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& PACIFIC
WEEKEND
EDITION



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LB Parsons menacing from many positions **Page 48**

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WAR IN UKRAINE



Desperately seeking soldiers

Russia, continuing to suffer losses, pulling out all the stops as it struggles to replenish troops



A man walks past a billboard that reads "Sign up for a volunteer team" — encouraging Russians to join the Tiger volunteer battalion — on a street in the Russian port city of Vladivostok, in the far-eastern Primorye region, on Thursday.

Associated Press

The prisoners at the penal colony in St. Petersburg were expecting a visit by officials, thinking it would be some sort of inspection. Instead, men in uniform arrived and offered them amnesty — if they agreed to fight alongside the Russian army in Ukraine.

Over the following days, about a dozen or so

left the prison, according to a woman whose boyfriend is serving a sentence there. Speaking on the condition of anonymity because she feared reprisals, the woman said her boyfriend wasn't among the volunteers, although with years left on his sentence, he "couldn't not think about it."

SEE DESPERATELY ON PAGE 8

INSIDE

Russia confirms prisoner swap talks as US hopes for Griner, Whelan release **Page 8**

Texas base lets robotic 'dogs' out

BY JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

An Air Force base in Texas let the robotic dogs out to patrol the installation this month, the second base in two years to give the machines a try.

The security forces squadron at Dyess Air Force Base unleashed an unspecified number of robot dogs — officially designated Vision 60 Quadrupedal Unmanned Ground Vehicles by their manufacturer — on Aug. 5 for a trial and training phase, according to a 7th Bomb Wing news release.

These quadrupeds, unlike their organic counterparts, neither bark nor bite and are limited to a watchdog role, according to the Air Force.

The machines are expected to "provide early warning" of potential threats, said Staff Sgt. Trung Vu, noncommissioned officer in charge of sensors for the 7th Security Forces Squadron, who was quoted in the release. Dyess is home to two aircraft wings of B1-B Lancer bombers and C-130J airlifters.

Each Vision 60, a product of Ghost Robotics of Philadelphia, starts at \$150,000, and the price goes up as payloads are added,

SEE ROBOTIC ON PAGE 7



RYAN HAYMAN/U.S. Air Force

A robot dog runs during training at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, last week. The base is the second to give the dogs a try.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

The Army and Air Force Exchange Services did not provide gas prices for facilities in Europe

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

| Country | Super E10 | Super unleaded | Super plus | Diesel | South Korea | Guam |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Japan | .. | \$4.939 | .. | \$5.059 | \$4.119 | \$4.109 |
| Change in price | .. | -14.0 cents | .. | -14.0 cents | -15.0 cents | \$4.629 |
| Okinawa | \$4.099 | .. | .. | \$5.059 | -16.0 cents | \$4.949 |
| Change in price | -16.0 cents | .. | .. | -14.0 cents | -15.0 cents | -14.0 cents |

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

EXCHANGE RATES

| Military rates | | South Korea (Won) | 1299.55 |
|----------------------------|---------|---|---------|
| Euro costs (Aug. 12) | \$1.01 | Switzerland (Franc) | 0.9376 |
| Dollar buys (Aug. 12) | 0.9420 | Thailand (Baht) | 35.10 |
| British pound (Aug. 12) | \$1.19 | Turkey (NewLira) | 17.9598 |
| Japanese yen (Aug. 12) | 132.00 | | |
| South Korean won (Aug. 12) | 1269.00 | | |
| Commercial rates | | (Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.) | |
| Bahrain (Dinar) | 0.3770 | | |
| Britain (Pound) | 1.2242 | | |
| Canada (Dollar) | 1.2740 | | |
| China (Yuan) | 6.7364 | | |
| Denmark (Krone) | 7.1819 | | |
| Egypt (Pound) | 19.1472 | | |
| Euro | 0.9654 | | |
| Hong Kong (Dollar) | 7.8443 | | |
| Hungary (Forint) | 380.16 | | |
| Israel (Shekel) | 3.2407 | | |
| Japan (Yen) | 132.13 | | |
| Kuwait (Dinar) | 0.3063 | | |
| Norway (Krone) | 9.4753 | Prime rate | 5.50 |
| Philippines (Peso) | 55.30 | Interest Rates Discount rate | 3.00 |
| Poland (Zloty) | 4.52 | Federal funds market rate | 2.32 |
| Saudi Arabia (Riyal) | 3.7571 | 3-month bill | 2.61 |
| Singapore (Dollar) | 1.3671 | 30-year bond | 3.03 |

INTEREST RATES

WEATHER OUTLOOK

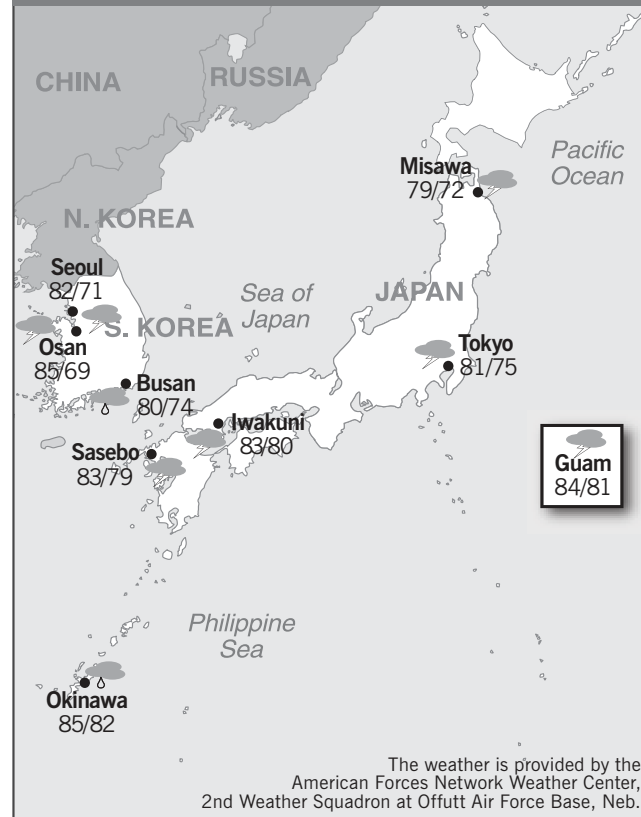
FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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MILITARY

USS George H.W. Bush deploys after 5 years

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush deployed this week for the first time in nearly five years, following intensive maintenance.

Carrier Strike Group 10 left its homeport in Newport, Va. on Wednesday, the Navy said in a statement.

The Navy did not say where the group was headed, but USNI News previously reported the George H.W. Bush is expected to relieve the USS Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group, which has been on duty in the Mediterranean since December.

“Throughout our deployment, we will continue to operate with and reassure our allies, maintain open sea lanes for trade and increased prosperity and deter or, if necessary, destroy our adversaries,” Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, commander of CSG 10, said in the statement.

In a show of NATO strength, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered Truman to remain in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations in February as tensions rose amid Russia’s troop buildup along the borders of Ukraine and subsequent full-scale invasion.

Among other operations, the Truman has supported training and patrol flights in Eastern Europe. It has also sailed in the Mediterranean, Ionian, Adriatic and



PHOTOS BY BILLY SCHUERMAN, THE (NORFOLK, VA.) VIRGINIAN-PILOT/AP
Ariana Ratliff consoles her son, Ryder Ratliff, 3, after her husband, Petty Officer 2nd Class Tristan Ratliff, deployed in Norfolk, Va.

Aegean seas and participated in military exercises with NATO allies and partners.

The George H.W. Bush CSG, which also includes Carrier Air

Wing 7, has more than 6,000 sailors. The cruiser USS Leyte Gulf and destroyers USS Delbert D. Black, USS Farragut and USS Truxtun of Destroyer Squadron



Willow Sommerfeldt, 2, waves to her father, Petty Officer 2nd Class Brendan Sommerfeldt from the shore Wednesday.

26, which also recently departed their homeports, are part of the carrier strike group as well.

This is the Delbert D. Black’s first deployment, the Navy said.

The carrier’s last deployment in 2017 included service in the Arabian Gulf, where it supported missions targeting ISIS as part of Operation Inherent Resolve. It returned from that seven-month deployment in August 2017.

It completed a 2½-year dry-dock maintenance in August 2021, according to the Navy. The maintenance period was the \$8.5 billion ship’s first time out of the water since 2006.

Last week, the destroyer USS

Bulkeley sailed from Norfolk as part of a scheduled homeport shift and gradual plan to rotate four destroyers based at Naval Station Rota in Spain.

Bulkeley will join USS Arleigh Burke, USS Roosevelt and USS Paul Ignatius, the Navy said in an Aug. 4 statement.

The White House announced in June that two additional destroyers would be based at Rota but didn’t specify which ships or give a timeline for their arrival, according to a June 28 USNI News report.

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Paratrooper in Italy creates time off incentives for 173rd Airborne

By NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — Spc. Harrison Turney was returning from a long weekend in Positano two months ago when he saw fellow paratroopers outside the barracks playing music and grilling meat.

That seemed like a waste to the 22-year-old California native. Why not go somewhere?

“They can grill out on a regular day,” Turney said.

During his nearly three-year assignment with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, he’s gotten around, traveling to numerous spots in Italy as well as to Ireland, Croatia, Greece, Monaco, Paris and Amsterdam.

“And some of these privates,



Spc. Harrison Turney

they should be aware that you can go pretty far on a four-day (weekend),” he said.

So Turney and his girlfriend

worked up an idea to encourage young paratroopers in the unit to do just that. By completing tasks, especially with others, they would get time off. He emailed the brigade commander, Col. Michael Kloepper, who loved the idea.

He and Turney jointly devised a points system consisting of 22 activities that allows soldiers to accumulate points and earn three-day and four-day passes. The incentive plan was implemented this month.

“Sky Soldiers like time off. We like Sky Soldiers to pursue excellence,” Kloepper said in a recent statement about the program. “So we mashed those two ideas together.”

The threshold for a three-day

pass is 75 points, and a four-day pass requires 100 points. Troops are limited to one points-related pass per month.

The activities include going on hikes, visiting battlefields, taking college classes, volunteering, earning awards, maxing out PT scores and taking a weekend trip by train or plane.

Each activity has an assigned point value, and troops can earn extra points for most activities by taking part in them as a group of four.

The scale ranges from 10-point activities, such as visiting a European battlefield or cemetery by oneself, to 100-point incentives, which include beating the brigade commander’s PT challenge with

three other paratroopers.

Winning Soldier of the Month is worth 50 points and graduating from Ranger School is worth 100 points.

Anyone in the brigade can accrue points, including senior officers, said Maj. Rob Haake, a brigade spokesman.

He said Turney’s brainstorming is “exactly what ‘owning the brigade’ should feel like by making it better no matter what rank you are.”

As for Turney, he’s off to his next assignment in October. It’s with the 25th Infantry Division — in Hawaii.

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Georgia troops return home after five-month deployment to Europe

Associated Press

FORT STEWART, Ga. — More than 3,800 Army soldiers are returning to Georgia five months after their rapid deployment to Europe after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Several hundred troops arrived

home Tuesday to Fort Stewart, where cheering parents, spouses and children welcomed them with waving flags and homemade signs.

Members of the 1st Armored Brigade of the Army’s 3rd Infantry Division found themselves scrambling to deploy in early March,

barely a week after Russian troops invaded Ukraine. The soldiers from Georgia went to Germany to train alongside NATO allies in a show of force intended to deter further Russian aggression in Europe.

Spc. David King had to leave his wife and 2-year-old daughter with

less than two days of advance notice. Both were waiting when he returned to Fort Stewart.

“I was a little worried that stuff was going to get crazy,” Kyra King, the soldier’s wife, told the Savannah Morning News. “But he stayed safe.”

Fort Stewart commanders have said the rest of the 1st Brigade should be home by the end of August.

The U.S. military is sending another unit to take its place — the 3rd Armored Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division based at Fort Hood, Texas.

PACIFIC

General: China should fear multinational drills

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

Teamwork displayed this week by the United States, Indonesia and a dozen other armed forces should instill fear in the U.S. military's "pacing threat," the general leading multinational drills in Indonesia said Thursday.

Super Garuda Shield, a two-week exercise concluding Sunday, took place while China exercised its navy and air force around Taiwan for a week following U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit there Aug. 3.

Beijing on Wednesday concluded the drills that Taipei saw as a rehearsal for invasion. China underlined its ballistic missiles and artillery with a white paper Wednesday that justifies using force to unite Taiwan, a self-governing democracy, with the mainland.

U.S. military leaders regard China as the "pacing threat" in the Indo-Pacific, the term Maj. Gen. Stephen Smith, commander of the

Army's 7th Infantry Division, used in remarks to Stars and Stripes on Thursday at Baturaja Training Area on Sumatra.

"That should put fear in their hearts — how we can come together as a joint, multinational force," Smith said.

The main complement of Super Garuda Shield is 2,000 American and 2,000 Indonesian troops. This year's installment is the largest in the 16-year history of the annual exercise.

The training is "a natural progression of where we need to be as we see what China is doing in the region," Smith said.

Super Garuda Shield is an Indonesian initiative, said Carlyle Thayer, an emeritus professor at the University of New South Wales and lecturer at the Australia



Smith



PHOTOS BY **SETH ROBSON**/Stars and Stripes

U.S. and Indonesian troops train together during the Super Garuda Shield exercise in Palembang, Indonesia, on Tuesday.

lian Defence Force Academy.

China is applying pressure in Indonesian waters around the Natuna Islands, he said in an email Tuesday. The islands northeast of Singapore are close to a part of the South China Sea claimed by China.

Chinese coast guard patrols, now routine, protect illegal Chinese fishing boats near the islands, Thayer said.

"Indonesia responded by beefing up the infrastructure at its nearby military airfields and naval ports, even deploying its most modern jet fighters," he said.

Indonesian leaders assumed that China recognized Indonesia's sovereignty over the Natunas but claimed historic rights over adjacent waters, Thayer said.

"Within the past year, China informed Indonesia that it had dis-

puted sovereignty claims," he said. "There were further incidents of Chinese harassment of Indonesian oil exploration efforts."

Indonesia has long refused to recognize China's claims in the South China Sea, Thayer said.

"Indonesia argues that all of its maritime boundaries are legitimate and based on international law," he said. "Therefore, Indonesia refuses to enter into negotiations with China or any other claimant state."

Super Garuda Shield is a message Indonesia sends to China, Thayer said.

Indonesia is "developing its capacity to defend its sovereignty and sovereign jurisdiction over its Exclusive Economic Zone and continental shelf by exercising with advanced navies including

the United States and significantly Japan for the first time," he said. "In other words, Indonesia is signaling its ability to deter China."

Japan sent paratroopers and Australia and Singapore both sent infantry companies to Super Garuda Shield. Canada, France, India, Malaysia, South Korea, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and the United Kingdom sent observers.

The Australian company commander, Maj. John Moulton, 35, said at Baturaja on Wednesday that his unit routinely works with both U.S. Marines and the Indonesian army.

He saved video on his phone of a Sumatran tiger crossing a road in the training area.

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Military officers from the United States, Australia and Singapore plan drills during the Super Garuda Shield exercise at Baturaja Training Area, Indonesia, on Wednesday.

N. Korea claims disputed victory over coronavirus

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — In a striking speech before thousands of North Koreans, leader Kim Jong Un's sister said he suffered a fever while guiding the country to victory over the coronavirus. She blamed rival South Korea for the outbreak and vowed "deadly" retaliation.

Kim Yo Jong, a powerful official in charge of inter-Korean relations, glorified her brother's leadership during the outbreak in her speech Wednesday at a national meeting where he jubilantly described the country's widely disputed success over the virus as an "amazing miracle" in global public health.

North Korea's statements about its outbreak are widely believed to be manipulated to help Kim Jong Un maintain absolute authority. But experts believe the victory an-

nouncement signals his intention to move to other priorities and are concerned his sister's remarks portend a provocation, which might include nuclear or missile tests or even border skirmishes.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said Thursday that Kim Jong Un declared victory over COVID-19 and ordered an easing of preventive measures just three months after the country first acknowledged an outbreak.

In her first known televised speech, his sister accused South Korea of spreading COVID-19 to North Korea's largely unvaccinated populace, saying the initial infections were caused by "leaflets, banknotes, awful booklets" and other items flown across the border by anti-North Korean activists in the South.

S. Korea preps response to North's tests

By **DAVID CHOI**
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — South Korea will have a new response the next time the North tests a nuclear weapon, Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup said Thursday, according to news reports.

Lee ruled out direct military action against North Korea but said "intensive responses" will be made after consulting with the United States, according to his remarks at a Seoul news conference reported by Yonhap News Agency.

"If North Korea conducts a nuclear test, the level of our response would be entirely different" than responses to previous tests, Lee said. Anticipation is growing for a North Korean test that South Korea and the United States have been predicting since May.

Pyongyang has "wrapped up its preparation for its seventh nuclear test," the South Korean Ministry of National Defense said in a news release Wednesday after a meeting of senior military leaders.

The ministry said the military will be ready if North Korea conducts some type of "provocation" during the upcoming Ulchi Freedom Shield military exercise by the U.S. and South Korea. The large-scale field exercise, the first in several years by the allies, is scheduled Aug. 22 to Sept. 1.

The U.N. Security Council imposed economic sanctions against North Korea in 2017 after its most recent nuclear test, the underground detonation of a hydrogen device that registered as a 6.3 magnitude earthquake. Pyongyang has conducted six nuclear tests since 2006.

Commercial satellite images

have suggested renewed activity around the Punggye-ri testing site, including construction at areas that were supposedly demolished in 2018. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met that year with then-South Korean President Moon Jae-in and then-President Donald Trump in face-to-face summits.

A confidential U.N. report also confirmed activity in Punggye-ri and said North Korea "continued to develop its capability for the production of fissile material" at a nuclear facility, according to a Reuters report Aug. 4.

So far this year, North Korea has conducted 17 rounds of missile tests; it last fired an unprecedented salvo of eight short-range missiles on June 5.

Stars and Stripes reporter Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this report.
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PACIFIC

Marines fly tactical vehicle via helicopter

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Marines from Okinawa demonstrated another facet of their commandant's new island-fighting doctrine this week by moving a tactical vehicle by helicopter from shore to ship and back again.

Marines of Combat Logistics Battalion 31 and Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 262 on Monday hauled the joint light tactical vehicle, about the size of its Humvee predecessor, from a secured military training area near Camp Hansen to the USS Miguel Keith offshore somewhere in the Philippine Sea, according to a news release emailed Wednesday to Stars and Stripes by Capt. Pawel Puczek, spokesman for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit.

The demonstration marked the first time Marines moved a light tactical vehicle by air in that manner, according to the release.

The exercise showed the Marines' ability to move combat vehicles and weapons systems between expeditionary advanced bases and ships like the Miguel Keith, a seaborne expeditionary base, Super Stallion pilot Capt. Tyler Hopping said in the release.

"The CH-53 and Helicopter Support Team provide a pretty unique capability to get those sys-



KIRA DUCATO/U.S. Marine Corps

A CH-53E Super Stallion from Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 262 picks up a joint light tactical vehicle from the USS Miguel Keith in the Philippine Sea on Monday.

tems to otherwise inaccessible locations," he said.

The maneuver tests a concept in expeditionary advanced base operations, a main tenet of Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger's servicewide redesign called Force Design 2030. He unveiled the concept two years ago as the Marines' counter to the threat posed by an increasingly assertive China.

The plan sacrificed tanks, towed cannon artillery and some helicopter units for smaller, faster, harder-to-detect fighting formations armed with long-range precision-fire capabilities in the form of light attack munitions.

Expeditionary advanced base

operations call for these mobile units to disperse inside the range of enemy missiles to seize and hold islands and sink enemy vessels at sea. The Marines on Okinawa have been rehearsing the concept piece by piece since its inception.

Force Design 2030 is not without its detractors. About two dozen retired generals, including former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joe Dunford, have lobbied against the plan behind the scenes, Politico reported in April.

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Sailor on Guam takes plea deal in shooting

By **MATTHEW M. BURKE**
Stars and Stripes

A Navy sailor on Guam agreed to testify against a codefendant in a shooting case in exchange for prosecutors dropping charges against him, according to the U.S. island territory's attorney general Thursday.

Eric Benjamin Salone, 28, pleaded guilty June 16 to one count of possessing a firearm without a proper ID, a third-degree felony, according to an email from Carlina Charfauros, a spokeswoman for Attorney General Leevin Taitano Camacho.

Salone agreed to testify against Nicholas Moore, 24, whose trial is scheduled to begin 9 a.m. Monday. Jury selection began Thursday in Guam Superior Court in Hagatna.

Salone's plea is temporarily set aside. If he cooperates with the case against Moore and completes a three-year probation, the case against him will be dismissed, Charfauros said.

Salone has been free on \$100,000 bail since March, ac-

ording to court records. His case was severed from Moore's, Charfauros said Thursday.

Salone and Moore were each charged March 24 with two counts of aggravated assault and terrorizing. Salone was also charged with possessing a firearm without the required ID and Moore with possessing an unregistered firearm. The assault and terrorizing charges came with the special allegation of use of a deadly weapon.

A subject unnamed in court documents alleged he was shot in the right leg around 9:15 p.m. Oct. 15, 2020, at an Agana Heights basketball court by a man driving a black Ford F-150 truck.

Authorities recovered a .38-caliber bullet from the alleged victim.

While investigating an unrelated homicide, Guam police discovered that Moore owned a black F-150 and two handguns: a 38-caliber and a .45-caliber, according to court records.

Police alleged Salone was in the

truck with Moore during the shooting, according to court records.

The Navy has not responded to requests from Stars and Stripes to identify Salone's rank, unit or his military occupation.

The service does not comment on ongoing investigations, Joint Region Marianas spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Katie Koenig said Thursday.

The homicide victim, Michael Castro, 28, went missing Oct. 29, 2020, the Pacific Daily News reported in June 2021.

His bloodied and bullet-riddled vehicle was found at Moore's house, along with a .45-caliber pistol with Castro's DNA on it. Castro's remains were found in a container in Yigo on Oct. 27.

Moore, who witnesses said is a drug dealer, is charged in separate cases with murdering Castro and sexually assaulting a 14-year-old girl, court records state.

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Premium gas to dip below \$5 a gallon at Far East bases

By **FRANK ANDREWS**
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The price of a gallon of premium gasoline on U.S. bases in the Far East is set to fall below \$5 for the first time since March, according to the Army and Air Force Exchange Service.

At Yokota Air Base, the headquarters of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo, AAFES customers will see premium at \$4.94 a gallon starting Saturday, down from \$5.07.

The same price drop will take effect at bases on Okinawa, at Misawa Air Base in the northeast and at Camp Zama, the headquarters of U.S. Army Japan outside Tokyo, according to AAFES' weekly price update.

Premium will also cost \$4.94 per gallon at U.S. bases in South Korea and on Guam; regular gas, which is not available at all AAFES stations in Japan, will drop to \$4.12 and \$4.11, respectively.

Back home, prices have dipped just below \$4 a gallon for regular gas for the first time in more than five months, The Associated Press reported Thursday. AAA said the national average is \$3.99 for a gallon of regular.

That's down 15 cents in just the last week, and 68 cents in the last month.

The decline reflects falling prices for crude oil, which have dipped close to \$90 a barrel from over \$120 a barrel in June.

"I figured the gas prices would go down eventually," civilian spouse Steven Brown told Stars and Stripes on Thursday at the AAFES Express near Yokota's main gate.

"I only generally have to fill up every few weeks or so — it was about \$50 every three weeks. It is way better here than when I was in Texas."

Premium is also set to sell for \$4.94 at Yokosuka Naval Base south of Tokyo, according to Navy Exchange department manager Dylan Bice.

Fuel prices at U.S. bases in the Pacific first reached \$5 a gallon for premium in March. Prices peaked in mid-June when military motorists paid \$5.83 for premium at AAFES stations in South Korea and \$5.82 in Japan.

Many shopped around for bargains on the Japanese economy. In May, a Shell service station just outside Yokota's main gate sold high octane for 170 yen a li-



JONATHAN SNYDER/Stars and Stripes

Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Jeffrey Hoffman fills up his car at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, on Thursday.

ter, or about \$5.04 a gallon.

The station also sold regular, not available at Yokota and some other bases in Japan, for about \$4.71 a gallon.

"We're not driving around taking the family on trips," Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Jeffrey Hoffman at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni told Stars and Stripes while filling up his car on Thursday.

"I like to drive around and sightsee, and with the COVID restrictions being more relaxed it doesn't help that gas prices are so high."

The gas pumps at MCAS Iwakuni are operated by the Marine Corps Exchange.

A spokesman did not immediately respond Thursday to a request for gas price information.

The exchange sets overseas pump prices based on the U.S. Department of Energy's weekly average for each grade of gasoline in the continental U.S., plus the unique, incremental costs the exchange incurs in each overseas market, AAFES spokesman Chris Ward said in May.

"These bona fide incremental costs include labor costs, excess depreciation and other unique expenses associated with providing gasoline to authorized drivers overseas," he said.

Stars and Stripes reporters Jonathan Snyder and Kelly Agee contributed to this report.
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MILITARY

4 al-Shabab militants killed in US airstrike

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Four al-Shabab terrorists who recently attacked Somali forces were killed Wednesday after a series of American airstrikes, U.S. Africa Command announced Wednesday.

U.S. forces, in coordination with the Somali government, launched three airstrikes against the terrorists who attacked the Somali troops Tuesday near Beledweyne, Somalia, AFRICOM said.

“The command’s initial assessment is that the strikes killed four al-Shabab terrorists and that no civilians were injured or killed,” AFRICOM said. “U.S. forces are authorized to conduct strikes in defense of designated partner forces.”

The announcement did not include further detail about the al-Shabab attack.

Al-Shabab is the Somali-based militant wing of the Somali Council of Islamic Courts that controlled the southernmost part of the country in 2006, according to the U.S. Director of National Intelligence. Though the main group

was defeated in 2007, al-Shabab has continued its violent insurgency.

“The federal government of Somalia and U.S. Africa Command take great measures to prevent civilian casualties,” AFRICOM said. “These efforts contrast with the indiscriminate attacks that al-Shabab regularly conducts against the civilian population.”

The airstrikes come about two months after U.S. special operations troops returned to Somalia. Former President Donald Trump had decided to pull roughly 700 U.S. service members from the country during the last days of his administration.

President Joe Biden reversed Trump’s decision based on a request from Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin out of “concern for the safety of our troops who have incurred additional risk by deploying in and out of Somalia on an episodic basis,” then-Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said at the time.

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Wildfire that burned 500 acres reignites at German training area

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

Crews at the German-American Baumholder military training area were battling another blaze Wednesday after extinguishing a 500-acre wildfire the day before, according to Landeskommando Rheinland-Pfalz, the German command authority in the region.

A nest of embers may have remained and flared up again, according to a spokesman with the German army.

“Currently a small blaze is still in progress but in an inaccessible area away from residential areas or buildings,” the spokesman said. “We are taking all necessary measures to quickly put out the fire, and there is no danger at this time.”

The earlier fire was reported Tuesday afternoon, the spokesman told Stars and Stripes on

Wednesday. Constantly shifting and gusting winds turned the initially small blaze into a larger one by late evening.

