is also home to an excellent carnival museum. A highlight of its collection is the "Schwellköpp," the huge papier-mâché heads worn by characters who entertain between the floats of the Rose Monday parade. The museum is found at Neue Universitätsstr. 2 and is open 11 a.m.-5 p.m. daily; entry costs 1.50 euros adults and 1.50 euros for children up to the age of 14. Online: mainzer-fastnachtsmuseum.de

Italy

Viareggio: This Tuscan coastal city just north of Pisa is home to one of Italy's most vibrant carnevale parades, staged several times over a single season. Huge floats populated by larger-than-life papier-mâché caricatures of politicians, entertainers and athletes reference the scandals of the past year. The Cittadella del Carnevale, a complex of 16 warehouses and the staging place for the floats on parade days, is home to a museum serving as a vast repository of all things carnival, including floats, photos and other paraphernalia from as far back as the 1920s. The adjacent Carnevalotto Museum of Contemporary Art contains objects symbolizing each edition of the carnival and a tribute to the float voted best of its year. The museum is open 3 p.m.-7 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, with additional opening hours from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on Saturdays. Adult entry costs 3 euros, students pay 2 euros, and ages 11 and under enter free.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Food that moves you

Taverne Kostas in Weiden is a warm culinary escape from the German winter

BY IMMANUEL JOHNSON
Stars and Stripes

Mediterranean cuisine has a special place in my heart, and there happens to be a great spot for it in the heart of Bavaria.

The restaurant is called Taverne Kostas — a common Greek name for a man — and it's in Weiden, a town of around 43,000 that's around 15 miles east of Grafenwoehr, or 25 miles east of Vilseck.

The food from Kostas will transport you to warmer climes than the typical German winter, and remind you of better times, when there were no restrictions on dining out or travel.

Because restaurants around Germany were only open for takeout when I went to Kostas, I got my meal to go. It consisted of warm feta cheese with chilis, garlic and herbs, a mixed salad and goulash soup — I know, not very Greek — to start; pork gyros, which is the Greek version of doner kebab, with pita, rice and tzatziki for the main course; and galaktoburiko, which is puff pastry filled with custard, topped with vanilla ice cream, for dessert.

The man who took my order



Taverne Kostas

Address: Pfarrplatz 2, 92637 Weiden in der Oberpfalz

Hours: Open daily from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. and 5 p.m.-10 p.m.

Prices: Between 6 and 15 euros. Most credit cards accepted.

Menu: Available in German on their Facebook page: facebook.com/TaverneKostas. English menus are available in the restaurant.

Phone: +49 17657677650

Immanuel Johnson

over the phone was friendly, spoke good English, and told me I could come pick up my dinner in 20 minutes.

When I got to the restaurant, the staff were helpful and friendly. And when I got back home, my main course was still warm and very tasty.

There are many other options on the menu if you don't want gyros, including seafood, souvlaki — small pieces of skewered, grilled meat and vegetables — and suzuki, which is the Greek version of the hamburger.



PHOTOS BY IMMANUEL JOHNSON/Stars and Stripes

A takeout meal from Taverne Kostas in Weiden, Germany, included, from top left, clockwise: warm feta cheese with chilis, garlic and herbs; galaktoburiko with a scoop of melting vanilla ice cream; pork gyros with pita bread, rice and tzatziki; a mixed salad; and goulash soup.

There's even something called the "Tom and Jerry" for kids — two suzukis served with rice and a mixed salad — or the "Mickey Mouse," which was basically the same gyros offering as I had for my main course, but in a child-friendly size.

Getting ice cream on my dessert was not a great idea, given that I was taking my meal home and would only get to the galaktoburiko after eating two other courses. The scoop was a puddle of slush when I got around to eating dessert. It still tasted good, though.

For drinks, Kostas offers the usual Greek fare, including anise-flavored ouzo and retsina white wine. They also do Greek coffee to go.

Johnson.Immanuel@stripes.com
Twitter: @Manny_Stripes



Pork gyros from Taverne Kostas come garnished with onions and are the Greek equivalent of the doner kebab.

Speak the language of love on Valentine's Day with 2-bite truffles

BY ELLIE KRIEGER
The Washington Post

I'll be whipping up a batch of these swoon-worthy treats this Valentine's Day as an act of self-love. Sure, I'll share with my husband, but since he doesn't buy into the holiday and I am a firm believer in the BYOV (Be Your Own Valentine) approach to life, they will really be a gift to myself.

They are two-bite chocolate-covered confections, which not only offer pure, sensual pleasure, they do so in a better-for-you way, without much added sugar, making them all the more lovable. At their center is a finely ground blend of buttery, toasted pecans, dried dates and graham crackers spiked with a bold, warmly fragrant combination of maple syrup, cocoa powder, strong brewed coffee and vanilla extract.

That heady mix is rolled into balls and then coated in melted dark chocolate for a truffle-like presentation. Since each ingredient is so familiar, you might think you could easily imagine how a combination of them would taste together. But when I first bit into one, my eyes widened with surprised delight.

Exponentially more than the sum of their parts, the truffle ingredients enhance one another in the most magical, mouthwatering way — just the kind of thing that speaks my love language.



LAURA CHASE DE FORMIGNY/The Washington Post

Pecan Mocha Truffles are perfect for Valentine's Day.

Pecan Mocha Truffles

Ingredients

1 cup pecan pieces
3 full sheets graham crackers
¼ cup coarsely chopped pitted dates
2 tablespoons maple syrup
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tablespoon strong brewed coffee or espresso
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
⅔ cup chopped dark chocolate

Directions

In a dry medium skillet over medium-high heat, toast the pecans, stirring frequently, until fragrant and darker, about 3 minutes. Transfer the nuts to a plate and let cool completely.

In the bowl of a food processor, combine the cooled pecans, graham crackers and dates and process until finely ground. Add the maple syrup, cocoa powder, coffee, vanilla and salt and process until combined.

Line a large rimmed baking sheet or large plate with wax paper. Using your hands, roll the pecan mixture into 12 balls, each about 1 inch in diameter, placing them on the wax paper as they are formed.

Place a large bowl over a pot with an inch or so of barely simmering water (make sure the bottom of the bowl doesn't touch the water). Add the chocolate to the bowl and let it melt, stirring occasionally. (Alternatively, you can melt the chocolate in the microwave by warming it in 20-second intervals, stirring well between each.)

Using two forks, roll each ball into the chocolate, letting any excess chocolate drip off before returning the truffles to the wax paper. Refrigerate, uncovered, until set, about 20 minutes, before eating or storing.

Serves 6 (makes 12 truffles.)

From cookbook author and licensed dietitian Ellie Krieger

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY SLOBODAN LEKIC/Stars and Stripes

The bend of the Saar River near the town of Mettlach in Saarland is normally a huge tourist draw, but with winter and coronavirus restrictions keeping crowds to a minimum, now may be the best time to visit.

Going round the bend

When coronavirus restrictions have you feeling loopy, a trip to the Saar River bend will straighten you out

BY SLOBODAN LEKIC
Stars and Stripes

The middle of this year's German winter may be a good time to visit the horseshoe-shaped meander on the Saar River called the Saarschleife.

Normally, the area in Saarland near the bend in the river draws throngs of visitors. But until coronavirus restrictions are lifted, they're staying home, so there's no battling through crowds to take in the stunning vistas of the Saar, neighboring France and, on a clear day, Luxembourg.

German winter weather might also be a factor in keeping the hordes away. When I visited on a rainy day in February, my car was the only one in the large parking lot next to the tourist office in the village of Orscholz.

Undeterred, I headed out anyway, taking a trail through the woods that leads to a scenic overlook, because the popular tree-top walkway was closed.

The walkway is about 50 feet above the ground and is the only way to get to a tower that offers commanding views of the surrounding area. The path through the forest leads to an overlook that offers equally stunning views of the surrounding area.

An easy walk from the overlook, there is the small town of Mettlach. Its claim to fame is that it is home to the head office of the Germany's famous ceramics maker, Villeroy & Boch.

The headquarters of the 250-year-old company are in an old abbey. Nearby, there's a museum, which has in its collection some of the earliest Villeroy & Boch pieces, including originals by Pierre Joseph Boch that date from the 18th century.

Replicas of the flooring tiles for the Titanic, which were made by Villeroy & Boch, are also on display in the museum. (The originals went down with the ship.)

Bathroom fixtures, such as urinals, bidets, tubs and tiles also feature in the museum. Villeroy & Boch makes those, too.

But like the nearby outlet store, the museum was closed to visitors in early February because of the coronavirus.

One thing that was open was the 1,000-year-old burial chapel that was built to house the remains of St. Luitwinus, the patron saint of Mettlach. The surrounding park is a good place for a picnic, particularly if nearby restaurants have to remain closed because of virus restrictions.

lekic.slobodan@stripes.com

On the QT

Directions: From Kaiserslautern/Ramstein, follow the A6 to the A8 toward Luxembourg, then the B21 to Mettlach, and then signs to Saarschleife. From Baumholder, take the A62 to the A1 in the direction of Trier, then the B51 to Mettlach and follow signs to Saarschleife.

Times: When they're not closed because of coronavirus restrictions, the treetop walkway is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and the Villeroy & Boch museum is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m.-6 p.m., and weekends from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Prices: When open, the treetop route costs 10 euros per adult or 21.50 euros for a family ticket, and the Villeroy & Boch museum costs 3.50 euros per person. Entrance for children up to 6 years of age is free. The trails through the woods are free.

Information: The Mettlach tourist office website is tourist-info.mettlach.de

Slobodan Lekic



A walkway through the forest canopy and a viewing tower overlooking the bend in the Saar River offers views of neighboring France and as far as Luxembourg.



The 1,000-year-old burial chapel on the grounds of the Villeroy & Boch headquarters was built to house the remains of St. Luitwinus, the town's protector saint.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



Chilly, crowd-free beach escape

GRAHAM CORNWELL/The Washington Post

Although the beaches of North Carolina's Outer Banks are mostly empty in wintertime, they are still full of entertainment for children, including the author's 5-year-old son, Gibson.

A winter trip to the Outer Banks swims against the tide, but is worth it

By GRAHAM CORNWELL
The Washington Post

I recently returned from the ultimate getaway: A trip to a cold, rainy beach in the middle of the winter.

Hear me out. A trip to the beach in winter is the purest form of escape. There is no worry about the weather. A summer beach vacation can be knocked off course by a few days of rain, but not a winter trip. There are no activities on the daily calendar, because not much is open and there is no hurry to grab a good spot on the beach. There is no packing, carrying, unpacking and repacking beach chairs, coolers and sand toys several times a day, because I do not want to sit for a very long time on a frigid and windy beach.

Plenty of people surf and fish in winter. I admire them for that, but I prefer to go to the beach with no expectations or agenda beyond watching the changes in ocean and clouds.

By winter beach, I do not mean Aruba or Key West during resortwear season. That's too easy. I mean chilly, probably wet, mostly gray mid-Atlantic beaches, like those along North Carolina's Outer Banks, a thin, 189-mile strip of barrier islands where my family spent two socially distanced weeks in December and January.

A winter beach around these parts is quiet. The rain and cold pretty much guarantee that you'll have the place to yourself. The waves sound louder and more constant. The heavier winds intensify the smell of salt and sea grasses and blow a salty mist into your face as you near the surf. In weather that might otherwise keep me locked inside, the draw of the ocean lures me outdoors.

I have been a beach person all my life. While I'm happy to spend time at lakes or in the mountains, salt and sand seem to trigger a different humor in my body. I breathe more deeply, I sleep better, I am more active and I probably even eat better.

Over the years, I've learned to be a beach person in all seasons. There is still nothing that beats cool saltwater lapping over you on a hot summer day, sand clinging to the bottom of a cold beer can, or the smell of bluefish hitting the charcoal grill as that day stretches out into a golden, breezy evening. I miss those days when they are gone, but I've

come to appreciate a whole different set of joys that winter brings to the beach and the areas around it.

During summer, for example, I have a tough time committing to any activity that doesn't offer the promise of a swim. But I love historical sites, scenic drives and nature walks, too, and winter is the best time to do these things. There are no crowds or traffic. On our recent trip to the Outer Banks, we had Jockey's Ridge State Park nearly to ourselves. Here, the tallest active sand dunes on the East Coast offer perfect views of the ocean, sound and Roanoke Island to the west. The driving winds made patterns across the sand and drove off the other visitors.

I worried about entertaining my 5-year-old son at the beach in the winter. But in his eyes, the short days and early sunsets were just more opportunity for headlamp beach walks and seeing the stars before dinnertime. I would carry our newborn strapped into her carrier on my chest, and my wife would lead our son on epic, but frosty, beachcombing expeditions. With no competition to speak of, they filled bucket after bucket.

Best of all, he paid little attention to any bad weather. Instead, he sprinted through wide-open spaces, swung a furred umbrella around like a lightsaber and embraced the thrill of evading the icy waves as they rolled on shore. On our last nighttime walk, he got a little too close and soaked his shoes and pants. But as we turned back home, he asked if he could splash through one more time. It was no more than 35 degrees outside, and yet it was impossible to deny him that simple, silly delight.

How many times during the pandemic have you sought to take a quiet walk in the woods only to spend most of your time stepping off the path so others can pass in socially distant safety? Go near a beach in winter, and the trails and boardwalks along the sound and marsh are all yours. In our region, it is the best time to see birds and waterfowl.

I have been to the Outer Banks several times a year for most of my life, but I had never spied tundra swans there until my trip in January, even though North Carolina sees more wintering swans than any other state on the East Coast. My son and I spent a morning watching pied-billed grebes dive deep for food, trying to guess when and where

they would finally emerge. I had to look them up because this was the first time I'd seen, or at least noticed, them. The fuzzy, short-nosed birds are common to coastal North Carolina, but in winter they come out on the sounds and bays in big groups.

In peak summer, traffic is terrible and deters us from driving anywhere, while the heat keeps us near water and shade and air-conditioning. None of these things are much of a concern in winter. I ventured into the little town of Duck and, even though it was during the pandemic, started to feel a true sense of place. Locals hit the coffee shops and bakeries on their way to work — just as they would in summer — but now I had the time to notice, to ask questions and to listen in. The fishmonger had a few more minutes to tell me how to cook the locally caught sea mullet and speckled trout, and to explain that the shrimp boats I see every evening just offshore come down from New England and never sell their catch locally.

On those somewhat rare days when the sun shines and the temperatures creep into the 50s or beyond, the deep blue of the sky and the reflections off the water are more brilliant than any other time.

I tried not to miss a sunset, whether over the bay or by the ocean, where the glow behind us from the west turned the horizon a rainbow of pastel pinks and purples.

The winter sky at night, minus much of the light pollution from high summer occupancies, explodes with constellations. We spotted Mars first, then Uranus, and then Orion's belt as we scrambled to find answers for our son's questions about every single cluster or pattern of stars that came into view.

Joan Didion said that the appeal of the ocean for her was the constancy of the horizon, "always there, flat." That perfect parallel line complements both the tumult of rough waves and the gentle swells of calm seas. One day, after hours of downpour finally let up, we took one of our regular evening walks down to the beach and peered out over the water. I thought about how often I look at the sky but how infrequently I actually see the horizon. Everything was gray, sea and sky, but in between I could just make out that thin band separating the two.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY AYA ICHIHASHI/Stars and Stripes

The pristine white sands and clear brilliant blue-green waters of Akajima's Nishihama Beach are breathtakingly beautiful.

On the QT

Directions: Aka Island is 60 minutes by express ferry from Tomari Port in Naha. The round-trip fare for Queen Zamami is 6,080 yen for adults and 3,040 yen for children.

Costs: Credit cards can be used at the ferry ticketing office; however, you'll need cash for renting a bicycle.

Food: Dining options are very limited at Aka, so it's a good idea to pack a lunch or buy something at a convenience store in Tomari Port. Be mindful to bring back all the trash with you as trash disposal is very limited in Aka.

Ferry information: Phone: 098-868-4567; Online: yoyaku.vill.zamami.okinawa.jp/zamami_web/enlog0101!doFormOpenLogin.action

Aya Ichihashi



Kerama deer are indigenous to Okinawa's Aka and Geruma islands.

One of Okinawa's hidden gems

Visitors to Akajima are treated to beautiful uncrowded beaches, array of local wildlife

BY AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

Akajima is one island of Okinawa's Kerama archipelago and only 25 miles from the Tomari Port of Naha.

Zamami, its sister island, is a more popular destination, and nine of out 10 ferry passengers disembark there before reaching Aka.

I'm secretly happy with that, and happy, too, with Aka remaining under the social media radar and never becoming as crowded and popular as its sister island.

One of the reasons I favor Aka is that it's much less touristy than Zamami. Its population is just 260 and it is connected by bridge to Geruma and Fukaji islands.

As soon as I step off the ferry, I go straight to rent a bicycle from Tatsunojo Mart, a five-minute walk from the port. Aka has no public transportation, and biking around the island is better than walking. Rental fee is 1,000 yen, or about \$9.50, for a day. The bike is usually rusty and squeaky, so make sure to check the brakes and tires before taking off.

Aka Beach is right next to the port and is a great spot for snorkeling. There are no lifeguards in the area, so make sure to swim with a flotation device for your safety.

The water gets very shallow during the low tide, and the sea turtles swim out to the deeper waters, so hit the beach during the high tide to protect the corals and yourself. The sea turtles are super friendly and keep snacking on the seaweed no matter how close you get. But be mindful not to touch any marine animals.

Nishibama Beach is the most popular beach in Aka, and it's incredibly beautiful. The sand is so fine and as white as snow;

the water is many shades of blue and green. I have visited more than a dozen times, but it always takes my breath away.

There is a newly built oceanfront seating area, a cozy, shaded terrace where visitors can eat their packed lunches or snacks. Lifeguards will be on duty from mid-April to late November. The current can be a little tricky there, so stay within the swimming area.

Aka Bridge connects Geruma and Aka islands, and the view from the bridge is astonishing. There are many beautiful sites on Okinawa, but I consider this view to be in the top three. This amazing view is the reason I'll keep coming back. You can also cross the bridge to bike around Geruma and Fukaji islands.

Maehama Beach is right next to the port and bridge, and it's a family-friendly beach with fine white sand. Parents with small children can easily walk to this beach from the port. Since there are no shaded areas there, it's better to bring a small pop-up tent to keep little ones out of the direct sun.

Wild Kerama deer can be seen on the beach or road at Aka. Kerama deer are indigenous to Aka and Geruma and are very timid. So please be mindful when you see them as they are federally protected.

Under current coronavirus restrictions, visiting Aka Island is a treat for me. There are fewer tourists on the ferry, and I can stay on the deck while spotting humpback whales on the way.

I could not ask for a better way to spend a weekend than snorkeling around Aka, watching its beautiful underwater world and listening to whales from afar.

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Snorkeling off Aka Beach offers your best chance to spot a hawksbill sea turtle.



You can sometimes spot swimming sea turtles from Aka Bridge, which connects Aka and Geruma islands in Okinawa's Kerama Archipelago.

WEEKEND: FOOD



No spoon required

‘Cereal snacks’ go super-sized to extend their reach beyond the bowl

By **EMILY HEIL**
The Washington Post

Big Cereal has big ambitions. The makers of the sugary stuff that traditionally has fueled American breakfasts are setting their sights far beyond the bowl. You can buy coffee creamer flavored like Fruity Pebbles, ice cream (er, “dairy dessert”) that tastes like Lucky Charms and even a Frosted Flakes beverage.

Now, you can also buy cereal formatted and packaged specifically for snacking. Akin to potato chips or pretzels, many of the new versions are essentially cereal, sized up or made into wafers, in bags that bring to mind their more familiar, salty counterparts.

You can hardly blame the cereal wizards for busting their way past the cereal aisle like so many sugar-dusted conquistadors. People are eating cereal, lots of it, at all times of the day — that’s according to research by Post Consumer Brands, says Tom “TD” Dixon, the company’s chief growth officer.

“The underlying theme is the fact that people are falling in love with cereal,” he says. “It brings people together and gives a level of comfort.”

He says people are eating cereal at lunch and dinner-time, which suggests that future products could even be aimed at replacing sandwiches or other entrees.

And if cereal is everything, it seems everything is cereal: You can eat Twinkies in cereal form thanks to an alliance between Post and the company that makes Hostess snacks. Little Debbie paired up with Kellogg’s to cereal-ify its brownies and Oatmeal Creme Pies. One of the biggest food trends on TikTok last year was cereal made up of tiny pancakes (it’s a meta concept, in miniature!).

So how do these cereal snacks taste? Well, if you’ve ever stuck your hand into a box of cereal and shoveled a handful into your mouth, you’ve got the basic idea.

I started with the Honeycomb Big Bites, which are basically a pumped-up facsimile of the traditional cereal bits, as if someone at the factory just turned up a dial by 30% or so. (Yes, I realize my idea of commercial food production is ridiculously unrealistic and based more on Willy Wonka movies than the real thing.) They tasted exactly, and unsurprisingly, like ... Honeycomb cereal. The regular version had that graham cracker-y note, and the cocoa one announced its chocolate-y flavor from the moment I opened the pouch.

“The underlying theme is the fact that people are falling in love with cereal. It brings people together and gives a level of comfort.”

Tom “TD” Dixon

Post Consumer Brands chief growth officer

The Froot Loops snack version was the same, giving me a sort of “Alice In Wonderland” feeling. Had I shrunk, and the pastel-toned loops were regular size? Whatever rabbit hole I had fallen down, the flavor was familiar enough to be grounding.

One of the odder sensations came from the Fruity Pebbles version. Rather than those little multihued flakes, the snack version is formed into a wafer that looks like a colorful patchwork quilt. It crunches like a thin rice cake and has a slight savory quality to it. It’s the most unlike its original form of the bunch.



PHOTOS BY LAURA CHASE DE FORMIGNY/The Washington Post

Forget the spoon and the bowl. Cereal companies have invaded the snack aisle with super-sized snackable versions of your childhood favorites.

And General Mills’ offerings in this category, dubbed “Remix Snacking Mixes,” take a slightly different approach. They’re regularly sized cereals, blended with other regularly sized cereals, into combinations such as a s’mores-inspired mélange of Cocoa Puffs and Golden Grahams with mini marshmallows.

I’m ambivalent about these, but that’s because I generally dislike the concept of snack mixes and mixed-nut blends. My issue is that I always have my favorites among the components, and wind up rooting around for the best bits (in this case, I bypass the dry marshmallows for the Golden Grahams), which makes me a bad citizen of Snack Nation. But perhaps if you’re a serial cereal blender, it might save you the hassle of having to pour from different boxes?

And ease does seem to be the idea behind this new category. In other words, we’re just really, really lazy. Making cereal 30% bigger means saving a few bag-to-mouth curls per snacking session. Which means we have more energy for our other pandemic pursuits, such as lifting the remote control and doom-scrolling.

Or, perhaps, for philosophical pondering. The morning after my tasting, the weird cereal-snack transmogrification I had been thinking about came to a full circle (or was it a loop?). I spotted my husband standing in the kitchen, eating a bowlful of the leftover snacks shaped like Froot Loops — a cereal he loved as a kid — doused with milk.

He shrugged as he lifted his spoon. “It’s like big cereal,” he said.



Memories with STARS AND STRIPES Pacific

Share your Memories with Stars and Stripes Pacific!

Your photos/stories will appear on the Stars and Stripes Pacific 75th Anniversary Website, 75.stripes.com.



WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Unleashing jitters

With a few tips and some tasty treats, owners don't have to fear taking their pandemic puppies to the dog park for the first time

By BETH HARPAZ
Associated Press

Like a lot of new dog owners, Adriana Magarin recently got a puppy to help brighten up pandemic life.

"You can only read so many books; you can only listen to so many podcasts," she said.