The heat was so intense that blank bullets left over from previous military exercises went off, local news broadcaster SWR reported. German and U.S. firefighters extinguished the flames Tuesday evening. There were no injuries.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation, but human error is being ruled out, as no exercises were scheduled at the time and no troops operated near the fire source, SWR reported.

German military officials say they think the fire was sparked spontaneously, given the drought conditions and recent high temperatures in the state.

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HUNTER DAY/U.S. Navy

An F/A-18E Super Hornet lands on the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman on Monday.

Navy jet recovered after Truman mishap lacked advanced traits

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The \$67.4 million Super Hornet that blew off the deck of a Navy carrier into the Mediterranean Sea lacked the cutting-edge technology available in the plane’s latest version, according to the service.

It was a Block II, an older version of the jet that had not been updated, Capt. Tamara Lawrence, a U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet spokeswoman, said Wednesday.

Newer, or Block III, versions carry technology upgrades that include an infrared search-and-track system useful in pinpointing stealth aircraft, better radar equipment and a precision-approach landing system.

That technology could be vulner-

able to exploitation by the Chinese or Russians, experts have said.

The F/A-18E from the USS Harry S. Truman was lost July 8 in rough weather, and was recovered Aug. 3 from a depth of about 9,500 feet roughly a half-mile from the estimated point where it entered the water.

It was found in the Ionian Sea, a portion of the Mediterranean that is south of the Adriatic Sea and bounded by Sicily, southern Italy, southern Albania and the western coast of Greece. It is being examined at Naval Air Station Sigonella’s NATO pier complex in Augusta Bay, Italy, as part of an ongoing investigation and will be transported to the U.S., Lawrence said.

Among the equipment search crews used was a CURV-21 remotely operated vehicle, or ROV,

equipped with a continuous transmission frequency modulation sonar.

The ROV was among other needed equipment flown to NAS Sigonella by Air Force C-17 Globemaster III cargo planes from Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, according to Lawrence.

“The search and recovery took less than 24 hours,” she said. “The team operated safely and efficiently to meet the timeline.”

The Navy is slowly phasing out the Super Hornet, which was introduced in 1999, but it plans to purchase 78 Block III versions and upgrade existing Block II models, Boeing, the plane’s manufacturer, said in September.

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Tree falls in storm, kills 2 Ranger candidates

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two Army Ranger candidates died and three others were hurt Tuesday after being struck by a falling tree during a thunderstorm near Dahlonega, Ga., the service said Wednesday.

Staff Sgt. George Taber and 2nd Lt. Evan Fitzgibbon and the injured soldiers, who were not named, were waiting for the storm to clear during a training exercise at Yonah Mountain when the tree fell at about 3:15 p.m., the service said in the statement.

All of them were taken to a local hospital, where Taber and Fitzgibbon were later pronounced dead, according to the Army.

“Those who volunteer to attend Ranger School represent the very best of our military,” Col. Christopher Hammonds, commander

of the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade, said in the statement. “This loss resonates across our Army and across our nation.”

Taber was a special forces medical sergeant with the 7th Special Forces Group at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. He enlisted in the Army in 2017 and graduated special forces qualification course in 2018. He later completed the combat medic course, military freefall parachutist course and survival, evasion, resistance and escape course, the Army said.

Fitzgibbon was an infantry officer assigned to the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course of the 199th Leader Brigade at Fort Benning, Ga. He had commissioned in May

2021 after graduating from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

“We are all deeply saddened by the loss of these two outstanding soldiers and send our heartfelt condolences to their families,” Maj. Gen. Curtis Buzzard, the commander at Fort Benning, said in the statement.

A safety investigation team from the Army Combat Readiness Center at Fort Rucker, Ala., is leading an investigation into the incident, which is standard protocol, according to Army spokesman Michael Negard.

The deaths come three weeks after Sgt. 1st Class Michael D. Clark was killed and nine other Reserve soldiers were injured by a lightning strike at Fort Gordon near Augusta, Ga. Those soldiers were also taking part in a training exercise at the time.



Taber

MILITARY

Camp Pendleton Marine killed in Kabul honored

Posthumous medal is awarded at Disneyland

BY ERIKA I. RITCHIE
The Orange County Register

Space Mountain was Lance Cpl. Dylan Merola's favorite ride. Disneyland was his happy place.

So on Monday, it was only fitting that a posthumous medal — commemorating the young Marine for his actions on Aug. 26 while standing guard at Kabul's airport in Afghanistan — was presented to his family during Disneyland's somber Flag Retreat Ceremony.

The notable lowering of the flag is held daily at the theme park's Towne Square near the end of Main Street. But, a medal presentation there is a rarity, park officials said.

The ceremony included the playing of each service branch's theme song — "The Caissons Go Rolling Along," "Anchors Away," "The Marines' Hymn," "Semper Paratus," and "The U.S. Air Force Song." Veterans attending the event stepped forward to represent their respective branch. The Disneyland Band played while the Dapper Dans sang the lyrics.

After the U.S. flag was lowered, Marine Master Sgt. Patrick Hause — the Casualty Assistance Calls Officer who assisted Merola's family after his death — presented the Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medal posthumously to Merola's mother, Cheryl Rex, who attended with her children Branden Murrell, 24, and Olivia Hernandez, 14, along with her parents.

"Receiving Dylan's award at Disneyland was very emotional," said Rex. "It was also calming to know that this was Dylan's place where we spent a lot of time for Dylan's whole life."

The medal with "C" for combat was presented to Merola for "heroic service above self" on the day that the Hamid Karzai International Airport was bombed



JEFF GRITCHEN/TNS

Cheryl Rex, center, stands during the flag retreat Monday at Disneyland, before a ceremony presenting her son Lance Cpl. Dylan Merola with a posthumous medal. Her son, Marine Pvt. Branden Murrell, left, and Master Sgt. Patrick Hause salute.

during the evacuation of Americans and Afghan allies.

Merola, 20, of Rancho Cucamonga, was one of 11 Marines, a Navy sailor, and an Army soldier killed that day. Most Marines were part of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines at Camp Pendleton.

Two other Southern California Marines — Cpl. Hunter Lopez, 22, and Lance Cpl. Karem Nikoui — have also posthumously been awarded similar awards. All those killed received the Purple Heart, and in November, Congress approved for all 13 to receive Congressional Gold Medals, one of the highest civilian awards. The attack, which also killed 170 Afghans and wounded another 45 U.S. troops, was the deadliest against U.S. forces in Afghanistan since Aug. 6, 2011.

The idea to host the award ceremony at Disneyland came from Hause's wife, Monica, a veteran of the Army and U.S. Air Force. She became close with Rex and her children because of her husband's connection to the family: Patrick Hause was the knock on the door notifying Rex that her son had been killed.

At the ceremony, Murrell witnessed the respect his brother received as hundreds of park vis-

itors took time out of their day to watch the flag come down. Among the crowd, dozens of veterans participated as their service branch was recognized.

Among them was Leroy Homer, 63, a Navy veteran from Lompoc who was visiting Disneyland with his wife. The flag ceremony is a "must-do" whenever they visit the theme park.

"When you sign the contract, we're putting our lives on the line for our country," Homer said. "We understand that's part of our job, and someone has to defend our way of life."

Robotic: 'Dogs' on patrol

FROM PAGE 1

company spokesman Michael Subhan told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday. The robotic dog can reach speeds of nearly 7 mph with a range of six miles and three hours of battery life, according to the Ghost Robotics website.

"There are quite a few payloads that can be added to the Vision 60 robot," Subhan said.

The electronic canines can carry thermal cameras; sensors for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear contamination; emergency ordnance disposal disruptors; manipulator arms; light detection and radar imagers; radios and other hardware and software, Subhan said.

Dyess is the second Air Force base to field mechanical quadrupeds. Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., set their robot dogs on the hunt two years ago.

The robots will not replace real working dogs, but "will be used as a force multiplier for enhanced situational awareness," Maj. Jordan Criss, commander of 325th Security Forces Squadron, said in a news release in November 2020.

The robots' patrol paths are set and monitored by a noncommissioned officer in charge of the security sensor system, Criss said. The machines can transmit real-time data to their operators and be controlled from a handheld remote or laptop.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection also tested Ghost Robotics' machines as potential patrol partners along the U.S. Southwest border, according to a Department of Homeland news release in February.

The 100-pound robot dog is en-



RYAN HAYMAN/U.S. Air Force

Master Sgt. Jaime Gutierrez performs a durability and strength test on a robot dog at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, on Aug. 5.

gineered to traverse a variety of natural terrain and human-built environments like stairs, according to Homeland Security. Robot dogs can get themselves upright again if they fall or are knocked over. Putting them to work reduces the risk to human officers from harsh environments, extreme weather and traffickers in drugs and humans, according to the department.

The Border Patrol tested its autonomous quadrupeds as sentries by programming them to walk specified routes during day and night. The machines also simulated train car inspections at railyards, according to Homeland Security.

"The Vision 60 can run autonomously via either GPS waypoints or recording a route and playing that route back autonomously," Subhan told Stars and Stripes.

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EUROPE

Russia confirms prisoner swap talks with US

By **ROBYN DIXON**
The Washington Post

RIGA, Latvia — Russia Thursday confirmed for the first time that negotiations between Washington and Moscow on a prisoner exchange were underway, after the United States proposed a deal to release WNBA star Whitney Griner and another American prisoner Paul Whelan.

The Russian Foreign Ministry confirmed negotiations were underway via a channel set up by President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin when they met in Geneva in June last year.

Russian Foreign Ministry

spokesman Ivan Nechayev said Thursday that negotiations about an exchange began after Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov confirmed last week that Russia was willing to talk.

“Instructions were given to authorized structures to carry out negotiations,” Nechayev said. “They are being conducted by competent authorities,” he told journalists in Moscow Thursday, state media reported.

The Biden administration has been under massive pressure to secure Griner’s release after her arrest at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo International Airport in February. She was carrying two

vape cartridges with cannabis oil, containing less than a gram of the substance, banned in Russia.

Griner’s plea to the court for leniency fell on deaf ears, and she was sentenced to nine years in prison in a Russian court last Thursday. Her legal team has announced plans to appeal.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced last month that officials had made a “substantial” offer for a deal to secure the release of Griner and Whelan but has not confirmed media reports that Washington offered to swap Russian arms trafficker Viktor Bout, who is

serving a 25-year sentence in the United States.

After Lavrov’s comments, Blinken said that after Russia’s indication that “they are prepared to engage through channels we’ve established to do just that ... we’ll be pursuing that.” Biden said Friday that “I’m hopeful. We’re working hard.”

The State Department says that both Griner and Whelan were wrongfully detained. Biden spoke by phone to the families of Griner and Whelan last month to assure them that his administration was doing everything it could to see them freed.

Former Marine Whelan, 52, a

security consultant arrested in 2018 and convicted of spying in 2020, is serving a 16-year jail sentence. He says he was framed. He was left behind when the United States exchanged another former Marine, Trevor Reed, for convicted Russian drug trafficker Konstantin Yaroshenko in April.

Another American arrested at Sheremetyevo International Airport for carrying cannabis into Russia, schoolteacher Marc Fogel, has not been classified by the State Department as wrongfully detained, and does not appear to have been included in the proposed prisoner swap.

Desperately: Reports say Russian troops are departing or trying to leave the military

FROM PAGE 1

As Russia continues to suffer losses in its invasion of Ukraine, now nearing its sixth month, the Kremlin has refused to announce a full-blown mobilization — a move that could be very unpopular for President Vladimir Putin. That has led instead to a covert recruitment effort that includes using prisoners to make up the manpower shortage.

This also is happening amid reports that hundreds of Russian soldiers are refusing to fight and trying to quit the military.

“We’re seeing a huge outflow of people who want to leave the war zone — those who have been serving for a long time and those who have signed a contract just recently,” said Alexei Tabalov, a lawyer who runs the Conscript’s School legal aid group.

The group has seen an influx of requests from men who want to terminate their contracts, “and I personally get the impression that everyone who can is ready to run away,” Tabalov said in an interview with The Associated Press. “And the Defense Ministry is digging deep to find those it can persuade to serve.”

Although the Defense Ministry denies that any “mobilization activities” are taking place, authorities seem to be pulling out all the stops to bolster enlistment. Billboards and public transit ads in various regions proclaim, “This is The Job,” urging men to join the professional army. Authorities have set up mobile recruiting centers in some cities, including one at the site of a half marathon in Siberia in May.

Regional administrations are forming “volunteer battalions” that are promoted on state television. The business daily Kommersant counted at least 40 such entities in 20 regions, with officials

promising volunteers monthly salaries ranging from the equivalent of \$2,150 to nearly \$5,500, plus bonuses.

The AP saw thousands of openings on job search websites for various military specialists.

The British military said this week that Russia had formed a major new ground force called the 3rd Army Corps from “volunteer battalions,” seeking men up to age 50 and requiring only a middle-school education, while offering “lucrative cash bonuses” once they are deployed to Ukraine.

But complaints also are surfacing in the media that some aren’t getting their promised payments, although those reports can’t be independently verified.

In early August, Tabalov said he began receiving multiple requests for legal help from reservists who have been ordered to take part in a two-month training in areas near the border with Ukraine.

The recruitment of prisoners has been going on in recent weeks in as many as seven regions, said Vladimir Osechkin, founder of the Gulagu.net prisoner rights group, citing inmates and their relatives that his group had contacted.

It’s not the first time that authorities have used such a tactic, with the Soviet Union employing “prisoner battalions” during World War II.

Nor is Russia alone. Early in the war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy promised amnesty to military veterans behind bars if they volunteered to fight, although it remains unclear if anything came out of it.

In the current circumstances, Osechkin said, it isn’t the Defense Ministry that’s recruiting prisoners — instead, it was Russia’s shadowy private military force, the Wagner Group.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, an entre-

preneur known as “Putin’s chef” because of his catering contracts with the Kremlin and reportedly Wagner’s manager and financier, brushed aside reports that he personally visited prisons to recruit convicts, in a written statement released by his representatives this month. Prigozhin, in fact, denies he has any ties to Wagner, which reportedly has sent military contractors to places like Syria and sub-Saharan Africa.

According to Osechkin, prisoners with military or law enforcement experience were initially offered to go to Ukraine, but that later was extended to inmates with varying backgrounds. He estimated that as of late July, about 1,500 might have applied, lured by promises of big salaries and eventual pardons.

Now, he added, many of those volunteers — or their families — are contacting him and seeking to get out of their commitments, telling him: “I really don’t want to go.”

According to the woman whose boyfriend is serving his sentence at the penal colony in St. Petersburg, the offers to leave the prison are “a glimmer of hope” for freedom. But she said he told her that of 11 volunteers, eight died in Ukraine. She added that one of the volunteers expressed regret for his decision and doesn’t believe he will return alive.

Her account couldn’t be independently verified, but was in line with multiple reports by independent Russian media and human rights groups.

According to those groups and military lawyers, some soldiers and law enforcement officers have refused deployment to Ukraine or are trying to return home after a few weeks or months of fighting.

Media reports about some troops refusing to fight in Ukraine



AP

Russian soldiers patrol a destroyed part of the Illich Iron & Steel Works Metallurgical Plant in Mariupol, in territory under the Donetsk People’s Republic, eastern Ukraine, on May 18.

started surfacing in the spring, but rights groups and lawyers only began talking about the number of refusals reaching the hundreds last month.

In mid-July, the Free Buryatia Foundation reported that about 150 men were able to terminate their contracts with the Defense Ministry and returned from Ukraine to Buryatia, a region in eastern Siberia that shares a border with Mongolia.

Some of the servicemen are facing repercussions. Tabalov said about 80 other soldiers who sought to nullify their contracts were detained in the Russian-controlled town of Bryanka in the Luhansk region of eastern Ukraine, according to their relatives.

Last week, he said that the Bryanka detention center was shut down because of the media attention.

But the parent of one officer who was detained after trying to get out of his contract told the AP this week that some are still being detained elsewhere in the region. The parent asked not to be identified out of safety concerns.

Tabalov said a serviceman can terminate his contract for a compelling reason — normally not difficult — although the decision is

usually up to his commander. But he added: “In the conditions of hostilities, not a single commander would acknowledge anything like that, because where would they find people to fight?”

Alexandra Garmazhapova, head of the Free Buryatia Foundation, told the AP that soldiers and their relatives complain of commanders tearing up termination notices and threatening “refuseniks” with prosecution. As of late July, the foundation said it had received hundreds of requests from soldiers seeking to end their contracts.

“I’m getting messages every day,” Garmazhapova said.

Tabalov said some soldiers complain that they were deceived about where they were going and didn’t expect to end up in a war zone, while others are exhausted from fighting and unable to continue.

Rarely, if at all, did they appear motivated by antiwar convictions, the lawyer said.

Russia will continue to face problems with soldiers refusing to fight, military analyst Michael Kofman said, but one shouldn’t underestimate Russia’s ability to “muddle through ... with half-measures.”

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CELESTYAL CRUISES

NATION

Wholesale inflation fell 1st time in 2 years

By **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Prices at the wholesale level fell from June to July, the first month-to-month drop in more than two years and a sign that some of the U.S. economy's inflationary pressures cooled last month.

Thursday's report from the Labor Department showed that the producer price index — which measures inflation before it reaches consumers — declined 0.5% in July. It was the first monthly drop since April 2020 and was down from a sharp 1% increase from May to June.

The easing of wholesale inflation suggests that consumers

could get some relief from relentless inflation in the coming months. The wholesale report follows government data Wednesday that showed that consumer inflation was unchanged from June to July — the first flat figure after 25 straight months of increases.

Yet economists caution that it's still too early to say that inflation is headed steadily lower.

"The July deceleration ... is a move in the right direction," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics. "But producer costs continue to rise at a rapid pace, well above target."

Wholesale food prices rose 1%

from June to July, a sign that grocery prices will likely keep rising in the coming months. The wholesale costs of eggs, beef and vegetables all jumped.

Trucking freight costs, though, fell 0.3%, evidence that some supply chain snarls are easing.

Inflation at the wholesale level still jumped 9.8% in July compared with a year earlier, suggesting that inflation will remain at painful levels for months to come. That was down from a year-over-year surge of 11.3% in June — near a four-decade high — and was the smallest annual rise in eight months.

Thursday's report showed that wholesale gas prices tumbled

16.7% from June to July, a sign that retail prices at the pump will continue to decline this month and likely into September. Consumers are already seeing steady reductions: Gas prices fell below \$4 a gallon, on average, on Thursday for the first time in five months.

The milder inflation data, and last month's unexpectedly robust hiring that helped lower the unemployment rate to a half-century low of 3.5%, have provided President Joe Biden with some positive economic news after months of accelerating price spikes hampered his approval ratings. Congressional Republicans have made rising inflation a major line of attack in the upcoming mid-

term elections.

And the Federal Reserve has embarked on its fastest pace of interest rate hikes since the early 1980s in an effort to quell inflation, and will likely keep raising borrowing costs for the rest of this year. Its short-term rate is currently in a range of 2.25% to 2.5%, the highest since 2018.

Chair Jerome Powell has said the Fed would need to see a series of declining inflation readings before it would consider pausing its rate increases. The Fed could announce a third straight three-quarter point rate hike when it next meets in late September or instead carry out a less drastic half-point hike.



MACABE BROWN, EVANSVILLE (IND.) COURIER & PRESS/AP

Officials are investigating after a house explosion Wednesday in Evansville, Ind.

Officials investigate the cause of Ind. house explosion that killed 3

Associated Press

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — Authorities worked Thursday to determine the cause of a house explosion in a southern Indiana neighborhood that killed three people and left another person hospitalized.

The explosion Wednesday afternoon in Evansville damaged 39 homes and crews had not yet completed thorough searches of all of them due to instability of the structures, Fire Chief Mike Connelly told reporters Thursday morning.

Eleven of the damaged homes were uninhabitable and will have to be demolished, Connelly said, and finding a cause is

expected to be a "very tedious process — and lengthy."

Names of the dead hadn't been released as of Thursday morning. Injuries to the fourth victim weren't considered life-threatening, Connelly said.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives also was investigating.

Evansville is located along Indiana's border with Kentucky. The blast left debris strewn over a 100-foot radius.

CenterPoint Energy, the local gas utility, was last called to the home in January 2018, Connelly said Wednesday.

"CenterPoint Energy is working closely with the Evansville

Fire Department, State Fire Marshal and other agencies as the investigation of this incident continues," the utility said.

It was the second house explosion in the area in just over five years. A house explosion on June 27, 2017, killed two people and injured three others.

Wednesday's explosion also brought to mind a massive blast in 2012 that destroyed or damaged more than 80 homes on Indianapolis' south side and killed two people. A man was convicted of tampering with a natural gas line at his then-girlfriend's home in an attempt to commit insurance fraud.

Unemployment claims rise by 14,000 to 262K

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans who signed up for unemployment benefits rose last week to the highest level since November, though the U.S. job market continues to show signs of strength.

Applications for jobless aid climbed by 14,000 to 262,000 and now have risen five out of the last six weeks, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

The four-week average for claims, which smooths out weekly ups and downs, rose by 4,500 to 252,000, also the highest since November.

The number of Americans collecting traditional unemployment benefits increased by 8,000 the

week that ended July 30 to 1.43 million, the highest since early April.

Unemployment applications are a proxy for layoffs and are often seen as an early indicator of where the job market is headed.

So far this year, hiring in the U.S. has been remarkably strong and resilient in the face of rising interest rates and weak economic growth. The Labor Department reported last week that U.S. employers added 528,000 jobs last month, more than double what forecasters had expected. The unemployment rate dipped to 3.5% in July, tying a 50-year low reached just before the coronavirus pandemic slammed the U.S. economy in early 2020.

Herrera Beutler 3rd GOP impeacher to lose primary

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler has become the third congressperson who voted to impeach former President Donald Trump to be ousted in a primary.

Herrera Beutler fell to Trump-backed Joe Kent, a former Green Beret, in the 3rd Congressional District contest. The district is in southwest Washington state, across the border from Portland, Ore. Kent will face Democrat Marie Gluesenkamp Perez in November. She had already advanced to the general election since she was the top vote-getter after the Aug. 2 primary, with 31% of the vote.

Herrera Beutler, who was first elected to the U.S. House in 2010, led Kent by about 4,700 votes on election night but her lead shrunk throughout last week, and updat-

ed returns Wednesday night put Kent — who was in the No. 2 spot since Monday night — ahead by 1,050 votes.

Kent finished with 22.8% of the vote, and Herrera Beutler was in third place with 22.3% of the vote.

Herrera Beutler conceded the race in an email Tuesday night, saying that "since I was first elected to this seat I have done my very best to serve my home region and our country."

In a statement Wednesday, Kent thanked the other Republican candidates, saying all of the "campaigns fought hard because we all care deeply about this district and this country."



Beutler

WORLD

Wildfires spread, fish die off amid severe drought throughout Europe

Associated Press

PARIS — Firefighters from across Europe struggled Thursday to contain a huge wildfire in France that has swept through a large swath of pine forest, while Germans and Poles faced a mass fish die-off in a river flowing between their countries.

Europe is suffering under a severe heat wave and drought that has produced tragic consequences for farmers and ecosystems already under threat from climate change and pollution.

The drought is causing a loss of

agricultural products and other food at a time when supply shortages and Russia's war against Ukraine have caused inflation to spike.

In France, which is enduring its worst drought on record, flames raged through pine forests overnight, illuminating the sky with an intense orange light in the Gironde region, which was already ravaged by flames last month, and in neighboring Landes. More than 26 square miles have burned since Tuesday.

The French wildfires have already forced the evacuation of

about 10,000 people and destroyed at least 16 houses.

Along the Oder River, which flows from Czechia north into the Baltic Sea, volunteers have been collecting dead fish that have washed ashore in Poland and Germany.

Piotr Nieznanski, the conservation policy director at WWF Poland, said it appears that a toxic chemical was released into the water by an industry and the low water levels caused by the drought has made conditions far more dangerous for the fish.

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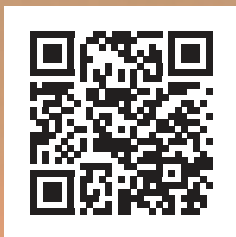
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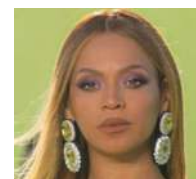
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WEEKEND



Beyoncé, Lamar
blazing trails

Music, Page 28



Spidey SUITS US ALL

As Spider-Man
turns 60, fans reflect
on diverse appeal

Page 15

TYLER SCOTT HOOVER/AP

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



General Drones

Lifeguard drones, especially effective when time is of the essence, are not unusual in Spain.

Drones against drownings

Devices saving lives in Spain, but US officials say they're too costly

By PRANSHU VERMA
The Washington Post

When a 14-year-old boy was in danger of drowning off the Spanish shores of Valencia last month, help came in an unusual form: a drone.

Within seconds of spotting trouble, lifeguards used walkie-talkies to notify trained drone pilots to fly one over to the child. The drone battled crosswinds and hovered a few feet over the boy, dropping an auto-inflating life vest. Shortly after the child put the vest on, a lifeguard arrived on a personal watercraft to bring him back to shore.

The rescue mission relied on technology from General Drones, a Spanish company that offers a preview into summers of the future: one where sun-kissed lifeguards can use drones to help respond to potential drownings quicker.

The technology has gained traction in Spain, where it's being used on nearly two dozen beaches.

Lifesaving drones provide a crucial benefit, lifeguards and company officials say, especially when time is of the essence.

"Every second matters," said Adrián Plazas Agudo, the chief executive of General Drones and a former lifeguard. "Our first response is in about five seconds ... It's very important to reduce the time."

Lifeguards face significant issues in saving people, said Bernard J. Fisher, the director of health and safety for the American Lifeguard Association. The pandemic halted lifeguard training, and the red-hot job market drove younger Americans to higher-paying summer gigs, sparking a national lifeguard shortage that's forced fewer people to monitor wider swaths of shore. In the United States, roughly 3,690 people drown per year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Lifeguards must get to people struggling in the water as quickly as possible, Fisher said, and a delay of seconds could be the difference between life and death. Using motorboats to rush out to people is costly and still takes time, he added, and swimming to a person is difficult. The lifeguards in the water rely on colleagues on land to direct them. But if the person struggling in the water is tired, they could go underwater or move along the shoreline quickly, making it hard to be spotted.

Agudo, who spent years as a lifeguard in Valencia and is an industrial engineer, started Gener-

al Drones in 2015 after a harrowing incident on the beach. He was patrolling a stretch of shore alongside Enrique Fernández, who became his company co-founder. They saw a woman struggling and rushed out to her — but they were too late.

"I could see how the woman drowned in front of me," he said. "It was the breaking point."

After that, Agudo and Fernández partnered with engineers at Valencia's Polytechnic University to create a drone that could reach people quicker than the fastest swimmer or water scooter and potentially save lives. They realized the beach was a harsh environment and needed a drone that could withstand water, sand and wind.

Ultimately, they created a drone that's roughly two feet wide and weighs about 22 pounds. Made of carbon fiber and wrapped in a Go-Pro-like casing, it keeps the beach environment from eroding the mechanical innards. The drone is outfitted with a high-resolution camera and carries two folded life vests that inflate upon touching water.