Buddy, her husky, is "a troublemaker, but he gets me up in the morning and gets me outside."

But Buddy's first trip to a dog park in Houston, where Magarin lives, was more than she bargained for. He was "doing great" hanging out with other dogs — until he followed them to a pond and fell in. He got out fine, she said, laughing, though he "looked like a little rat."

Dog parks are full these days of pandemic puppies and new owners learning the ropes. Fortunately, with treats and a watchful eye, you can take the anxiety out of dog park visits in no time.

Dog park jitters

Stephanie Holmes admitted to being "a little nervous" on a recent day in Prospect Park in Brooklyn, N.Y. It was her first time taking her 7-month-old dog, Stella, to the park's early morning off-leash dog run, which these days attracts dozens of pandemic puppies.

Stella did just fine with all comers, human and canine, but Tom Huang, owner of Rose, a gray-and-white pit bull, sympathized about the dog park jitters.

"It can be hard to get their attention if they're in the mix," he said.

Josslyn Shapiro had a strategy for getting her lab puppy Appa to listen: "If I bring chicken, he's OK."

Use treats like a magnet

High-motivation treats like chicken are exactly what trainers recommend for teaching dogs to come when called.

Darris Cooper, Petco's national dog training manager, says a "smelly yet tasty treat" should be used "like a magnet." Put it near your dog's nose, walk away, then call the dog with a "repetitive noise," like a whistle, smooch, or click, along with encouraging words like "Good boy!" or "Good girl!" When the dog comes, give the treat.

Practice rewarding your dog for coming when called several times a day, and "you should have a solid recall in about three weeks," said Tim Steele, a certified dog trainer who runs the Behavior Matters Academy in Sacramento, Calif.

And make it fun: "Clap your hands, use happy talk, get on your knees," he said. It's also important to "slowly increase the level of difficulty by calling when they are mildly distracted."

Playing or fighting?

It's normal for puppies to wrestle. But when is rough play too much?

If your pup is "cowering, lip-licking, hunched over with the tail tucked," or, conversely, "overly stimulated" and unable to settle down, "it's best to end the interaction," advises Cooper.

You can also try a "consent test," says Steele. If you think a dog is being too rough, gently pull the dog out and see whether the other dog moves away. If so, the aggressor "was indeed being a bit too rough and the other dog needed a break. But if the 'victim' dog follows, they're saying,



Harvest, a longtime reveler to Prospect Park's Long Meadow, plays off-leash Jan. 31 during designated free-roaming hours.

"Hey, wait — we were playing — I was fine!"

Steele says learning dog body language is helpful, too. He recommends the ispeakdog.org website and the new book "Doggie Language" by Lili Chin (Hachette).

Aggression is uncommon in most dogs, according to Cooper, but "if your dog lunges, snaps or bites another dog or person," get help from a trainer with the right experience. To avoid problems in older dogs, Cooper says it helps to socialize puppies young, adding that they "do best playing in pairs."

Sometimes owners fret when one dog mounts another, but experts say that's normal dog play and not always sexual in nature. (In fact, dogs sometimes mount dogs of the same gender.) Of course, be careful if your dog isn't spayed or neutered to avoid situations that could lead to unwanted pregnancies.

Bring me the ball

It's fun playing fetch, but what happens if another dog takes your ball? One strategy, Steele says: Bring an extra ball, so you can keep playing while the other

owner recovers your first ball. Even better: "Toss balls for numerous dogs. The dogs will be happy and the other owners will likely be thrilled!"

Alternatively, if another pooch is spoiling your game, put the ball away and try again later.

What the veterans say

Dog parks aren't just places to tire out energetic puppies, says Matt Kelliher of Minneapolis, owner of a 5-year-old mutt named Beckett. He advises new owners to think of them as places for "actively training your dog to be respectful, to listen, and practice recall," preferably with "a pocketful of treats."

He's also not a fan of small, fenced-in spaces: "Dogs need room to roam and scents to chase. I would recommend finding the biggest dog park you can."

Ted Hausman, who's been bringing his dog Harvest to Brooklyn's Prospect Park for years, says he's glad to see the newcomers.

"It's nice people are experiencing the joy of dog ownership," he said. "It's a good silver lining to the pandemic."



PHOTOS BY JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

Moose, a Great Dane, visits Long Meadow during off-leash hours.



Dogs play around a social distancing sign during off-leash morning hours Jan. 31 at the Long Meadow in Prospect Park in the Brooklyn borough of New York. Go to any dog park right now and you'll probably find lively pandemic puppies, along with new owners learning the ins and outs of off-leash play and discovering the joys of dog ownership.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Better spin on 2020

Essays in 'The New Possible' explore how to view year as laying the foundation for the rebirth, not death, of society

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE
Associated Press

In pop culture, 2020 has been understandably reviled as the “hell year.” It tormented us with a lethal pandemic spiraling out of control, thousands of shuttered businesses, violent protests over racial injustice, raging wildfires and political extremism and lies that underpinned January’s harrowing coup attempt at the U.S. Capitol.



neers in “The New Possible,” a collection of essays that explore what and how the world might rebuild from the rubble of the past year.

The group behind the book doesn’t lack for ambition. People from science fiction novelist Kim Stanley Robinson to Buddhist monk Jack Kornfield suggest ways to

reshape technology, the economy, the environment, the food supply, government and community in hopes that people can eventually look back at 2020 as a reawakening, and not a death rattle.

“People can tell our systems are broken, and not just in a subtle way, not just like we need to tweak a few things or throw a few bad apples out,” said Justin Rosenstein, a former Google and Facebook engineer who contributed an essay on building a “democratic economy.” “The rules of the system are rigged against us. They are not designed to serve the interests of humanity; they are not designed to serve the interests of nature.”

Rosenstein was one of the driving forces behind the book. Some critics may see him as part of the problem, given that he invented the Facebook “Like” button that helped propel the success of a social network that has become a massive funnel of misinformation that has become a source of consternation and regret for him and other one-time Facebook backers like investor Roger McNamee.

“It is very tempting to hate the players rather than look at the game and realize it’s the problem,” Rosenstein said. “We have new technology that can enable us to harness our collective intelligence in ways that has never been possible before.”



STEVE HUMPHREYS, INM/AP



JOHN CRESTON DUBOIS/AP



TOM ZASADZINSKI/AP

Justin Rosenstein, Tristan Harris and Philip Clayton have essays in “The New Possible.”

The book is backed by One Project, a nonprofit group Rosenstein started as part of his effort to improve the way we live and work. He also was a protagonist in “The Social Dilemma,” a Netflix documentary about the dark side of social media released four months before the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol.

Another “Social Dilemma” standout, former Google engineer Tristan Harris, founded the Center for Humane Technology in 2018 to nudge the industry away from building services and devices designed to attract and hold onto our attention. He considers his essay a kind of sequel to the Netflix documentary and its warning about how Facebook and Twitter can tear people apart instead of bringing them together.

“We have been screaming at the top of our lungs about this train running off the cliff for a long time and then it culminated in Jan. 6,” Harris told the AP, referring to the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol incited by former President Donald Trump. “We

have trapped the entire global psyche inside this Vegas-style dopamine machine that has become the host of our democratic conversations.”

“The New Possible” aims to spur change through 28 essays divided into 10 categories — Earth, Us, Change, Wealth, Work, Food, Education, Love, Community and Tomorrow.

The contributors quickly embraced the idea last spring, said Philip Clayton, one of the book’s editors and president of the Institute for Ecological Civilization. In the eight months since work on the essays began, Clayton believes the sequence of events that bookended the Nov. 3 election have turned “The New Possible” into a Kairos book, referring to the ancient Greek word for an opportune time in history.

“This is the one of the few moments in life,” Clayton said, “when the world points to you and says, ‘Are you going to make that inner change, or are you not going to transform?’”

Hawke’s new novel tale of actor rising above narcissism

By RON CHARLES
The Washington Post

Finally, a novel about the travails of a successful white guy! What could pull the heartstrings of our afflicted nation tighter than a story of brief, emotional setback suffered by a handsome movie star?

Ethan Hawke has got a lot of nerve. But he’s also got a lot of talent. The actor and director, who made his screen debut at 15, has published several books during his acclaimed Hollywood career, and he recently produced and starred in a spectacular TV adaptation of James McBride’s “The Good Lord Bird.”

But Hawke is also known as the man who cheated on Uma Thurman and offered loutish excuses about the sexual needs of great men like Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy and him.

Now, some 15 years after all that cosmic embarrassment, Hawke has published a novel called “A Bright Ray of Darkness.” It’s about a young movie star who got caught cheating on his stunningly gorgeous wife.

This recycled gossip is tiresome, but what’s most irritating about “A Bright Ray of Darkness” is that it’s really good. If you can ignore the author’s motive for creating such a sensitive and endearing cad, you’ll find here a novel that explores the demands of acting and the delusions of manhood with tremendous verve and insight.

“A Bright Ray of Darkness” opens during a storm of negative media coverage that erupts when the young heartthrob, William Harding, is spotted cavorting with a woman — not his rock star wife — in Cape Town, South Africa.

William is determined to tell the truth and shame the devil, but the teller of the tale always holds the reins of our sympathy, which may explain Hawke’s decision to narrate this story in the first person. As much as everybody around William regards him as a royal ass, we — his intimate confessors — know that he’s a hopeless romantic, hurt and confused, baffled that love can turn sour so quickly. Now at the ripe old age of 32, William must pull himself together, stop crying and grow up.

Even harder, he’ll have to do that personal reconstruction while making his debut appear-

ance on Broadway. Before his marriage publicly exploded, he’d signed on to play Hotspur in a lavish production of Shakespeare’s “Henry IV.”

Drawing on his experience playing Hotspur at Lincoln Center in 2003, Hawke creates spectacular performances — on and offstage — by King Henry, Prince Hal, Falstaff and the whole cast of brittle egos conniving for the director’s love and the audience’s attention. Shaping the novel around this production gives a frame that literally dramatizes the themes of the story, propelling it forward even while

William wallows in self-pity.

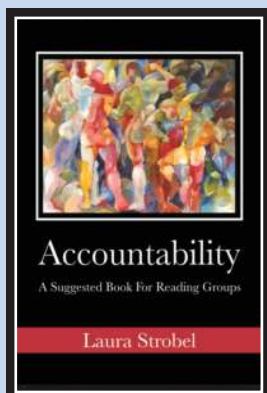
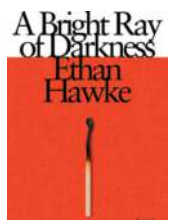
But performing alongside stage legends — some gracious, some not — is a challenge for William, this young movie star who’s used to everybody fawning over him. Fortunately, the play is also an opportunity to climb out of himself and be someone else at the very moment he really needs that.

“My life as a performer is at the absolute core of my sense of self-worth,” William says. “Inside the play it felt possible that I was not a person defined by his adultery, or his unloving parents, or his lies, his failure as a father.”

Maybe, he hopes, acting well onstage will serve as a prelude to acting better in real life.

“You know, William, your drug is approval,” a brutally honest friend tells him. “You need to have your own opinion of yourself.”

I want to be immune to Hawke’s charms, but I admit it: He’s written a witty, wise and heartfelt novel about a spoiled young man growing up and becoming, haltingly, a better person. “A Bright Ray of Darkness” is a deeply hopeful story about the possibility of rising above one’s narcissism. Bravo.



Four out of Four Stars for this True Story!
Read or Listen to the First Chapter and her Blog at www.LauraStrobelAuthor.com

Available on Amazon
PRINTED AUDIO eBOOK

Laura Strobel was born in New York City and grew up in Connecticut. Married for over three decades to the love of her life, she is most proud of her two dashing young men who love to tease (and taunt) their mama.



WEEKEND: MUSIC

LOOKING INWARD AGAIN

It's not 'Pinkerton,'
but Weezer frontman
Rivers Cuomo gets pretty
emo on 'OK Human'



Atlantic Records

Weezer revisits the introspective terrain of beloved cult favorite album "Pinkerton" on its latest, "OK Human."

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

The first time Weezer stayed off the road for as long as it has during the COVID-19 pandemic, the triggering catastrophe was the less-than-enthusiastic reaction to 1996's "Pinkerton."

Today that album is universally regarded as an emo classic. But at the time of its release, two years after the Los Angeles band's hit self-titled debut known as the Blue Album, fans and critics jeered Weezer's shift from clever, streamlined power-pop to a messier, noisier sound built around frontman Rivers Cuomo's psychosexual confessions.

"Those were the earliest Amazon customer reviews I remember seeing," the singer says. "A lot of people were repelled."

The cool reception drove Cuomo from performing, and when Weezer returned in 2001 it was with another punchy self-titled record, this one called the Green Album, that set the template for the next two decades of the group's career: polished rock-candy production, hooks within hooks and lyrics longer on jokes and wordplay than on self-revelation.

Now, 25 years after "Pinkerton" — and as the band's involuntary break from touring enters its 12th month — Weezer is finally revisiting the introspective terrain of its beloved cult fave with "OK Human." The new album sets Cuomo's inner thoughts against lush but faintly haunting orchestral arrangements.

"It's really trying to capture the anxieties of my everyday existence," he says, drawing a distinction between his approach here and the various narrative devices (including cut-up poetry and characters' voices) he used in recent years.

Unlike "Pinkerton," though, "OK Human" didn't come from a place of emotional trauma. In fact, Cuomo, 50, is thriving in quarantine.

"I'm perfectly happy to stay at home," he says. "It means I don't have to come up with excuses for not going out."

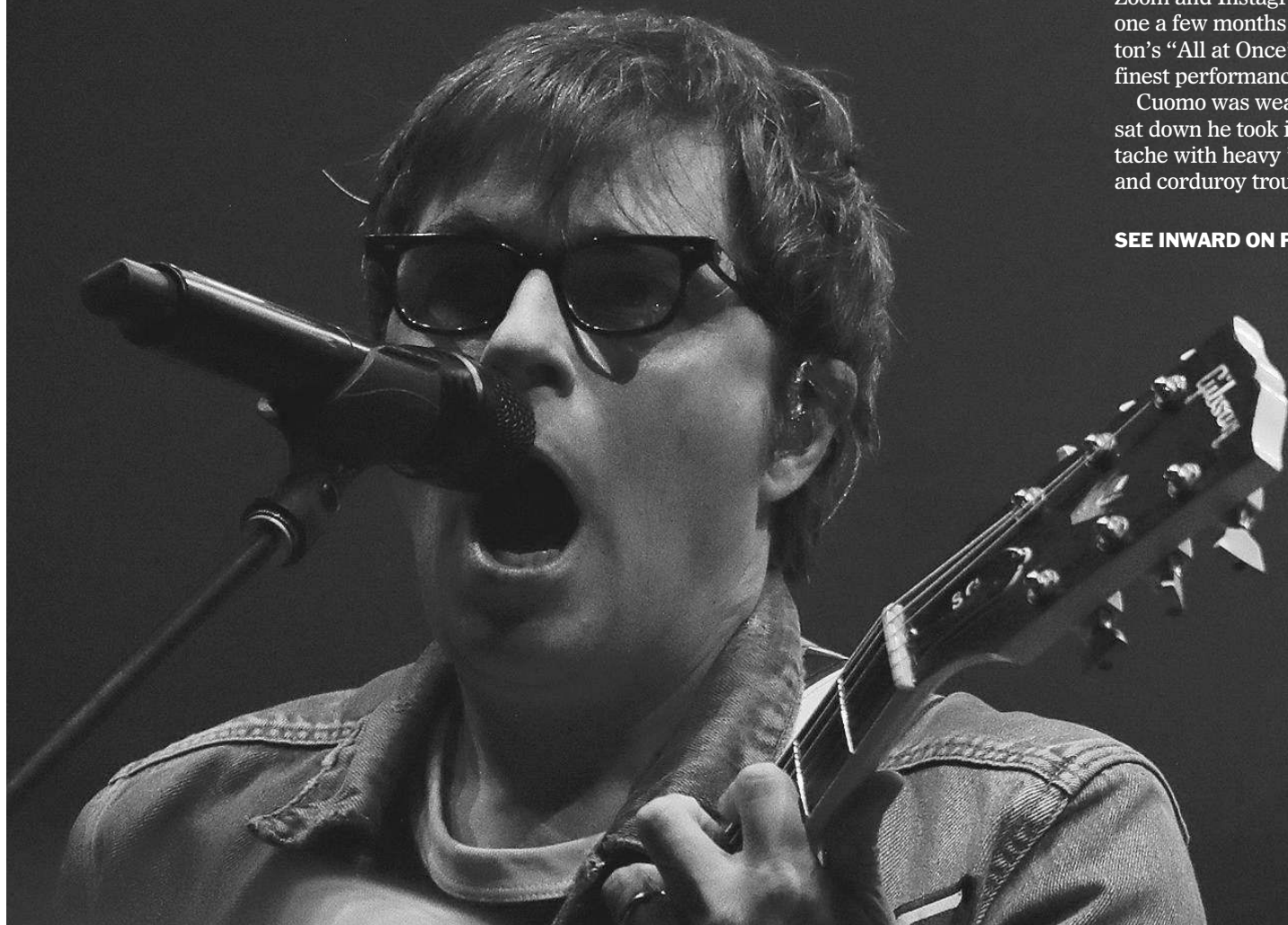
It's early December, and Cuomo and I are sitting 6 or 7 feet apart in a Zen-garden situation behind his home in Santa Monica, Calif. A sliding glass door opens into the plant-filled studio where he's been livestreaming lately on Zoom and Instagram — intimate virtual gigs, including one a few months ago in which he crushed Whitney Houston's "All at Once" — that he says represent some of the finest performances of his life.

Cuomo was wearing a mask when I arrived, but as we sat down he took it off, revealing a neatly trimmed mustache with heavy '70s-dad vibes. (His turtleneck sweater and corduroy trousers strengthen the effect.)

SEE INWARD ON PAGE 29

Rivers Cuomo performs with Weezer on Sept. 28, 2019, at the Rock in Rio festival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

LEO CORREA/AP



WEEKEND: MUSIC

Inward: Weezer dials down crunchy guitars on 'OK Human'

FROM PAGE 28

"I don't love shaving," he says, "so whenever I don't have to — like when there are no shows — a beard happens." The mustache started as a goof, but he gets a kick out of it every time he catches himself in the mirror.

With his extra time, Cuomo has gotten into web programming; he recently developed an online store for his website where he's selling downloads of old demos. The site is almost comically utilitarian in appearance — "amateurish," he admits with a laugh. "I don't really care what it looks like. I'm interested in just making stuff work."

Among his other pandemic activities: He plays ping-pong with his wife, Kyoko, whom he married in 2006 and with whom he shares a 13-year-old daughter and 9-year-old son. Kyoko is "a serious ping-pong-ist," he says — she played on her school team growing up in Japan. "She beats me every time, but the tension is incredible." They play every night after dinner, he says, then adds of his marriage: "We've gotten super-close — closer than ever."

The only thing Cuomo seems troubled by is that he'll have to leave home in a few weeks for his annual 10-day silent-meditation retreat. First exposed to the practice as a kid growing up on an ashram in Connecticut, he's been committed to meditating daily since 2003. Although he says it's essential to his creativity, the extended stretch of silence is something he likes having done more than he likes doing.

"Sometimes I'll look forward to it if life is really chaotic," he says, to which you have to ask: 2020 didn't qualify? He shrugs as he takes a swig of electrolyte water.

"Life right here is pretty peaceful," he says.

So why explore his deepest misgivings? Cuomo says the idea came from his producer, Jake Sinclair, who previously oversaw another self-titled "Weezer LP" (2016's so-called "White Album") and has also worked with Panic! at the Disco and 5 Seconds of Summer — popular young modern-rock acts operating in a lane Weezer helped create.

"Jake loves to think of me as this tortured artist," Cuomo says. The frontman isn't sure he agrees with that assessment: "I think everybody has some of that in them. So I was just channeling that."

The anxieties he probes on "OK Human" aren't the same as on "Pinkerton," which toggles between Cuomo's carnal appetites and the guilt he feels about using his rock stardom to satisfy them. Here he worries about the effects of his daughter's screen time and laments how closely he



TIMOTHY NORRIS FOR LIVE NATION/TNS

From left: Patrick Wilson, Scott Shriner, Rivers Cuomo and Brian Bell of Weezer perform at the Whisky a Go-Go on Sept. 10, 2019, in West Hollywood, Calif. The band has an ambitious release schedule for 2021. They just dropped a new album, "OK Human," with "Van Weezer" to follow later this year.

tracks his follower count on social media; "Aloo Gobi" wonders whether a couple's routine is getting dull — "What's playing at the Aero? / Some French noir flick" — while "La Brea Tar Pits" has a caveman calling for help as he sinks into the ooze of that L.A. landmark.

"I know there's a lot of conjecture about peeling the layers of irony away from Weezer — that it's like an onion," says drummer Pat Wilson. (Weezer's other members are guitarist Brian Bell and bassist Scott Shriner.) Over the years, Cuomo has pulled all kinds of left-field stunts to keep things interesting — sometimes to widespread scorn, as when he drafted Lil Wayne for an iffy guest verse in 2009, and sometimes to surreal acclaim, as when the group topped Billboard's alternative chart in 2018 with a straight-faced cover of Toto's "Africa."

"But what I hope people hear in this album — especially the diehard people who love 'Pinkerton' — is Rivers speaking through his lyrics and the music," Wilson continues. "To me, there's a direct line between the two records. This one is like a portrait of Weezer as a middle-aged man."

"Which is a terrible selling point," he adds with a laugh.

To frame these age-appropriate musings, Weezer dialed down the crunchy electric guitars of hits like "Buddy Holly" and "Beverly Hills" and hired a 38-piece orchestra — another idea that came from Sinclair, who says he envisioned "something like 'Eleanor Rigby' meets 'Rhapsody in Blue.'" The producer guided Cuomo toward "Nilsson Sings

Newman," the wistful 1970 LP on which Harry Nilsson performs tunes by Randy Newman.

Cuomo wasn't familiar with the album — he grew up idolizing Kiss and Van Halen — but loved it as soon as he heard it. "I'm so jealous of that guy's voice," he says of Nilsson, who died in 1994. "It seems like he can open his mouth and sing anything, and just the sound of his breath going through his vocal cords is beautiful."

"Right away, I was like, 'Oh my God, I'm so excited to do this.'"

That all-in attitude is typical of Cuomo. Yet what's interesting about his obsessions — and what sets him apart from any number of '90s-rock veterans — is the ease with which he moves between them; for him, no creative tactic ever serves as repudiation of another.

Indeed, "OK Human" is just one of two albums Weezer plans to put out this year. The other, "Van Weezer," is a detailed homage to the '80s metal of Cuomo's adolescence, loaded with the various peacocking techniques — "palm muting, whammy bars, artificial harmonics, two-handed tapping," per the singer's rundown — that Weezer consciously rejected as it set out in the dressed-down age of grunge.

"Back then, we weren't exactly sure who we were, but we knew who we weren't," Cuomo says. The showy "Van Weezer," set for release in May, is an eager experiment: "Let's bring those things back again and see if we can still be Weezer."

As earnest as it is, "OK Human" bears traces of Cuomo's slipperiness. "I'll give you an

example," he says. "It's super-disillusioning, but I think it demonstrates that a song can be both totally personal and have a writerly twist that deceives the listener in their interest."

In "Playing My Piano," the narrator sings about resenting Zoom interviews because they cut into the time he has to make music; in Cuomo's mind, though, the interviews actually represent the music that's distracting him from the programming he says he'd rather be doing.

"Here Comes the Rain" is another: a seeming account of self-encouragement that Cuomo wrote for his friend Sam Harris, the button-pushing author and podcast host, as Harris was getting beaten up online for some outrageous statement or another.

"I felt like I have more experience dealing with the internet and trolls because all that arose right when we were making our most controversial records," Cuomo says, thinking back to 2009's "Raditude," for which he recruited pop studio pros such as Dr. Luke and Polow da Don.

"I wanted to explain to Sam how to not get sucked into it." The song's original chorus, he claims: "Don't go on Reddit."

Then there's the new album's "Grapes of Wrath," in which Cuomo sings about blissfully falling asleep to the sound of an audiobook — only he doesn't say "audiobook" but specifically name-checks Audible in a bit of product placement that would've horrified any self-respecting '90s kid.

"It never occurred to me that that's a weird thing to say," Cuomo insists, and of course it's true that the lyric's precision makes it

more real. But he also has a twinkle in his eye as he says that his managers have been working on a cross-promotional gambit with the folks at iRobot.

"To have our voices coming out of a robot vacuum somehow promoting an album called 'OK Human'" — the title riffs on Radiohead's technophobic "OK Computer" — "to me that feels less like brand integration than a work of art unto itself," he says.

Cuomo's feelings have evolved over time (and as bands have stopped making serious money from record sales). So too has the level of control he feels he needs to exert over the recording of any new Weezer album.

On the Blue Album, he recalls, he battled with the LP's producer, the late Ric Ocasek of the Cars, about where microphones should be placed in the studio to record Wilson's drums. But for "OK Human" he was happy to entrust much of the process to Sinclair, who he says "is very careful to limit my power over the final outcome, which I think is really smart."

He's similarly que-sera-sera in regards to the Hella Mega Tour, a rock roadshow starring Green Day, Fall Out Boy and Weezer that was supposed to play stadiums across the U.S. and Europe last summer before COVID shut down live music. At the moment the rescheduled tour is set to kick off June 9 in Vienna, which given the bumpy vaccine rollout "seems like kind of a long shot," Cuomo says.

"Either way, I don't care," he adds. "I don't mind staying home more."

Besides, he's got plenty to keep him busy, including a movie musical he's working on about the life of the Buddha — it's called, uh, "Buddha Superstar" — and two more Weezer albums after "Van Weezer." The first, tentatively titled "Happy Chill," is in the style of the band's mellow 2001 single "Island in the Sun"; the other evokes Franz Ferdinand or the Clash, Cuomo says — "dance music, but it feels like a band."

Looking even further, he's beginning to imagine his first real solo record, which he describes with two unexpected words: "Barry" and "Manilow."

Singing "All at Once" and another great Houston oldie, "Didn't We Almost Have It All," on Instagram in recent months got him wondering why nobody does songs like that anymore: complex, grand-scaled ballads that avoid neat four-chord progressions to summon a real sense of romantic abandon.

"And that's when I thought of Barry Manilow," he says. "I always loved Barry Manilow. I'd love to do what he does."

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Mark Romanov

Filmmaker and marine biologist Rick Rosenthal, pictured filming wild salmon in British Columbia, says new innovations allow nature documentaries to become “more cinematic.”

TV that goes beneath the surface

Learn more about the ocean, its inhabitants with these currently available documentary films and television series

BY ERIN E. WILLIAMS

Special to The Washington Post

Nearly a year into the pandemic, as each winter day somehow feels both too short and incredibly long, my go-to daydream is an afternoon next to the ocean. Familiar or far-flung, crowded or serene, developed or desolate — anywhere works as long as I can envision spreading a towel on the sand and soaking up the sun.

Documentaries can tide us over until daydreams like mine become a reality. From our couches, we can expand our understanding of the ocean, plunging into waters from the Great Barrier Reef to the Mariana Trench. Meeting athletes, explorers and conservationists who surf big waves, breaking new ground and protecting marine life. And experiencing the perspectives of animals that inhabit gorgeously intricate undersea worlds.

Since the early 1980s, acclaimed wildlife filmmaker and marine biologist Rick Rosenthal has worked on many documentaries, including “Planet Earth” and “The Blue Planet,” for which he was the principal cameraman, and “Blue Planet II,” for which he was a consultant.

“These documentaries have become much more cinematic,” Rosenthal said, citing innovations such as digital movie cameras and drones that can more easily record animals’ behaviors without disturbing them.

New technologies also allow filmmakers to illuminate how humans are interacting with oceans in ways that we never thought possible, for better or worse; Rosenthal pointed out that because of ocean degradation and climate change, “things out there are changing drastically. It’s getting harder and taking more time to find locations and stories.”

The following documentary films and television series, loosely grouped by topic, will give you a deep dive into the oceans, their complexities and their vulnerabilities:

Global oceans

“**Blue Planet II**” (*Amazon Prime, Discovery Plus*) Four years in the making, this awe-inspiring 2017 BBC series — hosted by David Attenborough, like many of the selections below — sent camera crews to every ocean, from the Galapagos to the sea floor below Antarctica’s ice. Each episode documents extraordinary animal behaviors and immerses viewers in marine ecosystems, from their vast wildernesses to their tiniest inhabitants.

“**Life**” (*Amazon Prime, Discovery Plus*) The “Fish” and “Creatures of the Deep” are two of 10 episodes in the 2009 BBC documentary series narrated by Attenborough that capture a profusion of marine life around the world. Visit Australia, where cuttlefish trick each other and sea dragons dance together. In Japan, mudskippers leap high in the air; in Hawaii, gobies climb waterfalls. Stick around for a glimpse behind the camera as Rosenthal films sailfish hunting in the open ocean.

“**Our Planet**” (*Netflix*)

In collaboration with Silverback Films and World Wildlife Fund, this series takes viewers for a voyage on “The High Seas.” One of eight episodes in the 2019 documentary series narrated by Attenborough, it highlights a blue whale mother and calf’s intimate bond before plunging below the surface to meet bizarre and mysterious deep-sea creatures. In another episode, “Coastal Seas,” tour coral reefs, fields of sea grass and kelp forests before celebrating recovery in Raja Ampat, Indonesia, where a former shark fishing camp is now a baby shark nursery.

“**David Attenborough’s Great Barrier Reef**” (*Amazon Prime*)

Using some of the newest submersibles, this three-part Smithsonian series from 2015 provides a new perspective on Earth’s largest living structure. Explore some of the most remote corners of the Great Barrier Reef, including some of its approximately 900 islands and 3,000 reefs.

Meet mantis shrimp, visit mangrove nurseries and learn about the reef’s origins and cultural history. And share Attenborough’s elation as he spots a green sea turtle on his first night dive.

Sports

“**Kim Swims**” (*Amazon Prime*)

This inspirational 2017 film by Kate Webber and David Orr profiles Kim Chambers’ quest to swim solo from shark-inhabited Farallon Islands waters, 30 miles off San Francisco, to the Golden Gate Bridge. Becoming a marathon open-water swimmer after nearly losing a leg in an accident, Chambers is the sixth person to complete the Oceans Seven, the world’s most notoriously difficult swims. Her journey underscores human perseverance and nature’s healing power.

“**Momentum Generation**” (*HBO Max*)

In this 2018 HBO documentary by Jeff and Michael Zimbalist, the ocean is a refuge and a stage for some of the world’s most influential surfers, framing a story about an evolving sport and ambition, conflict and the families we create.

Conservation

“**Chasing Coral**” (*Netflix*)

Over three years, a team of scientists, divers and photographers worked to provide a firsthand look at coral reef disappearance. The 2017 film from “Chasing Ice” director Jeff Orlowski reveals bleaching devastation (a stress response that results in color loss) in locations such as Hawaii, Bermuda and the Bahamas.

“**A Plastic Ocean**” (*Netflix*)

From an opening flotsam-filled scene during an excursion to record blue whales off the coast of Sri Lanka, Craig Leeson and his team expose how millions of tons of plastic end up in the oceans each year. The 2016 film illustrates the problem’s jaw-dropping scope, including plastic bottle piles in trenches a mile and a half down, and its worldwide implications for marine ecosystems and human health.

Animals

“**Whale Wisdom**” (*Amazon Prime CuriosityStream*)

Rosenthal’s 2018 film, his most recent, whisks viewers to locations such as Patagonia, Norway and the Cook Islands to observe spectacular behaviors including gray whales surfing, sperm whales playing ball and humpbacks teaching each other songs — celebrating these mammals’ intelligence, emotions and culture.

“**My Octopus Teacher**” (*Netflix*)

This touching documentary, released last year, resonated with audiences for its depiction of a deeply personal bond between filmmaker and free diver Craig Foster and an octopus in the Great African Sea Forest off the continent’s southwest tip. The film is a beautiful meditation about our relationship with nature, and the octopus is a revelation — opening viewers’ eyes to an animal that, like many others, has a richer inner world than they ever imagined.

“**Superfish: Bluefin Tuna**” (*Amazon Prime*)

Join director Rosenthal as he journeys from the Azores to the Gulf of Mexico and beyond to document one of the ocean’s most surprising evolutionary wonders: enormous, warm-blooded bluefin tuna. In this 2012 documentary with narration by Attenborough, he finds remarkably sophisticated social behaviors that illustrate these animals’ intelligence and adaptability — and experiences one of his most incredible whale encounters.

“**Rise of the Great White Shark**” (*Amazon Prime*)

This 2017 documentary from Andy Casagrande examines great whites’ natural history, physiology and behavior, as well as some of the threats to their survival. The filmmakers emphasize the animals’ personalities and help viewers see them as individuals, illustrating the shift in how we view these magnificent but maligned animals.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

NEW ON DVD

“Lovecraft Country: The Complete First Season”: Adapted from the 2016 novel of the same name by Matt Ruff, the hit HBO series created by Misha Green follows Korean War vet Atticus “Tic” Freeman (Jonathan Majors) and photographer Letitia “Leti” Lewis (Jurnee Smollett) as the pair team up with the former’s uncle, George (Courtney B. Vance), while facing the horrors of a Jim Crow-era U.S. road trip for the Black travelers in search of Atticus’ father.

“The blunt catharsis in ‘Lovecraft Country’ comes through derring-do and ultraviolent fantasy. The novel and the HBO series both derive their punch from car-crashing the real 1950s into an alternate-universe, many-tentacled variation on recent history,” wrote Chicago Tribune critic Michael Phillips in his review. “[H.P.] Lovecraft’s racism is widely documented. Green, as producer and screenwriter, working with a versatile team of fellow writers, slyly subverts Lovecraft’s terror of The Other, in the form of Black America.”

Also available on DVD:

“A Call to Spy”: Winston Churchill orders the UK’s spy agency to train women as the Nazis attempt to gain control of France.

“Archenemy”: A teen (Skylan Brooks) believes a man (Joe Manganiello) who says he’s a superhero from another universe but has lost his powers.

“Bordertown Season 2”: Kari Sorjonen (Ville Virtanen) crosses the border to investigate a double murder. In Finnish and Russian.

“Fear of Rain”: A girl living with schizophrenia (Madison Iseman) must determine what’s real and what’s not as she suspects a neighbor has kidnapped a child.

“Harley Quinn: The Complete Second Season”: As the animated series kicks off its second season, Harley (voiced by Kaley Cuoco) struggles to retain control of New Gotham.

“Horizon Line”: Exes (Alexander Dreyfuss and Allison Williams) on a flight to a destination wedding fight to survive after their pilot dies of a heart attack.

“Random Acts of Violence”: Comic book writers discover a disturbing link between their work and real-life events.

“Riviera: Season 1”: After a newlywed’s (Julia Stiles) billionaire husband dies in a yacht explosion, she begins to investigate the murky secrets surrounding their wealth.

“The Swordsman”: Three swordsmen at various stages of their lives meet. In Korean.

“The Very Excellent Mr. Dundee”: A disgraced comedian (Paul Hogan) attempts to redeem himself before being knighted.

— Tribune News Service



NBC/AP

Dwayne Johnson is portrayed by Adrian Groulx (Dwayne at 10), Bradley Constant (Dwayne at 15) and Uli Latukefu (Dwayne at 20) in the NBC comedy series “Young Rock,” a coming-of-age story inspired by his challenging childhood and youth.

Wrestling with politics

Dwayne Johnson revisits his youth while campaigning for president in TV’s ‘Young Rock’

By LYNN ELBER
Associated Press

Dwayne Johnson’s new NBC comedy “Young Rock” has him campaigning for president in 2032, but the actor and producer sidestepped the possibility of a real-life run someday.

A coming-of-age story inspired by the former pro wrestler’s colorful but challenging childhood and youth, “Young Rock” is framed by the adult Johnson’s reflections on his life as he stumps for office.

Is Johnson cleverly preparing America for his next act?

“I think the people will prepare me. I can say that,” he replied with a laugh.

Using the candidacy as a device to revisit his past was suggested by Nahnatchka Khan, executive producer of “Young Rock,” he told The Associated Press. Johnson also is an executive producer for the series, debuting Feb. 17 on AFN-Pulse, with his younger versions played by Adrian Groulx, Bradley Constant and Uli Latukefu.

“We were trying to figure out a creative way that I can be inter-



RICHARD SHOTWELL, INVISION/AP

Dwayne Johnson attends the premiere of “Fast and Furious: Hobbs and Shaw” in Los Angeles July 13, 2019. Johnson’s new comedy series, “Young Rock,” premieres Feb. 17 on AFN-Pulse.

twined in every episode, to be part of it. This was (Khan’s) idea, and at first I was a little reticent about it because it’s political,” he said. “You just knew that by the time the show was coming out, politics was going to take yet another hard turn and be so polarizing as it is.”

Khan’s persuasive argument: “She said something to the effect

of, ‘Well, you always say you’re a man of the people, and I think we should give it a shot,’” Johnson recounted.

In a 2018 Vanity Fair interview, the film and TV star said he’d seriously considered a 2020 run for president but decided against it.

During a Q&A last month with

TV critics, Johnson was asked if he would invite U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren — a self-proclaimed fan of Johnson’s 2015-19 “Ballers” sports comedy — to make a cameo appearance on “Young Rock.”

“If we’re lucky enough to come back for a second round (of episodes), then maybe she will then,” he said. And what about President Joe Biden as a guest?

“Well, I can see that happening,” he told The AP. “It all depends on how far we go with it (the series). But I am friends with Sen. Warren, President Biden as well, and Vice President Kamala Harris, and so I wouldn’t rule it out.”

Johnson, a self-described independent, bestowed his first political endorsement on the Biden-Harris Democratic ticket last year. But he suggests a bipartisan approach ahead for “Young Rock.”

“I’m also friends with a lot of Republicans, so who knows what kind of melting-pot politics we’ll have down the road, if by chance we’re lucky enough to come back,” Johnson said.

“She said something to the effect of, ‘Well, you always say you’re a man of the people, and I think we should give it a shot.’”

Dwayne Johnson, referring to his executive producer’s idea to frame “Young Rock” politically

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

By GALADRIEL WATSON

Special to *The Washington Post*

There are many habits I've gained while working from home: snacking when desired, taking the dog for a midmorning walk, talking to myself and settling in for a daily nap. That last one will be especially painful to give up if or when I return to an office; my naps have become essential downtime that act as afternoon pick-me-ups. Why do my naps feel so needed and so revitalizing? And will I have to live without? I spoke to experts to get their advice.

The desire to nap

There are two biological processes that contribute to daily drowsiness, says Sara Mednick, a professor of cognitive science at the University of California at Irvine and author of "Take a Nap! Change Your Life."

The first system is the circadian: It prompts you to stay awake when it's light out and asleep when it's dark. In the middle of the day, it causes the hormone cortisol to start decreasing from its morning high and your core body temperature to slightly dip; losing heat helps you fall and stay asleep. The second is the homeostatic: It makes you sleepier the longer you've been awake. As the day progresses, it continually increases your "sleep pressure," causing you to have a growing need for sleep. Together, at midday, these create "kind of a perfect storm that makes people tired," Mednick says.

However, not all people are equally affected by these processes.

"Some people really experience it, and some people don't," she says. And, of course, not everyone can or does give into it. A 2009 survey by the Pew Research Center found that, on a typical day, one-third of U.S. adults nap.

Needing a nap is "a reflection that you haven't gotten sufficient sleep at night to address your body's need for sleep," says Lawrence Epstein, past president of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and clinical director for sleep medicine at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital. And chronically missing out on sleep is nothing but trouble.

"It affects performance, concentration, mood," Epstein says. It also "affects physiological processes involved in maintaining good health," he adds, noting links to obesity, hypertension and heart disease.

Pros and cons of naps

For many people who are sleep-deprived, a short shut-eye session is the ticket, Mednick says. "Your mood gets better, your creativity, your perceptual processing, your memory processing."



Necessity of naps

40 winks, even while teleworking, isn't lazy and can be beneficial

The benefits of napping show up in study after study. Mednick has found that nappers perform as well on a pattern-recognition task as people who have slept overnight. She has found that naps enhance creative problem-solving. Naps can boost and restore brain power. Toddlers who nap express more joy. Adult-nappers can tolerate frustration longer and feel less impulsive. Naps may help protect older people from cognitive decline and dementia. Runners can use naps to improve endurance. People who nap once or twice a week have a lower risk of cardiovascular disease. Memory is better after a nap. And on it goes.

On the other hand, many people can't tolerate naps and feel groggy when they wake up. This may be because they go into heavy, slow-wave sleep, which is the deepest stage of sleep, making it difficult to return to the waking world. Naps can also disrupt that night's sleep.

"Naps tend to be kind of a double-edged sword," Epstein says. "If you're sleeping during the daytime, you're going to sleep less at night."

Daytime sleepiness can also be a symptom of an underlying condition or sleeping disorder. If you're often napping or feeling sleepy, try to extend your sleep at night. If that doesn't help, "you

should probably be checking with your doctor or a sleep specialist," Epstein says.

Pandemic sleep habits

Epstein has found that pandemic sleep habits have veered in two directions — better and worse — which have had an effect on naps. Many people's sleep habits have gone awry. They may be suffering from greater insomnia and poorer sleeps. Additional time in bed doesn't mean it was quality time. Stress, illness, nightmares or a need to stay up to finish work set aside while caring for children have interrupted nightly rest, which means those people are more likely to need to nap.

Others, freed from their alarm clocks, "are now getting more sleep and feeling more rested," Epstein says. They, therefore, don't need to nap.

Mednick says she has heard from many people who have taken up daytime snoozing.

"There are definitely a lot of people who are at home and think, 'Oh, finally. I can work out when I want, I can nap when I want, I can wear what I want,'" she says. "There are a lot of self-care choices that people suddenly have."

Julia Hobsbawm, a British entrepreneur and writer who focuses on social health, isn't

surprised that at-home workers might be napping more.

"Our lives, even in lockdown, tend to be full of stuff to do and endless digital distraction," the author of "The Simplicity Principle" says by email. "Our brains start to behave like a computer which has been switched on for days on end: It gets worn out faster."

As more people work from home and can regulate their days themselves, she says, "I would see it as entirely positive if people begin to build in naps or a daily reset."

How to nap effectively

If you're in the napping camp, Mednick suggests setting an alarm for about 20 minutes, long enough to enable you to enter Stage 2 sleep. She considers this period of light sleep, in which your heartbeat and breathing slow and your muscles relax, "the reset button of sleep." In a NASA study that found that naps helped pilots become more alert, 10 to 20 minutes was good. Experiment to see what refreshes you without making you groggy or ruining your bedtime.

Make yourself comfortable. Lie down if possible; one study found that rest in a bed had more benefits than rest in a seat. Use an eye mask and ear plugs if needed. Try to set aside your

worries, perhaps by first engaging in a few minutes of mindful meditation. Breathe slowly and deeply. Concentrate on relaxing your muscles.

After your nap, if you need help becoming alert, splash your face with water or step into bright light. A caffeinated beverage might help — but not too late in the day, because it could adversely affect your overnight sleep.

If you've become a napper while working at home and are worried that you won't be able to nap when you return to your office, "this is a great time to find out how much time you need to feel fully rested," Epstein says. (Current recommendations are seven to nine hours a night for healthy adults.)

Experiment to see how many hours of nightly sleep you need. Then, when you return to the office, make sure you go to bed early enough to get that amount.

"You do that," Epstein says, "and hopefully, you won't need a nap."

Back at the office?

A work environment shouldn't stop you from catching 40 winks if you want, though, Mednick says: "People can still find ways to nap, and they always have." They might sit in their car, book an empty conference room or lean their head on their hand to look as if they're in deep thought.

Another option is to encourage your employer to set up a napping space.

"It's actually in their best interest to find ways to create a better-rested workforce," Epstein says, adding that sleep problems increase rates of absenteeism and work-related accidents and decrease work productivity. "Unfortunately, that's not the corporate mindset."

Hobsbawm thinks this should change.

"The idea that we can work as automatons, always on and permanently connected to our devices, is as unhelpful as it is outdated," she says. "Everyone needs a moment, several times a day, to reset their thoughts and do as little as possible. If you can nap, then great, but if you can't, the main thing is to switch out of what you've been doing." Alternatives could be a physical activity, such as a walk, or an artistic activity, such as coloring.

"A reset is like a battery charge," Hobsbawm says. "It can be short, but it has sweet benefits."

Mednick, a proud napper herself, hopes companies will allow employees to continue to work from and nap at home after the pandemic.

"Napping is not what lazy people do," she says. "It's what people who are really effective and creative and self-regulating and conscientious do. Those are the type of people who nap."

WEEKEND: FAMILY



ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

A cutout of former President John F. Kennedy occupies a seat next to seventh grader Reilly Sullivan at the Bruce M. Whittier Middle School on Jan. 29 in Poland, Maine. Teacher Logan Landry put up cardboard cutouts to keep up social distancing at the school, where instruction time has been cut in half by a hybrid model of learning.

Not enough time to learn

Teachers have had to cut and condense lessons due to the pandemic

BY MICHAEL MELIA
Associated Press

English teachers are deciding which books to skip. History teachers are condensing units. Science teachers are often doing without experiments entirely.

With instruction time reduced as much as half by the coronavirus pandemic, many of the nation's middle school and high school teachers have given up on covering all the material normally included in their classes and instead are cutting lessons. Certain topics must be taught because they will appear on exit exams or Advanced Placement tests. But teachers are largely on their own to make difficult choices — what to prioritize and what to sacrifice to the pandemic.

"I have to make decisions constantly about what material I'm not going to cover because it is impossible to get it all done," said Leigh Foy, a chemistry and Advanced Placement biology teacher at York Suburban High School in Pennsylvania.

School day schedules have been compressed to deal with the challenges of social distancing and remote learning. The pace of instruction has also been slowed by the need to cover subjects that were skipped following the school shutdowns last spring and by students' virus-related distractions and the difficulty in addressing both online and in-person audiences.

Foy typically has students memorize how to read and write names for chemical formulas. Now she gives them a sheet with the nomenclature to refer to during quizzes and tests. Even though it is an important skill for scientists, there isn't time this year.

What she teaches is constrained not only by her district's hybrid model, which leaves her with about

25% less instruction time, but also social-distancing mandates that have forced her to scrap laboratory experiences.

She was unhappy to see the College Board announce that it would not modify AP exams this year to account for the strains of distance learning. The company said colleges expect the exams to reflect the full scope of coursework, and there was no consensus about what content could be cut.

The strain shows on the faces of her students, including some who juggle part-time jobs or care for siblings on days they learn from home.

"Students are not dealing with a full tank of emotional or intellectual gas. They're exhausted," she said. "All I can offer them is, 'I am there with you. I'm running this marathon with you. I care about you. I am going to try to be fair, but I need to continue pushing because we all have the same goalpost.'"

In Poland, Maine, social studies teacher Logan Landry placed cardboard cutouts of historical figures like Henry Ford and George Washington at some seats to keep up social distancing at Bruce M. Whittier Middle School, where instruction time has been cut in half by the hybrid model.