Currently, 22 beaches in Spain use the technology, Agudo said. It has been used in roughly 40 to 50 lifesaving incidents in Spain. The drones can reach speeds of up to 50 mph, and monitor roughly 3.5 miles of shore.

The drone, called the Auxdrone LFG, costs roughly 40,000 euros to purchase. Counties that purchase the drone also shell out 12,000 euros per month for specialized drone pilots to execute the challenging task of flying a drone out into the ocean, where winds are strong, and deploying life vests precisely over someone who's drowning.

A number of lifeguard officials in the United States said they are excited about drones. At the same time, they noted that the technology is not a replacement for actual lifeguards and will not get widespread adoption until the cost comes down.

Tom Gill, chief of the Virginia Beach Lifesaving Service and vice president of the United States Lifesaving Association, agreed that drones would be helpful. But he said that no matter how advanced the technology gets, drones cannot replace lifeguards, who can spot unsafe situations as they're beginning.

"It may be nice to have that drone go out there and maybe they do get there quicker than the lifeguard," he said. "But a lot of times the lifeguard has already prevented this from happening in the first place."

Hassle-free Aiper Seagull 600 a must-have for pool owners

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

If you're a pool owner and want to vacuum it yourself, there's no need to read on. Otherwise, for owners who want a pool cleaned with a cordless, robotic pool cleaner, the hassle-free Aiper Seagull 600 is a must-have.

A robotic pool cleaner is a technology category I've never dipped into until trying the Seagull 600, and I'm hooked by how easy it is to use and clean. To test it, I tossed a bunch of leaves, sand and small sticks into my pool the night before my initial test, giving them enough time to sink to the bottom. This also gave the pool vacuum enough time to charge.

First thing in the morning, after powering it on with the press of the bottom side button, I lowered the cleaner into the pool with the supplied retrieving hook. The hook has the standard attachment to connect to any skimmer pole. A few hours later, the pool was 100% clean. It missed nothing.

Once the vacuuming was completed, the hook removed the Seagull 600 from the bottom. The self-parking feature sets the vacuum underwater at the end of the pool for easy removal.

A nice thing about the pool IPX8 waterproof-rated robotic vacuum setup is there are no cords or hoses. For the most part, you charge the 6.6-pound, 13-by-13-by-9.1-inch unit, and it is ready for the next round of dirt.

Inside the Aiper Seagull 600 is a 2600mAh rechargeable battery, which produces 30 watts of power for the quiet dual drive motors. Charging takes just under four hours to get 50 minutes of runtime. The ideal pool size is any shape up to 538 square feet, and the device runs at 52.5 feet per minute. The coverage area is on flat floors and will not climb walls or steps.

The vacuum has suction to remove debris, sand, grass clippings, leaves, etc., and two scrapers are included. There are four wheels on the bottom, and the left and right wheels are fixed. The front and back wheels are adjustable for different paths.

Cleaning the Aiper Seagull 600 is straightforward. Open the clips and remove the top cover to expose and remove the filter tray for a hosing. All the dirt the vacuum captured will be sitting in the tray and chassis. It takes seconds to put the filter back in and close the clips.

Aiper recommends not operating the cleaner when people are in the pool.

Cleaning a pool has never been so easy. Just drop it in, grab a lounge chair, sit and watch.

Online: aiper.com; \$269.99



AIPER/TNS

The Aiper Seagull 600 is a no-hassle way to clean pools.

Sennheiser's Momentum True Wireless 3 is touted by the company as their flagship pair of earbuds. And with good reason.

The Bluetooth 5.2 earbuds are an update in the Momentum True Wireless line, with a new 7 mm audiophile driver in each earbud, an improved ergonomic design for a comfortable fit and an added microphone.

Once the music begins playing in your ears, it's nothing short of spectacular, which is expected from an industry leader like Sennheiser. An app can tweak the sound, but the default sound right out of the box is as good as any I've heard.

Along with music playlists and streaming services, I've always felt that talk radio is an excellent way to test earbud clarity. After listening to a news broadcast on the Momentum True Wireless 3s for just a few minutes, the clarity sounded better than if the person were standing next to me.

The IPX4-rated splash-resistant earbuds are built with Adaptive Noise Cancellation, which automatically adjusts to your current listening environment. Transparency mode is perfect for street walking, bike rides or anywhere you use the earbuds where you need to hear some of your surroundings.

Each earbud has three noise-canceling microphones to broadcast your voice clearly to receiving ends of cell calls or accessing voice assistants. A charcoal cloth Qi wireless charging (USB-C) and storage case are included for up to 28 hours of playtime (seven hours from the earbuds, 21 additional from the charging case).

The new earbuds with touch controls are eye-catching, with a rounded rectangular body cased with a metallic matte finish. Other color options include black or white.

Four different-sized ear tips (XS, S, M, L) and three sets (S, M, L) of ear fins are included.

Sennheiser's smart app gives you the controls to tweak the sound to specific listeners. The app has presets, manual controls and an equalizer to find the sound balance for every set of ears.

Online: sennheiser-hearing.com; \$249.95

WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT

A superhero for everyman

Spider-Man celebrates 60 years of inspiring diverse fans, cosplayers who can see themselves behind his mask

BY AARON MORRISON
Associated Press

Spider-Man fandom is in Tyler Scott Hoover's blood — but not because he was bitten by an irradiated arachnid. His father had collected Marvel comic books featuring the character since the 1970s.

"He passed down a ton of comics to me," says Hoover, 32, of Glen Burnie, Md. "It kind of makes it almost like a religion. It would have been hard for me not to become a fan of Spider-Man."

There are legions of fans of Spider-Man, who this month marks 60 years in the vast, imaginative world of comic books, movies and merch. Among those fans are devotees like Hoover, a professional Spider-Man cosplayer and model who doesn't resemble the longtime "canon" presentation of the character. However, in the cinematic and comics universes, a Black Spider-Man is now reality.

Hoover is biracial — of Black and white ancestry — and stands at 6 feet 2 inches. And the story of his fandom illustrates an important point about New York City's favorite super-powered wall-crawler: The appeal of the character long ago transcended its original iteration as a white, unimposing, orphaned teenager.

The Spider-Man character's classic costume, complete with wide-eyed and web-patterned mask, is a key ingredient to the character's appeal across race, gender and nationality. Almost anyone can imagine themselves behind it as this everyman — an underestimated smarty-pants who, after a quick change into head-to-toe spandex, becomes a force for good.

"The older I got, slowly but surely, I saw how relatable the character was," Hoover says. "He had to work through his struggles while still maintaining a secret identity and doing good for the people. That kind of moral compass is powerful, especially for an impressionable mind."

More importantly, Hoover says, it's Spider-Man's struggle to protect his hometown that makes the character more believable than superheroes whose origin stories include wealth and influence. No coincidence, surely, that he refers to himself as "your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man."

Created by the late Stan Lee and Steve Ditko, Spider-Man appeared in comics as early as June 1962, although the canon date of his debut is Aug. 10, 1962, in Marvel's *Amazing Fantasy* #15. Peter Parker, a high schooler bitten by a spider from a science experiment, developed superhuman strength, the ability to cling to solid surfaces and fast reflexes aided by the ability to sense and anticipate danger.

But on his journey to becoming a superhero, Parker fails to stop a burglar who kills his Uncle Ben, leaving his adoptive aunt widowed. The character then strives to honor the words etched at the end of that debut issue, later attributed to his uncle: "With great power, there must also come great responsibility."

Racially and culturally diverse superheroes, generally absent from the mainstream comics scene during its first decades, began to emerge in the years after Spider-Man's debut, particularly at Marvel.

In 1966, Black Panther, also known as Prince T'Challa of the fictional and reclusive African nation of Wakanda, became the first Black Marvel comic superhero. Debuting in the 1970s were characters such as Storm, the mutant goddess most known as a member of Marvel's X-Men; Luke Cage, Marvel's formerly imprisoned Black



TYLER SCOTT HOOVER/AP

Tyler Scott Hoover, a professional Spider-Man cosplayer and model, poses as the Marvel comic superhero.

Harlemite with superhuman strength and nearly impenetrable skin; Shang-Chi, the master martial artist who is among the first Asian Marvel superheroes; and Red Wolf, the expert archer and first Native American Marvel superhero.

"Sometimes when we think of superheroes, we think of billionaires in suits, brilliant scientists or Norse gods," says Angélique Roché, host of the podcast "Marvel's Voices" and co-author of the upcoming book "My Super Hero Is Black."

Spider-Man turned the idea of mostly privileged humans using their wealth and power to become heroes on its head, she says. Spider-Man iterations, in the comics and in film, have appeared across multiple universes, or the so-called "spidaverse." Miles Morales, a teenage, Afro Latino Spider-Man, has become wildly popular and

"Spider-Man was never really defined by his ethnicity, but more so his social status and the struggles he went through. That's even more relatable for people of color and different ethnicities, because there's a lot of struggle involved in life that you have to persevere through."



Tyler Scott Hoover
professional Spider-Man cosplayer, model

starred in his own animated feature film. Cindy Moon, a Korean-American known as Silk, was bitten by the same spider as Peter Parker.

"Because Spider-Man means so much to us, we should always be open to the possibilities," Roché says. "We should always hope and believe that there's never going to be a dearth of people who want to fight for what's right."

In July, Spider-Man was inducted into the Comic-Con Hall of Fame during the annual convention in San Diego. Fans flooded the convention hall in costumes that spanned various iterations of the character.

Because of the mask, Spider-Man has been a safer choice for cosplayers hoping to avoid the staunch purists, or those who criticize others for deviating from canonized representations of superheroes. But cosplay doesn't have to be canon, says Andrew Liptak, a historian and author of the book "Cosplay, a History: The Builders, Fans, and Makers Who Bring Your Favorite Stories to Life."

"Ultimately, it's about your relationship to the character," he says. "You're literally wearing your fandom on your sleeves."

Liptak also says it's unfair to expect fans of color to dress up only as superheroes whose appearance or skin color matches their own.

In the recent film "Spider-Man: No Way Home," Electro, the villain played by Academy Award-winning actor Jamie Foxx, joked to Andrew Garfield's Spider-Man that he was surprised Spider-Man wasn't Black. Whether or not that opens the door to a live-action Black Spider-Man in future films, Hoover says Spider-Man should never be boxed into just one look.

"You will get those who argue, if you turn Spider-Man Black then you can turn T'Challa white," Hoover says. "Spider-Man was never really defined by his ethnicity, but more so his social status and the struggles he went through. That's even more relatable for people of color and different ethnicities, because there's a lot of struggle involved in life that you have to persevere through."

WEEKEND: MOVIES

By Ty Burr

The Washington Post

What do you do when life hands you lemons? You make lemonade, of course.

What do you do when life hands you a mind-bendingly humiliating and emotional trauma involving yourself, your father and the internet? You make a movie about it.

"I Love My Dad" premiered at the South by Southwest Film Festival in March and won both the jury prize and the audience award for best narrative feature — pretty remarkable for a movie most audiences watch through their fingers while screaming in embarrassment. The second feature film from writer-director-star James Morosini ("Threesomething"), it's an ink-black comedy about Franklin, a brooding young man played by the filmmaker, who has cut off all communication with his unreliable screw-up of a father, Chuck, played by actor-comedian Patton Oswalt. Desperate to connect, the father creates a fake Facebook account and, under the guise of Becca (Claudia Sulewski), a willowy and sympathetic woman Franklin's age, establishes a relationship with his son that can't help veering into oh-no-they-didn't/oh-my-god-they-did territory.

It sounds like a tabloid headline or the title of a particularly unseemly Subreddit: I Got Catfished By My Own Father. Yet "I Love My Dad," which opened in theaters Aug. 5 and whose title points in at least two directions, is more than just a one-joke cringefest. On the contrary, it goes to some honest and movingly real places in the eternal struggle between parent and child — while simultaneously making you want to rinse your eyeballs with lye.

Worst of all? (Or best, depending on how much you're into schadenfreude.) This really happened to James Morosini. Speaking recently by Zoom from his home in Los Angeles, the lanky filmmaking triple threat, 32, fesses up.

"When I was around 20 years old, I got in a big fight with my dad and I decided in kind of 20-year-old fashion that I was going to cut him out, that I was done with him. Blocked him on Facebook, changed his name in my phone to Do Not Answer. And I got home one day and this really pretty girl sent me a friend request on Facebook, and she had all the same interests as me and all these great pictures. I got really excited, and I started to feel kind of better about myself. My self-esteem started to improve. And then I found out that it was my dad, and he created this thing as a way of making sure I was OK."

And how long did the decep-



Sela Shiloni

James Morosini's "I Love My Dad" won both the jury prize and the audience award for best narrative feature at the South by Southwest Film Festival. The film is now in theaters.

Paternal panic mode

Morosini, the writer-director-star of 'I Love My Dad,' says the film was inspired by his own experience being catfished by his father

tion last? "Longer than I wish it had, I'll say."

At the same time, Morosini says the social media disaster led to an odd sort of reckoning between father and son: "It forced our relationship to hit this rock bottom that allowed an experience of honesty to start being more important in our relationship. And that's what the film is about in a lot of ways. How are we honest in our relationships? And what does it mean to be closer to somebody if you're getting closer to them in a dishonest way?"

"I Love My Dad" has broken the filmmaker out of his generational cohort of young Hollywood guys, all writing and acting

and putting weird comedy shorts on the internet while hoping for their big break. Morosini grew up shooting little action videos in the Boston suburbs — "kids with boxing gloves on, that don't know how to fight, trying to punch each other" — and, after graduating from the University of Southern California's School of Dramatic Arts, tried to make it as an actor, finding some success ("American Horror Story" on FX, "The Sex Lives of College Girls" on HBO Max) and little fulfillment.

"I was often cast as a bro or, like, the dumb guy," he says. "I was making a decent living, but I wasn't necessarily that fulfilled creatively. So I was spending a lot of time writing features and

making web series and watching an obsessive amount of film. I would go down, like, the AFI Top 100. I would go down Sight & Sound's Top 100. I would go country by country. I spent a lot of time with Éric Rohmer and became really obsessed with Michael Haneke."

That eclecticism reflects the movies Morosini likes and the movies he wants to make.

"I admire a big-budget Hollywood film," he says, "but then I also love the more personal indies. And I think my intent is to try and combine those sensibilities. My dream is to make big-budget spectacle films that have a certain weirdness to them, that have almost a taboo embedded in

them in some way or another."

With "I Love My Dad," he has nailed the taboo part. The scenes in which a lovestruck Franklin wants to get, uh, intimate with his new internet girlfriend while Chuck, on the other side of the phone, frantically tries to backpedal and then improvise, are horrifyingly hilarious or hilariously horrifying, especially when seen with an audience in full vocal mortification.

"That's part of the mischievous delight of the film, watching everybody freak out while they're watching it," the director admits. "And I think that was my intent making it, to take people through that roller coaster, where some parts are really sarcastic and then there are parts that are really sincere, and the audience has to be on their toes the whole time."

He has special praise for his co-star, who commits to the role of Chuck with a fearlessness that evokes a kind of squeamish awe.

"Patton is able to bring levity to darkness and he's also able to work with tone, where he's able to shift gears and go from light to dark and dark to light," Morosini says. "And he approaches all this work with a great sense of humanity."

Oswalt, reached by email while in San Diego for Comic-Con, said of working with Morosini: "He gave me something great to play against, in that in a lot of our scenes you see he doesn't give me anything, because those are the walls the son has put up around his father. My trying to break through those walls created this terrific tension and led to some real emotion [and human comedy]."

When asked what he sees in Morosini's future, Oswalt responded: "I have no idea where he's headed. He's gonna zig and zag like the great early '70s directors. Sidney Lumet went from 'Serpico' to 'Murder on the Orient Express' to 'Dog Day Afternoon' to 'Network.' The directors that are true searchers never try to carve out a niche. They try to expand the canvas."

Morosini embraces that search.

"I feel like I have a very particular thing I'm chasing, and I can't even quite articulate it," he says. "But I know that 'I Love My Dad' is a step of that journey."

Before that next step, though: What did Morosini's father think about the movie?

"I was nervous for him to see it," the filmmaker says, "but he loves it and he's in on the joke and is able to laugh at himself. And, I don't know, that's how I try to process things in my own life. How can I laugh at them and realize that in the grand scheme of things you can laugh at anything?"

One answer is to get an audience to laugh — and feel — along with you.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

Pushing family boundaries way too far

'I Love My Dad' a dark comedy about a father's misguided attempt to use social media to get closer to his son

By JAMES VERNIERE
Boston Herald

From Waltham, Mass.-raised writer-director James Morosini comes "I Love My Dad," a black comedy of the darkest hue about a father-son relationship that has sunk so deep that father Chuck Green (Patton Oswalt) turns to catfishing to remain in contact with his son Franklin (also Morosini). The father hijacks the identity of a pretty young woman named Becca Thompson (an appealing Claudia Sulewski), who waits tables at a diner in his neighborhood in Maine.

The catch? His son, who lives with his loving mother Diane (Amy Landecker) in Waltham, suffers from bipolar disorder and has attempted suicide at least once. In fact, when we meet him to the tune of Delibes' "Flower Duet," Franklin is taking part in a group therapy session. Franklin's dad has missed most of his son's life, including his high school graduation. His father has been so neglectful that Franklin blocks him online and on his phone. At work, Chuck sits in his office trying not to work. One of his coworkers, Jimmy (Lil Rel Howery), is also Chuck's best friend and fellow karaoke enthusiast.

When Chuck tells Jimmy what



Magnolia Pictures

Patton Oswalt, left, and James Morosini star in "I Love My Dad" as father and son.

he is doing, Jimmy calls it incest. Is it funny? Yes, it is. Does it make you uncomfortable? Yes, it does. But that is the whole point. Relationships, especially father-son relationships, can make us more uncomfortable than any other life experiences we have.

When Franklin and "Becca" are direct-messaging each other, the real Becca, whose photos

Franklin has seen, appears before Franklin like a spirit summoned by a magic spell. This happily makes Sulewski's part in the story bigger than it would have been. The digital romance between Franklin and Becca, again, is both charming and funny and also uncomfortable and in fact at times surprisingly cruel. Still, the faux Becca writes a

letter of recommendation to a video game company on behalf of aspiring coder Franklin. In an "internet kiss" sequence, we see both Morosini and Sulewski and Morosini and Oswalt kissing. Funny? Yes, it is. Are you OK with a father-son incest panic joke? Although Morosini dedicated "I Love My Dad" to his dad, Morosini is his mother's sur-

name. His father's name is Claudio Lichtenthal, and, yes, he once catfished his son.

"I Love My Dad" is a boundary-pushing screwball comedy that strongly suggests its maker has a bright future. Morosini, who looks a bit like a young Marlon Brando, has been a regular cast member on TV's "Four-some" and "The Sex Lives of College Girls." He made his directing debut with a comedy about a threesome called "Threesomething." Oswalt has amusing scenes with Rachel Dratch, who plays Chuck's sex-crazed boss/girlfriend Erica. In one scene, Chuck sends Erica's "sexts" to Franklin, pretending they are from "Becca." Oswalt is convincingly paternal as the fumbling dad. Morosini's willingness to tap into his darkest fears and desires keeps "I Love My Dad" from collapsing into self-parody. You genuinely want Franklin to find Becca and somehow start a romance with her and not to get hurt, especially knowing he has tried to kill himself.

In fact, making someone who has attempted suicide the protagonist of this crazy romantic comedy is Morosini's boldest touch. It's a brushstroke that makes everything that happens in "I Love My Dad" darker.

"I Love My Dad" is rated R for sexual content and language. Running time: 96 minutes.

Girls take friendship to terrifying new heights in thriller flick 'Fall'

By MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN
The Washington Post

If sweaty palms were the sole measure of a film's greatness, then the thriller "Fall," which centers on two young women stranded atop a rickety, decommissioned, 2,000-foot-tall TV tower in the middle of nowhere — on a platform not much wider than a cafe table for two — may be some kind of masterpiece. And while the dialogue is pretty spartan, including many iterations of "Are you OK?" and "It's OK," punctuated by periodic swear words, the cinematography is suitably, almost sweepingly acrophobic.

Maybe that's the wrong word. Acrophobia is the irrational fear of heights, and the terror deliberately instilled in the audience over the course of an hour and 45 minutes or so by director Scott Mann ("Final Score"), reuniting with his frequent co-screenwriter Jonathan Frank, makes perfect sense. Who in their right mind would climb such a thing?

Well, Hunter (Virginia Gardner) would. She's a professional daredevil who goes by the nickname Danger D on social media, where she has monetized her amateur drone videos and selfies, shot under hair-raising circumstances, into a career of sorts. For her latest misadventure, Hunter recruits her best friend Becky (Grace Caroline Currey) as a way of helping Becky overcome her devastation at

the death of Becky's husband in a mountain climbing accident one year ago. (The film opens with this tragic prologue, so Becky's trauma — magnified by the idiocy of Hunter's plan — feels vividly appropriate.)

Hunter and Becky are supposed to be expert climbers, tuned into their surroundings with the heightened awareness of true athletes. But as they're mounting this death trap, they seem not to notice all the rusted, rattling rivets that are about to come loose from the ladder they're ascending — and that in one instance do come loose, tumbling past Becky's head.

Miguel López Ximénez de Olaso (the cinematographer known professionally as MacGregor) certainly does pay attention to those details, in a way that makes "Fall" feel like a hyper-coaster of a movie: It ratchets up the tension to an almost unbearable degree, before releasing it in a torrent of nausea and nerves.

Lots of people pay good money to endure the kinds of thrill rides that make them wish they were back on solid ground. "Fall" does the same thing, but with the added benefit of being entirely vicarious. Just keep telling yourself: "It's only a stupid movie."

"Fall" is rated PG-13 for bloody images, intense peril and strong language. Running time: 107 minutes. Now playing in select AAFES theaters.



Lionsgate

Grace Caroline Currey, left, and Virginia Gardner star in "Fall."

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

Celebrating the messiness of family

'Easter Sunday' comedy about the Filipino American culture a bit irreverent but has something for everyone

BY PAT PADUA
The Washington Post

You don't have to be of Filipino descent to get the movie "Easter Sunday," loosely based on the life experience of Filipino American stand-up comic Jo Koy and centering on a man trying to navigate the fractured dynamic of a holiday with his extended family. But it does help.

Despite its broad comedy, typical of "Dukes of Hazzard" director Jay Chandrasekhar, the film has some tender and wise moments. And even if you don't get all the ethnic jokes, there's plenty of family drama that anybody will recognize, no matter their background.

Koy plays Joe Valencia, a Los Angeles comedian trying to land a part on a sitcom. (ABC recently rejected the pilot of a sitcom starring Koy but is reportedly interested in redeveloping the show.) Joe auditions well — producers especially love his impersonation of his mother's thick accent — but they want Joe to up his own accent. "You're at 30," he is told. "Bring it up to 50."

Joe doesn't want to exploit his heritage by playing up an accent he doesn't have, but his smarmy agent Nick (Chandrasekhar) tells him to go ahead with it.

Ironically, the cast of "Easter Sunday"

features actors who are indeed putting on an accent they don't have — like Tia Carrere, whose role as Joe's aunt marks the first time in her long career that she's been asked to play a Filipino. (Carrere is of Spanish, Filipino and Chinese descent.) So there's a meta-conflict at play here, and one wonders if Nick's frequent goading of Joe resonates with Chandrasekhar's own experience in the industry. (Born in Chicago, Chandrasekhar is of Tamil descent.)

Identity isn't the only conflict. Joe is a divorced father who's more concerned about his career than about his teenage son, known as Junior (Brandon Wardell). Joe plans make it up to him: He'll take him on a road trip for Easter Sunday dinner, but that just gives Dad more chances to let Junior down.

It sounds more like family drama than comedy, doesn't it?

And you might well wonder why a movie called "Easter Sunday" is being released in August. Although it's set on what is, for many devout Filipinos, the most important day of the liturgical calendar, the film isn't particularly religious. During Easter morning services, Joe even ends up doing a stand-up routine. Besides that, the order of Mass depicted is highly unorthodox. That probably wouldn't have played



Universal Pictures

From left: Tito Manny (Joey Guila), Regina (Elena Juatco), Eugene (Eugene Cordero), Joe Valencia (Jo Koy), Tita Teresa (Tia Carrere), Tita Yvonne (Melody Butiu) and Susan (Lydia Gaston) in "Easter Sunday."

well on a holy day — not for much of its apparent target audience, anyway.

Screenwriters Ken Cheng and Kate Angelo take great liberties with Catholicism, and their irreverence is such that when Joe and his cousin (Eugene Cordero) arrive at Joe's mother's house, they turn around the statue of Santo Niño — because it creeps them out.

I said this wasn't a religious picture, but this turning away from Jesus seems to be a lot of what "Easter Sunday" is about. Part of Joe's shtick is that Mom (a terrific Lydia Gaston) is always complaining that her son didn't become a nurse (as so many Filipinos follow that vocation) and that he never comes home. For all the frantic humor — including a crowd-pleasing cameo by Tiffany Haddish as a police officer — the movie is about one man's fall from grace, his struggle with failure and fatherhood and his strained relationships with his family.

While the adults are busy with their

careers and petty squabbles, it's encouraging that the younger generation seems more levelheaded. It's young Ruth (Eva Noblezada of "Luck"), Junior's love interest, who's the movie's moral center, especially when she scolds her prospective beau after he gives Dad an earful.

"Bro, that's not how we talk to our parents here," she tells him. Ruthie also offers the movie's richest ethnic metaphor: that the popular dessert drink halo-halo, which includes crushed ice, evaporated milk and various colorful fruits, is as messy as their heritage — as messy as family and, perhaps, as life itself. "But you keep coming back for more."

"Easter Sunday" is, like halo-halo, a bit messy. I wouldn't have chosen some of its ingredients. But there's enough flavor here that, even if you don't like, say, coconut, you can just pick it out.

"Easter Sunday" is rated PG-13 for some violence, some strong language and suggestive references. In English and some Tagalog with subtitles. Running time: 96 minutes.

'Luck' has appeal, but don't expect Pixar-level quality

BY MARK MESZOROS
The News-Herald
(Willoughby, Ohio)

How much does luck influence our lives? Are some people lucky? And, conversely, are some people unlucky?

In the world of the mildly enjoyable but overstuffed computer-animated movie "Luck," the answers to those questions are yes, yes and oh my gosh, yes.

In fact, Sam Greenfield (voiced by Eva Noblezada) may just be the unluckiest person in the world. Lots of little things go wrong for her all the time — she can't even toast a piece of bread without things going haywire.

More importantly, though, the resident of the Summerland Home for Girls has never been lucky enough to find her "forever family."

"Yeah," says Sam, who's now 18, "sure missed the boat on that one. On the upside, now I can put all that hoping behind me."

It's time for her to move out of Summerland — leaving behind young friends such as Hazel (Adelynn Spoon) — and into an apartment.



Apple TV+

Bob (voice of Simon Pegg), left, and Sam (Eva Noblezada) in "Luck."

We really get a sense of just how unlucky Sam is at the new digs, where, among other problems, a broom falls against the bathroom doorknob, locking her inside, and then said doorknob comes apart as she pulls on it while trying to free herself.

It's not much better at her new job at a crafts superstore, where cheerful store manager Marv (Lil Rel Howery) gives her responsibilities that bring with them little risk of her damaging the inventory.

At the orphanage, Sam and

Hazel have talked much about luck and were always on the lookout for a lucky penny.

"Find a penny, pick it up and all day long you'll have good luck," they'd say.

After a dejected Sam has an encounter with a black cat on the street, she finds one — and boy does her luck change. Appealingly selfless, Sam wants nothing more than to give the good-luck charm to Hazel before a fast-approaching visit with a couple looking to adopt.

Not surprisingly, Sam's luck

runs out when she loses the penny in a most unfortunate way. This is bad news not only for Sam and Hazel but also for the cat, Bob (Simon Pegg), who speaks — with a Scottish accent, no less — and hails from a magical place called the Land of Luck. Losing a lucky penny is no small deal, and Bob already gets the stink eye from a higher-up, the Captain (Whoopi Goldberg).

Bob and Sam make a deal: They will travel to the Land of Luck to secure a new penny. Sam first will loan it to Hazel, and then it will remain in Bob's possession to keep him in the Captain's good graces.

What follows is an extended adventure full of colorful creatures — including a dragon voiced by Jane Fonda ("Grace and Frankie"), a leprechaun named Gerry (Colin O'Donoghue, "Once Upon a Time") and Rootie (John Ratzenberger, "Cheers"), the proprietor of an unlucky juice bar — and occasionally dazzling visuals and inventive scenarios.

"Luck" is reminiscent of a couple of Pixar efforts, 2015's

"Inside Out" and 2020's "Soul," which have reality-based setups that may be interesting to adult viewers but give way to fantasy-world adventures designed to enthrall kids. That's fine — entertaining kids obviously should be the prime objective of these movies — but "Luck" does allow the adult mind to wander off from time to time.

The bigger problem with "Luck" is that it feels a step below similar big-screen releases. That said, some of the performances in "Luck" are quite appealing, starting with Noblezada ("Hadestown"), who helps make Sam very appealing. (If there's a knock against the character, she doesn't have much of an arc; she begins and ends as an admirable person and doesn't really have a lesson to learn.)

The best thing "Luck" has to offer is the lesson it gets to about bad luck and how, if handled correctly, it isn't so bad. That's a good one for the little ones — and it's enough to nudge it into the Land of the Recommended.

"Luck" is rated G. Running time: 106 minutes. Now streaming on Apple TV+.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Reichstag's glass dome reflects history

Years ago, when I got my history degree, I said to myself, "I'd better get a business degree, too, so I have some useful knowledge." But of course since then I've come to appreciate the value of historical insight. History is constantly speaking to us.

Whenever I visit the Reichstag building in Berlin, I'm reminded of my visit in 1999, when it had recently reopened to the public following a nearly decadelong reconstruction in the wake of German reunification. For tourists unaware of the building's history, its glass dome was simply another vantage point from which to enjoy views of the city.

But a knowledge of the Reichstag's past gives a visit a far deeper meaning. It was in this building that the German Republic was proclaimed in 1918, officially putting an end to German monarchy. In 1933, this symbol of democracy nearly burned down. While the Nazis blamed a communist plot, some believe that Hitler himself planned the fire. Whatever the case, he used the fire as a convenient excuse to frame the communists and grab total power.

After 1945, this historic home of the German parliament — which saw some of the last fight-

ing of World War II on its rooftop — stood as an abandoned and bombed-out hulk overlooking the no man's land between East and West Berlin. After reunification, Germany's government returned



Rick Steves

from Bonn to Berlin. And, in good European fashion, the Germans didn't bulldoze their former parliament building. While the building represented many painful aspects of German history, the reunited Germans respected the building's cultural roots and renovated it with extreme care.

They also capped it with a glorious new glass dome, incorporating modern architectural design into the late-19th-century icon, and opened it up to the people. Inside the dome, 50 yards above the ground, a cone of 360 mirrors reflects natural light into the legislative chamber below. Lit from inside at night, the dome gives Berlin a memorable nightlight — and a lantern celebrating good governance.

The Reichstag dome is a powerful architectural symbol. German citizens climb its long spiral ramp around the mirrored cone and look down, literally



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI/Rick Steves' Europe

The dome atop the Reichstag, Germany's parliament building, is a powerful architectural symbol.

over the shoulders of their legislators, to see what's on their desks. Jerked around too much by their politicians in the past, Germans are determined to keep a closer eye on them. This dome is designed for exactly that.

When the Reichstag first reopened, I climbed to the top of the dome and found myself surrounded by teary-eyed Germans. Anytime you're surrounded by teary-eyed Germans, something

exceptional is going on. I noticed that most of those people were old enough to remember the difficult times after World War II, when their city lay in rubble. What an exciting moment for them: The opening of this grand building was the symbolic closing of a difficult chapter in the history of a great nation. No more division. No more communism. No more fascism. They had a united government with a new

capitol building, looking into a promising future.

With knowledge of the past, we can better appreciate the significance of what's happening today. Travel can let us experience our collective history like nothing else — and it's never been more important to understand it.

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.

These extensive floral art displays not meant to last

From intricate sculptures of ice and snow that soon melt in the rays of the Alpine sun to papier-mâché effigies destined to go up in flames at the end of Carnival season, Europeans seem to show a soft spot for works of art with short shelf lives. Such ephemeral creations are showcased again in late summer as a spate of floral-inspired events creates a brilliant tableau of irresistible eye candy.

Brussels, Belgium: Through the weekend, Brussels' glorious Grand-Place becomes all the more dazzling for the presence of the Flower Carpet, a biennial endeavor brought to light through the efforts of 100 volunteers, who deftly assemble the floral creation in under six hours.



Karen Bradbury

Each carpet is a unique work of art, often inspired by the art of other lands, anniversaries or significant milestones. The 2022 edition of the carpet is a "back to the roots" reinterpretation of the very first carpet to have been laid down back in 1971, and like its predecessor half a century ago, will feature arabesque forms and images of Saint Michael, a patron saint of Brussels, and the Belgian Lion.

While earlier editions of the floral tapestry leaned heavily on hardy, weather-resistant begonias, the plant's dwindling presence in Belgium means dahlias, chrysanthemums and Japanese spindles increasingly find their way into contemporary editions.

The carpet can be viewed from the UNESCO-listed square, as well as from the balcony of the Town Hall. The sound and light shows offered once dusk falls end the experience on a high note.

The carpet can be viewed from the balcony of City Hall from 3 p.m.-6 p.m. Aug. 12 and from 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Aug. 13-15. The sound and light show takes place in thirty-minute intervals from 9:30 p.m.-11 p.m. Aug. 13-15. Adult



iStock

Every other year since 1971, the Grand Palace courtyard in Brussels, Belgium, has "grown" a flower carpet. This year's display is visible starting Friday.

tickets go for 7 euros; those under 10 enter free. Tickets are available online, at the Visit Brussels shops or near the City Hall entrance. Online: flowercarpet.brussels/en

Sélestat, France: this Alsatian beauty of a town hosts its annual Corso Fleuri, or flower parade, on Aug. 13. From 6 p.m., the first of 12 floats decorated in keeping with this year's theme of the diversity of Europe's nature will roll down the Quai de l'III. Ensembles of musicians, dancers and jugglers will crisscross the streets of the Old Town. At 10 p.m., an illuminated version of the parade sets forth. Around midnight, fireworks are shot off over the waters of the nearby lake. Visitors can also check out the wares at a handicrafts market or sample wines from the surrounding vineyards. Grandstand seating goes for 20 euros for both parades, or 12 euros for a single spectacle. General entry is free. Online: tinyurl.com/4b2ke24t

Bad Ems, Germany: Last year, this tiny gem of a spa town on the Lahn River joined the ranks of UNESCO World Heritage Sites as one of 11 resorts within a grouping titled "Great Spa Towns of Europe;" finally, it can celebrate in earnest as its Flower Parade and Bartholomew Market return to the scene. On Aug. 28, the "Blumenkorso," billed as Germany's largest flower parade, will once again roll through town. About 1.5 million dahlias find their way into the 30 or so floats making up the procession. Between the wagons, marching bands from throughout Europe play their upbeat tunes.

The spectacle always takes place in tandem with a traditional folk festival with roots tracing back to 1379. Here, visitors can enjoy midway games, indulge in their favorite festival snacks and ride on attractions ranging from tame to terrifying.

The parade gets underway at 2 p.m. Entry costs 9 euros for adults and is free for those under the age of 14. Online: blumenkorsobadems.de

Zundert, Netherlands: It takes not just a village but 20 or so tiny towns to pull together the world's biggest summer flower parade. And it's not just fun, it's competition, as a professional jury decides whose float wins the day.

The event takes place on the first Sunday of September, meaning Sept. 4 is the date to make way to the town of Vincent Van Gogh's birth in 2022. The floats first start moving at 1:30 p.m., and from 6 p.m., they're parked to allow visitors to admire the artistry up close. Tickets to the parade are available online at a cost of 12 euros; entry to the exhibition area, which also remains open on Sept. 5, costs 5 euros. Tickets bought on parade day itself will cost 15 euros. Those ages 12 and under enter for free. Online: corsozundert.nl

An article published July 15 incorrectly referred to Bern, Italy. The town is located in Switzerland.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Bathtime bliss

Find warmth, happiness in Iceland's geothermal waters

BY SIMON PETER GROEBNER
Star Tribune

Iceland's geothermal lagoons, baths and spas are more than a tourist attraction — they're a way of life.

In every Icelandic movie and TV show I've watched on Icelandair flights, there is a scene in which the characters settle their differences or hash out the news and gossip while sitting chest-deep in the local, naturally heated pool. In a nation of harsh weather, a steamy public bath is key to happiness.

And Iceland has come a long way from the renowned Blue Lagoon. Many of the best newer lagoons around this Kentucky-sized island share some features in common: Nordic-modern design that blends into the environment, infinity pools with epic views, wade-up bars and spa packages that enhance your experience (and your bill), but aren't necessary for your enjoyment. Best of all, there's that pure, soothing 100- to 104-degree water, courtesy of a nationwide underground heat source that makes Iceland a world leader in clean energy.

We recuperated in a nice one after a day of hiking around the small, one-village island of Hrisey. (If you visit, keep in mind that you're a guest of the polite locals here, and swimsuit standards may be a little more modest than at the big lagoons.)

This summer welcomes yet another incredible-looking site: the soon-to-open Forest Lagoon, tucked into conifers with a view of snowcapped mountains and a fjord, and located just above the fun northern capital of Akureyi. I can't wait to check it out, but meanwhile here are the best Iceland lagoons I found during a north-centric road trip last summer. Prices are based on current exchange rates; to avoid crowds, we often made midday reservations in advance.

Sky Lagoon

Last year's "hottest" new lagoon is situated on the end of an industrial peninsula near Reykjavik, but you'll forget that once you leave the changing room and wade into the up-to-104-degree waters. The artificial pool has been meticulously constructed to resemble a natural volcanic landscape, with an adjacent spa (for Pure Pass and Sky Pass purchasers) that looks like a historic Icelandic turf house. The broad infinity pool overlooks a channel to the Atlantic and distant volcanoes, and you can shower in a hot waterfall or lounge mermaid-style on a stone. More than at any other lagoon, the social vibe here was like that of a nightclub or cocktail party, with tourists and flight attendants chatting away. (From 7,990 Icelandic króna or about \$59; skylagoon.com)

Geosea

Moving to the northern tip of Iceland and the artsy fishing village of Husavik (fictionalized in the Will Ferrell comedy "Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga"), Geosea blew my mind. As the name of this seaside spot implies, the 102-degree thermal spring blends with clear ocean waters for a saline, invigor-



The sprawling Myvatn Nature Baths feature grottoes made of volcanic rock.

ating experience. Infinity pools offer a breathtaking view of the Greenland Sea, with the Arctic Circle not far off. To the left is Husavik's quirky yellow lighthouse. Luxuriating in the hot waters and warm subarctic sun at 2 in the afternoon with a local Kaldi lager from the swim-up bar was my favorite moment of my trip to Iceland. (5,500 krona or about \$40; www.geosea.is/en)

Vök Baths

After a morning of driving through mountain passes in the northeast, we descended to this remote spot where two geothermal pools seem to float upon the cool, freshwater Lake Urridhavatn. So after you warm up in the hot suspended pool, you can jump into the cold lake, and repeat. Despite this unique novelty, Vök Baths were only the fourth-most amazing lagoon we visited, and the water temperature did not feel close to the 105-degree max. It's definitely worth a stop if you're driving on Ring Road near the city of Egilsstaðir in the east. A sauna is included. (From 5,990 krona or about \$44; vok-baths.is/en)

Myvatn Nature Baths

In the heart of north-central Iceland's Myvatn geothermal area, we followed up riding Icelandic horses with an evening visit to this natural gem. At the sprawling Nature Baths, the emphasis is on a more rustic, eco experience — mineral-rich, milky white/blue waters with a soft, rocky floor. If nothing else, the steam and the slight sulfuric odor (which you get used to in Iceland) provide sanctuary from Myvatn's swarms of annoying but harmless black flies. Walls of volcanic rock create grottoes for privacy or international socializing. (5,900 krona or about \$43; myvatnnaturebaths.is)

Blue Lagoon

Before tourists knew anything else about Iceland, they'd heard of the Blue Lagoon. It may have since been surpassed, but I still love the original, which I last visited in 2017. The silica-rich water is sourced from a local power plant, but that still counts as geothermal in my book. It's a refreshing escape from a brisk night, year-round. Plus, you can give yourself a facial, with a lava scrub, silica mud mask and algae mask sourced from the lagoon. Surrounded by lava fields, it's close enough to the airport to enjoy on a long layover from Europe. And the affiliated, five-star Retreat at Blue Lagoon hotel is bucket-list stuff. (From \$60 but typically more; book in advance; bluelagoon.com)



PHOTOS BY SIMON PETER GROEBNER, MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/TNS

A visitor wades through the entrance to Sky Lagoon, a geothermal lagoon that opened near Reykjavik in 2021. The bath has a nightclub or cocktail party vibe.



The Geosea Geothermal Sea Baths in Husavik, Iceland, feature 102-degree seawater pools and a view of the Greenland Sea. The baths were fictionalized in the Will Ferrell comedy "Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga."

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Echoes of the sacred

Monuments, churches, ruins showcase Thessaloniki's storied religious diversity

BY GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO
Associated Press

Under fluttering strings of Greek and Byzantine flags, three men raised a party tent on the terrace of the 5th century Osios David church one recent Saturday, hoping it would shelter festivalgoers from the heat that already shrouded the view of Mount Olympus across the gulf.

That's Thessaloniki in a snapshot — a seaside trove of early Christian art and architecture, with echoes of the sacred all around the city, from the mythical mountain home of the ancient Greek gods to the contemporary Orthodox Christian monasticism of Mount Athos.

Pervasive if more hidden traces of Islam and Judaism also persist, even though many monuments were destroyed in a 1917 fire.

"People see the (archaeological) ruins next to them, but no one knows the diverse history," said Angeliki Ziaka, a professor of religion at Thessaloniki's Aristotle University. "Now is the time to rebuild this knowledge, to find the intermarriage of cultures."

Each of the last six years, I've spent at least a few days in and around Greece's second-largest metropolis, which bubbles with the energy of a city historically at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, about halfway between Athens and Istanbul.

I find Thessaloniki eminently

walkable even in the summer heat, thanks to an inexhaustible supply of the iced coffee drink called frappé and the sea breezes off the Thermaic Gulf. Overlooking its waters are the iconic White Tower and a beloved, mileslong promenade.

Simple meandering leads to monuments woven into today's urban fabric: Going to buy roses at the flower market, I discovered next to it a 500-year-old bathhouse (hammam) built by the Ottomans in the multi-domed style of Byzantine architecture and named Yahudi Hammam, after the Sephardic Jews who settled here.

The hammams and the still-functioning markets were for centuries the mingling places for the city's Jews, Muslims and Christians, who lived in separate neighborhoods, Ziaka said.

During centuries of Muslim Ottoman domination — a legacy perhaps most immediately visible in today's profusion of buzzing coffee shops — Thessaloniki was the refuge of a thriving Jewish community. Its history, told by the Jewish Museum, will be further spotlighted in a Holocaust museum and education center that's in the works.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, most Muslims lived in the Ano Poli, a quiet warren of walled gardens, houses with overhanging upper floors detailed in wood and steep streets climbing to a hilltop fortress.



PHOTOS BY GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO/AP

The 700-year-old church of Agios Panteleimon is seen in its lush garden in Thessaloniki, Greece, on June 25. Its precise brickwork, exuberance of domes and rounded windows and niches make it a great example of Thessaloniki's Byzantine architecture.

But more than a millennium before the Ottoman conquest, it was here that St. Paul first brought Christianity to the Thessalonians — to whom he later wrote some of Christendom's most widely read letters.

Churches dating from across the centuries when Thessaloniki was a center of the Byzantine Empire still dot the labyrinthine landscape.

Down a tiny, fruit-tree-lined alleyway that opens to a spectacular sea view, diminutive Osios David preserves in its cupola a 1,600-year-old mosaic of Christ presiding over fish-filled rivers of paradise, with two Old Testament prophets looking on in astonishment.

Frescoes from the 12th century adorn the walls, though the city's most outstanding mural paintings are at Agios Nikolaos Orfanos, another small Ano Poli church deep inside a garden. Their colors still vivid after 700 years, they portray the lives of Jesus, prophets and saints in minute and individual details, such as one hermit's flowing beard and matching striped tunic and cap.

Just downhill from the church is the Rotunda, a capsule of Thessaloniki's interconnected religious history.

The vast circular building was constructed as a Roman temple or mausoleum in the 300s, shortly after became a Christian church, later on a mosque — whose tall minaret remains standing — and is now a museum and a sanctuary for dozens of swifts that fly chirping around it. Liturgy is still celebrated a

"People see the (archaeological) ruins next to them, but no one knows the diverse history. Now is the time to rebuild this knowledge, to find the intermarriage of cultures."

Angeliki Ziaka

professor of religion at Thessaloniki's Aristotle University

dozen times a year, but most visitors come for the early Byzantine golden mosaics adorning the immense dome, portraying a fusion of Roman architecture and Christian worship with people praying in front of the empire's most luxurious buildings.

From the worshippers' distinctive coiffures to the curtains billowing in the pavilions behind them, it's a slice of early Christianity come alive — the beginning of a religious story that continues uninterrupted to this day, as in the woman kissing icons around the corner at Agios Panteleimon, a church built in the late 13th century and still actively used.

Its precise brickwork, exuberance of domes and rounded windows and niches — and its location in a garden full of flowering oleander bushes surrounded by café terraces — makes it quintessential Thessaloniki.

There are plenty more churches and museums to explore in the city, but I always try to fit in some excursions to the countryside.

In the fertile plains to the west are vestiges of the city's founding dynasty — that of Alexander the

Great, born in ancient Pella and celebrated in its museum and excavations.

Less than an hour's drive away, the Museum of the Royal Tombs at Aigai takes you underground into a reconstruction of the burial mounds of Alexander's father and other Macedonian royals. In the dark exhibit halls, artwork like a massive crown of nearly 400 gold oak leaves and acorns shines blindingly.

So does the sun on the beaches of Halkidiki, the three-fingered peninsula extending into the Aegean Sea to the southeast of Thessaloniki.

From the pine-topped, white rock formations of my favorite, Kavourotrypes Beach, I can see holy Mount Athos across the bay.

Through the beach bar owner's binoculars, I even make out several of its Orthodox Christian monasteries, part of a complex dating back to the Byzantine era where about 2,000 monks live.

Since women are barred from stepping foot on Mount Athos, though we can approach on boat tours, I content myself with sipping another frappé before diving into the transparent sea.



Visitors admire the Byzantine mosaics adorning the gigantic dome of the Rotunda on June 25 in Thessaloniki, Greece.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

A UNESCO World Heritage site, the ruins at Paestum, Italy — about 60 miles south of Naples — include three Greek temples built between 560 and 460 B.C. The most well-preserved is the Temple of Neptune, which visitors can enter and explore.

Smaller, but significant

Paestum's ruins provide glimpse into ancient Greek and Roman life

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

With the famed ruins of Pompeii looming large in people's imaginations, many of Italy's smaller and lesser-known ancient sites often are overlooked.

One such place is Paestum, a long-ago Greek colony situated along the Tyrrhenian Sea about 60 miles south of Naples.

The ruins at Paestum include three well-preserved Greek temples built between 560 and 460 B.C. Visitors can enter two of them and marvel at the massive structures graced by Doric columns, one of three orders of ancient Greek architecture.

A UNESCO World Heritage site, Paestum was founded in the 7th century B.C. by Greek colonists, who called it Poseidonia. The area likely was already occupied by humans when they arrived, according to the Italian website Siti Archeologici d'Italia.

The city later came under the control of the Lucanians, an ancient Italic tribe, and finally the Romans in 273 B.C., who named it Paestum, the website states.

Tours of the ruins are self-guided via an app in several languages that includes an interactive map, text and audio. It's available for download on iOS or Android. There also are informational signs posted throughout the park.

Once inside, visitors will be drawn to the Temple of Neptune, to the right of the

On the QT

How to get there: By car, Paestum is an about an hour and 45 minutes from Naples. Take the train from Naples central station to Paestum. Cross the street directly in front of the station to walk west down Strada Provinciale 168 to Via Magna Graecia. The park is an about 10-minute walk from the train station. For train timetables and ticket prices visit: trenitalia.com/it.html
Cost: From March to November, adult admission is 12 euros, which includes the archeological sites at Paestum and Velia and the national museum at Paestum. The ticket is valid for three days. From December to February, the cost is 6 euros. There are reduced prices for children and families, and an annual pass also is available.
Hours: 8:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m. daily (holidays may affect hours or opening). There are cutoff times for last entry to the parks and museum.

Information: museopaestum.cultura.gov.it

entrance. Built around 460 B.C., the temple is the most well-preserved of the three, with much of its elements, except the roof, still intact.

Visitors can enter and explore the temple, but access is controlled to limit the number of people within the structure at any one time.

Farther down a concrete pathway is the Temple of Hera, also known as the archaic temple or basilica. It's the oldest of the three temples.

Construction of it took 40 years, and archaeologists believe work started in 560 B.C., according to the Paestum app. People also can enter part of this temple or

walk around it via a path system that meanders throughout much of the park.

Across the ruins to the north is the Temple of Athena, situated on a small hill that was artificially expanded to accommodate the structure. This temple, built around 500 B.C., later was used by the Romans to worship the same goddess, whom they called Minerva, according to the app.

The area around the temple is known as the northern sanctuary and contains evidence of many altars and other structures. Arrows and shields — Athena was the goddess of battle strategy and wisdom — have been found in the sanctuary.

In addition to the temples, the ruins at Paestum include four city gates and a wall about 3 miles long that surrounds the city. A public meeting place, homes, a marketplace and shops, a sanctuary and pool and other elements of daily life also can be explored.

Another park highlight is the Roman amphitheater, where Paestum's citizens would go to watch gladiators, wild beasts and, sometimes, executions, according to the app.

While the Romans built over much of the city, they kept the original Greek city plan, including streets, in place, the app states.

Not to be missed is the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Paestum, which is on Via Magna Graecia across from the archaeological site. The museum includes pottery, tools and other items found in the



The Temple of Athena is visible from the Temple of Neptune.



Paestum also includes a museum that features pottery and other artifacts, such as well-preserved frescoes from a tomb.



The ruins include a public meeting place, a Roman amphitheater, market area and well-preserved walls around the city.

town and nearby necropolises and a sanctuary.

It also includes five frescoes found near Paestum in the Tomb of the Diver, named for a funerary painting that depicts a young man diving into a pool of water. Archaeologists believe that the panel of the diver and four others portraying a symposium were created around 480 to 470 B.C. The panels are amazingly well-preserved with vivid colors. While it's unknown for whom the tomb was made, it's easy to picture an athletic man cut down in his youth.

Paestum is at its best in the spring and fall, when the weather is cooler. If you visit during the summer, be certain to have plenty of water, and wear a hat and sunscreen.

While there are bars, cafes and souvenir stands outside the park, there are no shady spots or benches where visitors can sit and take a break.

With its full access to the archaeological history of southern Italy, the parks and museum offer an easy trip from Naples and a chance to take in the grandeur of Greek architecture and ancient Roman living in a choose-your-own-adventure format.

It's an ideal spot for families, history buffs and people seeking a fun day trip to indulge their curiosity in early Mediterranean culture.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Yes, you can get good Mexican in Germany

Casa Azteca offers a pleasant surprise, regional specialties

BY DAVID EDGE
Stars and Stripes

Having lived in Texas for most of my life and having visited Mexico several times, I rarely have high expectations of Mexican food in Germany, given its great distance from the source.

So Wiesbaden's Casa Azteca was a pleasant surprise. Walking into the restaurant, I was very impressed with the Dia de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, motif.

A huge mural of a sugar skull was painted on one of the walls, and some tables also had sugar skulls painted on them.

Mexican food liberally uses citrus fruits as marinades in combination with peppers, chocolate, basil, cinnamon and assorted other flavorful things. This blending of dynamic ingredients is one of the reasons Mexican cuisine is so popular in the U.S.

Since it was a warm day, my best friend and I decided to eat outside on the patio, and once again I was impressed with a large mural of a Mexican village. The well-apportioned patio provided plenty of room for customers and wait staff to move around.

I found Casa Azteca's menu very impressive in its array of regional cuisines from across Mexico. It also contains vegan and vegetarian options.

In addition, the drink menu is large and has plenty of specialty beverages. There were 11 different margaritas on the menu, some I have never even heard of like the Truffle Margarita. There were other interesting drinks on the menu such as the Mexican Colada, the Tequila Mule and a Mango Chili Mojito.

For an appetizer, we ordered nachos al pastor, which came in a portion big enough to share. Red, white and blue corn chips formed a bed for the house-made pico de gallo, shredded cheese, pickled jalapenos and bits of pork al pastor. These nachos were amazing.

My friend chose the beef chimichangas for his entree. The dish was loaded with beef, refried black beans and rice and came with a dipping sauce made with avocado, lime and chili.

He gave the Casa Azteca chimichanga high reviews and said he would order it again. I sampled the dipping sauce, which was good but not extraordinarily so.



PHOTOS BY DAVID EDGE/Stars and Stripes

The nachos al pastor at Casa Azteca, a Mexican restaurant in Wiesbaden, Germany. The tasty nachos, served in a portion big enough to share, feature house-made pico de gallo, shredded cheese, pickled jalapenos and bits of pork al pastor on a bed of red, white and blue corn chips.



Casa Azteca

Address: Schiersteinerstrasse 2, Wiesbaden

Hours: 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. daily, but the kitchen closes at 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday

Prices: About 8 to 20 euros for most meals.

Information: casa-azteca@web.de; 0611 16888605

David Edge

I ordered the barbacoa plate. It came with a small pot of barbacoa, rice, refried black beans and house-made corn tortillas with diced onions and coriander and lime wedges.

Beef is the typical meat used in barbacoa. It is heavily seasoned and either cooked in a clay pot or wrapped in banana leaves and then slow-cooked in the ground. When cooked correctly, it is fork-tender and very delicious.

The chefs at Casa Azteca did a good job with the barbacoa. The meat was tender, juicy and full of flavors that reminded me of home.