Last fall, he discussed the election as it unfolded with his seventh grade students, but he had to trim some lessons on the U.S. Constitution, including a review of documents about how it protects against tyranny in government.

He and other teachers are "in communication with the other grade levels, so they're aware of what might be lacking in a particular area," Landry said. "But I'm really hoping that they will get that at a later grade level, especially going to high school."

The challenge of shorter classes

is compounded by attendance problems. Students stay away for weeks at a time for quarantine or other reasons, adding to the amount of material they miss. But in the time he has with students on in-person learning days, Landry said, they are more eager to learn than ever.

"That positivity really helps me in the classroom," he said.

In every other school year, English teacher Cristin Espinoza in Denver would have her ninth-grade students read graphic novels in groups modeled on book clubs. It was difficult for her to accept that the groups would not be possible this year.

"Not only do I love teaching it, but students love learning through a different lens," she said. "So it's been really unfortunate to have to realize this can't happen."

At her charter school, Strive Prep — RISE, students have been learning remotely all year. Where Espinoza once had students for 90 minutes at a time, she now has about 20 minutes of direct instruction daily after accounting for a modified schedule and the time it takes students to settle.

"It doesn't leave time for a student for it not to click the first time. And that's just not realistic," she said.

One recent Monday, she began class by returning to a segment from the previous Friday on Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart." The students' written assignments were missing the mark, and she felt it was important to double down on the task of writing strong paragraphs to support their ideas.

"It's always like, what is highest leverage?" she said. "What are you going to be able to take to the classroom next year that's going to actually help you become a better reader, writer, thinker, scholar?"

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Strange habits picked up out of pandemic boredom

"Honey," my retired Navy husband woke me this morning with a steaming cup of coffee — a sweet routine he started since he began working from home last March — "I just transferred money into your account because you're twenty bucks in the red. Now, I know you had to buy Anna's birthday gifts and groceries, so it's no big deal, but please ... just don't buy any more stock, okay?"

Busted.

I'll admit it. I got sucked into the fascinating drama over the GameStop stock price. I downloaded the Reddit app and joined the now famous (or infamous, depending on your point of view) subgroup "WallStreetBets." Initially, I just wanted to see what all the fuss was about. Before I knew it, I had bought a share of GameStop stock with our grocery money and was slinging terms like "diamond hands," "GME go brrrr," "stonks," "YOLO" and "to the moon, baby!"

What happened? How did I, a 54-year-old stay-at-home mom and military spouse with a signature meatloaf recipe and sensible shoes, become a bloodthirsty amateur stock trader?

Shut any military spouse accustomed to constant change into a house for months on end, and she will soon feel like a caged wolverine in search of fresh meat in the form of entertainment, distraction and excitement. In our desperate state, new extremes are reached ... standards are abandoned ... peculiar habits are formed.

In other words, things get weird.

After our collective obsession with "Tiger King" waned and we gained 10 pounds from baking bread, we looked for the next thing, and the next, and the next — limping along until herd immunity restores some sense of normalcy to life.

I'm actually proud of some new habits I've picked up. Others, not so much.

In an effort to add extra zip to watching Netflix every flipping night, I finally figured out Sudoku. However, I also regularly swipe and giggle like an idiot, stuck in TikTok video vortexes, forgetting to defrost dinner, let the dog out, shower or go to bed.

Pandemic monotony has led me to think deeply about things I never had time to contemplate before. As a military spouse who moved frequently, I was rarely up to speed on local news, but now I read Rhode Island updates with my cup of coffee every morning. Unfortunately, my new daily news habit has also given me an in-depth understanding of national politics at a time when ignorance is arguably bliss.

I've always been a football fan, but I was content to keep my interests at a surface level, preferring to focus on game-day recipes and which quarterback is cutest. But a few days ago, I actually uttered the words, "I can't wait to see what the Steelers roster looks like after the draft this April."

Who the hell am I?

Recently while cleaning out a closet, I found the old potholder loom I bought years ago for the kids. Despite the fact that those ugly hooked potholders are too small to adequately protect one from third-degree burns, I ordered four bags of loops on eBay and just finished my third potholder last night.

Other strange pandemic habits I've picked up include obsessive vitamin intake, restoration of my circa-1985 second left ear piercing, a newfound penchant for Jameson whiskey, staying up until 1 a.m. on a regular basis, and an unhealthy nut addiction.

The pandemic is a lot like a deployment for military spouses. We do whatever we need to do — no matter how weird — to make it back to normal life. When that day comes, I'll keep my third earring, but will I give up my new obsessions with stock trading, staying up late, vitamins, TikTok, Jameson, potholder weaving, Ebay, nuts, news and football?

Only time will tell.

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com, and in Lisa's book, *The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com*. Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

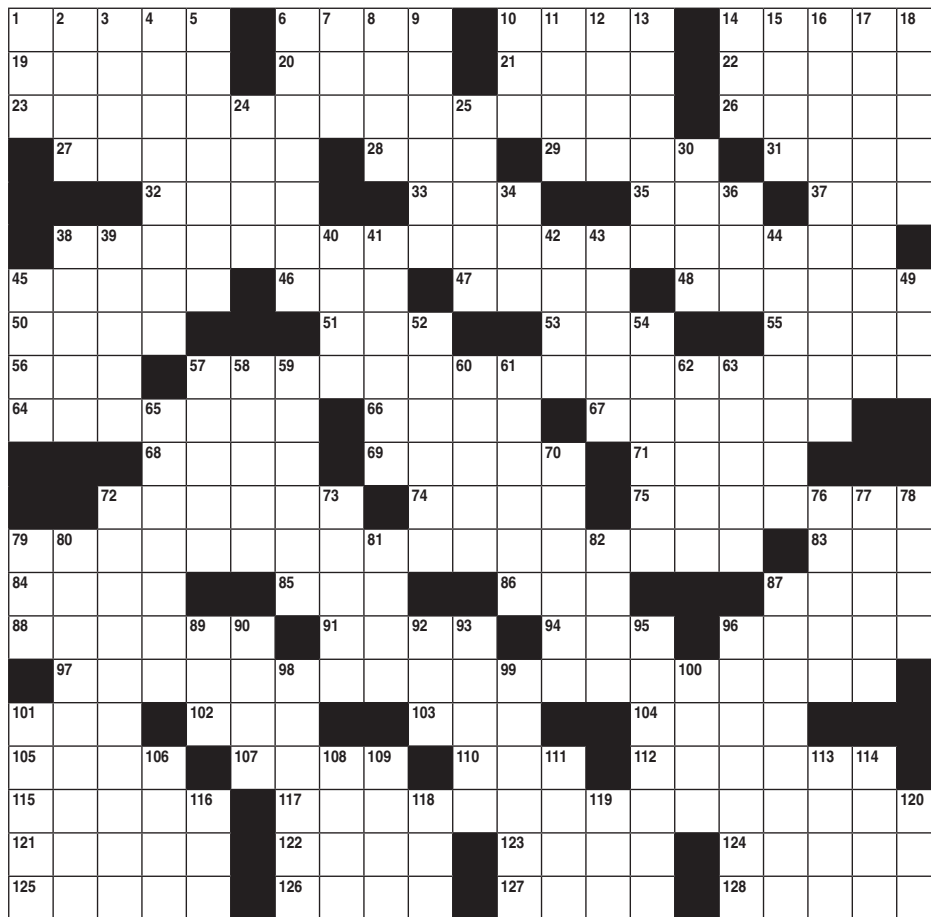
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

PRODUCT MISPLACEMENT

BY JIM HILGER / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Jim Hilger, of Amarillo, Texas, is a retired computer analyst and educator. Besides making crosswords, he enjoys collecting 45 r.p.m. records (he has more than 10,000 of them), cartooning and watercolor painting. "Most of my paintings end up looking like cartoons, however," he says. The starting point of this puzzle was 38-Across. Jim apologizes in advance to the maker of every product he has "misplaced" herein. — W.S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Mannerly
 - 6 Philippine currency
 - 10 Just open
 - 14 Second socks, say
 - 19 Offer a judgment
 - 20 Thing with tags
 - 21 Fruit-salad fruit
 - 22 Sound of exertion
 - 23 Huge celebration after L.A.'s football team wins the Super Bowl?
 - 26 Nice nicety
 - 27 Great shakes
 - 28 Oldest tech sch. in the U.S., founded in 1824
 - 29 Bygone royalty
 - 31 Oodles and oodles
 - 32 Besmirch
 - 33 Big fuss
 - 35 With 1-Down, address ender
 - 37 Schlep
 - 38 Reason that the prestigious scientific journal refuses articles from President Herbert's relatives?
 - 45 Power symbol?
 - 46 Senate support
 - 47 ___ gras
 - 48 Restorative indulgence
 - 50 Kind of bookstore
 - 51 Oil-field sight
 - 53 It's symbolized by an elephant, for short
 - 55 Theater seating option
 - 56 Japanese honorific
 - 57 Apology from a musician to the other band members?
 - 64 Best Picture winner that was banned in Vietnam
 - 66 Lena of "Chocolat"
 - 67 1957 Jimmy Dorsey hit
 - 68 "Lonely Boy" singer, 1959
 - 69 Stiff
 - 71 Morally uncompromised
 - 72 Many a summer position
 - 74 Like writing about how to write
 - 75 Epitome of herd mentality
 - 79 Volunteered at a nursery?
 - 83 General practice?
 - 84 Idle of Monty Python
 - 85 ___ Lou Who of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas"
 - 86 Elton John or Mick Jagger
 - 87 District on Hawaii's west coast
 - 88 Volcanic substance
 - 91 Person fluent in Quechua
 - 94 Et ___ (footnote abbr.)
 - 96 Fool
 - 97 Adding a historic ship as a deal sweetener?
 - 101 Campaign guru
 - 102 Super Bowl played in 2020
 - 103 Past
 - 104 Get hold of
 - 105 Dry
 - 107 Hiker's snack
 - 110 Article from U.C.L.A.?
 - 112 Vatican ambassador
 - 115 Small versions
 - 117 Story about a drinking binge?
 - 121 Frost lines?
 - 122 Awards feat, for short
 - 123 Puccini piece
 - 124 Really lift
 - 125 Ed of "Elf"
 - 126 Movement based on deliberate irrationality
 - 127 Be really impressive, informally
 - 128 Procrastinate
 - 8 State symbol
 - 9 Sound from a marching band
 - 10 Pseudonym lead-in
 - 11 Ditch at the last moment
 - 12 Leatherwork tools
 - 13 Largest city on the Arabian Peninsula
 - 14 "Lionized" studio
 - 15 Neighborhood
 - 16 Gift in "The 12 Days of Christmas"
 - 17 Push
 - 18 Trap, of a sort
 - 24 Sheikh's peer
 - 25 Free from
 - 30 Aussie animals
 - 34 Medal above plata
 - 36 One-up
 - 38 ___ cavity
 - 39 Bowl, e.g.
 - 40 Prefix with nautical
 - 41 One temporarily entrusting property to another
 - 42 Ink
 - 43 Units in the life span of a galaxy
 - 44 Ad ___ tax
 - 45 Brink of transition
 - 49 Folksy possessive
 - 52 Wilt
 - 54 Magazine whose crossword is always accompanied by a photograph
 - 57 Rigged card game
 - 58 Hooked up, as oxen
 - 59 Wolves (down)
 - 60 Supergiant in Orion
 - 61 Hall of Fame quarterback for the Colts
 - 62 More balanced
 - 63 In ___ way
 - 65 Rail container for liquids
 - 70 Bakery buy
 - 72 Cloth woven from flax fiber
 - 73 So last year
 - 76 "You can't make me!"
 - 77 Female goat
 - 78 Gloomy, weather-wise
 - 79 Place to surf
 - 80 Haydn's "The Creation" and others
 - 81 Step on a ladder
 - 82 The Berenstain Bears live in one
 - 87 "A merry old soul," in a nursery rhyme
 - 89 Crack up, in textspeak
 - 90 Bit of kindling
 - 92 U.S. counterpart to Britain's MI6
 - 93 ___-Norman French
 - 95 Common call on a 3rd-and-1
 - 96 Not black-and-white
 - 98 Sticker worn in November
 - 99 How some practical jokes go
 - 100 Burden
 - 101 Prairie east of the Andes
 - 106 Two-fifths of one quarter
 - 108 Sitar selection
 - 109 Move laboriously
 - 111 Houston M.L.B.'er
 - 113 Stressed, in a way: Abbr.
 - 114 Multiple of tetra-
 - 116 Union member of the 20th century, for short
 - 118 Concern for one catching a connection, briefly
 - 119 Sound from a drunk
 - 120 "Stop right there!"

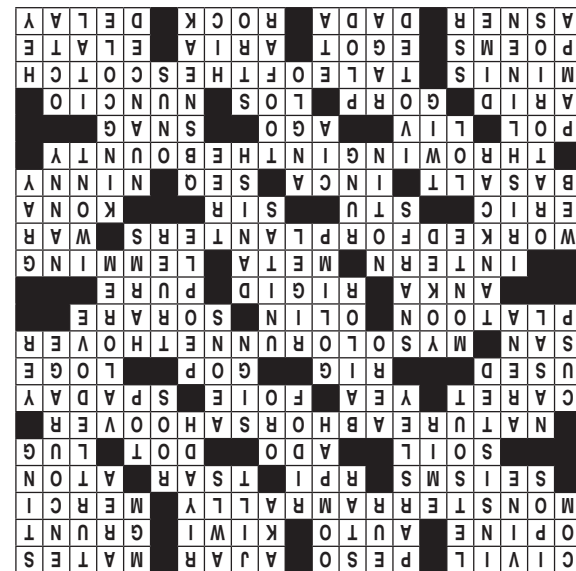


GUNSTON STREET

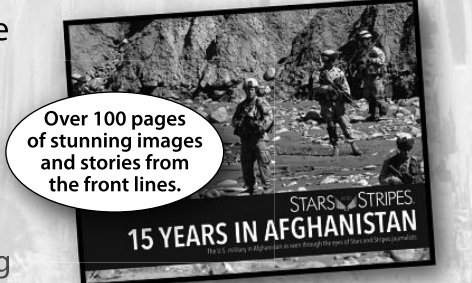


"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

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FACES



DISNEY PLUS

Gina Carano appears as Cara Dune in the Disney Plus series "The Mandalorian." In a statement Wednesday, Lucasfilm said Carano is no longer a part of "The Mandalorian" cast after backlash over a social media post comparing the Jewish experience during the Holocaust to the U.S. political climate.

'Mandalorian' actor fired

Lucasfilm severs ties with Carano following backlash over 'abhorrent and unacceptable' social media post

By TIMOTHY BELLA
The Washington Post

Actress Gina Carano will not return to her breakout role on the Disney Plus hit "The Mandalorian" following swift backlash to the actress sharing a social media post that implied conservatives in America are treated like Jews in Nazi Germany, the latest in a series of inflammatory online posts from the star.

Lucasfilm, the production company in charge of the Star Wars series, confirmed the decision in a statement shared with The Washington Post late Wednesday after Gizmodo first reported the news.

"Gina Carano is not currently employed by Lucasfilm and there are no plans for her to be in the future," the company said in a statement. "Nevertheless, her social media posts denigrating people based on their cultural and religious identities are abhorrent and unacceptable."

The announcement to sever ties with Carano, who played Cara Dune on the critically acclaimed series, comes after widespread backlash this week to an Instagram post that featured the graphic photo of a Jewish woman being beaten in Nazi Germany.

"Jews were beaten in the streets, not by Nazi soldiers but by their neighbors ... even by children. Because history is edited, most people today don't realize that to get to the point where Nazi soldiers could easily round up thousands of Jews, the government first made their own neighbors hate them simply for being Jews," Carano wrote on her Instagram story on Tuesday. "How is that any different from hating someone for their political views?"

As Carano has been an outspoken supporter of former president Donald Trump and has often complained about backlash against her conservative opinions, many critics took the post as her equating Republicans with Jews in Nazi Germany.

The post has since been deleted, but not before fans captured the moment and shared it widely. Critics

called for the actress to be fired for her online rhetoric under the hashtag #FireGinaCarano, which trended on Twitter on Wednesday.

Neither Disney nor Carano immediately returned messages from The Post late on Wednesday.

Carano, 38, first gained fame in the late 2000s as a decorated mixed martial artist, with her popularity in the fighting world leading some to call her "the face of women's MMA."

Upon retirement in 2009, Carano transitioned into acting, appearing in films such as "Fast & Furious 6" and "Deadpool."

She came to playing Dune after producer Jon Favreau, the showrunner of "The Mandalorian," created the character with the MMA legend in mind. Favreau tried out no other actresses for the role and even named the character after Carano. Her portrayal as a battle-hardened mercenary was met with positive reviews, with many lauding her on-screen performance as an inspiration for young women.

But as her fame grew over the last year, critics took note of her history of controversial and derogatory social media posts. In August, Carano blasted "cowards and bullies" for criticizing her lack of public support for Black Lives Matter and liked posts disparaging the movement. The next month, she was accused of ridiculing transgender pronouns by adding "boop/bop/beep" to her Twitter profile. She pushed back against critics who accused her of being transphobic, saying she did it to expose "the bullying mentality of the mob."

In November, she began echoing Trump's baseless claims of widespread voter fraud. In other posts, she mocked mask mandates to stop the spread of the coronavirus. She had previously called for churches and businesses to reopen and criticized pandemic restrictions.

It's unclear whether her role will be recast in "The Mandalorian," which is in preproduction for a third season that's expected to begin filming this year.

Rock Hall of Fame releases nominee list

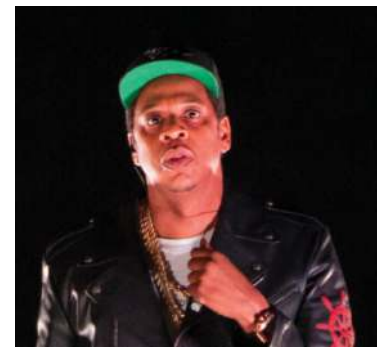
By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Jay-Z, Foo Fighters, Tina Turner and Iron Maiden lead this year's nominees to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, a female-heavy list of 16 acts that includes for the first time The Go-Go's, Mary J. Blige and Dionne Warwick.

Artists are eligible for a nomination 25 years after the release of their first official recording. There are two newly eligible acts, Jay-Z and Foo Fighters, while artists nominated for the first time include Blige, The Go-Go's, Iron Maiden, Warwick and Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti.

Several candidates are looking for a second spot in the hall. Turner would be inducted for a second time, having gone to the hall as part of Ike & Tina Turner in 1991. Foo Fighters frontman Dave Grohl is already in the hall as a member of Nirvana.

If elected, Turner and Carole King would become the second



AP

Jay-Z, performing on the 4:44 Tour in 2017, made this year's list of Rock Hall nominees.

and third female artists inducted twice, following Stevie Nicks' 2019 election; she was also in as a member of Fleetwood Mac.

Other nominees this year include: Kate Bush, Devo, Chaka Khan, LL Cool J, New York Dolls, Rage Against the Machine and Todd Rundgren.

The class of 2021 will be announced in May.

Jeep pauses Springsteen ad after drunk driving charge

Bruce Springsteen is facing a drunken driving charge in New Jersey, prompting Jeep to put on pause the Super Bowl television commercial that features him.

Springsteen was arrested Nov. 14 in a part of the Gateway National Recreation Area on the New Jersey coast, a spokesperson for the National Park Service confirmed Wednesday.

Springsteen received citations for driving while under the influence, reckless driving and consuming alcohol in a closed area. The spokesperson said Springsteen was cooperative.

Jeep released a statement saying it "would be inappropriate for us to comment on the details of a matter we have only read about and we cannot substantiate." But the company said, "it's also right that we pause our Big Game commercial until the actual facts can be established."

Joss Whedon faces 'Buffy' actor abuse claims

Prominent film and TV creator Joss Whedon, who faced a claim of abusive behavior on the set of "Justice League," drew criticism Wednesday from actors who worked with him on "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

The first and most direct allegations came from Charisma Carpenter, who said in a social media post that Whedon has a "history of creating toxic and hostile work environments," including the one she experienced on "Buffy" and

while she was pregnant.

Among Carpenter's allegations: During her pregnancy, Whedon called her "fat," joked about firing her and, at one point, called her into a meeting during which he allegedly asked if she was "going to keep it," apparently a reference to her pregnancy, and attacked her character and religion. She said she was "unceremoniously fired" from the role of Cordelia the following season.

Hustler publisher Larry Flynt dies at 78

Porn purveyor Larry Flynt, who built Hustler magazine into an adult entertainment juggernaut that included casinos, films, websites and other enterprises as he relentlessly championed First Amendment rights, has died at age 78.

Flynt, who had been in declining health, died Wednesday at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, his longtime attorney, Paul Cambria, told The Associated Press. He had been paralyzed and nearly killed in a 1986 assassination attempt.

Flynt maintained throughout his life that he wasn't just a pornographer but also a fierce defender of free-speech rights.

"My position is that you pay a price to live in a free society, and that price is toleration of some things you don't like," he once told the Seattle Times. "You have to tolerate the Larry Flynts of this world."

Compiled from wire services

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

White tiger figurine prompts calls to police

MD ROCKVILLE — Police in Maryland said they received several calls about a large, life-like figurine of a white tiger that was placed on the side of Interstate 270.

The Washington Post reported that the figurine was perched atop a Jersey barrier on the highway in Rockville.

A Rockville police officer went to look at the figurine after a 911 call was received.

Officers from the Montgomery County Police Department removed the tiger. It has since been “adopted” by officers of the county police department’s first district.

The question of how and why the figurine came to appear on the interstate remains a mystery.

Authorities: Shiv found in inmate’s nose

NY CAPE VINCENT — An inmate is in special housing and awaiting disciplinary charges after a correctional officer found a shiv in his nose, authorities said.

The officer noticed something in the inmate’s nose during a contraband search Jan. 29 at a New York prison in Cape Vincent, according to the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association, the union that represents correctional officers.

The inmate, who is serving an 18-year sentence for attempted murder, voluntarily removed the item from his nose, WWNY-TV reported. It was a piece of sharpened ceramic melted into a plastic cap.

Hoops fans compete to leave largest tip

OH CINCINNATI — A crosstown rivalry between basketball fans of the University of Cincinnati and Xavier University has extended to leaving tips at restaurants, with the largest exceeding \$4,500.

The restaurant The Birch in Terrance Park posted a photo on Facebook of a receipt with the monster tip left on a \$55 ticket, the Cincinnati Enquirer reported.

As many as 90 families pooled money to give the tip, Aaron Tritsch, owner of The Birch, told the newspaper.

Fans of the teams have left rival tips at more than 20 area restaurants since Jan. 9, the newspaper reported.

Fire damages historic Krispy Kreme store

GA ATLANTA — A historic Krispy Kreme Doughnuts store owned by Shaquille O’Neal was engulfed in flames this week, heavily damaging the structure.

Battalion Chief Douglas Hatcher said firefighters saved most of the building after the fire started in the back. No injuries were re-



WILFREDO LEE/AP

Traveling angels

Archbishop of Miami Thomas Wenski stands in front of a traveling bronze sculpture titled “Angels Unawares,” before blessing it in downtown Miami. According to the Archdiocese of Miami, Pope Francis unveiled the original sculpture, created by Canadian artist Timothy Schmalz, in St. Peter’s Square on Sept. 29, 2019, the 105th World Day of Migrants and Refugees. The traveling replica of the sculpture will be open to the public at Bayfront Park until April 8.

ported. Hatcher said the cause of the fire was under investigation.

The Midtown Krispy Kreme opened in 1965. It was one of the first locations established outside the company’s main bases of operations in Winston-Salem, N.C., and Nashville, Tenn.

O’Neal bought the store in 2016.