The Casa Azteca was a pleasant surprise for me. It's not often you find a restaurant in Germany making Mexican food the right way.



This decorated skull is part of the restaurant's Day of the Dead motif.

Everything from their sauces to the warm tortilla, both corn and flour, were made in house.

Even the murals on the walls and the furniture were all designed to make customers feel as if they were in a restaurant in Mexico or the American Southwest.

When I get nostalgic for home again, I will go back to Casa Azteca for more of the food that brought me so much comfort when I was growing up.

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From left: Beef chimichangas, nachos al pastor and a barbacoa plate.



A sugar skull mural painted on the walls at Casa Azteca.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

On track for Legos

Toy company, JR East issue stamp challenge in Tokyo to celebrate anniversaries in Japan

BY JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

Lego lovers still have time to complete a stamp-collecting challenge at Tokyo-area train stations, collect a small prize and get comfortable riding the rail system.

Until Aug. 21, Lego and Japan Railways East are collaborating to mark the 90th anniversary of the Lego Group and 150th anniversary of the first rail line in Japan, which connected Shimabashi in Tokyo to Yokohama.

Participants move from station to station collecting ink stamps on a large game card. Seven stamps qualify the holder for a prize. Thirty stamps bring a larger prize. Brochures with a stamp section are available at 30 stations in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Participating stations are listed in the brochure.

A one-day Tokenai pass to ride the rails costs 760 yen for adults and 380 yen for children, respectively, or \$5.63 and \$2.73, and can save riders the toll on their e-cards.

Shinjuku Station, reputedly the world's busiest rail terminal, is where I began my hunt for seven stamps on a hot August weekday. At any moment the maze-like station teems with thousands of commuters.

The stamp section is distinguishable by Lego wallpaper with "Shinjuku" printed on it. I found it by asking at the information desk. The ink stamps bear the station name in hiragana, a Japanese phonetic lettering system, and a special Lego minifigure. Shinjuku's figure resembles a red chili pepper.

The following Sunday I resumed the trail through another six stations I needed to complete the card. It took some effort because the stamp areas were not

always immediately visible at the stations, but that made the hunt more challenging.

Waiting on trains, reaching the next stations and navigating the crowds and summer heat to finally discover a stamp location took some commitment. Usually, I needed an assist from the information desk, security guards or by catching sight of the Lego signs set up to direct players to the stamp tables.

I was not alone in my quest. "It's very enjoyable," said an older Tokyo resident, Hiromitsu Hamamoto, at Nakano Station. "It was definitely an adventure for me."

My stamp-collecting journey took me from one side of Tokyo to the other, over miles of track and through the myriad tunnels that define Tokyo's stations. With my fifth stamp, I was energized to keep moving; I was almost there. Onto the next station and the next, Meguro, my goal and the seventh station.

Victorious, I returned to Shinjuku, one of 10 designated goal stations where collectors can claim their prize.

Stamp collectors may claim their prize, a Lego minifigure, at a New Days convenience store. Several options are available, but I chose one of a station employee.

To claim the prize, I presented the completed card and paid a hefty ransom in the form of a 500 yen or more purchase of anything inside New Days.

I knew it probably would be a challenge to get to the 30-station mark, so seven is where I ended. But I did witness several others working on that milestone to beat the Aug. 21 deadline.

More information is online at www.jreast.co.jp/tokyo/lego_stamp-rally

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PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

Top: People line up to collect a special Lego stamp at Shibuya Station in central Tokyo. Shibuya's minifigure for the stamp rally is called "Shopping Girl."

Below: Akihabara station's minifigure for the stamp rally is called "Pro Gamer."

Lower left: Collect special Lego stamps at Tokyo-area train stations through Aug. 21, and prizes like the limited-edition train conductor minifigure can be yours.

Left: The stamp-collecting challenge can help familiarize children with the Tokyo rail system.



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STARS AND STRIPES

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

A meaty proposal

Midtown BBQ's delectable items make eatery a must

BY JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

Although my diet these days is plant-based, I was not dissuaded from visiting a meatful restaurant in central Nagoya.

Owned and run by Rob Shannon, a Canadian expat, Midtown BBQ Steak and Smokehouse made my family's list of places to go on a visit to the sprawling city.

Just six minutes from Nagoya Station, the restaurant next to the Hori River has its name artfully printed on the building. We arrived for dinner on our first day in the city.



The interior is inviting and cozy. Seating was more than sufficient, with spots for outside dining, and second and third floors.

The menu offers a choice of burgers, steaks and other barbecue selections. I went straight for the black Wagyu brisket with two side dishes. My wife had the grilled chicken, and my son sampled chicken fingers from the children's menu.

My wife and I could both attest to the meat being melt-in-your-mouth tender and char-grilled to perfection. The barbecue sauce was a great-tasting add-on, but not essential, especially for the Wagyu.

The available sides included creamy coleslaw, potato salad and grilled, fresh mixed vegetables, just to mention a few.

As well as my nonalcoholic specialty drink, I ordered a couple of milkshakes. In my opinion, the milkshake was the only thing that was lacking in zest.

Nevertheless, that did not shake my confidence in trying other desserts, like the delicious caramel cheesecake that my wife had or the large chocolate brownie that added extra calories to my meal.

Because Midtown's offerings were so good, and the service we received was not lacking, we indulged in its delectable selections once more before our last day in the city. If you don't want to travel as far as Nagoya, there are also locations in Tokyo and Yokohama.

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PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

Once you're past the brick exterior, Midtown BBQ Steak and Smokehouse in Nagoya, Japan, is inviting and cozy. It's the type of atmosphere in which you could enjoy a delicious meal. The menu offers tasty menu items and the eatery has seating on three levels.



The black Wagyu brisket, served with two side dishes, was tasty with or without sauce.



The caramel cheesecake is a delicious way to top off a meat-heavy meal.

Midtown BBQ Steak and Smokehouse

Location: 5-24-3 Nakamura-ku, Meieki, Aichi-ken, Nagoya-shi 450-0002

Directions: A short walk from Nagoya Station.

Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; 11:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Prices: Weekday lunch set menu is 1,500 yen, or about \$11. The grand menu is served all day during regular business hours with prices ranging from 1,200 yen to 5,900 yen, or more for larger dishes serving two or more people.

Dress: Casual
Information: Phone: 052-898-5080; Online: midtown-bbq.com

Juan King

STARS AND STRIPES

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Reaffirmation of Okinawan identity

Hajichi, a lost form of women's tattoo art, is making its comeback on the subtropical islands and beyond

BY MICHELLE YE HEE LEE
AND JULIA MIO INUMA
The Washington Post

Hana Morita was scrolling through Pinterest when she came across hajichi, a minimalist tattoo worn by Okinawan women on their fingers and hands. Once common on the subtropical islands where traces of a distinct culture remain, the art had almost disappeared over a century of assimilation.

As a fourth-generation Japanese American who visited her grandmother in Okinawa every summer, Morita made researching hajichi part of her quest to understand her family's roots. Then, she found an Okinawan hajichi artist on Instagram and got her first tattoo.

"I wanted it to mark the physical affirmation of becoming more of myself," Morita, 22, said. "My grandma was really happy to see it, because her grandma also had hajichi."

Morita is among a growing number of women in their 20s and 30s who are discovering the lost art form through social media and driving a small but passionate comeback. They are part of a larger movement to preserve the uniqueness of Okinawa and show it is so much more than its reputation as a resort destination that hosts American military bases.

Okinawa was the independent Ryukyu kingdom before it was annexed by Japan in 1879 and then occupied by the United States for almost 30 years after World War II. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Okinawa's return to Japan from U.S. rule, but Okinawans say they are treated as second-class citizens in Japan despite shouldering the burden of the U.S. military presence.

Hajichi was banned in 1899 as the Japanese government pushed assimilation and as new norms about public decency emerged during the time when the country opened to foreigners after more than 200 years of isolationist policies. While tattoos are becoming more fashionable among younger Japanese, they remain stigmatized and often associated with the yakuza, the Japanese criminal syndicate.

Now, attempts by a handful of tattoo artists in Okinawa and Tokyo to revive hajichi have reached artists and clients in diasporic communities in Brazil and Hawaii. Some view the resurgence as a callback to a time when Okinawan women held powerful positions as religious leaders and breadwinners. For them, it's a symbol of empowerment in a country that ranks among the lowest among developed nations on women's advancement.

"Hajichi is also a part of this idea that women possess power. And living in a patriarchal society like Japan, I think that's part of why I was drawn to hajichi," said Moeko Heshiki, 30, founder of the

Hajichi Project. "Even in the tattoo industry, a lot of tattoo artists tend to be men. But hajichi was usually done by women for women, so this felt especially meaningful."

Growing up in Tochigi, north of Tokyo, Heshiki experienced microaggressions relating to her Okinawan identity. "You're light-skinned for an Okinawan," people would say and point out how her name doesn't sound like a typical Japanese name. (It's Okinawan.) But being Okinawan was important for her.

As she looked for a tattoo design that represented her family, she came across hajichi on Pinterest. She got her first hajichi from a tribal tattoo artist in Tokyo, then in 2020 opened her own studios in Tokyo and Okinawa. Tattoo artists in Okinawa now do hajichi, but Heshiki is the sole hajichi specialist — "hajicha" — on the islands.

Hajichi's origins are murky and date as far back as the 16th century, according to researchers.

It was a sign of pride of womanhood, beauty and protection from evil spirits. It could also indicate marriage. Young women often got hajichi in multiple sessions as a rite of passage through different stages of life, according to "Hajichi of Nakijin, A Vanishing Custom," a 1983 research paper. Islands in Ryukyu each had their own designs and customs.

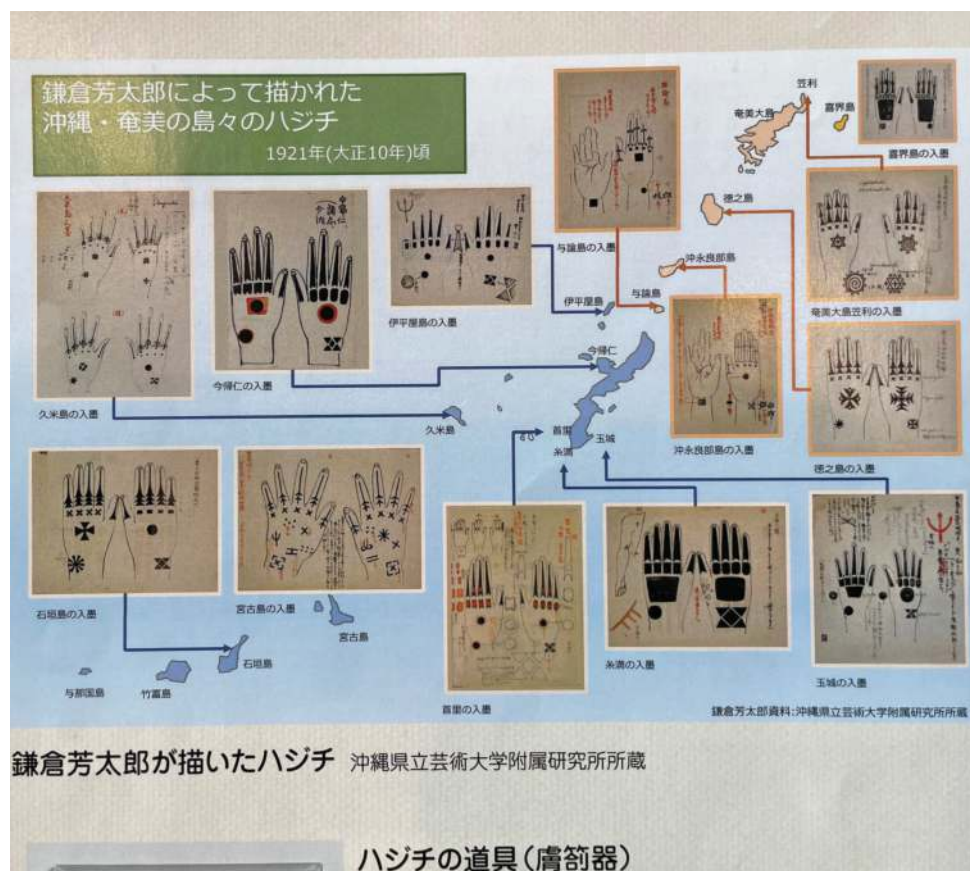
Heshiki tries to stick to original techniques as closely as possible, hand-poking with bamboo needles and referencing designs in history books from secondhand bookstores and fabric from various regions.

She makes sure her clients are of Okinawan heritage before she gives them tattoos in the traditional locations of fingers, hands and wrists. Many are young, mixed-race women who find her on Instagram. For those drawn to it for aesthetic reasons, she tattoos them on different parts of the body to preserve the hand-worn tattoo for women of Okinawan descent.

The resurgence has led women to new discoveries about Okinawa before Japanese or U.S. rule. For example, when Heshiki showed her hajichi to her father, who was born in Okinawa under U.S. occupation, it triggered memories of his grandmother, who Heshiki learned also

"Hajichi is also a part of this idea that women possess power. And living in a patriarchal society like Japan, I think that's part of why I was drawn to hajichi."

Moeko Heshiki
founder of the Hajichi Project



A map of the hajichi designs from various regions of Okinawa.



Moeko Heshiki, 30, founder of the Hajichi Project, is the sole hajichi specialist — "hajicha" — on the islands of Okinawa.



Heshiki showed photos of her research and the hajichi tattoos she has done on other young women.

had the tattoo and spoke a different dialect that disappeared after the annexation.

And they hope to pass it down. Akemi Matsuzaki, a 32-year-old Okinawan native, teaches hip-hop dance and is often asked about her hajichi by her students, which leads to conversations about Okinawan Indigenous culture.

Matsuzaki, whose grandfather is American, got her first hajichi this year and plans to complete a full design on both hands. When she turns 37, a milestone age in Okinawa, she plans on getting a special design to mark the year.

"When I got it done, it just felt so great and it just all felt so natural to me," she said. "Though I was born in Okinawa and am working here, getting hajichi made me feel even more strongly of the fact that I really am here, and I feel more comfortable and proud of who I am."

Still, hajichi is rare. Getting a tattoo,

especially on an exposed body part like the hands, is a major commitment that could backfire professionally.

For those women, Minami Shimoji, a 30-year-old occupational therapist in Okinawa, offers an alternative: temporary hajichi using fruit-based ink that was used for Amazonian tribal tattoos. Shimoji learned about hajichi when she saw an elderly patient who had a marking on her hand that resembled the art.

Shimoji had grown up performing Okinawan dances and wanted to learn more. She aspires to be a full-time tattoo artist, but for now runs a studio part time out of an apartment building in Chatan, near a U.S. military base.

As military airplanes roared by, drowning out the music in her studio, she scrolled through the hundreds of comments on a TikTok video she made about hajichi.

She's aware of pushback from traditionalists who don't approve of her adaptation of hajichi into body art that lasts just two weeks. But even during the Ryukyu age, hajichi evolved, she said.

"Hajichi originally had different designs depending on region or class, so it was never just this one form," she said. "I feel that culture is never static and it's something that is created together by people, and hajichi can evolve while respecting the traditional aspects."

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Q&A

Processing a tricky past

Actress McCurdy discusses her new book, 'I'm Glad My Mom Died'

By ALICIA RANCILIO
Associated Press

Jennette McCurdy is well aware that the title of her new book, "I'm Glad My Mom Died," is attention-grabbing. She also readily admits that she means every word. "It's something that I mean sincerely; I'm not saying it to be flippant."

McCurdy, who co-starred in the Nickelodeon show "iCarly" and its spinoff, "Sam & Cat" opposite Ariana Grande, hopes readers will understand why she makes such a bold statement: "I hope that readers feel that by the end of it, 'this makes sense.'"

The 30-year-old writes in her book that her mother Debra "was a narcissist" who "emotionally, mentally and physically abused" her. She pushed McCurdy into an acting career as a child and encouraged her to have an eating disorder, McCurdy says. Her mother insisted on giving her daughter showers through her late teens, claiming she didn't wash her hair correctly, McCurdy says.

It wasn't until seeking therapy after her mother's death from complications of cancer in 2013 that McCurdy began to fully deal with the trauma she was put through. Before therapy, McCurdy was drinking excessively and had unhealthy romantic relation-

ships. Now after years of work on herself, she's sharing her story with the world. Writing the book, she says, was an emotional roller coaster.

"I'd be crying while writing it and then I'd be laughing, remembering something. My mom's way of speaking was humorous and very distinct, and writing that out was a very dynamic, emotional experience."

McCurdy, who hosts a podcast called "Empty Inside," spoke with The Associated Press about looking back, therapy and how she may return to work in front of the camera.

Answers have been edited for clarity and length:

Associated Press: It's one thing to come to realizations about your childhood through therapy but another to share those discoveries with the world. What made you want to put it out there, first in a one-woman show (also called "I'm Glad My Mom Died") and now in a book?

McCurdy: I think finding shape is very important. There's certainly many stages of processing. Processing the events that

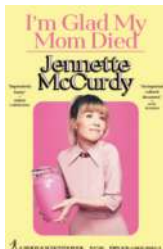
happened in my childhood took so long in therapy. I needed to do so much of that excavating work on my own.

When you think back now about your childhood and your mom, what do you think?

My grandfather passed away a few years ago, and I got to really experience what I consider a more conventional grieving process of a really close family member... It was heartbreaking and devastating. With my mother's death, I'd go from being so, so deeply angry to then feeling just so sorry for her. And so I could feel compassion and sympathy and then just anger and rage. I'd cry because I missed her and I'd be angry that I was crying that I missed her and feel she doesn't deserve these tears. I think abusive love is so complicated ... It's going to be mixed and messy.

Your book is also a reminder of how you never really know what's going on with someone because people would watch you on these shows and maybe think, 'Oh, she's got it all.'

Now my life is very boring. At the time, being on this children's television show that's so glossy and so polished and so exactly, like, perfect ... my actual life felt so the opposite. Living in that dichotomy felt really confusing. But also now in retrospect, I see



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

Former actress Jennette McCurdy, author of the memoir "I'm Glad My Mom Died," poses for a portrait July 28 in Los Angeles.

that there's a lot of humor in that. As agonizing as it is to be in the ambulance with my mother while she's convulsing in the middle of a seizure, to look up and see my face (on a billboard) felt like my life was mocking me.

Are you definitely done with acting?

Recently, and only since writing the book, there's been a part of me that's like, you know, maybe I'll write something for myself. I could see something like that happening where I think there's a version of acting that could potentially be healing for me now, especially if I were the one sort of writing the thing.

Are you still in therapy?

I am. I just saw my therapist yesterday. It's funny because

now if I look at my journal notes from when I first started therapy, it's like, how many times did I binge and purge today? And, like, trying to have a better relationship with alcohol. Now it feels like little tuneups or thinking about turning 30. What an amazing thing to be able to go into a therapy session and just talk about (expletive) turning 30.

How is your relationship with food now?

I don't obsess about food at all. ... I want people to know that I do believe it's possible to not have it haunt you for the rest of your life. I feel great in my recovery. I consider myself recovered. For anybody who might be struggling now, I want them to know it's possible to recover.

Mann's 'Heat 2' struggles with pacing, sloppy storytelling

By CHRIS KLIMEK
The Washington Post

The 1995 cops-and-robbers saga "Heat" stands as neon-loving filmmaker Michael Mann's magnum opus, though it arrived at the midpoint of his career. A panoramic Los Angeles crime opera, it was the summation of the then-52-year-old auteur's work, and not just because it extended the meticulous study of career criminals that had informed Mann's first two features, "The Jericho Mile" and "Thief." Though "Heat" was a luxe production with a blue-chip cast toplined by Robert De Niro and Al Pacino, it was also a close remake of a TV movie Mann had shot with no-name actors only six years earlier.

Turns out, Mann had found a well that was too rich to return to just once. While preparing 1981's "Thief," Mann had hired a retired Chicago cop named Chuck Adamson as a technical adviser. The pair would become close friends, and Adamson's experiences pursuing and eventually killing a professional thief named Neil McCauley in the 1960s would inspire several of Mann's subsequent TV and film projects.

Mann, in turn, helped Adamson launch his own screenwriting career. The 1986-

1988 NBC series "Crime Story," which Adamson co-created and Mann produced, was set in the '60s but featured scenes and bits of dialogue that Mann would reprise almost verbatim in "Heat."

How strange it is to find Mann repainting his masterpiece a generation later ... as a novel. "Heat 2" — let's dock a few points for that uninspired title — is, like "The Godfather Part II," both a prequel and sequel to the film. The book opens the day after the bloody events of the movie circa 1995, but quickly

flashes back to 1988, which allows Mann and Edgar Award-winning co-writer Meg Gardiner to bring De Niro's Neil McCauley back from the dead, and ahead to 1996 and 2000. This hopscotching in time enriches the characters but costs the book in pacing and tension, traditionally Mann's strengths. Mann's 170-minute film races toward its inevitable-but-satisfying climax like a bullet. Mann and Gardiner's 470-page novel ambles along in fits and starts, intermittently picking up narrative steam only to let it dissipate. It's frustrating.

The character who most benefits from

the expanded treatment is the resourceful burglar Chris Shiherlis, sole member of McCauley's crew to survive the movie, in which a ponytailed Val Kilmer made a strong impression despite minimal dialogue. Shiherlis spends most of "Heat 2" living in Paraguay with a forged Canadian passport, working as muscle for a Taiwanese crime family with a base of operations in Ciudad del Este. Silently taking in everything he witnesses, Shiherlis discovers that even the multimillion-dollar "scores" he and his best pal McCauley used to "take" were small potatoes and that globalization offers unlimited earning — well, stealing — potential to an industrious outlaw. Shiherlis also finds himself falling in love, even as he yearns to be reunited with the wife and son he left behind in LA.

All this feels fresher than the 1988 chapters, wherein McCauley and Shiherlis and their crew plan to rob a Mexican drug cartel. McCauley's Mexican lover Elisa is a partner in their scheme, and he is a loving father figure to her young daughter Gabriela. This unconvincing domestic subplot seems to have been put here to explain the origin of the "no attachments" philosophy that McCauley espouses in

"Heat's" most famous scene — over coffee, and to the cop who wants to put him away, no less. But this was not something that required explanation. De Niro's performance supplied all the subtext and all the backstory we needed.

What's more damaging is the arbitrary character-as-device that Mann and Gardiner use to bridge the 1988 and 2000 segments — a sociopathic home invader and sex offender named Otis Wardell, who crosses swords with both McCauley and Vincent Hanna, Pacino's nervy detective character, years before they will cross swords (and coffee cups) with each other.

Wardell's character is frightening, if indistinct, but his role hinges wholly on coincidence spanning a dozen years and half a continent. Turns out, the crooks McCauley and Shiherlis, the cop Hanna and the killer-rapist-fiend Wardell all operated in Chicago in the '80s before relocating to Los Angeles in the '90s. Really? That "Heat" is plotted as tightly as a Swiss watch makes the shapelessness of this follow-up all the harder to forgive. And the writing, alternately terse and florid, isn't elegant enough to disguise the sloppy storytelling. Mann's cinema may be poetry, but his prose is ... well, prosaic.



WEEKEND: MUSIC

COMMENTARY

Musicians who move the needle

With new albums, Beyoncé and Kendrick Lamar push music culture forward

BY DAN DE LUCA
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Kendrick Lamar and Beyoncé are the most acclaimed Black music makers of their time.

Between them, the Compton rapper and Houston-born megastar have won 42 Grammys and a Pulitzer Prize. (Though in an ongoing injustice, neither has been honored with the prestigious album of the year Grammy. Taylor Swift and Adele have a combined five.)

Neither artist rules the popularity roost. Drake, Swift and Adele do bigger numbers when it comes to sales and streams. But both have attained exalted status as artists of importance who push the culture forward while commanding a mass audience.

Beyoncé, who has 28 of those Grammys, is Queen Bey, “the world’s greatest living entertainer,” according to Rolling Stone. (And who would argue? No one who wants to avoid the wrath of the BeyHive.)



Beyoncé

Lamar is widely regarded as the most skilled rapper of his generation. His 2017 album “DAMN.” was lavished with praise, making Lamar the first pop music maker to be bestowed with a Pulitzer. It’s “a virtuosic song collection,” the committee wrote, “... that offers affecting vignettes capturing the complexity of modern African American life.”

So when either Lamar or Beyoncé re-

SEE NEEDLE ON PAGE 29

Kendrick Lamar performs at the Glastonbury Festival in Worthy Farm, Somerset, England, on June 27.

SCOTT GARFITT/AP

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Q&A

Little Feat celebrates 'Waiting for Columbus'

By JIM HARRINGTON
Bay Area News Group

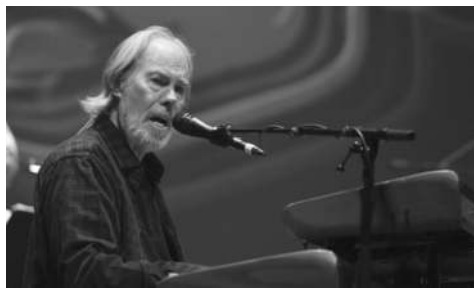
Forty-five years ago, Little Feat traveled to the U.K. and set up shop for a four-night stand — Aug. 1-4, 1977 — at the Rainbow Theatre in London. The Los Angeles rock act then quickly returned to the U.S. where it would play three shows — Aug. 8-10 — at George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium in Washington, D.C.

The tape machines were most definitely rolling as the band — which vocalist-guitarist Lowell George, keyboardist Bill Payne, bassist Roy Estrada and drummer Richie Hayward formed in 1969 — rolled through such numbers as "Feats Don't Fail Me Now," "Oh Atlanta," "Spanish Moon" and, of course, "Dixie Chicken."

The result was Little Feat's first live album, the 1978 double-LP "Waiting for Columbus," which went on to become the most commercially successful outing of the band's career.

Having just broken into the top 20 for the first — and still only — time in its career, Little Feat seemed well positioned to capitalize on the momentum of "Waiting for Columbus." Unfortunately, it was not to be and the band broke up in early 1979. Not long after that, George died of a heart attack at the age of 34.

In the late '80s, Little Feat reformed and has been rocking audiences ever since. The group is currently celebrating the 45th anniversary of the "Waiting for Co-



JEFF MOORE, ZUMA PRESS/TNS

Bill Payne performs with Little Feat at the Sandler Center in Virginia Beach, Va., on April 20. The band is celebrating the 45th anniversary of its popular live album, "Waiting for Columbus."

lumbus" shows with a tour and has also released "Waiting for Columbus: Super Deluxe Edition," an eight-CD box set from Rhino Records that includes a remastered version of the original album plus three previously unreleased concert recordings. Visit rhino.com for details.

I recently had to chance to chat with Little Feat's immensely talented Bill Payne — who has also performed with Bob Seger, the Doobie Brothers, Jackson Browne, Emmylou Harris and many other acts — about the "Waiting for Columbus" anniversary.

(Responses are edited for length.)

How did the idea for this live album come about?

It's a little foggy in my mind as to who

suggested it. Some people thought it was Lowell. Others thought it was Warner Bros. In my mind, it could have been both. But Warner certainly had to be close to the people who maybe approached Lowell first and said, "Hey, the band's strengths are in the live performances." That makes sense to me.