Police officer charged with stealing truck

CA SANTA ANA — A Los Angeles police officer was charged with stealing a truck from an Orange County dealership and using it for more than a year, including driving it to work, authorities said.

Matthew Calleros, 45, of Whittier was arrested last November after a nearly yearlong investigation by the LAPD and the Orange Police Department. He pleaded not guilty to three felony charges.

Prosecutors alleged that in October 2019, Calleros went to a dealership in Orange and drove off in a 2015 Chevrolet Silverado. Calleros then used another police officer’s identification to call the LAPD’s Vehicle Warrant Unit to report the stolen truck had been recovered, prosecutors contend.

He also used the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System to link a license plate number belonging to a different

THE CENSUS

70 The approximate number of feet a driver plunged off a slippery interchange exit ramp in Wisconsin, and survived. A Wisconsin Department of Transportation camera captured the Milwaukee-area crash. The video shows the pickup hitting snow on the right shoulder before flipping over the barrier wall and plummeting to Interstate 94 below as cars pass by. When deputies arrived, they found the pickup upright, the sheriff’s office said. Two people were already trying to help the driver, who was conscious and breathing.

Silverado to the stolen truck, according to prosecutors.

Herd of calves escape farm, stroll highway

IN LaPORTE — A herd of about 75 Holstein calves barreled down an Indiana highway after escaping a nearby farm.

Capt. Derek Allen, an off-duty officer who happened to be nearby in his police car, quickly made a U-turn when he saw the cows running by in LaPorte County.

“It’s really important to note, these cows weren’t just walking, they were at a full gallop, if you will,” Allen told the South Bend Tribune.

Allen, along with LaPorte County Detective Jim Fish, as well as a number of volunteer firefighters and other onlookers, began corralling the calves as they moved south.

Eventually, all the cows were accounted for, Allen said, and no

injuries were reported to the human onlookers or the cattle.

Man banned from park after poaching elk

OR CRATER NATIONAL PARK — An Oregon man was banned from Crater Lake National Park, ordered to pay over \$40,000 in restitution and sentenced to probation with a six-month stay at a residential reentry center after he pleaded guilty to poaching a trophy bull elk in the park, prosecutors said.

U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams said the guilty plea and sentence came after an investigation into the activities of Adrian Wood, 44. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began tracking the White City man after reports that he was illegally hunting in the park in 2014.

Federal agents searched Wood’s residence and found specimens of hunted animals including at least 12 deer, a black bear

and 13 elk, according to a DNA analysis.

Two men convicted of cockfighting charges

NV ELKO — Two Elko County men were convicted of numerous crimes related to an illegal cockfighting operation discovered during a drug raid in rural northeast Nevada in 2019.

Hector Hugo Ramirez-De La Torre, also was found guilty of drug trafficking charges and possessing a firearm by a prohibited person, the Elko Daily Free Press reported.

The jury failed to reach a verdict in Elko County District Court on drug charges for the other man, Jorge Landeros Ruiz, but prosecutors said they intend to retry him. A third man, Eduardo Ruiz, pleaded guilty earlier to two drug charges and five charges of unlawful killing or maiming of an animal. He was sentenced to six to 18 years in prison.

Law officers found more than 500 chickens and four horses and ended up euthanizing 248 roosters along with a horse in poor physical condition. They also confiscated 8.8 pounds of methamphetamine, \$13,000 in cash and eight firearms.

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Automotive 140

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940

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Some of the latest Scam fads are:

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- People saying Free Dog (different breeds) for adoption.

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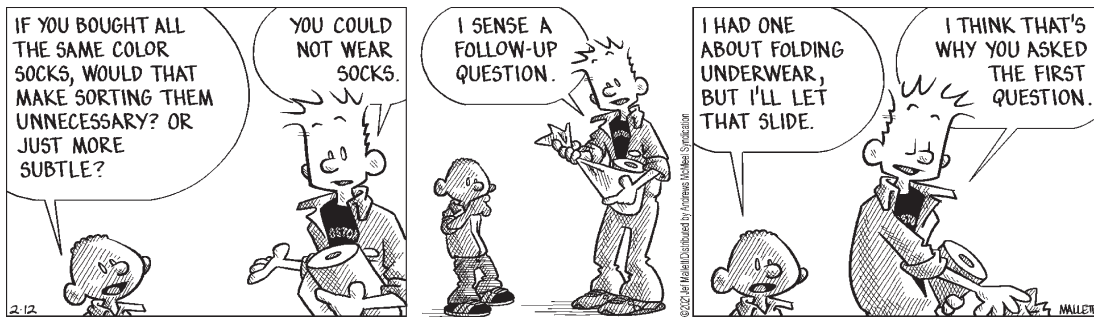
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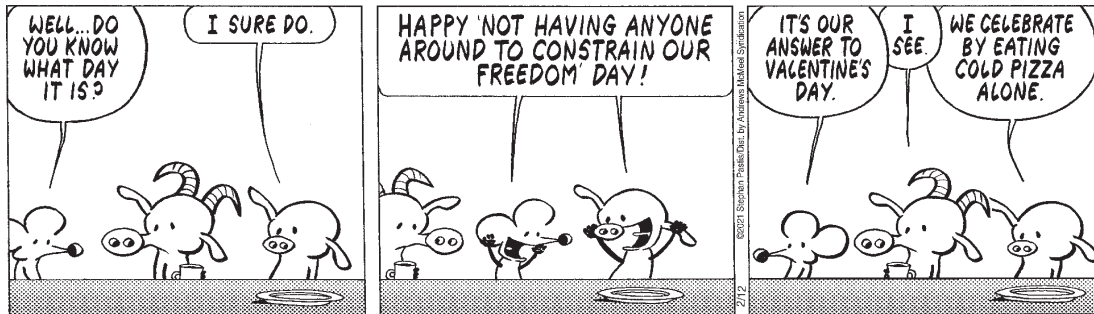
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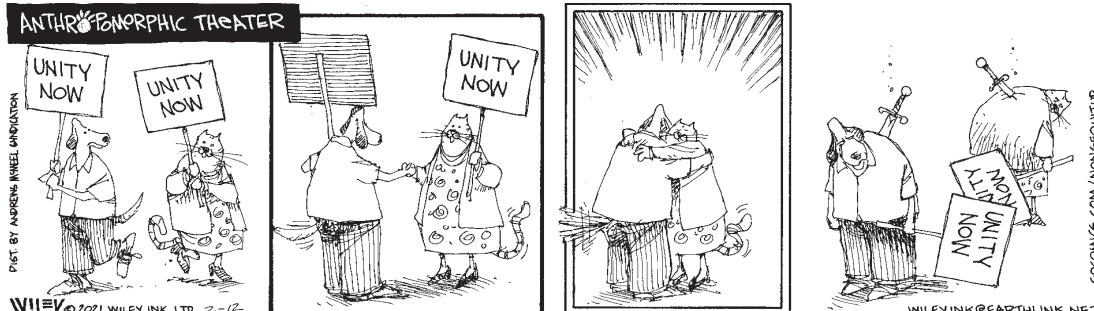
Dilbert



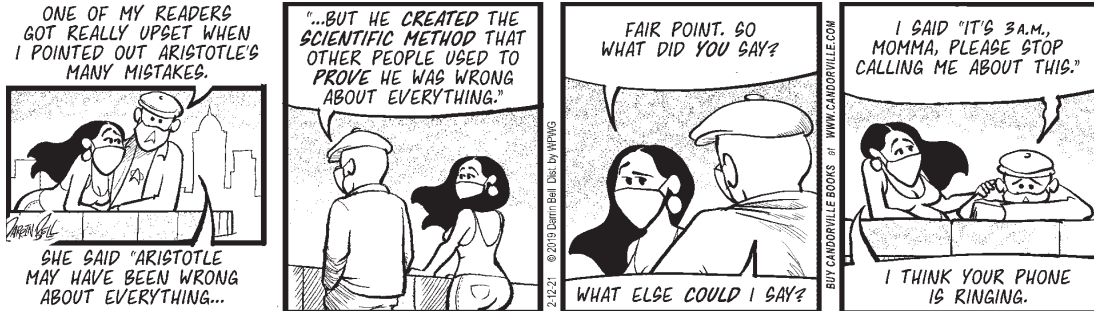
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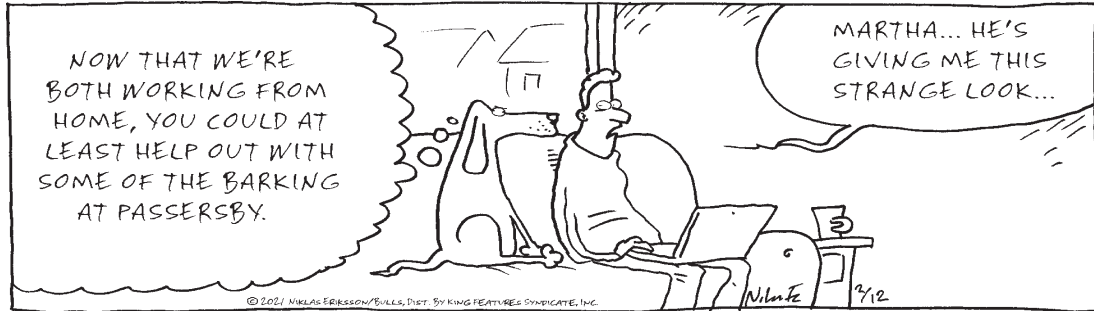
Non Sequitur



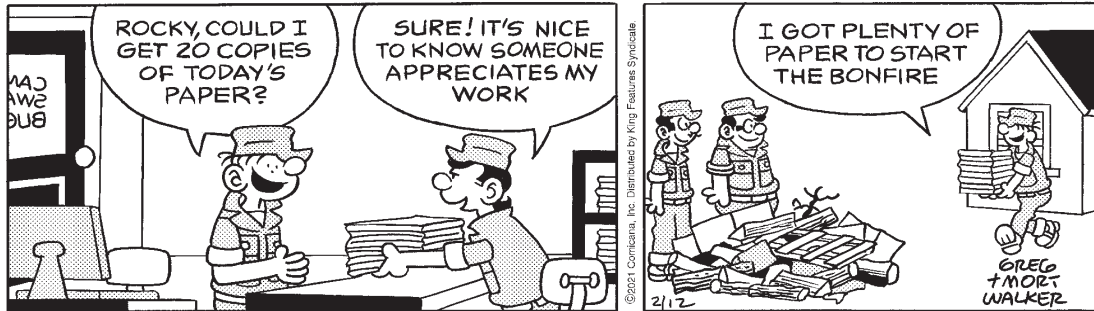
Candorville



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		
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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 Reacts in horror
- 6 Feedbag bit
- 9 Urban carrier
- 12 Birdlike
- 13 — -Magnon
- 14 In the style of
- 15 "Sexy" Beatles girl
- 16 Seasonal work assignment
- 18 Deletes
- 20 Stratagem
- 21 Mahal preceder
- 23 NYPD investigator
- 24 Streisand title role
- 25 "East of Eden" twin
- 27 — Park, Colorado
- 29 Polite refusal
- 31 Main dish
- 35 Olive — (military uniforms)
- 37 Evict
- 38 Good, in Guadalajara
- 41 Mel of Cooperstown
- 43 Hotel amenity
- 44 Jai —
- 45 Nativity figure
- 47 Clerical position
- 49 "Wheel of Fortune" host
- 52 Shelter
- 53 Year, in Mexico

- 54 Sculptor's material
- 55 Designer monogram
- 56 Life story
- 57 Of equal size

- 22 Pitcher's pride
- 24 Hankering
- 26 Boring type
- 28 Exams
- 30 "No seats"
- 32 Work that's needed ASAP
- 33 Sixth sense
- 34 Greek vowel
- 36 Yogi's little pal
- 38 In the worst way
- 39 "— Gold" (Fonda film)
- 40 Painter's stand
- 42 "Selma" actress
- 45 Singer Mitchell
- 46 Bits of butter
- 48 Poke
- 50 Blackbird
- 51 Beer barrel

DOWN

- 1 Ozone, for one
- 2 Director DuVernay
- 3 Moonlighter's gig
- 4 Two of a kind
- 5 Golf great Sam
- 6 Groups of eight
- 7 War god
- 8 Male turkey
- 9 Bayou cuisine
- 10 "It's — cause!"
- 11 Tower of confusion
- 17 Magician's word
- 19 "Bye!"
- 21 — chi

Answer to Previous Puzzle

A	M	O	K		K	I	T		A	K	I	N
D	A	D	A		I	C	H		S	I	S	I
D	R	O	Z		N	I	A		S	N	A	P
S	A	R	O	N	G		W	H	I	S	K	S
				O	O	F		A	S	H		
T	S	K	S		I	N	K	S	T	A	I	N
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J	O	N	A	T	H	A	N		G	A	M	E
		D	I	L			K	A	Y			
M	E	N	S	C		I	M	P	A	R	T	
O	R	E	L		A	P	E		S	L	A	Y
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2-12

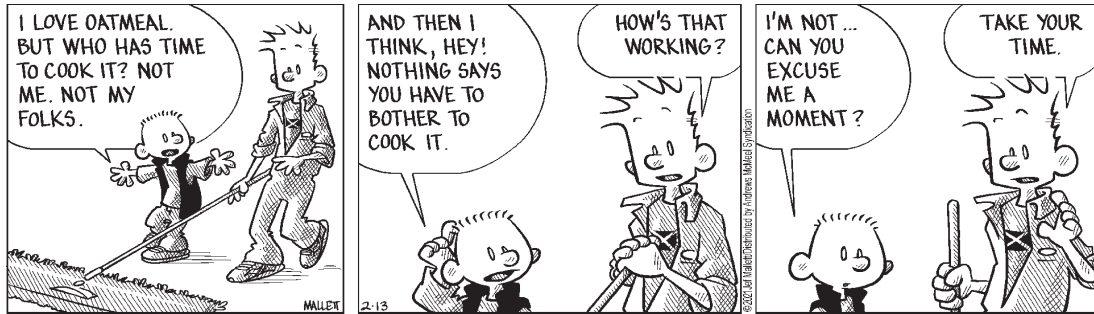
CRYPTOQUIP

OXUJ XUWVZCZE OXZC U
 LZQJURC SZQK WIWVUQ UESRLZ
 LIVFDCRMJ LVRDPZE UPIUQE
 JXZ PFM? UPPK QIEZ.

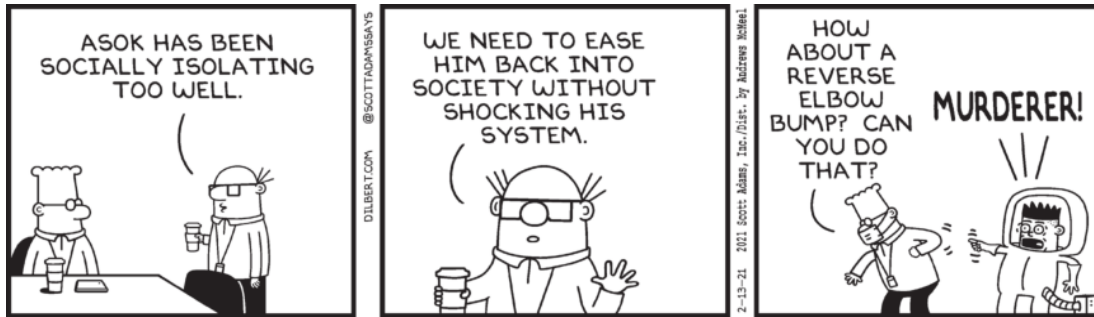
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: DARK YELLOWISH-BROWN COLOR THAT PICKLES TURN WHEN THEY SIT OUT AND BECOME SPOILED: CUKE UMBER.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals B

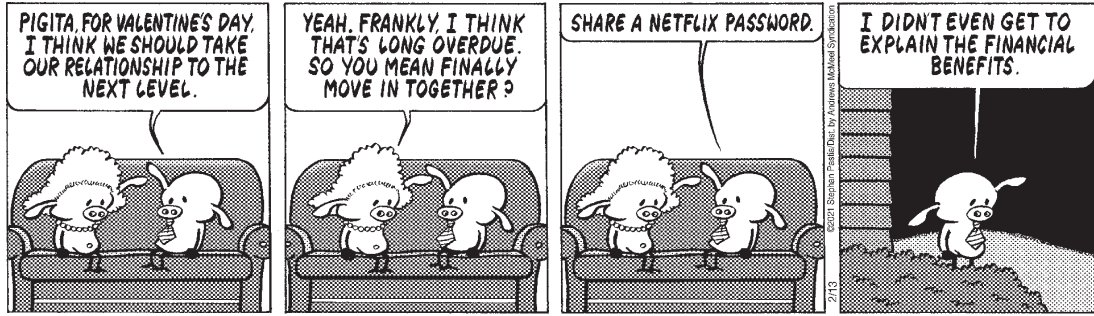
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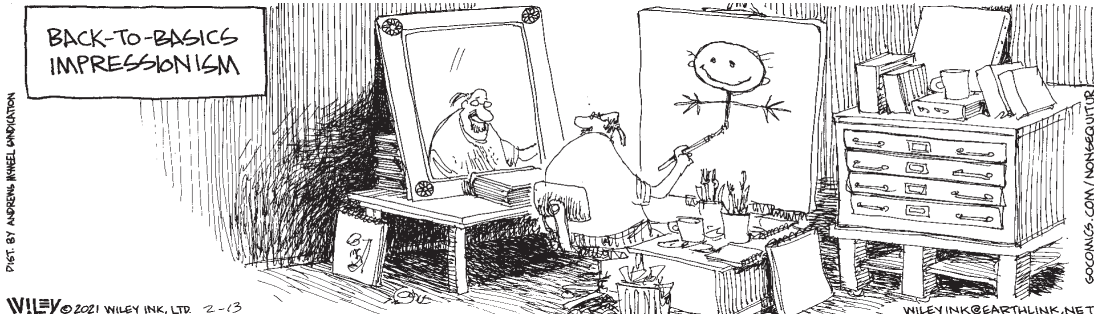
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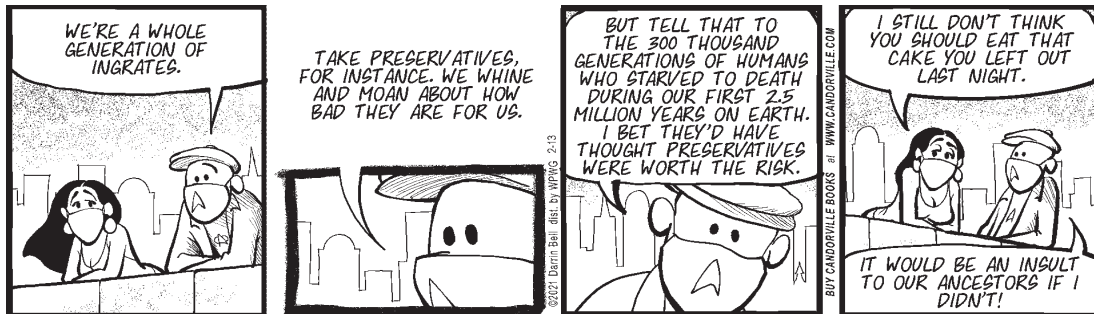
Pearls Before Swine



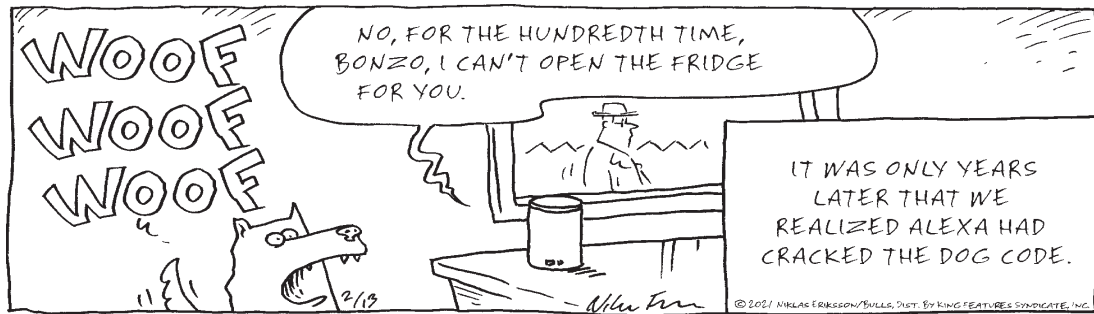
Non Sequitur



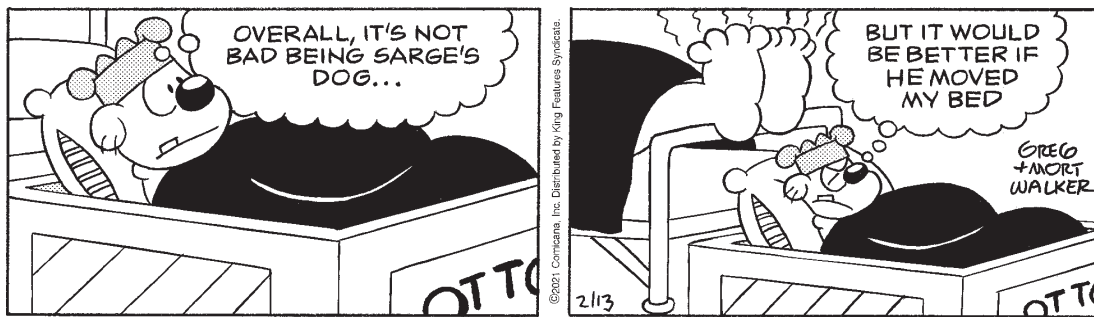
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31	32	33				34		35		36	37	38
39					40		41		42			
43				44				45		46		
47			48					49		50		
51								52				
	53							54				

ACROSS

- 1 Strike, old-style
- 6 Ranch crew
- 11 Ocean breeze
- 12 Monastery heads
- 14 Leather worker
- 15 Send to a starship
- 16 Tolkien creature
- 17 Ledger entry
- 19 Hollywood's Lupino
- 20 Off-white
- 22 Speck
- 23 Peevish fit
- 24 Oyster's prize
- 26 Bits of body art
- 28 Ball club?
- 30 — chi
- 31 Rapping sound
- 35 Sailing vessel
- 39 Mideast gulf
- 40 Lean- — (sheds)
- 42 Director Wertmuller
- 43 Leg, in slang
- 44 Give — old college try
- 46 French article
- 47 Horrify
- 49 Surplus
- 51 Wonder or Nicks
- 52 "Peter Pan" author

- 53 Backed (away from)
- 54 Tickle

- 23 Moonshine maker
- 25 Long. crosser
- 27 Prof's helpers
- 29 Was a snitch
- 31 Sitar tunes
- 32 Conforms
- 33 Plant-based protein source
- 34 Youngster
- 36 NHL team
- 37 Infant's outfit
- 38 No longer in
- 41 Biblical realm
- 44 "Would — to you?"
- 45 Pre-diploma hurdle
- 48 Bird (Pref.)
- 50 French vineyard

DOWN

- 1 Spooky gathering
- 2 Chanted word
- 3 Actor McShane
- 4 Even
- 5 Goofed
- 6 — for Humanity
- 7 Help a hood
- 8 Cagers' gp. for short
- 9 Spotted tile
- 10 Small apartment
- 11 Precipitous
- 13 Tiffs
- 18 Automaton, for short
- 21 City-based

Answer to Previous Puzzle

G	A	S	P	S		O	A	T		C	A	B				
A	V	I	A	N		C	R	O		A	L	A				
S	A	D	I	E		T	E	M	P	J	O	B				
						E	R	A	S	E	S		R	U	S	E
T	A	J				D	E	T		Y	E	N	T	L		
A	R	O	N			E	S	T	E	S						
I	M	B	U	S	Y					E	N	T	R	E	E	
						D	R	A	B	S		O	U	S	T	
B	U	E	N	O		O	T	T		S	P	A				
A	L	A	I			J	O	S	E	P	H					
D	E	S	K	J	O	B				S	A	J	A	K		
L	E	E				A	N	O		S	T	O	N	E		
Y	S	L				B	I	O		A	S	B	I	G		

2-13

CRYPTOQUIP

V L M - O R Z S Z V K L M L E R L Q Z
 X S G M Z G K E G C Q G U U Z G A Q L Y
 W Z A O G X Y W G F Z S X H I L H Z Q:
 I Z O O C W A L W F Z A Q U G Y X Z K.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT HAPPENED WHEN A CERTAIN VERY POPULAR ADVICE COLUMNIST CLIMBED ABOARD THE BUS? ABBY RODE.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals G

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Imagining a Europe that would stand up to Putin

By FRIDA GHITIS

Special to The Washington Post

Imagine a parallel world in which Europe lived up to its ideals. In that universe, members of the European Union would react to Russia's attempted murder of regime critics with a single, unified, emphatic voice and would follow its words with action.

Imagine how the bloc could use its tremendous economic and political weight — 27 countries, 448 million people, one of the largest economies in the world — to impose a cost on Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime for its flagrant violations of human rights. A strong and focused European voice would have forced Putin to think twice about his brutal treatment of anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny, whom he has tried to assassinate and has now thrown back into prison after a contrived trial.

Imagine how the EU's foreign policy chief could have responded to Navalny's imprisonment — and the widespread protests in Russian cities that followed it — by proposing a tough package of sanctions targeting key Russian officials and business tycoons. The measures might have included making it illegal to demand bribes or to invest corrupt profits in the West, and it could make it impossible to get in and out of European capitals and resorts easily. Aside from making life unpleasant for the oligarchs, this would have also forced them to rethink their own cozy relationship with Putin, perhaps making his seemingly endless grip on power a bit less of a sure thing.

This imaginary EU would also make it clear that anti-money laundering measures, a freeze of assets held in the West and a series of other steps would follow unless Moscow started making progress on human rights and democracy, beginning with Navalny's

release. Faced with intense pressure from its leading trade partner, Russia would not simply be able to go on with business as usual — and Europe could present itself as the world's leading defender of freedom and human rights.

This version of the EU could contrast itself favorably with the dramatically diminished stature of the United States. Europeans spent the four years of the Trump administration bitterly complaining about America's abdication of its role as a defender of free societies. Imagine a Europe that was to make good on those criticisms by acting in defense of its own values, finally assuming the "strategic autonomy" it has long claimed to want.

All this is a useful thought experiment — because it brings into relief just how pathetic real-life Europe has become. Last week, when the EU's de facto foreign minister Josep Borrell traveled to Moscow for "talks" on the Navalny issue, the Russians were happy to display their contempt. Borrell stood meekly by as Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov humiliated him, calling Europe "an unreliable partner." Then, adding injury to insult, Russia expelled three European diplomats it accused of participating in the recent wave of pro-Navalny protests.

Europe ought to be a tremendous force for good in the world. Instead, it too often cuts a pathetic figure.

Germany has just restarted work — in defiance of U.S. sanctions — on the Nord Stream 2 project, a system of pipelines designed for the import of Russian gas. By doing so, the Germans have effectively declared that they could not care less how Russia treats its own people and that they will unquestioningly hold their economic interests higher than their alleged loyalty to European values. They didn't even pause the work for symbolic effect.

This might be a good moment to point out that defending human rights and democracy is not some obligation imposed on the Europeans from without. The EU's own founding documents explicitly embrace "universal values of human dignity ... based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law." Imagine if Europe took these values seriously in its dealings with the rest of the world. And imagine if the EU and the United States consistently collaborated in their defense. Other tyrants around the world would have no choice but to take notice.

Imagine if the liberal democracies, acting in concert, implemented sanctions against those who benefit from corrupt regimes and imposed curbs on those doing business with state-owned firms in authoritarian states. Despots would have to think twice before imprisoning dissidents, toppling officials, muzzling critics, or sending death squads to other countries to silence their foes. It's a beautiful dream. But it's far from reality.

After Navalny's jailing, EU foreign ministers met to discuss the case — and came to no conclusions, no action. Borrell went to Moscow anyway — with predictable results.

The spectacle of his visit was so damaging to Europe's reputation that scores of members of the European Parliament wrote a letter urging European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to fire Borrell. Failing that, they wrote, he should resign for causing "severe damage to the reputation of the EU."

Von der Leyen said Borrell has her "full support," which is hardly surprising. After all, this is the reality of today's EU — not the one we see when we try to imagine a better world.

Frida Ghitis is a former CNN producer and correspondent who writes about world affairs for The Washington Post, CNN.com and World Politics Review.

Images of the mob at the Capitol are unforgettable

By JENNIFER RUBIN

The Washington Post

I felt sick to my stomach watching the House managers' minute-by-minute presentation Wednesday of insurrectionists entering the Capitol, assaulting police officers, terrorizing lawmakers and staff. The near-miss incidents in which lawmakers and staff came within seconds of confrontation with the mob provided riveting viewing. Only the most heartless senators could fail to appreciate that "but for the grace of God," they would have been beaten or killed. The visuals were all the more powerful because the people in peril were sitting as jurors in the trial of the disgraced former president who incited the mob.

Further depressing and incensing was the knowledge that most Republican senators, including those whose lives were saved during the evacuation of the Senate chamber (impeachment manager Rep. Eric Swalwell, of California, said they came within just 58 steps of the mob), have been telling us — and more importantly, the mob's victims — to "move on." It defies belief that they are alive because of the courage of police, but haven't the courage themselves to convict the person who put a target on their backs.

Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., also took us through the former president's actions during the siege, including the unanswered pleas to demand that his supporters evacuate and his refusal to condemn the terror-

ists. Republicans trying to acquit on the grounds that members of the mob went to the Capitol on their own (patently false as that may be) have no explanation for the commander in chief's abdication of his responsibility to defend the government.

Several aspects of the presentation stood out — and will stay with us forever.

First, one could viscerally sense the barbarity of the mob. The hellish violence, the taunts and the determination to find and kill both House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Vice President Mike Pence should appall any decent human. But not the former president. In a video to the mob, he told them, "We love you." There is no more vivid example of the pathology of the ex-president who embraces anyone who will "fight" for him. By placing Pence center stage in the trial, House managers made clear just how dangerous it was for the ex-president to incite a mob willing to kill Pence.

Second, the disrespect and violence against law enforcement officers were more stunning than we initially realized. Video showing police officer Daniel Hodges being crushed in a doorway, with blood on his face, should disabuse anyone of the notion that the former president and his minions revere the police. They stand not for law and order, but for chaos and malevolence.

Third, knowing that the vast majority of Republicans will nevertheless vote to acquit despite the evidence should put in perspec-

tive how abnormal the Republican Party has become. To remain in good standing in the GOP, they must divorce themselves from any sense of compassion (for those hurt or killed), gratitude (toward those who saved them) or loyalty (not even to Pence). How will they rationalize their cringeworthy support for the MAGA cult leader years from now? How do they rationalize it now?

Fourth, the hysteria that the former president whipped up methodically and deliberately over the course of weeks likely could not have succeeded in motivating the mob had social media cut him off immediately after the election or if Fox News had not given him an audience of millions. (Disclosure: I am an MSNBC contributor.) His lies were amplified night after night by Fox News hosts. The Big Lie that the election was stolen was embraced by radio talk-show hosts and Rupert Murdoch's media empire. Even now, when the results of their handiwork are seen, there is no remorse and no reconsideration of their racket whereby they made money off inflaming ignorant people.

The Republicans who could sit through that presentation, disregard it and vote to acquit the ringleader in chief have irretrievably lost the moral standing to govern. They do not get to self-identify as "constitutional conservatives" or "law and order" Republicans if they vote to let the ex-president off.

Jennifer Rubin writes reported opinion for The Washington Post.

SCOREBOARD/AUSTRALIAN OPEN

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Wednesday's men's scores

EAST

Charleston (WV) 93, W. Virginia St. 87
Daemen 102, D'Youville 77
Fairmont St. 99, Frostburg St. 75
Providence 70, UConn 59
Villanova 96, Marquette 64
Wake Forest 69, Boston College 65
West Liberty 119, Wheeling Jesuit 76

SOUTH

Belmont Abbey 87, Erskine 72
Chattanooga 78, Wofford 66
Davis & Elkins 83, WV Wesleyan 80
George Mason 77, Fordham 45
Georgia College 59, Columbus St. 49
Georgia Southwestern 108, Young Harris 105, OT

Houston 82, South Florida 65
LSU 94, Mississippi St. 80
Mercer 77, Samford 70
Mississippi 80, Missouri 59
North Georgia 82, Clayton St. 67
Old Dominion 78, Charlotte 76, OT
SC-Aiken 69, Lander 55
Tennessee 89, Georgia 81
The Citadel 79, ETSU 71
Tusculum 86, Mars Hill 65
UNC-Greensboro 64, Furman 58
Virginia 57, Georgia Tech 49
W. Carolina 74, VMI 72
Wichita St. 61, UCF 60

MIDWEST

Alderson-Broadus 77, Notre Dame (Ohio) 65
Bradley 76, Valparaiso 52
Drake 80, N. Iowa 59
Fort Hays St. 89, Cent. Oklahoma 79
Indiana 79, Northwestern 76, 2OT
Iowa 79, Rutgers 66
Missouri St. 65, S. Illinois 53
S. Indiana 86, Quincy 71
Saint Louis 67, Rhode Island 60
Wisconsin 61, Nebraska 48

SOUTHWEST

Abilene Christian 88, Houston Baptist 59
Nicholls 76, Lamar 71
Northwestern St. 68, Incarnate Word 67
Sam Houston St. 79, SE Louisiana 61
Stephen F. Austin 80, Texas A&M-CC 68
Tulane 58, Tulsa 48

FAR WEST

Pepperdine 76, San Francisco 68
San Diego St. 77, San Jose St. 55

Wednesday's women's scores

EAST

Bryant 56, CCSU 53
DePaul 81, St. John's 73
Fairleigh Dickinson 79, St. Francis Brook-lyne 74, OT

Houston 89, Temple 52
Lafayette 76, Loyola (Md.) 69
Merrimack 83, LIU 76
Towson 83, James Madison 74
UConn 70, Seton Hall 49
West Virginia 69, Kansas 61

SOUTH

Appalachian St. 72, Coastal Carolina 58
Charlotte 102, Old Dominion 95, 2OT
Cincinnati 73, Memphis 62
Incarnate Word 56, Northwestern St. 47
Nicholls 79, Lamar 77, OT
SE Louisiana 68, Sam Houston St. 67
Tulane 64, Tulsa 47

MIDWEST

Bowling Green 80, Kent St. 79, OT
Buffalo 80, Toledo 73
Cent. Michigan 81, Miami (Ohio) 78
Indiana 90, Penn St. 65
Marquette 77, Butler 48
Minnesota 83, Illinois 73
Ohio 88, Ball St. 66
Providence 60, Creighton 48
W. Michigan 74, Akron 66
Wisconsin 75, Ohio St. 70

SOUTHWEST

Abilene Christian 62, Houston Baptist 56
Baylor 82, Texas Tech 50
Cent. Arkansas 58, New Orleans 53
TCU 78, Kansas St. 67
Texas 64, Oklahoma St. 53

FAR WEST

Boise St. 85, UNLV 59
Fresno St. 76, Air Force 58

AP SPORTLIGHT

Feb. 12

1937 — Cleveland is granted an NFL franchise. The Rams play in Cleveland for nine years before moving to Los Angeles. After the 1994 season, the Rams move to St. Louis.

1947 — Boston's Bill Cowley becomes the NHL all-time scoring leader when he scores a goal and an assist for the Bruins in a 10-1 win over the New York Rangers. Cowley's 529 points is one more than Syd Howe, who retired one year earlier.

1958 — Boston's Bill Russell scores 18 points and grabs 41 rebounds to lead the Celtics to a 119-101 victory over the Syracuse Nationals.

1968 — Jean-Claude Killy of France wins the men's giant slalom in the Winter Olympics at Grenoble, his second gold medal en route to the Alpine triple crown.

1972 — The Soviet Union ice hockey team wins the gold medal with a 5-2 victory over Czechoslovakia at the Winter Olympics. The United States is awarded the silver because it had beaten and tied Czechoslovakia.

1985 — Pittsburgh's Mario Lemieux becomes the first rookie to be named most valuable player at the NHL All-Star game. The 19-year-old center scores two goals, including the game-winner, and has an assist to lead the Wales Conference to a 6-4 win over the Campbell Conference.

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball American League

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Named Jerry Narron major-league instructor and promoted James Kruk to head athletic trainer and Brett Walker to director of rehabilitation.

BOSTON RED SOX — Acquired OF Franchi Cordero and two players to be named later from Kansas City and RHP Josh Winckowski and a player to be named later from the New York Mets.

DETROIT TIGERS — Agreed to terms with INFs Greg Garcia and Renato Nunez on minor league contracts.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Acquired OF Andrew Benintendi and cash considerations in a three-team trade from Boston and the New York Mets.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Agreed to terms with DH Nelson Cruz on a one-year contract.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Agreed to terms with RHP Darren O'Day on a one-year contract with a player/club 2022 option. Designated RHP Ben Heller for assignment.

OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Agreed to terms with INF Jed Lowrie on a minor league contract.

TEXAS RANGERS — Named as managers, Kenny Holmberg (Triple A-Round Rock), Jared Goedert (Double AA-Frisco), Josh Johnson (High A-Hickory), Carlos Cardoza (Low A-Down East), Jay Sullenger (Rookie AZL Rangers) and Carlos Maldonado (Rookie DSL Rangers). Agreed to terms with RHP Mike Folytyniewicz on a one-year contract. Designated RF Adolis Garcia for assignment.

National League

CINCINNATI REDS — Claimed INF Max Schrock from Chicago Cubs waivers. Agreed to terms with RHP Braden Shipley on a minor league contract.

COLORADO ROCKIES — Agreed to terms with RHP Dugan Darrell.

NEW YORK METS — Acquired OF Khalil Lee from Kansas City in a three-team trade with the Mets sending RHP Josh Winckowski and a player to be named later to Boston. Designated C Ali Sanchez for assignment.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Traded RHP Johan Quezada to St. Louis for undisclosed cash. Signed INF Didi Gregorius to a two-year contract. Agreed to terms with OF Matt Joyce on a minor league contract.

BASKETBALL

WNBA

NEW YORK LIBERTY — Acquired Gs Natasha Howard and Sami Whitcomb from Seattle in exchange for a No. 1 overall 2021 WNBA draft pick and a first round pick in 2022 draft. Traded G Kia Nurse and F Megan Walker to Phoenix in exchange for a sixth round pick in the 2021 WNBA draft and a first round pick in the 2022 draft.

SEATTLE STORM — Acquired the rights to sign F Stephanie Talbot from New York.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Re-signed TE Eric Tomlinson to a one-year contract.

DENVER BRONCOS — Released CB A.J. Bouye.

CHICAGO BEARS — Named Mike Pettine senior defensive assistant, Mike Snyder offensive quality control/assistant quarterback coach and Henry Burris offensive quality control coach.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Signed TE Paul Quessenberry.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Named Martin Nance executive vice president and chief marketing officer.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Signed OLB Quinton Bell, WRs Cyril Grayson, Travis Jenson and Josh Pearson, DBs Javon Hagan and Herb Miller, Gs Nick Leverett and John Molchon, DL Benning Potoa'e, TE Cody McElroy and DT Kobe Smith to reserve/futures contracts.

WASHINGTON FOOTBALL TEAM — Agreed to terms with QB Taylor Heinicke on a two-year contract extension.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

BUFFALO SABRES — Reassigned G Dustin Tokarski from Rochester (AHL) to the minor league taxi squad.

DALLAS STARS — Loaned D Julius Honka to Texas (AHL). Reassigned Fs Ty Dellandrea and Tanner Kero to the minor league taxi squad.

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

NASHVILLE SC — Acquired F C.J. Sapon on a two-year contract with an option for a third year.

ORANGE COUNTY SC — Signed MF Tommy McCabe from Cincinnati.

COLLEGE

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY — Announced that Matthew Jabs is returning as women's swimming and diving head coach and Kristen Burgess as women's tennis head coach.

NORTHWESTERN — Named Jim O'Neil football defensive coordinator.

PRO BASEBALL

MLB calendar

Feb. 17 — Voluntary reporting date for pitchers, catchers and injured players.

Feb. 22 — Voluntary reporting date for other players.

Feb. 27 — Mandatory reporting date.

March 15 — Last day to place a player on waivers for 30 days termination pay.

March 27 — Last day to offer a retention bonus to an eligible player attending spring training with a minor league contract.

March 30 — Last day to place a player on waivers for 45 days termination pay.

Defending champ Kenin done

BY JOHN PYE
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Sofia Kenin knew this would be a tough test at the Australian Open, a potentially early end to her first attempt to defend a Grand Slam title.

Upon realizing she probably would be playing big-hitting veteran Kaia Kanepi in the second round, Kenin acknowledged, she "maybe kind of broke down a little bit."

Kenin was right to be worried. And, with Kanepi at her best, this one was over quickly. Delivering 10 aces, Kanepi powered her way past the fourth-seeded Kenin, overwhelming the 2020 champion 6-3, 6-2 in only 64 minutes on Thursday.

"I obviously felt like I'm not there 100% — physically, mentally, my game. Everything just feels real off, obviously. It's not good," Kenin said at her news conference, where she wiped away tears. "I mean, I just — I know I couldn't really handle the pressure."

One person who knows how to defend a major title is Rafael Nadal, who shares the men's record of 20 with Roger Federer.

Nadal shrugged off some heckling from a spectator before beating 177th-ranked Michael Mmoh 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 in the last night match,



RICK RYRCROFT/AP

The United States' Sofia Kenin waves as she leaves the court following her second-round loss to Estonia's Kaia Kanepi on Thursday at the Australian Open in Melbourne, Australia.

showing no signs of the back soreness that has bothered him.

Nadal was serving for the second set at 5-4 when a woman yelled out and made hand gestures as he prepared to serve. She yelled again at 30-0 and stadium security escorted her out of Rod Laver Arena. As the rest of the crowd started booing the woman, Nadal laughed.

Australian Open scoreboard

Thursday

At Melbourne Park Melbourne, Australia
Purse: AUD\$3,790,000
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Men's Singles Second Round

Andrey Rublev (7), Russia, def. Thiago Monteiro, Brazil, 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (8).
Feliciano Lopez, Spain, def. Lorenzo Sonego (31), Italy, 5-7, 3-6, 6-3, 7-5, 6-4.
Karen Khachanov (19), Russia, def. Ricardas Berankis, Lithuania, 6-2, 6-4, 6-4.
Casper Ruud (24), Norway, def. Tommy Paul, United States, 3-6, 6-2, 6-4, 7-5.
Lloyd Harris, South Africa, def. Alexei Popyrin, Australia, 6-2, 1-6, 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-3.
Mikael Ymer, Sweden, def. Carlos Alcaraz Garfia, Spain, 2-6, 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (5).
Filip Krajinovic (28), Serbia, def. Pablo Andujar, Spain, 6-2, 5-7, 6-1, 6-4.
Mackenzie McDonald, United States, def. Borna Coric (22), Croatia, 6-4, 6-2, 4-6, 6-4.
Radu Albot, Moldova, def. Christopher O'Connell, Australia, 6-2, 7-5, 7-6 (8).
Matteo Berrettini (9), Italy, def. Tomas Machac, Czech Republic, 6-3, 6-2, 4-6, 6-3.
Stefanos Tsitsipas (5), Greece, def. Thanasi Kokkinakis, Australia, 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-1, 6-7 (5), 6-4.
Fabio Fognini (16), Italy, def. Salvatore Caruso, Italy, 4-6, 6-2, 2-6, 6-3, 7-6 (12).
Alex de Minaur (21), Australia, def. Pablo Cuevas, Uruguay, 6-3, 6-3, 7-5.
Daniil Medvedev (4), Russia, def. Roberto Carballes Baena, Spain, 6-2, 7-5, 6-1.
Rafael Nadal (2), Spain, def. Michael Mmoh, United States, 6-1, 6-4, 6-2.
Cameron Norrie, Britain, def. Roman Safiullin, Russia, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3, 7-6 (3).

Women's Singles Second Round
Shelby Rogers, United States, def. Olga Danilovic, Serbia, 6-2, 6-3.
Karolina Muchova (25), Czech Republic, def. Mona Barthel, Germany, 6-4, 6-1.
Karolina Pliskova (6), Czech Republic, def. Danielle Collins, United States, 7-5, 6-2.
Elise Mertens (18), Belgium, def. Zhu Lin, China, 7-6 (8), 6-1.
Belinda Bencic (11), Switzerland, def. Svetlana Kuznetsova, Russia, 7-5, 2-6, 6-4.
Ashleigh Barty (1), Australia, def. Daria Gavrilova, Australia, 6-1, 7-6 (7).
Yulia Putintseva (26), Kazakhstan, def. Alison van Uytvanck, Belgium, 6-4, 1-6, 6-2.
Kaia Kanepi, Estonia, def. Sofia Kenin (4), United States, 6-3, 6-2.
Donna Vekic (28), Croatia, def. Nadia Podoroska, Argentina, 6-2, 6-2.

After the brief delay, he hit two aces to finish off the set. He wrapped up the match 1 hour, 47 minutes.

In the preceding match on the main show court, fifth-seeded Elena Svitolina beat 16-year-old Coco Gauff 6-4, 6-3, knocking the youngest player out of the draw.

Other women's winners included former No. 1 Karolina Pliskova, who beat Danielle Collins 7-5, 6-2, and Shelby Rogers, who reached the third round at the Australian Open for the first time by beating Olga Danilovic 6-2, 6-3.

In an all-American match, No. 22 Jennifer Brady beat Madison Brengle 6-1, 6-2.

Fifth-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas was pushed all the way by No. 267-ranked Australian wild-card entry Thanasi Kokkinakis in a 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-1, 6-7 (5), 6-4 win. Tsitsipas will next play Mikael Ymer, who beat 17-year-old Spanish qualifier Carlos Alcaraz in the second round.

Also advancing were No. 9 Matteo Berrettini, No. 21 Alex de Minaur and Mackenzie McDonald, who beat 22nd-seeded Borna Coric 6-4, 6-2, 4-6, 6-4, and 39-year-old Feliciano Lopez.

AP sports writers Steven Wine in Miami and Howard Fendrich in Washington contributed to this report.

tain, def. Aljaz Bedene, Slovenia, and Jiri Vesely, Czech Republic, 6-7 (2), 7-6 (5), 7-6 (7).
Casper Ruud, Norway, and Miomir Kecmanovic, Serbia, def. Oliver Marach, Austria, and Robin Haase (13), Netherlands, 6-3, 1-6, 6-0.
Horia Tecau, Romania, and Marcelo Melo (7), Brazil, def. Filip Krajinovic and Dusan Lajovic, Serbia, 3-0, ret.