Looking back 45 years later, how do you now view these recordings?

I kind of view them in a place where they should be — which is, they are iconic recordings of this band. But there is also a part of me that kind of views a lot of things, like a lot of us do, which are like home movies. It was our second time in England. The first time we went over there was with the Warner Bros. Music Tour. The Rainbow Theatre was a pretty good place to play and people just went nuts for the band. And they have pretty much been in our camp ever since — as has D.C., by the way.

Fans hold up "Waiting for Columbus" as a real milestone for the band. Is that how you see it?

I see it as just a blip on the screen — but a big blip, indeed. But there were too many back and forths taking place for the band to really take advantage of anything for very long.

That album — a lot of people view it as like the pinnacle, which it was at the time. But it wasn't the overall pinnacle moving forward. It was more of a beginning than

an end. But, obviously, when we cut that record in 1977 — it was released in 1978 — you can't see the future.

What's it like revisiting the album in concert?

We've really been enjoying playing "Waiting for Columbus." When we first got into it — because we were playing all these other tunes, a month or two before that — we thought, "What's it going to be like playing the same set every night? Will it get old? Will it kind of fossilize the music?"

It's been anything but that. It's been just an adventure every night, getting out there and trying different things. We're not obliterating the music — where nobody knows what we're playing or what they are listening to. It's the same stuff. It's just what we've always done. You react to certain areas that you'd like to jam on something and take it for a spin, maybe implementing some world music — a percussion here and there — and just keeping an open mind about arrangements.

Are you playing the album in its entirety at each concert?

We are playing every song. But we are not replicating every song. Some people do this stuff where it's like, "Let's see how close we can get it to sound like the album." Nah, we aren't doing that. We take our songs and we do what Little Feat has always done.

Needle: Beyoncé, Lamar offer different responses to turbulent times

FROM PAGE 28

leases a new project, it registers as a cultural event. And this pop music season, they've gifted us with two, with each auteur returning with a new work that shows how they respond to turbulent times. One is full of joy, and one is fraught with tension.

"Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers," which came out in May, is a double album, a weighty endeavor that's Lamar's first full-blown artistic statement since "DAMN."

Meanwhile — in case you haven't heard — Beyoncé is back. Her return also comes after a long absence. "Lemonade," which included the powerful liberation song "Freedom" with Lamar, came out way back in 2016.

Beyoncé's "Renaissance" is only a single album, but it's part of a planned trilogy, "a three-act project," she's said, "recorded over three years during the pandemic." The title makes its ambition clear, evoking artistic rebirths from Florence in the 14th century to Harlem in the 20th.

After "DAMN." and "Lemonade," both Lamar and Beyoncé embarked on music for film projects that explored Black identity through a pop cultural lens.

Lamar oversaw and appeared on the soundtrack to "Black Panther," the Chadwick Boseman-starring superhero movie set in fictional East African Wakanda released in 2018.

In 2019, Beyoncé performed on and produced the soundtrack for the Disney

computer-animated remake of "The Lion King," again teaming with Lamar, on "Nile." The next year, she used that music as a starting point for "Black Is King," a Disney+ film she directed and starred in.

Coupled with "Black Parade," the protest song released after the police killing of George Floyd in 2020, "Black Is King" worked as a manifesto of Black Pride. Demonstrators marched that summer to both "Black Parade" and Lamar's tough-minded "Alright," from 2015's "To Pimp a Butterfly."

The socially conscious thrust of "Black Parade" and "Lemonade's" "Formation" led many to expect "Renaissance" would have a political bent, an impression that was furthered by a song title: "America Has a Problem."

But along with her many attributes, Beyoncé is skilled at reading the room. And she surely realized her fans are in need of uplift and release. "Renaissance" is a celebration of resilience, for sure, as voiced in the lead single, which introduces thumping house music as it insists: "You won't break my soul."

As has been well-documented since its release, "Renaissance" is a celebration of Black queer dance music. It incorporates references to underground house and techno history and touchstones like Chic, whose guitarist Nile Rodgers plays on the irresistible "Cuff It." Donna Summer is paid homage to, and New Orleans bounce music queen Big Freedia exhorts dancers to "release your wiggle."

"Renaissance" has come under some criticism. Kelis spoke out on social media, saying she hadn't given permission for use of her 2003 song "Milksshake," to be used on "Energy." Beyoncé has since excised the brief interpolation, just as she has removed a lyric in "Heated" after it came under criticism for being ableist. (Yes, it's the same term that Lizzo was recently pressured to remove from her hit "Grrrls.")

But the album, which so far has been released without any videos — after all of her recent albums were full of them — is mostly being rightly celebrated for what it is: a party starter that'll provide a balm, rather than break your soul. The problem plaguing "America" is never spelled out, but it's suggested that any solution should include a sensual prerogative: "Booty gon' do what it want to."

The album cover pictures Beyoncé in a barely there bikini atop a holographic horse in what seems to be a reference to a photo of Bianca Jagger at Studio 54 in 1977. In the Instagram post in which she revealed the cover, Beyoncé wrote that making "Renaissance" "allowed me to feel free and adventurous in a time when little else was moving. My intention was to create a place to scream, release, feel freedom. i hope you find joy in this music."

That sense of release and joy is not what "Mr. Morale" is all about. Lamar's opus is an altogether tense and extremely dense production that grapples with issues of

Black masculinity and is weighted with the burden of being a voice of his generation.

The edginess is right there on the album cover, which couldn't contrast more sharply with Beyoncé as a dance floor Lady Godiva. Lamar and his fiancée Whitney Alford are pictured with their two children, with the rapper holding one in his arms as he looks off camera. A gun is tucked into his trousers and a crown of thorns sits on his head. Trouble is coming.

Nobody expects Kendrick Lamar to make party music, so it's no big surprise that "Mr. Morale" is not full of dance floor bangers. And going back to his career-making 2012 album "good kid, m.A.A.d City," Lamar has always been the most self-analytical of rappers. The combination of his contemplative and combative sides are a big part of what makes him great.

Still, "Mr. Morale" is striking in how weighted he is with the pressure to be a sort of hip-hop oracle. That tension is there from the start, as Lamar confides "I been going through something" and cites the exact number of days that passed between the release of "DAMN." and "Mr. Morale's" release.

Lamar does find a measure of release in confronting personal trauma in "Mr. Morale," but he also spends a lot of time feeling agitated about the expectation placed upon him. Unlike Beyoncé on "Renaissance," he does carry the burden lightly.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

No warring ‘cowboys and Indians’ here

‘Reservation Dogs’ back with its 2nd season, continuing to tell stories that more accurately reflect Indigenous experiences

BY GREG BRAXTON
Los Angeles Times

Devery Jacobs was thrilled as she filmed the pilot for FX’s “Reservation Dogs” two years ago. The coming-of-age story about a group of mischievous teens on a Native American reservation in rural Oklahoma reflected her own experience, and she felt personally invested in the project.

Jacobs also feared that the show would never see the light of day.

The actress/writer for years had confronted resistance in Hollywood to telling stories of Indigenous people, particularly stories that extended beyond the industry’s long-standing stereotypes central to the Western genre. She was concerned that “Reservation Dogs” might meet the same fate.

“We didn’t know if FX was going to pick it up, and that this might be the one and only time we had to tell this story,” Jacobs recalled. “It was a love letter to the reservations we all grew up on. We were putting our hearts and souls into it. It was such a cathartic experience. We did it for ourselves. We thought, ‘If we never get to tell this story again, we will have laid it all out on the table.’”

Her worries soon dissipated. FX picked up the series, which quickly became one of the freshman darlings of last year, charming critics and viewers with its offbeat humor and eccentric characters while putting an authentic and affectionate spotlight on a universe that has rarely been featured in mainstream film and TV. (Both L.A. Times TV critics Lorraine Ali and Robert Lloyd selected “Reservation Dogs” as one of the best TV series of 2021.)

Season 2 of “Reservation Dogs” launched last week on Hulu with several major honors in hand, including a Peabody Award and two Independent Spirit Awards. The show is shot entirely in the Muscogee Nation and has an all-Indigenous writing and directing staff.

“This has been such a surreal experience,” said D’Pharaoh Woon-A-Tai, who plays Bear Smallhill, the unofficial leader of the Dogs. “I never thought I would be on a project I’m this proud of. I was anxious about what the perception of the show would be. I knew it was good, one of a kind. And I knew it was funny. We’re funny people, cracking jokes during hard times. It may seem inappropriate, but that is how we deal with trauma and pain.”

“Reservation Dogs” is at the center of an elevated Native American presence on screen in the past few years, with characters and plots that are worlds away from Hollywood’s longtime Western formula of warring “cowboys and Indians.”

AMC’s “Dark Winds,” Peacock’s “Rutherford Falls” and Paramount Network’s “Yellowstone” all have central and topical storylines related to Native Americans. “Reservation Dogs” co-star Wes Studi (“Dances with Wolves”) stars in the new theatrical release “A Love Song.” And several more projects spotlighting Indigenous characters and themes are on the horizon.



FX/Hulu

In season one of “Reservation Dogs,” Native American teens try to fund their planned exit from their reservation by engaging in petty crimes and other schemes. Above, Elora (Devery Jacobs) and Willie (Paulina Alexis) try to make some money by selling meat pies.

Jacobs referenced Hollywood’s past treatment of Indigenous people last year when the show received the Independent Spirit Award for best new scripted series. She paid special tribute to Native American artists who she said had paved the way for “Reservation Dogs.”

“To all of those who came before us playing antagonists in Western movies and mythic, stoic and savage Indians, to Native creators who had to break down

“Jojo Rabbit”). “It’s exciting, but I take it all in stride. The big reward for me is having this show and being able to tell this story. I knew that if I had the support to really find the right way to present Native humor and a good Native story and fill it with drama and magic, I could create something that resonated.”

On the dramedy, the Dogs — Bear, Elora Danan (Jacobs), Willie Jack (Paulina Alexis) and Cheese (Lane Factor) en-

Dogs are splintered — Elora Danan has embarked for California after making an uneasy truce with NDN leader Jackie (Elva Guerra), while the others continue to try to make the best of it on the reservation.

“The first season has the Dogs dealing with losing Daniel, while the second season shows them working on their relationship with each other,” Harjo said.

Asked what he felt audiences were responding to in the series, Harjo said different viewers were drawn by different elements.

“For non-Native people, it’s immersive,” he said. “It puts you into a world that you never knew existed. That’s good storytelling. And for Native people, they’re seeing themselves for the first time. It’s a truthful depiction. There have been so many false depictions of ourselves.”

The humor and the chemistry of the cast are also attracting audiences. Most of the actors had never met before the project began, but they still felt a connection with one another.

“We all liked each other right off the bat,” Woon-A-Tai said. “When we were all in LA for the final callbacks, it didn’t even feel like we were competing with each other. Plus, you throw 10 Indigenous teens in a room together and we’re all going to tell jokes and talk s—.”

The success of “Reservation Dogs” makes Harjo optimistic about the future of Indigenous people in Hollywood.

“This culture is literally the longest culture to be on this land, so there are so many stories,” he said. “This show has opened everyone’s mind. If you let Native people tell their stories, there’s no end to where they can go.”

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Sterlin Harjo

“Reservation Dogs” executive producer

tropes in this industry, we are here accepting this award because of you,” she said in her acceptance speech. “We are walking on the same path you walked for us and carved out for us. We hope this marks a new beginning.”

A few hours before hitting the red carpet for a premiere event at Tulsa’s River Spirit Casino Resort, executive producer Sterlin Harjo reflected on the show’s success and its significance.

“Part of it is hard to comprehend, and part of it is about being happy and living in the moment,” said Harjo, who created the series with Oscar winner Taika Waititi

gaged in petty crimes and other schemes to fund their planned exit from the reservation to more seductive opportunities in California.

Motivating their mission is their ongoing grief over the death of their comrade Daniel, who took his own life one year before the series’ action begins. In addition to their interactions with several colorful adults around the reservation, the Dogs also are battling a rival group — known as the NDN Mafia — who gunned them down in a paintball drive-by shooting.

When the second season opens, the

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Netflix

Tom Sturridge is Morpheus, the Dream King, in "The Sandman." Sturridge said that he wanted Morpheus' appearance to more resemble humans.

Entering the world of the Dream King

Neil Gaiman's long-awaited Netflix adaptation of 'The Sandman' now streaming, with Tom Sturridge in the titular role

BY KATE FELDMAN
New York Daily News

Tom Sturridge at first tried to look like the Morpheus from Neil Gaiman's comic book series: translucent white skin, a mop of hair standing on end, pitch-black eyes with stars in the center.

But he and Gaiman realized that to bring the "Sandman" protagonist to life, he had to be able to walk among humans.

"Because the most important thing for me is that Morpheus is representative of us," the 36-year-old British actor, who stars as the Dream King, said.

"When he walks through the streets of New York and through the streets of London, no one should bat an eyelid. And the way I looked, I would walk down the hallway of the studio and everyone would be like, 'dude, what are you wearing? You look like a freak.'"

An on-screen adaptation of Gaiman's DC Comics series, which published 75 issues from January 1989 to March 1996, has been stuck in developmental hell for decades. Netflix's version, with Gaiman himself at the helm, is now streaming.

Starring Sturridge as Dream or Morpheus or the titular Sandman or any number of nicknames, "The Sandman" opens with one of the seven Endless (a family of siblings made up of Destiny, Death, Dream, Destruction, Desire, Despair and Delirium) captured in an occult ritual and held hostage for almost 100 years when he refuses to grant their wishes.

When he finally escapes, Dream returns to his king-

dom, the Dreaming, to find it in shambles and his people mostly gone. With the help of his librarian Lucienne (Vivienne Acheampong) and his raven Matthew (voiced by Patton Oswalt), Morpheus sets out to restore what once was.

"I think that normally, with these kinds of narratives, you're following a hero. With 'Sandman,' though, there is, to some extent, a protagonist in Morpheus. What he's doing is shepherding you through the stories and dreams through others, through thousands of different kinds of humans and creatures and beings," Sturridge said. "One minute you're in Hell with Lucifer Morningstar and the next you're in a homicidal orgy in America."

Lucifer, played by "Game of Thrones" alum Gwendoline Christie, proves to be just one of Dream's obstacles. In his absence, the Sleeping Sickness took over, leaving millions of people asleep with no dreams, no nightmares, just emptiness. His own nightmare, Corinthian (Boyd Holbrook), escaped the Dreaming and set out to cause as much destruction as possible.

Johanna Constantine (Jenna Coleman), an occult detective specializing in exorcisms, is overwhelmed by the evil. Even his own sister, Death (Kirby Howell-Baptiste), has struggled to keep up.

But there's a throughline of hope, including in one of the comic's most iconic scenes with Dream and Lucifer. And yet the world of "Sandman" is a dark one, where cruelty and pain run freely. For Sturridge, who used the eight-month audition process to "read all 2,500 pages over and over again" and now counts himself one of the series'

most rabid fans, that's part of the appeal.

"I think there's this trope that we have in contemporary storytelling where you've got to find the good in the bad guy. It's banal, I think, and is a kind of cliché and a vanity, because no one is brave enough to play a truly bad person. They always want everyone to love them. I think it's thrilling to be a part of something where there is an actually genuine bad guy who doesn't really change," said the actor, who previously starred in "The Boat That Rocked" and was nominated for a Tony Award in 2019 for "Sea Wall/A Life." "But, having said that, I look at Lucifer and I see someone cast out from heaven and a life that has been utterly destroyed, and I think there's a complexity there."

For Gaiman, whose work also includes "American Gods" and "Good Omens," "The Sandman" has remained among his most revered, a terrifying, funny mixture of fantasy and horror that stood up on the shelves next to Batman and Superman in the DC library.

Joseph Gordon-Levitt tried to make a movie. Fox ripped Lucifer out from the pages and turned it into a procedural starring Tom Ellis. Audible did a multi-part adaptation, then a sequel.

But "The Sandman" got Gaiman on set every day. Sturridge knows the expectations of the fan base and the pressures that come along with that.

"I am part of that fan base. I'm in the same army. I will kill anyone who messes with this," he said. "I've made this film in my head the way I know everyone else has made their own film."

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Can't take the heat

Rising temperatures put children at higher risk of heat-related illness, dehydration than adults

BY EMMARIE HUETTEMAN
Kaiser Health News

Amid a summer of record-breaking temperatures across much of the United States and Europe, public health experts are cautioning that children are more susceptible to heat illness than adults are — even more so when they're on the athletic field, living without air conditioning or waiting in a parked car.

Cases of heat-related illness are rising with average air temperatures, and experts say almost half of those getting sick are children. The reason is twofold: Children's bodies have more trouble regulating temperature than those of adults, and they rely on adults to help protect them from overheating.

Parents, coaches and other caretakers, who can experience the same heat very differently than kids do, may struggle to identify a dangerous situation or catch the early symptoms of heat-related illness in children.

“Children are not little adults,” said Dr. Aaron Bernstein, a pediatric hospitalist at Boston Children's Hospital.

Jan Null, a meteorologist in California, recalled being surprised at the effect of heat in a car. It was 86 degrees on a July afternoon more than two decades ago when an infant in San Jose was forgotten in a parked car and died of heatstroke.

Null said a reporter asked him after the death, “How hot could it have gotten in that car?”

Null's research with two emergency doctors at Stanford University eventually produced a startling answer. Within an hour, the temperature in that car could have exceeded 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Their work revealed that a quick errand can be dangerous for a kid left behind in the car — even for less than 15 minutes, even with the windows cracked and even on a mild day.

As record heat becomes more frequent, posing serious risks even to healthy adults, the number of cases of heat-related illnesses has gone up, including among children. Those most at

risk are young children in parked vehicles and adolescents returning to school and participating in sports during the hottest days of the year.

More than 9,000 high school athletes are treated for heat-related illnesses every year.

Heat-related illnesses occur when exposure to high temperatures and humidity, which can be intensified by physical exertion, overwhelms the body's ability to cool itself. Cases range from mild, like benign heat rashes in infants, to more serious, when the body's core temperature increases. That can lead to life-threatening instances of heatstroke, diagnosed once the

body temperature rises above 104 degrees, potentially causing organ failure.

Prevention is key. Experts emphasize that

drinking plenty of water, avoiding the outdoors during the hot midday and afternoon hours and taking it slow when adjusting to exercise are the most effective ways to avoid getting sick.

Children's bodies take longer to increase sweat production and otherwise acclimatize in a warm environment than adults' do, research shows. Young kids are also more susceptible to dehydration because a larger percentage of their body weight is water.

Infants and younger children also have more trouble regulating their body temperature, in part because they often don't recognize when they should drink more water or remove clothing to cool down. A 1995 study showed that young children who spent 30 minutes in a 95-degree room saw their core temperatures rise significantly higher and faster than their mothers' — even though they sweat more than adults do relative to their size.

Pediatricians advise caretakers to monitor how much water children consume and encourage them to drink before they ask for it. Thirst indicates the body is already dehydrated.

They should also dress kids in light-colored, lightweight clothes; limit outdoor time during the hottest hours; and look for ways



iStock

Children's bodies take longer to increase sweat production and otherwise acclimatize in a warm environment than adults' do, research shows. Young kids are also more susceptible to dehydration because a larger percentage of their body weight is water.

Warning signs and solutions

Experts note that a flushed face, fatigue, muscle cramps, headache, dizziness, vomiting and a lot of sweating are among the symptoms of heat exhaustion, which can develop into heatstroke if untreated. Call a doctor if symptoms worsen, such as if the child seems disoriented or cannot drink.

Taking immediate steps to cool a child experiencing heat exhaustion or heatstroke is critical. The child should be taken to a shaded or cool area; be given cool fluids with salt, like sports drinks; and have any sweaty or heavy garments removed.

For adolescents, being submerged in an ice bath is the most effective way to cool the body, while younger children can be wrapped in cold, wet towels or misted with lukewarm water and placed in front of a fan.

Although children's deaths in parked cars have been well documented, the tragic incidents continue to occur. According to federal statistics, 23 children died of vehicular heatstroke in 2021. Meteorologist Jan Null, who collects his own data, said 13 children have died so far this year.

Caretakers should never leave children alone in a parked car, Null said. Take steps to prevent young children from entering the car themselves and becoming trapped, including locking the car while it's parked at home.

More than half of cases of vehicular pediatric heatstroke occur because a caretaker accidentally left a child behind, he said. While in-car technology reminding adults to check their back seats has become more common, only a fraction of vehicles have it, requiring parents to come up with their own methods, like leaving a stuffed animal in the front seat.

The good news, Null said, is that simple behavioral changes can protect kids. “This is preventable in 100% of the cases,” he said.

to cool down, such as by visiting an air-conditioned place like a library, taking a cool bath or going for a swim.

To address the risks to student athletes, the National Athletic Trainers' Association recommends that high school athletes acclimatize by gradually building their activity over the course of two weeks when returning to their sport for a new season — including by slowly stepping up the amount of any protective equipment they wear.

“You're gradually increasing that intensity over a week to two

weeks so your body can get used to the heat,” said Kathy Dieringer, president of NATA.

The National Weather Service's heat alert system is mainly based on the heat index, a measure of how hot it feels when relative humidity is factored in with air temperature.

But the alerts are not related to effects on health, said Kathy Baughman McLeod, director of the Adrienne Arsht-Rockefeller Foundation Resilience Center. By the time temperatures rise to the level that a weather alert is issued, many vulnerable people

— like children, pregnant women and the elderly — may already be experiencing heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

The center developed a new heat alert system, which is being tested in Seville, Spain, historically one of the hottest cities in Europe.

The system marries metrics like air temperature and humidity with public health data to categorize heat waves and, when they are serious enough, give them names — making it easier for people to understand heat as an environmental threat that requires prevention measures.

The categories are determined through a metric known as excess deaths, which compares how many people died on a day with the forecasted temperature versus an average day. That may help health officials understand how severe a heat wave is expected to be and make informed recommendations to the public based on risk factors like age or medical history.

The health-based alert system would also allow officials to target caretakers of children and seniors through school systems, preschools and senior centers, Baughman McLeod said.

Giving people better ways to conceptualize heat is critical, she said.

“It's not dramatic. It doesn't rip the roof off of your house,” Baughman McLeod said. “It's silent and invisible.”

KHN (Kaiser Health News) is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues. Together with Policy Analysis and Polling, KHN is one of the three major operating programs at KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation). KFF is an endowed nonprofit organization providing information on health issues to the nation.

WEEKEND: FAMILY



CARRIE ANTLINGER/AP

Angel Hope works on a math problem as part of an intense six-week summer bridge program for students of color and first-generation students at the University of Wisconsin, in Madison, Wis., on July 27.

Starting a step behind

Experts worry that COVID-19 grads aren't academically prepared for college

BY COLLIN BINKLEY
Associated Press

Angel Hope looked at the math test and felt lost. He had just graduated near the top of his high school class, winning scholarships from prestigious colleges. But on this test — a University of Wisconsin exam that measures what new students learned in high school — all he could do was guess. It was like the disruption of the pandemic was catching up to him all at once.

Nearly a third of Hope's high school career was spent at home, in virtual classes that were hard to follow and easy to brush aside. Some days he skipped school to work extra hours at his job. Some days he played games with his brother and sister. Other days he just stayed in bed.

Algebra got little of his attention, but his teachers kept giving him good grades amid a school-wide push for leniency.

"It was like school was optional. It wasn't a mandatory thing," said Hope, 18, of Milwaukee. "I feel like I didn't really learn anything."

Across the country, there are countless others like him. Hundreds of thousands of recent graduates are heading to college this fall after spending more than half their high school careers dealing with the upheaval of a pandemic. They endured a jarring transition to online learning, strains from teacher shortages and profound disruptions to their home lives. And many are believed to be significantly behind academically.

Colleges could see a surge in students unprepared for the demands of college-level work, education experts say. Starting a step behind can raise the risk of dropping out. And that can hurt everything from a person's long-term earnings to the health of the country's workforce.

The extent of the problem became apparent to Allison Wagner as she reviewed applications for All-In Milwaukee, a scholarship program that provides financial aid and college counseling to low-income students, including Hope.

Wagner, the group's executive director, saw startling numbers of students who were granted permission to spend half the school day working part-time jobs their senior year, often at fast food chains or grocery stores. And she saw more students than ever who didn't take math or science classes their senior year, often as a result of teacher shortages.

"We have so many students who are going on to college academically malnourished," Wagner said. "There is no way they are going to be academically prepared for the rigor of college."

Her group is boosting its tutoring budget and covering tuition for students in the program who take summer classes in math or science. Still, she fears the setbacks will force some students to take more than four years to graduate or, worse, drop out.

"The stakes are tremendously high," she said.

Researchers say it's clear that remote instruction caused learning setbacks, most sharply among Black and Hispanic students. For younger students, there's still hope that America's schools can accelerate the pace of instruction and close learning gaps. But for those who graduated in the past two years, experts fear many will struggle.

In anticipation of higher needs, colleges from New Jersey to California have been expanding "bridge" programs that provide summer classes, often for students from lower incomes or those who are the first in their families to attend college. Programs previously treated as orientation are taking on a harder academic edge, with a focus on math, science and study skills.

Other states have used federal pandemic relief to help colleges build summer programs. In Kentucky, which gave colleges \$3.5 million for the effort this year, officials called it a "moral imperative."

"We need these people to be our future workforce, and we need them to be successful," said Amanda Ellis, a vice president of Kentucky's Council on Post-secondary Education.

A couple months after struggling through his math placement test, Hope headed to the University of Wisconsin-Madison for six weeks of intense classes at a summer bridge program. He took a math class that covered the ground he missed in high school, and he's signed up to take calculus in the fall.

He also revived basic study skills that went dormant in high school. He started studying at the library. He got used to the rhythms of school, with assignments every day and tests every other week. He rediscovered what it's like to enjoy school.

Most importantly, he says it changed his mindset: Now he feels like he's there to learn, not just to get by.

"After this, I definitely feel prepared for college," he said. "If I didn't have this, I would be in a very bad place."

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Bowling-league blunders inspire columnist career

I've been telling a lie for 20 years, and it's finally time to come clean. On my office wall, there's a framed clipping of an essay I wrote about marriage that appeared in *The Washington Post* in 2010. It was the first thing I ever published ... or at least that's what I've been telling everyone.

Truth be told, I'd been published before. But those facts aren't as glamorous as the story about launching my column-writing career after authoring an essay for a huge international publication. So, for the past two decades, I've been lying about it.

But now, in honor of National Bowling Day (Aug. 13), I'm telling the real story about how I became a military spouse columnist. Prepare for the dull, unremarkable truth.

It all started when our military family was stationed in Stuttgart, Germany. I was going through my pathetic post-move will-you-be-my-friend stage. Sensing my desperation, an Army wife approached me in our neighborhood on Patch Barracks and asked if I'd join her bowling team. As a Navy wife, I wasn't familiar with Army spouses' bowling leagues, but I would've joined a naked bobsled team if it meant I'd make new friends.

With no bowling knowledge whatsoever, I wrote a check for the league membership fee and joined the team "Great Balls of Fire." However, I soon found out that the league members did not take kindly to idle chit-chat at the bowling alley. Unfortunately, they actually wanted me to bowl ... competitively.

For the first few months, I tried my best, but just couldn't improve my abysmal bowling skills. What else could I do to win the approval of league members, I wondered?

One week, I showed up with an idea and told my teammates. "You know how we're always complaining about packing on pounds from all this heavy German food? And we sit here each week eating nachos and pizza? Well, I have a fun idea for a league-wide weight-loss competition! Everybody's gonna love it!"

The following week, I announced my new weight-loss contest, which I had cleverly dubbed "B.U.T.T.O.K.S" (Bowlers United To Take Off Kilograms Sensibly) to the league. The plan was simple. My teammate, a registered nurse, would bring a scale and confidentially record and track competitors' weights. Each week, and at the end of the season, weight loss winners would receive prizes. Genius!

I thought the league would hail me as creative, witty and fun-loving, but I was met with blank stares, scowls and shaking heads. Now, I was not only a bad bowler, I had just insulted the entire league by implying they all needed to diet.

Too late to turn back, I lobbied a few league members to join the challenge and carried on, bringing healthy recipes each week, and issuing prizes for those who lost pounds.

One month into the contest, I spawned another "brilliant" idea. I'd pitch a story to the base newspaper — *The Stuttgart Citizen* — about our bowling league diet competition, ill-fated as it was. Desperate for content, they agreed, and soon, my first feature appeared with the headline "Women bowlers sign on for B.U.T.T.O.K.S. challenge."

I'd like to think that the lady bowlers were awed by my mastery of media and my bright future as a journalist, but alas, they were unimpressed. However, the piece did cause excited chatter among the league ladies, who enjoyed reading about themselves in *The Citizen* between bowling turns.

My plan to find my friend group in the bowling league had backfired; however, writing for the tiny base newspaper (not *The Washington Post*) is in fact what originally inspired me to become a columnist.

I offer this confession on National Bowling Day to clear my conscience, but while we're getting real, I'll also concede that no matter how many columns I'm inspired to write, the spouses' bowling league will never forgive me.

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

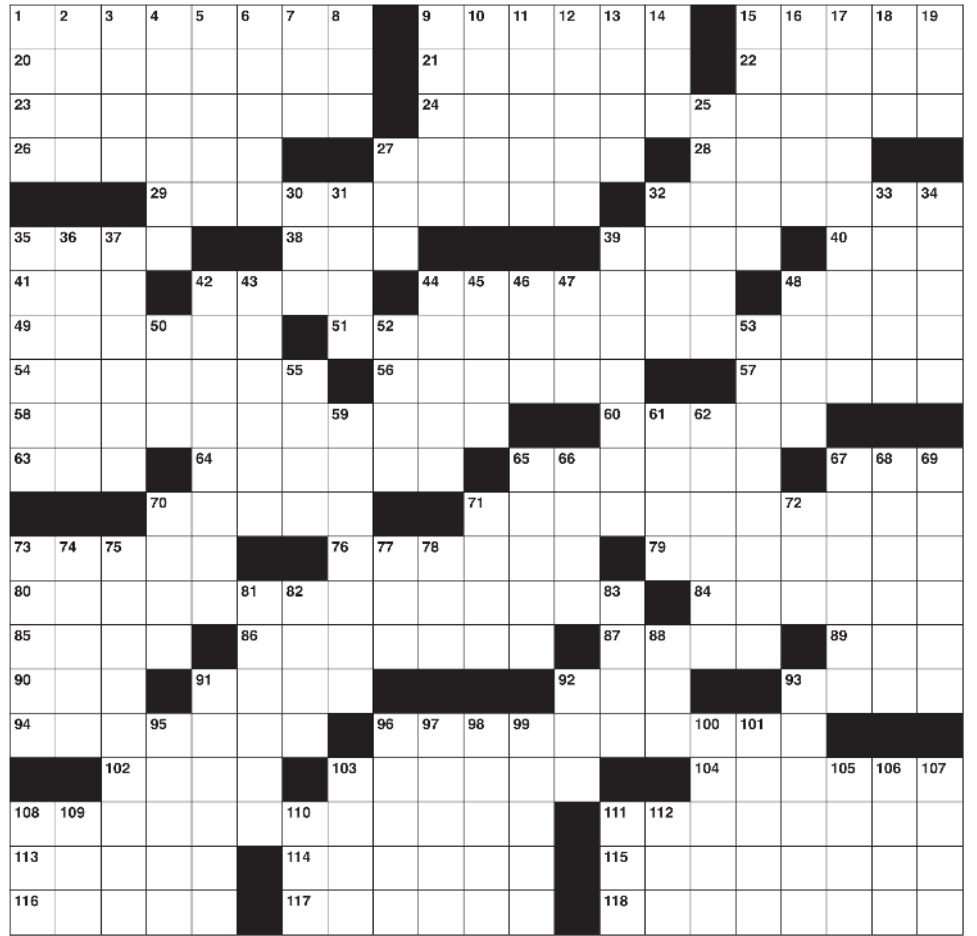
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

WHY? WELL, WHY NOT?

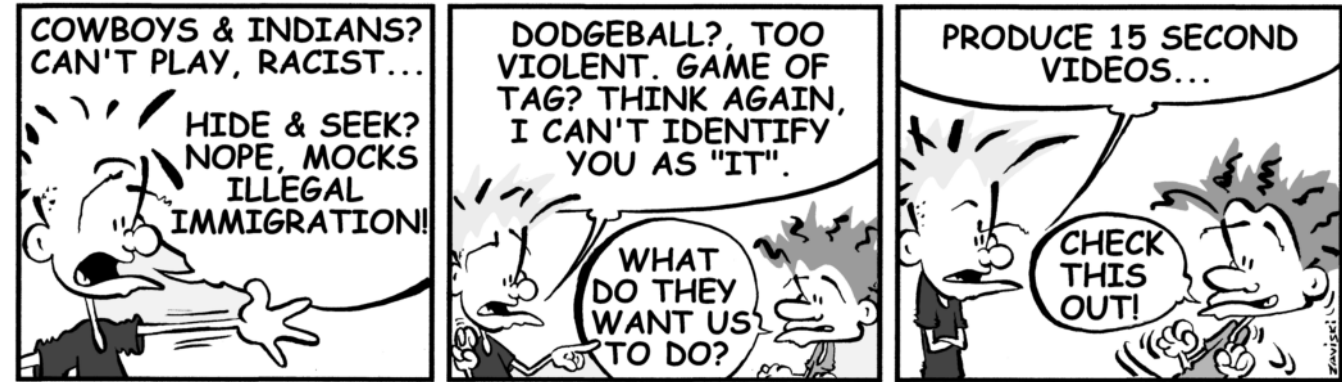
BY JESSE GOLDBERG / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Jesse Goldberg is a software engineer in San Francisco. This is his third crossword for The Times. His most recent one, in July 2021, involved quips from Julia Child. Jesse loves word puzzles. His daily routine includes solving Wordle (followed by checking WordleBot to see how he did), Spelling Bee and then the Times crossword, in that order. — W. S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Condiment at a pho shop
 - 9 Got too scared, with "out"
 - 15 Shelve
 - 20 Big picture
 - 21 Author/journalist Welteroth
 - 22 "The ___ Holmes Mysteries" (young-adult detective series)
 - 23 Nationwide competitor
 - 24 Places where some belts are tightened?
 - 26 Longtime surname on late-night TV
 - 27 Rooibos by another name
 - 28 Simpson imp
 - 29 Stephen Crane's "The Red Badge of Courage," e.g.?
 - 32 Gave the scoop
 - 35 Its presence on Mars offers a clue to life
 - 38 Growler's contents
 - 39 Actress Lena
 - 40 Can
 - 41 Medical gloves and N95 masks, for short
 - 42 Pen
 - 44 Andy Dufresne in "The Shawshank Redemption," e.g.
 - 48 Pear-shaped instrument
 - 49 Buy a lot of, with "on"
 - 51 Lawyer with absurdly exaggerated humor?
 - 54 Where Camus's "The Plague" is set
 - 56 Circuit-board components
 - 57 Count, e.g.
 - 58 Sleep phase?
 - 60 Coconut-covered cookie
 - 63 It might get the weed out
 - 64 Flagship vehicle line for Mercedes-Benz
 - 65 Encourage
 - 67 Dallas-to-Austin dir.
 - 70 Test, as a new mattress
 - 71 Harvesting machine that needs cleaning?
 - 73 Didn't just sit there
 - 76 Vouch for, with "to"
 - 79 Mythical weaver
 - 80 Doctor's description of the birth of triplet sons?
 - 84 "Well, maybe"
 - 85 Connect, as two devices
 - 86 Rhetoric
 - 87 Relax
 - 89 No longer active: Abbr.
 - 90 Golf ball's path
 - 91 City north of Des Moines
 - 92 Slangy turndown
 - 93 Cinco + uno
 - 94 They might get all over the floor
 - 96 Battle between Tinker Bell and Princess Ozma?
 - 102 Cream
 - 103 "Ready?"
 - 104 Some Guinness records
 - 108 Census-taking of a Midwest capital?
 - 111 Begin
 - 113 Bel ___ (Italian cheese)
 - 114 Charm
 - 115 Become aware of ... or a homophonic description of four letter shifts in this puzzle's grid
 - 116 Partners of hinds
 - 117 Reaches
 - 118 Comes clean
 - 18 The Liberty Tree, e.g.
 - 19 Some free housing recipients, for short
 - 25 Longtime surname on late-night TV
 - 27 Fwy. or expy.
 - 30 Clutch, e.g.
 - 31 Name hidden in "global economy"
 - 32 Couleur de l'océan
 - 33 Rhapsodize over
 - 34 Caterpillar alternative
 - 35 Disruption for a poolside sunbather
 - 36 God associated with the moon
 - 37 American ___
 - 39 Marsupial that goes into shock when frightened
 - 42 Kind of parking
 - 43 Each
 - 44 Arab leaders
 - 45 "I spilled ___ remover on my dog. Now he's gone": Steven Wright
 - 46 Dancer Charisse of "Singin' in the Rain"
 - 47 Wizard
 - 48 Sci-fi daughter of Padmé
 - 50 D as in D.C.? Abbr.
 - 52 Some prosecutors, for short
 - 53 Primeval
 - 55 First name in folk
 - 59 Some wide-brimmed hats
 - 61 Killer of the Night King on "Game of Thrones"
 - 62 ___ Day, early collaborator with Prince
 - 65 "r u 4 real?"
 - 66 Serving with a meze platter
 - 67 It's a ball
 - 68 Japanese honorific
 - 69 Pries (from)
 - 70 Icky look
 - 71 Boots, helmets, rope, etc.
 - 72 Prefix with puncture
 - 73 For face value
 - 74 One-named entertainer from Spain
 - 75 Hand-held device used by Mr. Spock
 - 77 Lunar New Year
 - 78 General name for a dish?
 - 81 Shade of red
 - 82 Ticks off
 - 83 Like Juliette Gordon Low, founder of the Girl Scouts
 - 88 Fish in a poke bowl
 - 91 Unfairly takes advantage of, as a policy
 - 92 WaPo alternative
 - 93 Square figure?
 - 95 Like a tasty cake
 - 96 Ice-cream treat
 - 97 They might hold on to their caps, for short
 - 98 "Failure ___ an option"
 - 99 Back in style
 - 100 You can see right through it
 - 101 Beginning of a toast
 - 103 What concealer might conceal
 - 105 Soaks (up)
 - 106 Co-author of 2016's "The Book of Joy," along with the Dalai Lama
 - 107 Break ... or brake
 - 108 Inits. on the road
 - 109 Inits. on the road
 - 110 Darkroom item, in brief
 - 111 Personal-ad abbr.
 - 112 No-win situation

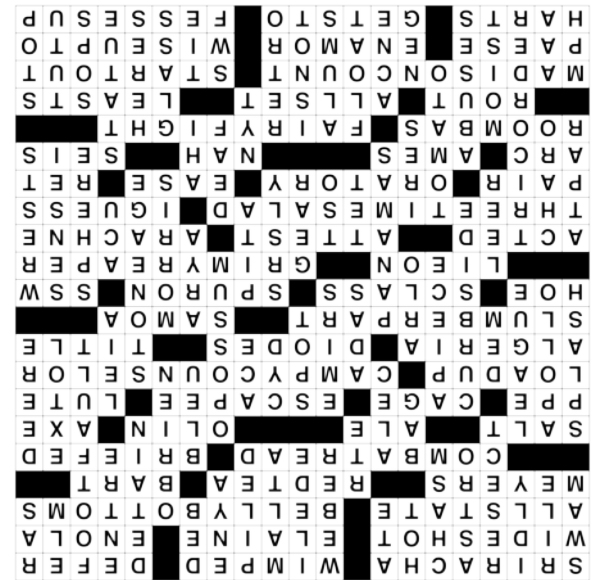


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"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

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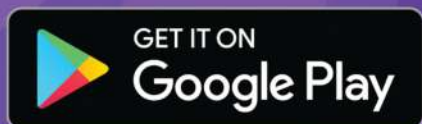
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CR-2022-000484

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY COURTS OF ENGLAND AND WALES
COMPANIES COURT (ChD)

IN THE MATTER OF USAA LIMITED
and
IN THE MATTER OF USAA S.A.
and
IN THE MATTER OF USAA S.A. UK BRANCH
and
IN THE MATTER OF
THE FINANCIAL SERVICES AND MARKETS ACT 2000

Notice is hereby given that on 25 July 2022 an Application was made under section 107 of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (the Act) in the High Court of Justice, Business and Property Courts of England and Wales, Companies Court (ChD) in London by USAA Limited (the Transferor) and USAA S.A. (acting through its head office in Luxembourg and its branch in the United Kingdom) (the Transferee), for orders:

(1) under section 111 of the Act sanctioning a scheme (the Scheme) providing for the transfer by the Transferor to the Transferee of all of the Transferor's insurance business (comprising the Transferor's run-off business in respect of risks situated in the European Economic Area and the Transferor's live and run-off business in respect of risks situated in the United Kingdom); and

(2) making ancillary provisions in connection with the Scheme pursuant to section 112 and 112A of the Act.

A copy of the report on the terms of the Scheme prepared in accordance with section 109 of the Act by an independent expert (the Scheme Report), a statement setting out the terms of the Scheme and a summary of the Scheme Report, and the Scheme document may be obtained free of charge by contacting the Transferor and the Transferee using the telephone numbers or addresses set out below. These documents and other related documents, including sample copies of the communications to policyholders, are also available at <https://www.usaa.com/Brexit>. This website will be updated for any key changes to the proposed transfer.

Any questions or concerns relating to the proposed Scheme should be referred to the Transferor and the Transferee by email to PartVII@usaa.com, by telephone at 0800 289 192 (if calling from within the UK or by mobile or DSN), 00 800 531 81110 (if calling from within Europe) or 800 531 8722 (if calling from within the United States), available Monday to Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. (UK time), or in writing to Part VII Enquires, USAA Limited, 4th Floor, Fitzwilliam House, 10 St Mary Axe, London, EC3A 8AE, United Kingdom or Part VII Enquires, USAA S.A., 1, Avenue du Bois, L-1251, Luxembourg.

If you have a policy with the Transferor and/or the Transferee please quote your policy number in any correspondence. This can be found in your policy documentation or related correspondence.

The Application is due to be heard at the High Court of Justice of England and Wales, 7 Rolls Buildings, Fetter Lane, London, EC4A 1NL, United Kingdom on 21 November 2022. Any person who thinks that he or she would be adversely affected by the carrying out of the Scheme, or objects to the Scheme, may attend the hearing and express their views, either in person or by representative. It is requested that anyone intending to do so informs the Transferor and the Transferee (using the contact details set out above) as soon as possible and preferably before 11 November 2022 to set out the nature of their objection. This will enable the Transferor and the Transferee to provide notification of any changes to the hearing and, where possible, to address any concerns raised in advance of the hearing.

Please note that it is possible that the hearing may take place remotely via a teleconferencing service. It is requested if you intend on attending the hearing (whether in person or via your representative), you inform the Transferor and the Transferee (using the contact details set out above) as soon as possible and preferably before 11 November 2022. This will enable the Transferor and the Transferee to provide any details necessary to attend the hearing if it is to be held remotely.

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The Transferor and the Transferee will inform the UK's Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority of any objections raised in advance of the hearing, regardless of whether the person making the objection intends to attend the hearing.

05 August 2022

Norton Rose Fulbright LLP, 3 More London Riverside, London, SE1 2AQ, United Kingdom
Solicitors acting for USAA Limited and USAA S.A.
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What fighting back against flooding looks like

By MICHELINE MAYNARD

Special to The Washington Post

The scenes are getting all too familiar: torrential rains triggering floodwaters that engulf roads, houses, subdivisions and cities, overwhelming officials and residents who've never seen anything like it before.

Almost as soon as the cleanup starts somewhere, another wave of flooding hits. It has occurred in Houston, Detroit, St. Louis and most recently, eastern Kentucky, where President Joe Biden visited this week. He vowed to provide ample federal resources and promised a return trip to gauge progress on efforts to rebuild.

"This happened in America! American problem! And we're all Americans, everybody has an obligation to help," Biden said.

But the United States isn't alone in the devastation caused by these extraordinary deluges. This week, the gleaming streets of Seoul, South Korea, one of Asia's most prosperous capitals, were engulfed by floods, far exceeding the impact of an ordinary typhoon.

Nine people died, the Han River overflowed, cars were stranded across the city, and nearly 800 buildings were damaged in the worst flooding in 80 years.

There are multiple reasons cities flood, but the primary one is that rain comes down so heavily that the water has nowhere to go. Mayors everywhere have urged citizens to play a role by clearing catch basins of debris and moving cars out of the way of drains.

For years, urban planners have prescribed ideas to thwart the floods. Solutions include building sponge cities, popular in China, where rainwater is repurposed for irrigation and to flush toilets.

Green roofs and rooftop gardens have been planted everywhere from Ford Motor's Rouge plant in Dearborn, Mich., to the sky-

scraper parks that abound in Singapore. Permeable pavement — half plants, half brick or concrete — is becoming a popular landscaping feature, as are the rain gardens popping up to replace curbside strips of grass.

Toronto is trying something even more dramatic. It is in the midst of the billion-dollar Port Lands Flood Protection Project, in a former industrial area southwest of downtown. Six hundred acres are being reconstructed, with parkland, wildlife habitats and eventually housing for 20,000 residents.

The project builds on conversations that have taken place since the 1970s about combining flood protection with an effort to bring nature back to the area. According to Bloomberg News, everything that needs to stay dry is being raised higher, while areas that can support water will absorb any excess flow.

Twelve hundred miles to the south, Panama City, Fla., is spending \$25 million on a storm water management plan. The effort was driven by the devastating impact of Hurricane Michael three years ago. The storm took out so many trees that it changed the city's water table, pouring more water into sewers than the system was built to hold.

Biden, speaking in Kentucky, sounded encouraging about avoiding future damage. "We have the capacity to do this. It's not like it's beyond our control. The weather may be beyond our control for now, but it's not beyond our control."

For some Detroit residents, however, some of the post-flood help that they expected after strong rainfall in June 2021 did not arrive. All 24,000 flooding claims filed with the Great Lakes Water Authority in Wayne County were rejected.

Authorities said that the widespread basement flooding that accompanied strong rainfall was simply unavoidable. Even if all the area's pumps and other flood-mitigation equip-

ment had been working, basements would have flooded anyway, the agency said.

However, more than 600 flooding victims have filed a class-action lawsuit against the agency and the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, alleging that only three of 16 pumps were working — a legal battle that is likely to continue.

Here in New Orleans, where I moved in May, urban flooding is an almost daily challenge, due in part to the city's low geography. While hurricanes have stayed away this season, locals tell me they can't remember a summer with more thunderstorms, which can cause streets to flood in minutes.

As I typed this column, I received a text reading, "Heavy rain could cause street flooding in low-lying areas." It was the seventh such alert I'd received since June. Thankfully, I have access to information: The city's Streetwise website tracks street flooding in real time. But even when streets are still passable, New Orleans's notorious deep potholes can become camouflaged when filled with water.

Beyond danger to motorists and pedestrians, urban flooding poses a growing threat to communities of color. A new study from Brown University, which looked at New Orleans and five other cities, said it was crucial to clean up abandoned industrial sites — often located near poor neighborhoods — so that their pollution isn't spread by floodwaters.

In the Bible, Noah had decades to build his ark before the great flood. With climate change increasingly appearing to produce storms that bring staggering amounts of rain, we don't have that much time to prepare. We urgently need to expand on current countermeasures against flooding and pioneer new ones.

Micheline Maynard is a contributing columnist for The Washington Post, concentrating on Detroit and the Midwest.

Finland and Sweden further strengthen NATO

By ARTHUR I. CYR

Special to Stars and Stripes

On Aug. 3, the U.S. Senate overwhelmingly approved Finland and Sweden joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The vote was 95 to 1, far more than the two-thirds required for approval. This supports expansion in the strategically vital Arctic, which will significantly extend Russia's borders with NATO members.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, an occasional collaborator with Russia, initially opposed admission of Finland and Sweden. His concerns included the presence in Scandinavia of the Kurdistan Workers' Party and the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units. Turkey's government strongly opposes such separatist groups.

At the end of June, the three nations' leaders signed an accord on the matter. Turkey has a very large and effective military. Expanding NATO to the north while not losing Turkey in the south represents a major strategic victory.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine represents the most serious crisis and challenge in Europe since the Balkan wars of the 1990s. President Vladimir Putin no doubt anticipated a quick victory. Ukraine's heroic self-defense to date has energized as well as united NATO. Russia is paying a high price for aggression.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict overall is a long-term affair. In 2014, Russia seized Crimea and the eastern portion of Ukraine. Cri-

mea had been part of Russia until Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred the peninsula to the authority of Ukraine in 1954.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, followed by the disintegration of the Soviet bloc of satellite states, and then the Soviet Union, represented historic strategic victory for the West. The end of the Cold War confirmed the policy of restraint and deterrence termed "Containment," initiated by the Truman administration.

Poland, a NATO member since 1999, is active in the collective effort to provide arms to Ukraine. The new coalition government in Germany led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz began with a low profile regarding Europe, in considerable contrast to the assertive long-term leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel. This changed abruptly when Russia invaded Ukraine, and Germany now provides arms and other aid.

Both of the potential NATO members bring significant qualities. The Soviet-Finnish War of 1939-40, ended through negotiation, demonstrated Finland's military prowess against a far larger enemy. Cold War Sweden practiced variations of often obviously anti-American "neutrality." Both nations in NATO strengthen deterrence of Russia in the North.

During the early phases of the Cold War, the Arctic was the focus of intense security concern. NORAD, the North American Air Defense Command, was formed in 1958 (retitled North American Aerospace Defense Com-

mand in 1981) to coordinate Canada and U.S. military activities. The threat of Soviet long-range bombers attacking after crossing the Arctic was a prime concern. Less visibly, President Dwight Eisenhower secured demilitarization of Antarctica in 1959.

In the North today, Russia has taken the lead in commerce, exploration and military bases. Moscow also pursues serious disputes with other Arctic nations. One example involves Canada and Denmark regarding control of the Lomonosov Ridge.

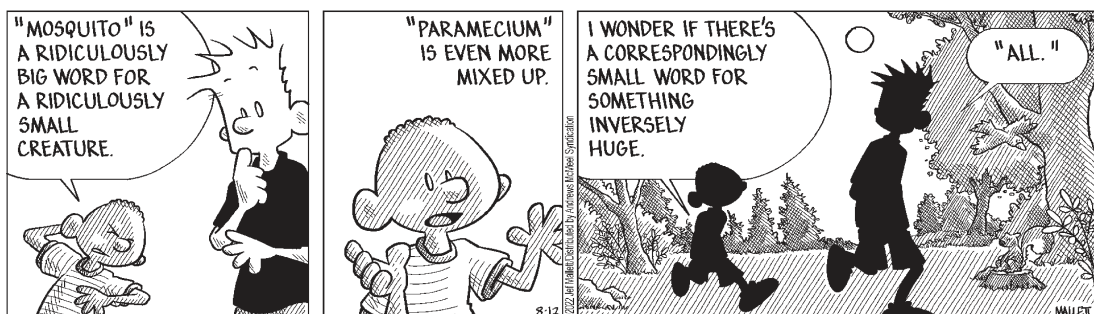
In 2021, Russia succeeded Iceland in chairing the Arctic Council, which also includes Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the U.S. Finland and Sweden in NATO will effectively isolate Russia as the only non-member of the alliance. Agreement within an enlarged NATO will facilitate effective strategy to counter Russia's potentially significant expansion in the Arctic region, a vital area largely ignored by U.S. presidents since the turn of the century.

Less directly, this may encourage over the long term the trend for NATO to become engaged in other parts of the world. Last month, the alliance announced efforts to expand relations with Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea.

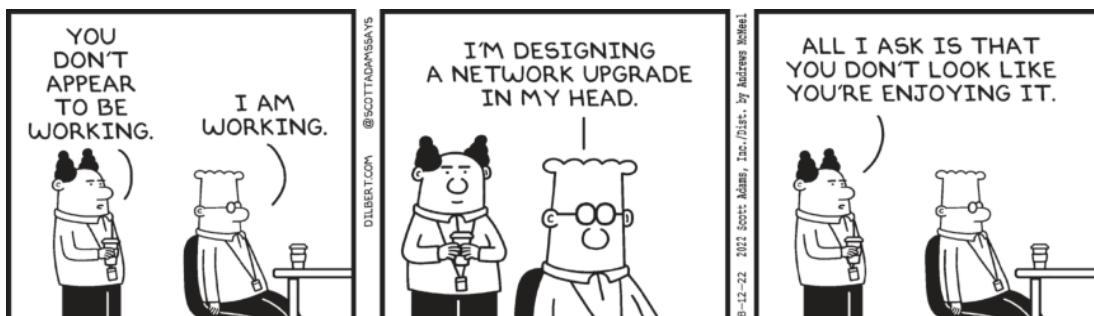
Russia has reconfirmed the validity of NATO.

Arthur I. Cyr is author of "After the Cold War — American Foreign Policy, Europe and Asia."