Women's Doubles First Round
Vera Zvonareva, Russia, and Laura Siegemund (16), Germany, def. Kimberly Birrell and Jaimee Fourlis, Australia, 6-2, 6-1.
Kirsten Flipkens, Belgium, and Andreja Klepac (14), Slovenia, def. Oksana Kalashnikova, Georgia, and Georgina Garcia Perez, Spain, 7-5, 6-4.
Barbora Strycova, Czech Republic, and Hsieh Su-wei (1), Taiwan, def. Astra Sharma and Destanee Aiava, Australia, 6-4, 5-7, 6-4.
Nicole Melichar, United States, and Demi Schuurs (4), Netherlands, def. Fiona Ferro, France, and Jill Teichmann, Switzerland, 3-2, ret.
Lizette Cabrera and Maddison Inglis, Australia, def. Renata Voracova, Czech Republic, and Wang Yafan, China, 7-6 (3), 4-6, 7-6 (10).
Belinda Woolcock and Olivia Gadecki, Australia, def. Mihaela Buzarnescu, Romania, and Ankita Raina, India, 6-3, 6-0.
Sharon Fichman, Canada, and Giuliana Olmos, Mexico, def. Latisha Chan and Hao-Ching Chan (5), Taiwan, 1-6, 7-6 (1), 6-2.
Hayley Carter, United States, and Luisa Stefani (12), Brazil, def. Yaroslava Shvedova and Elena Rybakina, Kazakhstan, 6-4, 6-3.
Arina Rodionova and Storm Sanders, Australia, def. Simona Halep, Romania, and Charlotte Kempenaers-Pocz, Australia, 6-4, 7-5.
Bernarda Pera, United States, and Rosalie van Der Hoek, Netherlands, def. Veronika Kudermetova and Anna Blinkova (15), Russia, 3-6, 6-3, 7-5.
Viktoria Kuzmova, Slovakia, and Anna Kalinskaya, Russia, def. Zarina Diyas and Yulia Putintseva, Kazakhstan, 6-4, 6-2.
Darija Jurak, Croatia, and Nina Stojanovic, Serbia, def. Irina-Camelia Begu, Romania, and Nadia Podoroska, Argentina, 6-0, 5-7, 6-2.
Christina McHale, United States, and Ons Jabeur, Tunisia, def. Daria Gavrilova and Ellen Perez, Australia, 7-6 (4), 6-4.
Arantxa Rus, Netherlands, and Tamara Zidansek, Slovenia, def. Alison Riske, United States, and Ajla Tomljanovic, Australia, 6-1, 6-7 (5), 7-5.

NFL/NHL



GENE J. PUSKAR / AP

Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger has said he's willing to renegotiate his contract for next season, which is expected to be his last. His salary cap hit next season is supposed to be \$41 million.

NFL carousel will spin soon, not just for QBs

By BARRY WILNER
Associated Press

The Matthew Stafford-Jared Goff trade not only has whet fans' appetites for big deals, it's caused a social media frenzy about which quarterbacks are headed elsewhere.

That could happen with the likes of Carson Wentz, Jimmy Garoppolo, Deshaun Watson and Cam Newton. And on a slightly less publicized level with Teddy Bridgewater, Jameis Winston, Sam Darnold and Mitchell Trubisky.

But before anyone gets the idea that half of the NFL's starting signal-callers from 2020 will be employed by new teams in 2021, well, know that carousel is not spinning out of control.

Why not? Money. More specifically, contract dollars. Dead money. Salary-cap repercussions.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only reduced revenues for the NFL across the board, it also has forced a lower salary cap for 2021. That figure is undetermined, though it won't be less than \$175 million and probably will be in the \$180 million-\$185 million range.

So any cap hits for trades involving QBs with mega-contracts will be built as much on finances as football skills. Sure, plenty of teams with questionable quarterbacking would love to add a Watson or Wentz — and even inquire about the availability of the likes of David Carr or Matt Ryan. But the

DID YOU KNOW?

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SOURCE: Associated Press

price tag is a paramount consideration.

There are also the tricky contract dynamics for Dak Prescott and Ben Roethlisberger. Prescott played under the franchise tag cost of \$31.4 million but was injured in the Cowboys' fifth game. Dallas is adamant about keeping Prescott, preferably with a long-term deal.

"One of the things that we're going to have to really see where we are, and it will affect everybody, all 32 (NFL teams), and it will affect our team," Cowboys executive vice president Stephen Jones said, "is what the consequences of the virus have had on our cap situation going forward, and where is that salary cap going to be and what kind of cap are we going to manage into. So all those things will play a role into players that we keep that are under contract, where we can sign — obviously Dak being at the top of that list — and then going from there."

Roethlisberger has indicated a willingness to redo his contract with Pittsburgh for what likely

will be his final season. He's set for a cap hit of \$41 million, and that won't happen.

The strength in free agency is on defense, from the line to the secondary.

Indeed, two of the keys to Tampa Bay's championship, linebackers Shaq Barrett and Lavonte David, will be available if the Bucs don't re-up them before next month.

Bucs coach Bruce Arians expects them back, as well as receiver Chris Godwin and the three additions Tom Brady recruited: Rob Gronkowski, Antonio Brown and Leonard Fournette.

If they reach free agency, look for the likes of defensive linemen/edge rushers Leonard Williams, Trey Hendrickson, Haason Reddick, Matthew Judon, Bud Dupree and Yannick Ngakoue to cash in. Defensive backs John Johnson III, Justin Simmons, Marcus Maye and perhaps veteran Patrick Peterson, whose performance has faded recently, could be popular.

Blockers and pass catchers seem most attractive on offense. In the trenches, two All-Pro might be free: center Corey Linsley and guard Brandon Scherff. So might Joe Thuney, Trent Williams and Taylor Moton.

In the pass-happy NFL, teams always are looking for receivers, and the top wideouts about to hit free agency are Allen Robinson, Kenny Golladay and JuJu Smith-Schuster.

AROUND THE NHL

Players, referees forge new bonds

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

NHL referees and linesmen are holding pre- and postgame meetings virtually, not eating meals with one another and taking all the necessary precautions to limit time spent together.

They're seeing one another less but players much more, the result of a unique schedule with teams almost always facing off multiple games in a row. Working consecutive games between teams has allowed officials and players to build more of a rapport than usual, even amid coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

"It's different," Philadelphia's Travis Konecny said. "It's kind of fun. For me, I'm still young in the league, so I haven't had an opportunity to really ever talk to some of the officials and get to know them too well. It's a chance to build some relationships and see a couple familiar faces out there."

While familiarity breeds contempt on the ice among opponents, it's having the reverse effect for the men in stripes.

"You definitely want to be nicer in the first game, I think, just to say, 'Hello, how are you doing, how's the room service been?'" Washington defenseman Brenden Dillon said. "When you do have that familiarity and you kind of get to know the guys, I feel like you can build a bit more of a relationship other than just the guys that are yelling at one another on the ice."

COVID-19 problems

So far, 34 games through Tuesday have been postponed because of the virus, and three teams are paused through at least the weekend. New Jersey was up to 19 players on the league's virus protocol list, Minnesota 12 and Buffalo nine.

Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams said he still expects his team to play all 56 regular-season games, and there has been no indication yet from the NHL that it will sort playoff standings by points percentage.

Crazy Columbus

It seems like Columbus is at the center of the league this season.

First there was Pierre-Luc Dubois' change of scenery request, his benching and blockbuster trade to Winnipeg for Patrik Laine and hometown kid Jack Roslovic. Then the Blue Jackets were on the wrong end of a bizarre botched video review in a loss to Carolina on Sunday. And then coach John Tortorella benched Laine on Mon-

NHL scoreboard

East Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	12	9	1	2	20	39	26
Philadelphia	13	8	3	2	18	46	41
Washington	12	6	3	3	15	44	45
N.Y. Islanders	11	5	4	2	12	25	27
Pittsburgh	11	5	5	1	11	33	41
N.Y. Rangers	12	4	5	3	11	31	33
New Jersey	9	4	3	2	10	23	26
Buffalo	10	4	4	2	10	30	32
Central Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	11	9	1	1	19	42	20
Florida	10	7	1	2	16	32	28
Chicago	14	6	4	4	16	39	41
Columbus	14	6	5	3	15	39	45
Carolina	10	7	3	0	14	34	27
Dallas	10	5	2	3	13	34	25
Nashville	13	5	8	0	10	31	46
Detroit	14	3	9	2	8	27	46
West Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	10	8	1	1	17	37	26
St. Louis	13	7	4	2	16	43	43
Colorado	11	7	3	1	15	38	24
Arizona	12	6	5	1	13	34	33
Anaheim	14	5	6	3	13	29	39
Minnesota	11	6	5	0	12	30	30
San Jose	11	5	5	1	11	32	40
Los Angeles	12	3	6	3	9	34	42

North Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Toronto	14	11	2	1	23	52	36
Montreal	13	8	3	2	18	50	35
Edmonton	15	8	7	0	16	52	52
Winnipeg	12	7	4	1	15	41	35
Calgary	12	6	5	1	13	36	33
Vancouver	16	6	10	0	12	50	63
Ottawa	14	2	11	1	5	31	58

Wednesday's games

Boston 3, N.Y. Rangers 2, OT
Toronto 4, Montreal 2

Thursday's games

Edmonton at Montreal
New Jersey at Philadelphia, ppd.
Pittsburgh at N.Y. Islanders
Tampa Bay at Florida
Washington at Buffalo, ppd.
Columbus at Chicago
Detroit at Nashville
Ottawa at Winnipeg
St. Louis at Minnesota, ppd.
Carolina at Dallas
Arizona at Colorado, ppd.
Anaheim at Vegas
Calgary at Vancouver
San Jose at Los Angeles

Friday's games

Boston at N.Y. Rangers
St. Louis at Arizona

Saturday's games

Washington at Buffalo, ppd.
Ottawa at Winnipeg
Vegas at San Jose
Boston at N.Y. Islanders
Montreal at Toronto
New Jersey at Philadelphia, ppd.
Tampa Bay at Florida
Carolina at Dallas
Columbus at Chicago
Detroit at Nashville
St. Louis at Arizona
Calgary at Vancouver
Minnesota at Los Angeles, ppd.

Sunday's games

Washington at Pittsburgh
Philadelphia at N.Y. Rangers, ppd.
Colorado at Vegas

day. On Tuesday, Mikko Koivu abruptly retired because he wasn't playing up to his expectations. What's next? Oh, Tortorella is in the final year of his contract, with no extension in place.

AUTO RACING



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Kyle Larson in his garage during a Daytona 500 practice session at Daytona International Speedway, Wednesday, in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Larson grateful for 2nd chance after racial slur

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Kyle Larson loaded his motorhome and drove to Daytona International Speedway by himself, alone for some seven hours to prepare for his return to NASCAR competition.

The excitement of a new season settled his nerves and he felt optimistic about his future.

After serving a six-month suspension for his use of a racial slur that nearly cost him his career, Larson was just appreciative of the opportunity ahead.

“I feel extremely grateful because, you know, I really never thought I would get another chance to race in NASCAR and I kind of accepted that,” Larson said Monday as he waited for the Daytona infield to open.

“I hope to do a good job on and off the track and really take advantage of a second chance.”

Larson’s career imploded early in the pandemic during a night of virtual racing. He used the N-word to address his spotter over the livestream and it was heard by everyone following online.

The clip quickly spread and the fallout was swift: Larson was dropped by nearly every sponsor and fired by Chip Ganassi Racing within a day. He’d been headed into free agency, poised to sign the most lucrative contract of his life, and suddenly found himself unemployable at 27 years old.

He began a path to redemption that went far beyond the sensitivity course NASCAR ordered him to take during his suspension. Larson took it upon himself without publicizing his actions to pursue a hands-on education in racial inequality and injustice.

Larson volunteered with a Minneapolis foundation focused on youth development and empowerment, visited with former Olympian Jackie Joyner-Kersey and resumed work with a Philadelphia nonprofit that helps minorities advance in motorsports. Although

he’s half-Japanese and advanced through NASCAR’s diversity program, Larson had his eyes opened to his childhood of privilege coming from a middle-class, two-parent household.

NASCAR reinstated Larson late last year and he found a soft landing with Hendrick Motorsports, one of the top teams in motorsports. Rick Hendrick wanted to offer Larson that second chance and his support has been unwavering — he’s willing to fund the No. 5 Chevrolet out of pocket if needed and the sponsor for Sunday’s Daytona 500 is a Hendrick automotive company.

Larson spent most of 2020 rebuilding his image and is ready to prove his character in and out of a race car.

“A lot of people do things and they just say ‘I’m sorry’ and go right on running their life. And that’s all they have to do and people say ‘OK, we’ll give you another shot,’” Hendrick said. “This guy did 10 times that. He’s created an image and (done) things in that community that people really respect.

“It was Kyle’s heart and Kyle’s desire that got him back.”

Hendrick doesn’t worry about the reception Larson might receive in the grandstands or the garage — “fans love him, he drives the wheels off the cars,” he said — and he believes Larson returns to NASCAR with emotional depth.

When asked about his relationship with Wallace, Larson chuckled and said the two had been texting earlier Monday about gaming consoles and golf. Like Larson, Wallace has moved into better cars in 2021, and Larson believes they each have platforms to help NASCAR’s diversity push.

“Everything is fine with Bubba and I, and I’m excited to get on track with him,” Larson said. “We’re each in really good equipment and I’m sure we’ll be battling each other a lot. I think the two of us look forward to leading NASCAR in this transformation.”

Wallace sends Jordan to top of scoring pylon at Daytona

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Bubba Wallace and Michael Jordan are feeling bullish about their debut in 23XI Racing headed into the Daytona 500.

Wallace sent Jordan to the top of scoring pylon in the first Daytona 500 practice session for their new team and the first overall for NASCAR in more than 300 days. Wallace then threatened Wednesday night to make a front-row start for Sunday’s season opener but has to wait another night to find out where he’ll qualify for “The Great American Race.”

Wallace was selected as the driver in the first season of a new team that brought Jordan into NASCAR as a team owner. Wallace was fastest in the field in practice and surely impressed his new boss — call that about 200 mph speed “Flying Jordan” — once they meet for the first time.

“He’ll be here Thursday, so I’ll get to have the first one-on-one conversation with him, just to pick his brain, to learn more about him,” Wallace said. “We all got to see a little bit of his taste and his character in ‘The Last Dance.’ Very competitive, I’m going to say that.”

With a getting-to-know-you weekend ahead, Jordan sent Wallace “a very positive” text after practice.

Wallace hit 199.747 mph in the No. 23 Toyota for 23XI Racing to top practice and then 189.577 in the qualifying session for the Daytona 500.

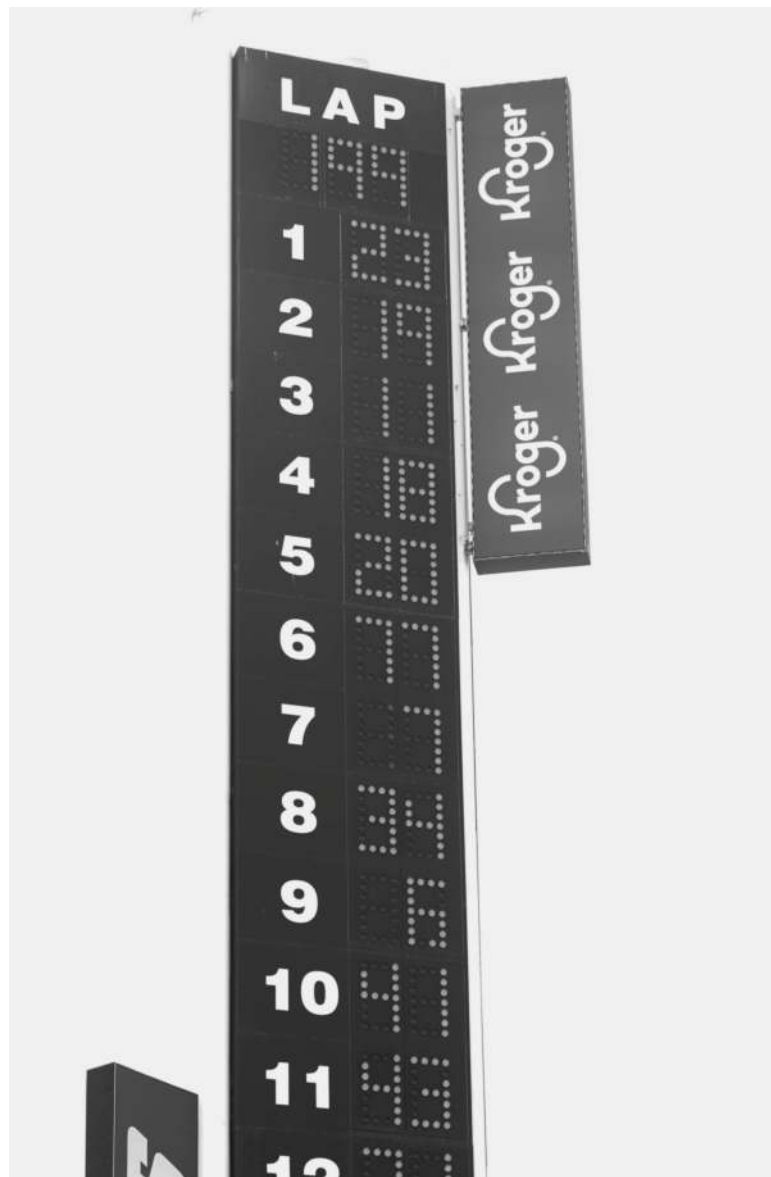
Hendrick Motorsports drivers Alex Bowman and William Byron start on the front row. NASCAR sets the rest of the field with a pair of qualifying races Thursday.

Wallace’s qualifying speed was enough to zip him to the top of the chart and he stayed there until Byron bumped him out with 21 drivers remaining.

Jordan joined with NASCAR driver Denny Hamlin to form the new team with Wallace, a high-profile pairing of a Black majority team owner and the only Black driver at NASCAR’s top level. Jordan is the first Black principal owner of a full-time Cup team since Hall of Famer Wendell Scott in 1973.

Jordan, a six-time NBA champion with the Chicago Bulls and a Hall of Famer, and Hamlin purchased a charter for their team from Germain Racing that guarantees Wallace a spot in the 40-car Cup Series field every week.

Hamlin, of course, is trying for his third straight Daytona 500 victory for Joe Gibbs Racing. He said he’ll focus maybe a day each week



PHOTOS BY JOHN RAOUX/AP

The leaderboard for a NASCAR Daytona 500 practice session shows Bubba Wallace (23) at the top. Left: Bubba Wallace leaves his garage after Wednesday’s practice session at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla.



on the 23XI team (No. 23 for Jordan, XI for Hamlin’s No. 11 Toyota) and remains committed to JGR.

“I always have to maintain a level of professionalism to the team that I drive for,” Hamlin said. “This is the point of the season where things will start to get easier from my standpoint.”

NASCAR hit the track for practice for the first time in 341 days since a 55-minute session on March 6, 2020, at Phoenix Raceway. The pandemic forced NASCAR to streamline its schedule and most races were turned into one-day events. That continues in

2021 with only Daytona and seven other race weekends — mostly new tracks and championship weekend — having scheduled practice sessions.

Wallace had a tumultuous 2020 as he became NASCAR’s face for racial justice and change. He successfully pushed NASCAR to ban the Confederate flag at its events and with it came a wave of backlash from some fans. Wallace weathered it as best he could — even when NASCAR brought in the FBI to investigate a garage door pull in his stall at Talladega that had been fashioned into a noose months earlier — and it ultimately led to millions in new sponsorship dollars that gave Wallace the funding to help get 23XI Racing off the ground.

“I’m pumped and I know that all the resources are there. Everything is in place,” Wallace said. “My motto is, ‘no more excuses.’”

AUTO RACING

Smaller NASCAR teams have slim chance at Daytona

By MARK LONG
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Josh Bilicki has a plan for his first Daytona 500. He wants to ride around with his Rick Ware Racing teammates near the back of the field in an attempt to avoid the inevitable multicar melee that almost always happens in “The Great American Race.”

Maybe it's the smart approach.

It's definitely the conservative one. It also could keep Bilicki out of the crosshairs of some of NASCAR's top drivers and teams in the season opener Sunday.

“Hopefully, when we're back there, we don't have one or two knuckleheads try to race each other because then we can have the big one back there by us,” Bilicki said. “If we can just form a line, and some of our small teams and small cars stay out of the big pack, when the big one happens, hopefully we can just drive around and have a good day.”

Bilicki's strategy exemplifies the difference between NASCAR's haves and have-nots, the gap between the front-runners and backmarkers. It's a seemingly huge hole, too, and makes the Daytona 500 far from a race anyone can win.

Yes, there has been an occasional shocker in stock-car racing's signature event — Derrike Cope (1990), Ward Burton (2002) and Trevor Bayne (2011) are the most recent examples — but more often than not, the Daytona 500 is a playground for the big boys and their well-funded teams.

“In some ways, it makes the racing more compelling and more fun to watch because it's less predictable when you have less-capable drivers, to some degree,” said Brad Keselowski, the 2012 Cup Series champion who is winless in 11 Daytona 500 starts.

Keselowski remembers watching lower-level, short-track races

0-for-508

Record in NASCAR Cup Series races for a group of drivers from smaller teams, including Josh Bilicki, Quin Houff, Corey LaJoie, Garrett Smithley, Kaz Grala, Anthony Alfredo, Cody Ware, Joey Gase, Noah Gragson, Timmy Hill and B.J. McLeod.

SOURCE: Associated Press

as a kid and thinking they were the best because “everyone was all over the track.” The chaos wasn't nearly the same when the pros turned laps because they had more control.

“There's something to be said for watching the best race car drivers on the planet,” Keselowski said. “If you look at our fields, the bottom 10 to 15 drivers are probably not what you would consider the best drivers in the world. As a pure competitor, I'd like to see that change.”

It's unlikely to happen anytime soon because of the struggle to gain sponsorship and financial backing combined with sagging attendance and television ratings. Throw in NASCAR's changing landscape — stars such as Tony Stewart, Jeff Gordon, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Matt Kenseth and Jimmie Johnson have retired in recent years and been replaced by younger, cheaper and less-experienced drivers — and the racing series clearly has been watered down.

The Daytona 500 entry list doesn't exactly read like a who's who in racing. Bilicki is joined by a number of unknowns: Quin Houff, Corey LaJoie, Garrett Smithley, Kaz Grala, Anthony Alfredo, Cody Ware, Joey Gase, Noah Gragson, Timmy Hill and B.J. McLeod.

They are a combined 0-for-508 in NASCAR's top series, although Bilicki, Alfredo and Gragson have yet to make their Cup Series debuts.



JOHN RAOUX / AP

Defending Cup Series champion Chase Elliott, right, talks with a crew member in his garage Wednesday during a Daytona 500 practice session at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Chasing a repeat: Elliott seeks 2nd straight title

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — NASCAR's newest champion will wreck one of his best friends to win a race. An exhibition race! Nothing but the trophy at stake.

Chase Elliott perhaps offered a sneak preview of what's to come in his title defense when he knocked Ryan Blaney out of his way in the closing stretch of the Busch Clash. The two are tight — they vacation together — and Elliott had little remorse.

“I think you have to try to win the race. I mean, if I'm sorry about trying to win a race, I'm in the wrong business here,” Elliott said after Tuesday night's race on the road course at Daytona International Speedway.

It was an aggression not often shown by Elliott, so mild-mannered that “shucks” and “dang” are about as colorful as he gets. He did flip Kyle Busch a prolonged middle-finger salute after a wreck last May. But Elliott never glanced Joey Logano's way 10 days later when the Penske driver stared him down following their on-track collision.

Elliott was most expressive in the hours after he wrapped up his first Cup Series title last November, when he bounded into the media room at Phoenix, neck gaiter pulled down and drinking a beer. He offered rare introspection on his rise from a quiet kid following his Hall of Fame father

“If I'm sorry about trying to win a race, I'm in the wrong business here.”

Chase Elliott

On knocking friend Ryan Blaney out of the way in the Busch Clash

around the track all the way to becoming NASCAR's most popular driver and its newest champion.

A little over two months later, Elliott was back to banging his head in yet another overly critical self-assessment at the Rolex 24 endurance race. He said he was “terrible, terrible, way off the pace,” when he climbed from his first stint racing a sports car in his Rolex 24 debut.

At Daytona nine days later, Elliott was almost defiant following his tangle with his buddy.

Elliott didn't care the 35 laps around Daytona's road course didn't count for anything. He's developed into perhaps NASCAR's best road course driver — he'd won four consecutive races dating to 2019 — and NASCAR is racing the circuit for real later this month. The Daytona 500 is Sunday — Elliott has two poles but no wins in five starts — and winning the Clash could have put him on course to sweep everything in Daytona.

So he dove deep inside of Blaney

in the chicane, the two cars made contact and Blaney spun and crashed. Kyle Busch then passed both Elliott and Blaney for the victory.

The two spoke outside Blaney's wrecked car, and Blaney said he told Elliott: “If you're going to make a move like that, make sure you at least win the race. Don't hand it to the third-place guy.”

“We're friends,” Elliott said. “Friends can have tough conversations.”

Elliott is 25 and boss Rick Hendrick has known him his whole life. The team owner first signed Elliott to a development deal when Elliott was 14 and a decade later Hendrick sees the same kid. Hendrick said Bill Elliott — former Cup champion and 16-time most popular driver — raised a humble son with an understanding he had to earn his career.

He wants to be better in different formulas, he's said, and is seeking to improve areas he found weaknesses in last season. Elliott won a career-high five races, including three of the final five and the last two of the season.

That breakthrough final push — he'd failed twice prior to advance into the championship final four — set a pace Elliott finds comfortable.

“There is no defending. We need to be on offense. We need to keep pushing,” Elliott said. “I think if you're back on your heels and trying to protect something, I don't think your mind is in the right place.”



JOHN RAOUX / AP

Cody Ware, one of the drivers for the smaller teams at the Daytona 500, gets ready for a practice session Wednesday.

AUTO RACING

Best: NASCAR made significant changes ahead of new season

FROM PAGE 48

Hamlin — who helped usher MJ into the sport — has kids asking about his PJs in a national commercial tagline he can't shake.

The schedule underwent an overdue overhaul and now has a whopping seven road courses and five new venues. NASCAR is even set for an off-road detour through the dirt at fan-favorite Bristol Motor Speedway.

Perhaps in any other season, NASCAR could raise a glass to what its broadcast partner is billing as "The Best Season Ever." But promising "best" anything in a pandemic seems as outlandish as a 62-year-old driver — 1990 winner Derrike Cope — in the Daytona 500.

Yet here we are.

While NASCAR can hope the racial reckoning from last season that led to its Confederate flag ban has eased, concerns that it can reach the season finale without interruptions to the schedule and drivers falling ill still linger.

NASCAR last year navigated the pandemic by first filling the free time with nationally televised iRacing and found a way to become one of the first major sports to resume competition in May. It was the first sport to complete its full schedule but got to November only by moving races, running without spectators or limited spectators, and trusting participants to monitor their own health.

At least four drivers tested positive for COVID-19 during the 2020 season, with Jimmie Johnson, Austin Dillon and Truck Series driver Spencer Davis missing races.

NASCAR again won't test competitors in 2021 but plans on having rapid tests at the tracks when needed. The bubble has been widened this season to allow a team owner into the garage for the first time since last March and NASCAR acknowledged it must be "nimble" with its schedule. The second race of the season scheduled in Fontana, Calif., has already been moved to the road course at Daytona because of pandemic restrictions.

NASCAR executive vice president Steve O'Donnell touted the momentum from a successful 2020 season but acknowledged the pandemic has challenged NASCAR going into 2021.

"I think all of us hoped by this time we'd have full grandstands and be ready to rock and roll for the 500. That's not the case," he said.

Daytona International Speedway can hold more than 100,000 in the grandstands and thousands more in the infield, but the speedway will be limited to roughly 30,000 spectators for the

Feb. 14 season-opener.

Hamlin is seeking to become the first driver to win three consecutive Daytona 500s while also transitioning into team ownership. He still drives for Joe Gibbs Racing but has partnered with Jordan to create 23XI Racing (pronounced twenty-three eleven) and field a car for Wallace, the only Black full-time driver at NASCAR's top level.

Wallace had a tumultuous 2020 as he became NASCAR's face for racial justice and change. He successfully pushed NASCAR to ban the Confederate flag at its events and with it came a wave of backlash from traditional fans. Wallace weathered it as best he could — even when NASCAR brought in the FBI to investigate a garage door pull in his stall at Talladega that had been fashioned into a noose months earlier — and it ultimately led to millions in new sponsorship dollars that gave Wallace the funding to help get 23XI Racing off the ground.

He and Jordan become the only Black team owner and driver combination in the sport and the pairing puts Wallace in a glaring spotlight. Winless in 112 Cup races driving for underfunded Richard Petty Motorsports, Wallace knows it is time to deliver.

Wallace is seeking a balance in trying to be successful with a high-profile team while also using his platform to push for diversity. If he can do it all with fewer headaches, he'd be thrilled.

"I lost 7 pounds through everything that happened last year. So much stress and pressure, Lord," Wallace said. "I have a goal every year to not be a part of the headlines. Every year I have that goal. And I've failed every year."

23XI with Jordan and Trackhouse with Pitbull are two of three new teams entering the Cup Series this year in anticipation of a new car in 2022 that will make NASCAR more affordable for owners.

Kyle Larson returns after a nearly full-season suspension for using a racial slur and he will drive for Hendrick Motorsports, which in November celebrated its 13th NASCAR championship with Elliott's win. Larson and Elliott are two of the most dynamic young drivers in the series and hope to fill a void created by a rash of retirements, most recent seven-time champion Johnson.

New teams, new tracks, young drivers and an abundance of optimism has led broadcast partner Fox to market the 2021 NASCAR campaign as "the best season ever." That remains to be seen starting with the Daytona 500 and ending with the Nov. 7 finale at Phoenix.



CHRIS O'MEARA / AP

Alex Bowman kicks up sparks as he runs during a NASCAR Daytona 500 qualifying session Wednesday at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Bowman, Byron give Hendrick sweep of Daytona front row

BY JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — New number, new day, new time, same result for Hendrick Motorsports.

Alex Bowman and William Byron swept the front row Wednesday night in qualifying for the Daytona 500, giving Hendrick its 14th pole and sixth in the last seven years. Rick Hendrick's engine-building wing has seven straight poles because it powers Ricky Stenhouse Jr., last year's pole-winner.

"I think it means a lot to Mr. H — he wants to win everything, like every category, he wants to be top of the list," Bowman said. "Here it really just comes down to who built the fastest race car. And I think it's important for Hendrick Motorsports to come up and prove that they're the ones that did that."

Bowman posted a lap at 191.261 mph to earn the top starting spot for the second time in his career. It's the fourth consecutive year Bowman will start from the front row, but he's got a completely new look this time.

Bowman in the offseason was moved from the No. 88 into the No. 48 vacated by seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson. He inherited sponsor Ally, which has committed to backing Bowman and helping him develop his brand.

"It's really hard to sit here and be like, 'I did it and I did this and that and that's why we are on the front row for four consecutive years,'" Bowman said. "It's more



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Alex Bowman holds the award flag in Victory Lane after winning the pole position during qualifying for the Daytona 500.

about the people that make it happen. I floored it, but I'm pretty sure everybody else did, too. I'm just appreciative to have a fast car."

Greg Ives, Bowman's crew chief, has put one of his cars on the front row for five consecutive years dating to Dale Earnhardt Jr. in 2017. Ives has never had a car start lower than third since he became a Cup crew chief in 2015.

"We put a lot of time and effort into our speedway program. It's a show car. It's the pinnacle of the hotrods that we bring out of our race shop," Ives said. "There's a lot of pride in every piece, every car, just from the paint job all the way down to the last nut and bolt."

Bowman drove his Chevrolet

more than 1 mph faster than teammate Byron, who qualified second with a lap at 190.219 mph. Only the front row was set Wednesday, the first time Daytona 500 qualifying has been held at night under a condensed Speedweeks schedule.

"Hendrick always gives us great cars to come down here and qualify well and also race well, so you never know which guys are going to have the speed out of the four of us," Byron said of the four-car Hendrick stable. Chase Elliott was 11th and Kyle Larson 15th to complete Hendrick's lineup.

It's the ninth consecutive year Chevrolet won the pole.

The 40-car field is determined through both time trials and a pair of Thursday night qualifying races. NASCAR sold 36 charters that guarantee those owners slots in the field, which leaves eight drivers vying for four "open" spots in the Super Bowl of stock-car racing.

Two spots were earmarked to the fastest "open" cars in time trials. David Ragan and Ryan Preece earned those berths.

Preece had a charter last year with JTG-Daugherty Racing, but the team no longer holds its rights and there's concern the car won't attempt to make every race if it doesn't have early success.

Preece said he wasn't nervous before attempting his lap, but did panic when the qualifying session was delayed for a power issue and Preece noticed he was wearing the wrong firesuit. Preece said he ran half-a-mile before his qualifying lap to change his suit.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Redshirt rosters

Bears, Badgers benefit from extra years

By STEPHEN HAWKINS Associated Press

Jonathan Tchamwa Tchatchoua and Adam Flagler got to watch Baylor win a lot of games from the bench last season, and now are among six former redshirts playing every game for the undefeated, second-ranked Bears.

Davion Mitchell and MaCio Teague, two of the league's best shooters, were part of a Big 12-record, 23-game winning streak last season in their debuts as Baylor starters. That was after those former transfers also went through a redshirt season together.

"If you have two guys going through it at the same time, it makes it a lot easier. If you've got other guys on the team that have gone through, it makes it a lot easier," Baylor coach Scott Drew said of redshirts. "The guys that are sitting out, they're in large part a big reason why our teams have been successful, because you practice more than you play games."

In an era of one-and-done players, Baylor has become consistently one of the Big 12's top teams with rosters full of experience. The Bears (17-0) matched the best start in school history with a win at Texas last week before COVID-19 issues forced the postponement of five games that will keep them from playing again until Feb. 20.

Baylor isn't the only team benefiting from multiple players who either had to sit out a season to satisfy NCAA transfer requirements or took a redshirt year. Either way, it allowed plenty of development time with their teams.

No. 19 Creighton has two senior starters and a key reserve, including leading scorer Denzel Mahoney, who transferred into the program. The starting lineup for No. 21 Wisconsin has three fifth-year seniors, among them top scorer D'Mitrik Trice and leading rebounder Micah Potter, who started his college career at Ohio State.

"Obviously we're one of the oldest groups to ever play the game

of basketball in college, I guess," the 24-year-old Trice said with a laugh.

"The experience is always a big thing and coach (Greg) Gard always harps on that," Trice said. "For us to have freshmen come in this year in a big class and just learn everything they can from our older group is going to help them in the future and down the road. I think it's going to help us, especially here getting late into the season."

Both the Badgers and Baylor have starting fives with an average age of about 22 1/2. That makes them older than the starting lineup of the NBA's Chicago Bulls.

They all could even come back for another year in college since the NCAA isn't counting this season against players' eligibility. That decision, and a blanket waiver for current transfers, removed the necessity of any players having to redshirt this season.

Three former redshirts are in Baylor's starting lineup: Mitchell,



JOHN PETERSON/AP

Wisconsin guard D'Mitrik Trice shoots over Nebraska guard Thorir Thorbjarnarson during the second half Wednesday in Lincoln, Neb. Trice is one of three fifth-year seniors on the team.

Teague and bruising 6-5 forward/guard Mark Vital, a 24-year-old fifth-year senior. Vital verbally committed in September 2013 to play for the Bears and redshirted as a freshman in 2016-17 before becoming a regular in the lineup and one the nation's top defenders.

Drew said the redshirt seasons provide "truly one year of development," allowing players to get better without the pressure of actual

games.

"Iron sharpens iron. When you're competing every day against other great players, it helps get you better," Drew said. "And because we've had so many players that have had to sit out or have sat out, they can help mentally the people sitting out deal with it."

AP sports writers Steve Megargee and Eric Olson contributed to this report.

Advertisement for 'Best of the Pacific 2021' featuring 'STARS AND STRIPES' branding, a 'CAST YOUR VOTE!' call to action, a QR code for online voting by March 21, and a prize of a gift card worth up to \$300. The background is a repeating pattern of award categories like 'BEST ON-BASE RESTAURANT' and 'BEST OFF-BASE RESTAURANT'.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/NBA



YOUNG KWAK / AP

Gonzaga forward Ben Gregg, right, guards Dixie State guard Emad Elniel in a game in Spokane, Wash. Gregg is among a small group of freshmen seizing an opportunity to play as midyear enrollees after the NCAA granted an extra year of eligibility to athletes in winter sports.

Midyear enrollees seize chance to play with free eligibility

BY AARON BEARD
Associated Press

The plan was for Carter Whitt to play a year at prep school before suiting up next season at Wake Forest. Instead, Whitt is already on the court for the Demon Deacons after graduating early and joining the program in December.

The 6-foot-4 guard is among a small group of freshmen nationally seizing an opportunity as mid-year enrollees, getting the jump on college careers with what amounts to free eligibility amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"I just figured it would be a better way to use a year," Whitt said. "Rather than being away at boarding school, I might as well just be away at college."

When the NCAA announced athletes in winter sports like basketball would get an extra year of eligibility due to the pandemic, it opened the door for signees to reclassify and join their college teams instead of facing the uncertainty of trying to play a final high school season in a pandemic.

Midyear enrollees have taken the court at several schools across the country, including No. 1 Gonzaga, No. 4 Ohio State, No. 20 Southern California, UCLA, Oregon and Maryland. They've also shown up on the women's side, too, including Saylor Poffenbarger at No. 2 Connecticut and Dominique Darius at No. 8 UCLA making their debuts in January.

In most cases, they're earning spot minutes as reserves. Some are playing larger roles like Whitt in the Demon Deacons' backcourt

or Mustapha Amzil as an every-game starter at Dayton. Still others, such as Trey Patterson at No. 5 Villanova, have enrolled in school and are practicing but it is unclear if they will play this season.

Ohio State's Chris Holtmann signed Meechie Johnson Jr. in November, then added the 6-2 guard to the roster in December after Johnson graduated early. Johnson made his debut Jan. 9 at Rutgers and has averaged 7.4 minutes through his first nine games.

"That's the challenge as a coach, right?" Holtmann said during that stretch. "You're throwing him in midyear. ... Now you're saying, 'Hey, hop in, play 15, 10 minutes in the best league in the country. And, oh, by the way, you're also going to play one of the most important positions on the floor, the point guard position. Learn our defensive system, learn our offensive system and, by the way, don't overthink, just play.' That's a lot to ask of a young man."

Dayton has found a major boost in Amzil, a 6-10 forward from Finland. The November signee joined the Flyers in December, with coach Anthony Grant saying he had little practice time before his Dec. 30 debut against La Salle.

"The process of trying to get him acclimated probably really started more similar to an NBA-type deal," Grant said, "where you give him some basic things and say, 'Hey, here's what we'll do and here's how you'll fit in and then we'll try to teach you as you go on.'"

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	18	7	.720	—
Brooklyn	15	12	.556	4
Boston	12	11	.522	5
Toronto	12	13	.480	6
New York	11	15	.423	7½

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Charlotte	12	14	.462	—
Atlanta	11	13	.458	—
Miami	10	14	.417	1
Orlando	9	16	.360	2½
Washington	6	16	.273	4

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	16	9	.640	—
Indiana	12	13	.480	4
Chicago	10	14	.417	5½
Cleveland	10	16	.385	6½
Detroit	6	18	.250	9½

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	14	11	.560	—
Memphis	10	10	.500	1½
Dallas	12	14	.462	2½
New Orleans	11	13	.458	2½
Houston	11	13	.458	2½

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Utah	20	5	.800	—
Portland	13	10	.565	6
Denver	13	11	.542	6½
Oklahoma City	10	14	.417	9½
Minnesota	6	19	.240	14

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	20	6	.769	—
L.A. Clippers	18	8	.692	2
Phoenix	15	9	.625	4
Golden State	13	12	.520	6½
Sacramento	12	12	.500	7

Wednesday's games

Toronto 137, Washington 115
Dallas 118, Atlanta 117
Brooklyn 104, Indiana 94
Memphis 130, Charlotte 114
L.A. Clippers 119, Minnesota 112
Denver 133, Cleveland 95
Chicago 129, New Orleans 116
Phoenix 125, Milwaukee 124
L.A. Lakers 114, Oklahoma City 113, OT

Thursday's games

Miami at Houston
Toronto at Boston
Indiana at Detroit
Orlando at Golden State
Philadelphia at Portland

Friday's games

Detroit at Boston
Minnesota at Charlotte
New York at Washington
New Orleans at Dallas
San Antonio at Atlanta
L.A. Clippers at Chicago
Milwaukee at Utah
Oklahoma City at Denver
Cleveland at Portland
Memphis at L.A. Lakers
Orlando at Sacramento

Saturday's games

Philadelphia at Phoenix
Indiana at Atlanta
Houston at New York
Brooklyn at Golden State
Miami at Utah

Sunday's games

Boston at Washington
Minnesota at Toronto
Milwaukee at Oklahoma City
New Orleans at Detroit
San Antonio at Charlotte
Portland at Dallas
Orlando at Phoenix
Memphis at Sacramento
Cleveland at L.A. Clippers
L.A. Lakers at Denver

Leaders

THROUGH FEBRUARY 10

Scoring					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Beal, WAS	21	241	155	689	32.8
Curry, GS	25	245	130	741	29.6
Lillard, POR	22	198	160	647	29.4
Embiid, PHI	20	182	195	582	29.1
LaVine, CHI	24	239	113	676	28.2

NBA switch leads Mavs' Cuban to relent on anthem

League reiterates 'longstanding policy' after outcry

BY SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

DALLAS — Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban relented Wednesday and the national anthem will be played before home games this season after the NBA reiterated its "longstanding league policy" to include the song.

The league's initial reaction to Cuban's decision was to say teams were free to conduct pregame activities as they wished with the unusual circumstances created by the coronavirus pandemic. Most teams don't have fans at home games.

But the NBA abruptly reversed course with Cuban's decision reverberating around the country, including a question put to White House press secretary Jen Psaki during her daily briefing. Athlete protests of social and racial injustice during the "The Star-Spangled Banner" became a flashpoint between then-President Donald Trump and various leagues during his administration.

"With NBA teams now in the process of welcoming fans back into their arenas, all teams will play the national anthem in keeping with longstanding league policy," the league said.

The Mavericks played a prerecorded anthem with both teams standing along the free-throw lines, as spelled out in NBA guidelines, before Wednesday night's 118-117 win over Atlanta. In the past, Cuban always had live performances of the anthem, although that practice has changed across all sports because of the pandemic.

Less than half of the roughly 1,500 vaccinated essential workers were at their seats during the

anthem. All players and coaches stood, including Dallas coach Rick Carlisle with his right hand over his heart.

"It's an animated discussion, which is certainly not surprising," Carlisle said before the game. "This was Mark's decision. He was steadfast about it. It's been quite a day."

The Mavericks released a statement from Cuban while acknowledging the club would return to playing the anthem.

"We respect and always have respected the passion people have for the anthem and our country," Cuban said. "But we also loudly hear the voices of those who feel that the anthem does not represent them. We feel that their voices need to be respected and heard, because they have not been."

"Our hope is that going forward people will take the same passion they have for this issue and apply the same amount of energy to listen to those who feel differently from them," he said. "Then we can move forward and have courageous conversations that move this country forward and find what unites us."

The Mavericks played their first 10 regular-season games without fans before allowing the essential workers in for free for the first time Monday against Minnesota.

Rich Patterson, a 29-year-old who works in health care and attended the Atlanta game with a colleague, said the anthem was important to him, but that he wasn't hung up on whether it was played before sporting events.

"This is a sporting event and I'm here to have fun," Patterson said.



TONY GUTIERREZ / AP

The Dallas Mavericks and Atlanta Hawks, along with a limited number of fans, stand during the playing of the national anthem before Wednesday's game in Dallas.

SPORTS



Anthem tradition will stand
Mavs' Cuban forced to relent after league reiterates 'longstanding policy' » **NBA, Page 47**

AUTO RACING

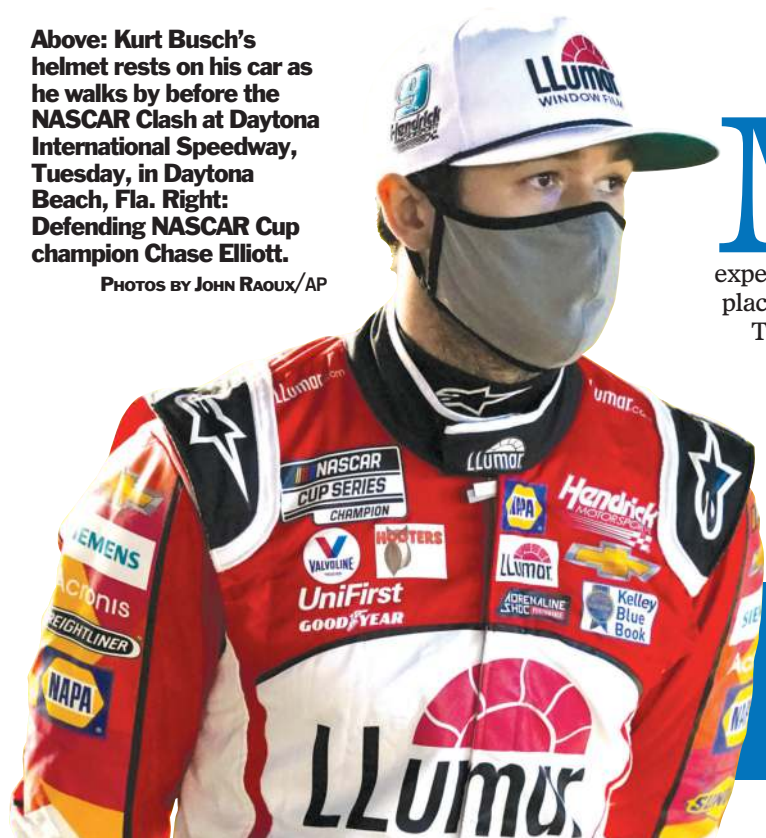
Best season ever?



With new teams, new tracks, and a popular young champion, NASCAR has high hopes for future

Above: Kurt Busch's helmet rests on his car as he walks by before the NASCAR Clash at Daytona International Speedway, Tuesday, in Daytona Beach, Fla. **Right:** Defending NASCAR Cup champion Chase Elliott.

PHOTOS BY JOHN RAOUX/AP



BY JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

Michael Jordan took his own advice and just did it: Air Jordan formed his own NASCAR team and expects the foundation will be in place to build a stock car Dream Team centered around Bubba Wallace.

Jordan has some company on the celebrity starting grid: Pitbull bought his own piece of a NASCAR team and "Mr. Worldwide" could have fans — up to 30,000 of them

"There's no better time to be involved in NASCAR."

Pitbull

Rapper, co-owner of NASCAR Cup Series team Trackhouse Racing

at the Daytona 500 — shouting "Dale!" at next week's season opener.

"There's no better time to be involved in NASCAR," said Pitbull, who was attracted to the sport by the 1990 movie "Days of Thunder" and is now partnered with new team Trackhouse Racing, which along with Mexican driver Daniel Suarez provides a platform to reach a broader audience.

"In the same way that music is a universal language, I also see NASCAR as a universal language," Pitbull added. "Everybody loves a fast car and a great story."

The fan favorites extend well beyond the owner's box. Chase Elliott, NASCAR's most popular driver, is the reigning champion and three-time Daytona 500 winner Denny

SEE BEST ON PAGE 45

INSIDE

Elliott ready to do whatever it takes to win 2nd straight title
Page 44

Early exit for defending champion Kenin » Aussie Open, Page 41