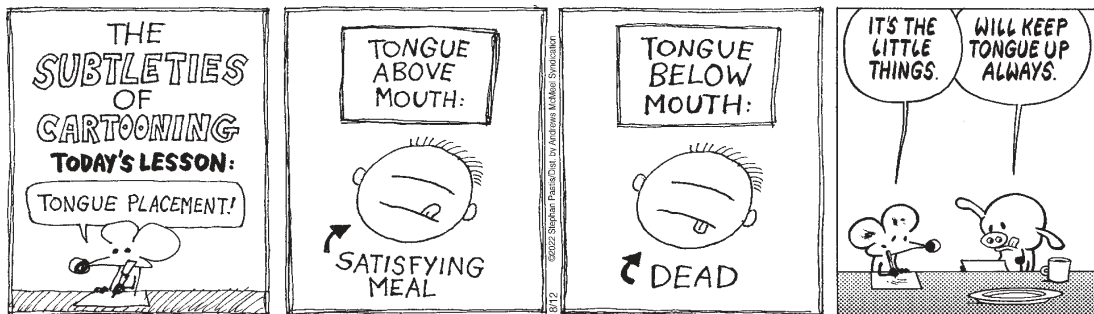
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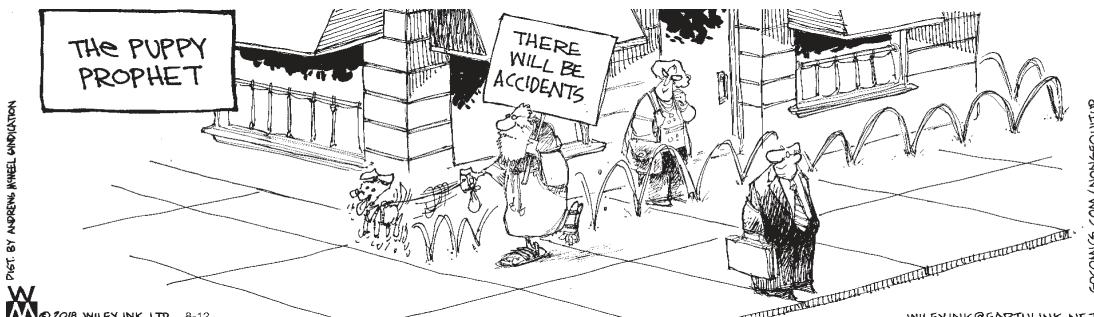
Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



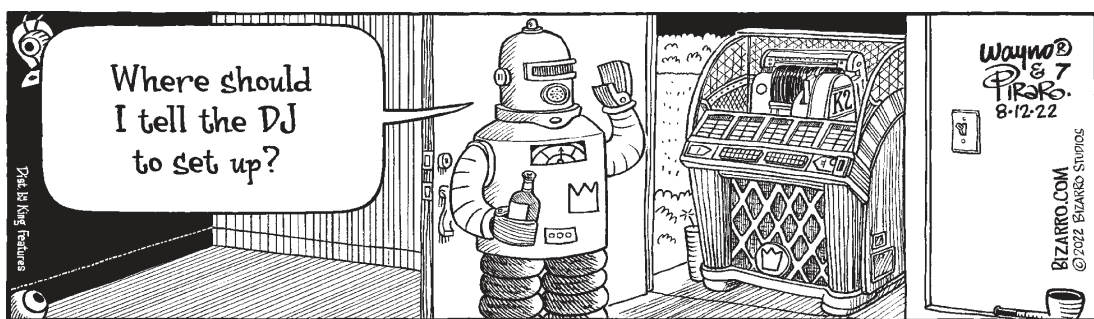
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|--|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | | | | 13 | | | | | 14 | | | |
| 15 | | | 16 | | | | | | 17 | | | |
| | | 18 | | | | | | | 19 | | | |
| 20 | 21 | | | | 22 | 23 | | | | | | |
| 24 | | | | | 25 | | | | 26 | 27 | 28 | |
| 29 | | | | 30 | | | | | 31 | | | |
| 32 | | | 33 | | | | | | 34 | | | |
| | | | 35 | | | | | | 36 | | | |
| 37 | 38 | 39 | | | | 40 | | | | | | |
| 41 | | | | | 42 | 43 | | | | | 44 | 45 |
| 46 | | | | | 47 | | | | | 48 | | |
| 49 | | | | | 50 | | | | | 51 | | |

ACROSS

- 1 Dime portrait
- 4 "Phooey!"
- 8 Chow
- 12 Singer Reed
- 13 Aachen article
- 14 Russo of "The Intern"
- 15 Top floor cooler
- 17 Roman poet
- 18 Farm fraction
- 19 Corrodes
- 20 Monk's home
- 22 Raw minerals
- 24 Paint layer
- 25 Skillet with low sides
- 29 Gearwheel tooth
- 30 Prefix with "logical"
- 31 Bathroom, to a Londoner
- 32 Refuse holder
- 34 Lacking slack
- 35 New Mexico resort
- 36 Desert flora
- 37 Passé
- 40 Achy
- 41 Breakfast chain
- 42 Village People classic
- 46 Air-show stunt
- 47 Sneeze syllable
- 48 Latin 101 word
- 49 Singer Lovett

- 50 Tools with teeth
- 51 Label

DOWN

- 1 Ga. neighbor
- 2 Speck
- 3 Yellow turnip
- 4 Belittle
- 5 Teeming
- 6 Political strategist Navarro
- 7 Hamilton bill
- 8 Complain
- 9 Guns the engine
- 10 One
- 11 Hotel furniture
- 16 "Cold As Ever" rapper
- 19 Seized vehicle
- 20 Bank statement no.
- 21 Rude dude
- 22 Killer whales
- 23 Check
- 25 Designer Chanel
- 26 Table protector in Paris
- 27 Summer month
- 28 Terse denial
- 30 Roe provider
- 33 Treeless tract
- 34 Poi base
- 36 Some Pacific salmon
- 37 Pickling herb
- 38 "Hi, sailor!"
- 39 Implement
- 40 Garbage barge
- 42 Roast VIPs
- 43 "Caught ya!"
- 44 "I — Rock"
- 45 Eggy quaff

Answer to Previous Puzzle

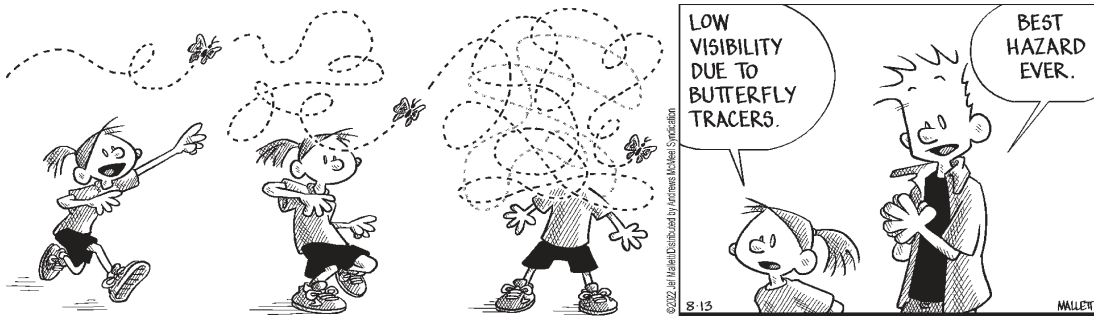
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| J | A | R | S | | O | A | F | | T | G | I | F | | | |
| O | R | E | O | | P | T | A | | H | O | S | E | | | |
| B | E | E | F | | T | A | J | | R | O | T | E | | | |
| S | A | F | A | R | I | | I | P | O | D | | | | | |
| | | | | | B | A | C | K | T | O | W | O | R | K | |
| T | V | S | E | T | | E | A | T | | M | A | I | | | |
| R | E | E | D | | C | B | S | | V | E | T | S | | | |
| I | R | A | | | E | R | A | | S | I | N | E | S | | |
| B | A | C | K | T | O | B | A | C | K | | | | | | |
| | | | | | R | I | C | O | | C | H | I | M | P | S |
| A | B | E | T | | N | U | T | | N | I | L | E | | | |
| L | I | S | T | | E | N | E | | G | L | O | W | | | |
| I | T | T | Y | | D | I | D | | S | O | T | S | | | |

8-12

CRYPTOQUIP

EJKUY EMK OBZJEBIZ UKDQBYHU
 XUY RI RCXIQRILY KO LRXEBKI,
 CXE EJRE KIY BU EJY
 MRHBYH MRHHBKH.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF AN INSOMNIA MEDICATION WERE MADE IN A WESTERN AFRICAN NATION, THAT MIGHT BE GAMBIAN AMBIEN.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals G

Frazz



Dilbert



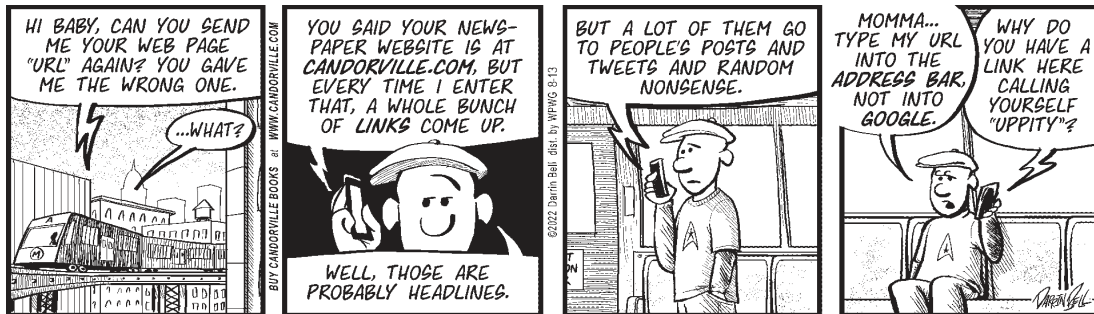
Pearls Before Swine



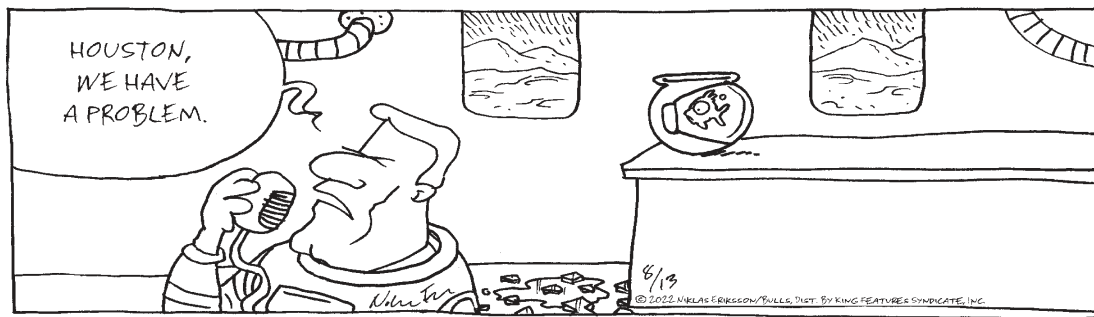
Non Sequitur



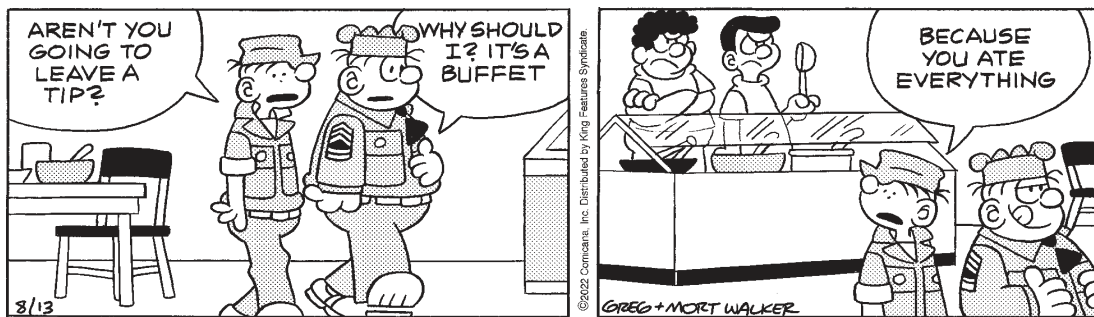
Candorville



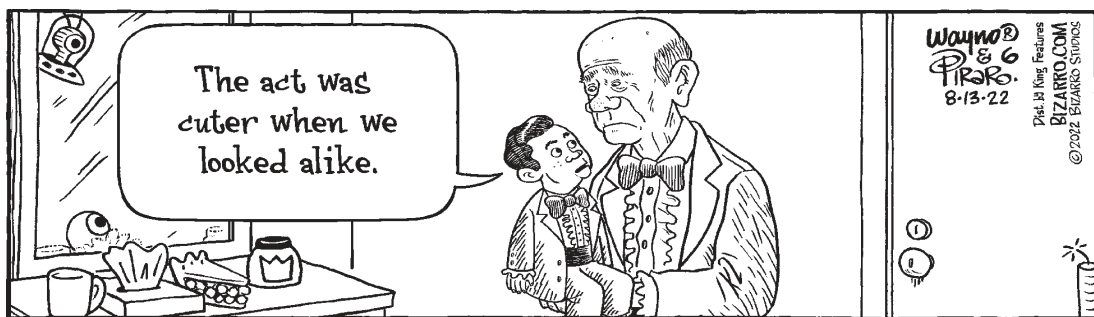
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | | 9 | 10 | 11 | |
| 12 | | | | | 13 | | | | | 14 | | | |
| 15 | | | | | 16 | | | | | 17 | | | |
| 18 | | | | | 19 | | | | 20 | | | | |
| | | | 21 | 22 | | | 23 | 24 | | | | | |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | | | | | 28 | | | 29 | 30 | 31 | |
| 32 | | | | | | | | 33 | | | | | |
| 34 | | | | | 35 | | 36 | | | | | | |
| | | | 37 | | | | 38 | | | | | | |
| 39 | 40 | 41 | | | 42 | 43 | | | | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 |
| 48 | | | | | 49 | | | | | 50 | | | |
| 51 | | | | | 52 | | | | | 53 | | | |
| 54 | | | | | 55 | | | | | 56 | | | |

ACROSS

- 1 Beans
- 5 Enfold
- 9 Stanley Cup org.
- 12 Luau dance
- 13 Roof overhang
- 14 Parisian "yes"
- 15 Pedestal occupant
- 16 Sketch
- 17 Trio after Q
- 18 Church organ feature
- 19 Retrieve
- 20 Bogus
- 21 Canonized Fr. woman
- 23 Soul, to Sartre
- 25 "Fantasia" ballerinas
- 28 Esteem
- 32 Commence
- 33 Biblical king
- 34 Gave a speech
- 36 Sipping aids
- 37 Weep
- 38 Spigot
- 39 "Holy cow!"
- 42 Away from SSW
- 44 Foot fraction
- 48 Flight stat
- 49 "Misery" star James
- 50 Olympian Lipinski

- 51 Altar promise
- 52 Bullets
- 53 Family
- 54 Fresh
- 55 Low digits
- 56 Warmonger

- need
- 24 Maestro Zubin —
- 25 "Westworld" network
- 26 Suffix with hotel
- 27 Links org.
- 29 Notable time
- 30 Tier
- 31 Mag. staff
- 35 Energetic person
- 36 Shorthand pros
- 39 Profit
- 40 Shoppe description
- 41 Pack cargo
- 43 Handle
- 45 "The Lion King" lion
- 46 Gullet
- 47 Slugger Aaron
- 49 Purring pet

DOWN

- 1 Poker token
- 2 BMW rival
- 3 Fall into a chair
- 4 Merchant's spiel
- 5 Hunks of cheese
- 6 Exceptional
- 7 Online icon
- 8 Church seat
- 9 Director Ephron
- 10 Corn cover
- 11 Low-calorie
- 20 Frenzied state
- 22 Photocopier

Answer to Previous Puzzle

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F | D | R | | D | R | A | T | | G | R | U | B | |
| L | O | U | | E | I | N | E | | R | E | N | E | |
| A | T | T | I | C | F | A | N | | O | V | I | D | |
| | | | | A | C | R | E | | R | U | S | T | |
| A | B | B | E | Y | | O | R | E | S | | | | |
| C | O | A | T | | C | R | E | P | E | P | A | N | |
| C | O | G | | S | O | C | I | O | | L | O | O | |
| T | R | A | S | H | C | A | N | | T | A | U | T | |
| | | | | T | A | O | S | | C | A | C | T | |
| D | A | T | E | D | | | | | S | O | R | E | |
| I | H | O | P | | | M | A | C | H | O | M | A | N |
| L | O | O | P | | | C | H | O | | A | M | O | |
| L | Y | L | E | | | S | A | W | S | | T | A | G |

8-13

CRYPTOQUIP

MSTCT GK TSMXERT XFAVF PEBC

ZGHBT YAKCVPHR PG EQY ZKGL

VEPFGHAV VFSKVF TCKOAVCT:

LETT PKEQTAP.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THOSE TWO FIGHTING SOLDIERS USE AN ABUNDANCE OF CAUTION, BUT THAT ONE IS THE WARIER WARRIOR.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals H

SCOREBOARD/TENNIS

PRO SOCCER

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

| | W | L | T | Pts | GF | GA |
|----------------|----|----|---|-----|----|----|
| Philadelphia | 12 | 3 | 9 | 45 | 41 | 18 |
| NYCFC | 12 | 5 | 6 | 42 | 43 | 24 |
| CF Montréal | 12 | 8 | 4 | 40 | 40 | 39 |
| New York | 10 | 7 | 7 | 37 | 38 | 30 |
| Columbus | 8 | 6 | 9 | 33 | 31 | 26 |
| Cincinnati | 8 | 8 | 8 | 32 | 40 | 43 |
| Chicago | 8 | 10 | 6 | 30 | 27 | 30 |
| Orlando City | 8 | 10 | 6 | 30 | 27 | 36 |
| Inter Miami CF | 8 | 10 | 6 | 30 | 29 | 39 |
| New England | 7 | 7 | 9 | 30 | 35 | 34 |
| Charlotte FC | 9 | 13 | 2 | 29 | 30 | 34 |
| Atlanta | 7 | 9 | 7 | 28 | 31 | 34 |
| Toronto FC | 7 | 12 | 5 | 26 | 34 | 42 |
| D.C. United | 6 | 13 | 4 | 22 | 28 | 47 |

WESTERN CONFERENCE

| | W | L | T | Pts | GF | GA |
|----------------|----|----|----|-----|----|----|
| LAFC | 16 | 4 | 3 | 51 | 48 | 24 |
| Austin FC | 13 | 5 | 6 | 45 | 50 | 31 |
| FC Dallas | 9 | 7 | 9 | 36 | 34 | 27 |
| Minnesota | 10 | 9 | 5 | 35 | 38 | 34 |
| Real Salt Lake | 9 | 8 | 7 | 34 | 31 | 33 |
| Nashville | 8 | 8 | 9 | 33 | 33 | 34 |
| Portland | 7 | 6 | 12 | 33 | 41 | 37 |
| Seattle | 10 | 12 | 2 | 32 | 31 | 29 |
| LA Galaxy | 9 | 11 | 3 | 30 | 32 | 32 |
| Colorado | 8 | 9 | 6 | 30 | 34 | 36 |
| Vancouver | 8 | 10 | 6 | 30 | 27 | 39 |
| Houston | 7 | 13 | 4 | 25 | 29 | 39 |
| San Jose | 5 | 10 | 9 | 24 | 39 | 49 |
| Sporting KC | 6 | 14 | 5 | 23 | 23 | 44 |

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Saturday's games

Orlando City at New York
 Atlanta at Cincinnati
 D.C. United at New England
 Chicago at Philadelphia
 Portland at Toronto FC
 New York City FC at Miami
 Sporting Kansas City at Austin FC
 Columbus at Colorado
 San Jose at FC Dallas
 CF Montréal at Houston
 Vancouver at LA Galaxy
 Charlotte FC at Los Angeles FC

NWSL

| | W | L | T | Pts | GF | GA |
|----------------|---|---|---|-----|----|----|
| Portland | 7 | 1 | 7 | 28 | 36 | 15 |
| San Diego | 7 | 4 | 4 | 25 | 21 | 13 |
| Houston | 7 | 4 | 3 | 24 | 26 | 17 |
| Chicago | 6 | 3 | 5 | 23 | 22 | 17 |
| Kansas City | 6 | 4 | 4 | 22 | 16 | 17 |
| OL Reign | 5 | 4 | 6 | 21 | 16 | 14 |
| Angel City | 5 | 5 | 3 | 18 | 14 | 16 |
| Orlando | 3 | 5 | 6 | 15 | 16 | 30 |
| Louisville | 2 | 6 | 7 | 13 | 16 | 22 |
| Gotham FC | 4 | 8 | 0 | 12 | 9 | 24 |
| Washington | 1 | 6 | 9 | 12 | 16 | 21 |
| North Carolina | 2 | 5 | 4 | 10 | 20 | 22 |

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Wednesday's game

Portland 2, Washington 1

Friday's game

Louisville at Houston

Saturday's games

Kansas City at North Carolina
 Orlando at San Diego

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

| | W | L | Pct | GB |
|---------------|----|----|------|----|
| x-Chicago | 25 | 9 | .735 | — |
| x-Connecticut | 23 | 11 | .676 | 2 |
| x-Washington | 20 | 14 | .588 | 5 |
| Atlanta | 14 | 20 | .412 | 11 |
| New York | 14 | 20 | .412 | 11 |
| Indiana | 5 | 29 | .147 | 20 |

WESTERN CONFERENCE

| | W | L | Pct | GB |
|-------------|----|----|------|----|
| x-Las Vegas | 24 | 10 | .706 | — |
| x-Seattle | 21 | 13 | .618 | 3 |
| x-Dallas | 17 | 17 | .500 | 7 |
| Minnesota | 14 | 20 | .412 | 10 |
| Phoenix | 14 | 20 | .412 | 10 |
| Los Angeles | 13 | 21 | .382 | 11 |

x-clinched playoff spot

Wednesday's games

New York 91, Dallas 73
 Minnesota 86, Phoenix 77

Thursday's games

Chicago at Las Vegas
 Connecticut at Los Angeles

Friday's games

Washington at Indiana
 New York at Atlanta
 Seattle at Minnesota
 Dallas at Phoenix

TENNIS

National Bank Open

Wednesday

At Uniprix Stadium & Aviva Centre

Montreal

Purse: \$5,926,545

Surface: Hardcourt outdoor

Men's Singles

Round of 32

Casper Ruud (4), Norway, def. Alex Molcan, Slovakia, 7-6 (3), 6-3.
 Pablo Carreno Busta, Spain, def. Holger Rune, Denmark, 6-0, 6-3.
 Roberto Bautista Agut (14), Spain, def. Jensen Brooksby, United States, 7-5, 6-1.
 Tommy Paul, United States, def. Carlos Alcaraz (2), Spain, 6-7 (4), 7-6 (7), 6-3.
 Jannik Sinner (7), Italy, def. Adrian Panarin, France, 2-6, 6-4, 6-2.
 Marin Cilic (13), Croatia, def. Karen Khachanov, Russia, 6-3, 6-2.
 Nick Kyrgios, Australia, def. Daniil Medvedev (1), Russia, 6-7 (1), 6-4, 6-2.
 Alex de Minaur, Australia, def. Grigor Dimitrov (15), Bulgaria, 7-6 (4), 7-5.
 Gael Monfils (17), France, def. Maxime Cressy, United States, 7-6 (10), 7-6 (6).
 Cameron Norrie (9), Britain, def. Botic Van de Zandschulp, Netherlands, 6-1, 6-2.
 Taylor Fritz (10), United States, def. Frances Tiafoe, United States, 5-7, 6-1, 6-4.
 Albert Ramos-Vinolas, Spain, def. Diego Schwartzman (12), Argentina, 6-4, 6-2.
 Daniel Evans, Britain, def. Andrey Rublev (5), Russia, 6-4, 6-4.
 Felix Auger-Aliassime (6), Canada, def. Yoshihito Nishioka, Japan, 7-6 (6), 6-4.
 Jack Draper, Britain, def. Stefanos Tsitsipas (3), Greece, 7-5, 7-6 (4).

Men's Doubles

Round of 32

Harri Heliouvaara, Finland, and Lloyd Glasspool, Britain, def. Ivan Dodig, Croatia, and Austin Krajicek (7), United States, 6-4, 6-2.
 Nikola Mektic and Mate Pavic (5), Croatia, def. Nicolas Mahut and Edouard Roger-Vasselin, France, 3-6, 6-4, 10-7.
 Gonzalo Escobar, Ecuador, and Ariel Behar, Uruguay, def. Marcelo Melo, Brazil, and Pablo Carreno Busta, Spain, 6-2, 7-6 (4).
 Santiago Gonzalez, Mexico, and Andres Molteni, Argentina, def. Robert Farah and Juan Sebastian Cabal (8), Colombia, 7-5, 6-1.
 Gael Monfils and Benjamin Bonzi, France, def. Vasek Pospisil, Canada, and Jannik Sinner, Italy, 4-6, 6-2, 10-8.
 Cameron Norrie, Britain, and Alex de Minaur, Australia, def. Diego Schwartzman and Francisco Cerundolo, Argentina, 7-5, 6-0.
 Simone Bolelli and Fabio Fognini, Italy, def. Liam Draxl and Clevee Harper, Canada, 6-4, 6-1.

National Bank Open

Wednesday

At Aviva Centre Stadium

Toronto

Purse: \$2,527,250

Surface: Hardcourt outdoor

Women's Singles

Round of 32

Karolina Pliskova (14), Czech Republic, def. Amanda Anisimova, United States, 6-1, 6-1.
 Camila Giorgi, Italy, def. Elise Mertens, Belgium, 6-3, 7-5.
 Coco Gauff (10), United States, def. Elena Rybakina, Kazakhstan, 6-4, 6-7 (8), 7-6 (3).
 Iga Swiatek (1), Poland, def. Ajla Tomljanovic, Australia, 6-1, 6-2.
 Alison Riske-Amritraj, United States, def. Jelena Ostapenko (16), Latvia, 7-6 (2), 0-6, 7-5.

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball

American League

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Returned RHP Davis Martin to Charlotte (IL).
CLEVELAND GUARDIANS — Reinstated RHP Aaron Civale from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Jake Jewell to Columbus (IL).
DETROIT TIGERS — Announced they have released executive vice president and general manager Al Avila. Optioned OF Daz Cameron to Toledo (IL). Selected the contract of OF Kerry Carpenter from Toledo. Returned RHP Beau Brieske from his rehab assignment and transferred him to the 60-day IL.
KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Optioned RHP Jonathan Heasley to Omaha (IL). Recalled OF Brent Rooker from Omaha. Optioned C Sebastian Rivero to Northwest Arkansas (TX).
MINNESOTA TWINS — Agreed to terms with RHPs Ricky Mineo, Jack Noble, SS Omari Daniel and LHP Jacob Edwards on minor league contracts.
OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Recalled LHP J.P. Sears. Selected the contract of OF Cal Stevenson from Las Vegas (PCL). Placed RHP Paul Blackburn on the 15-day IL, retroactive to August 5. Designated SS Jed Lowrie for assignment.
SEATTLE MARINERS — Reinstated RHP Diego Castillo from the 15-day IL and INF/OF Dylan Moore from the 10-day IL. Optioned LHP Brendan Bernardino and OF Kyle Lewis to Tacoma (PCL). Released CF Travis Jankowski.
TEXAS RANGERS — Recalled LHP John King from Round Rock (PCL). Placed RHP Spencer Howard on the 15-day IL, retroactive to Aug. 8.

National League

ATLANTA BRAVES — Designated 1B Mike Ford for assignment. Transferred OF Adam Duvall from the 10-day IL to the 60-day IL. Placed SS Orlando Arcia on the 10-day IL. Reinstated RHP Kirby Yates from

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

AFCA Preseason Coaches Poll

The preseason USA Today Sports AFCA Coaches Poll Top 25 with team's records from last season in parentheses, total points based on 25 for first place through one point for 25th, ranking in last year's final poll and first-place votes received.

| | Record | Pts | Pvs |
|------------------|--------|------|-----|
| 1. Alabama (54) | 13-2 | 1634 | 2 |
| 2. Ohio St. (5) | 11-2 | 1564 | 5 |
| 3. Georgia (6) | 14-1 | 1542 | 1 |
| 4. Clemson | 10-3 | 1356 | 16 |
| 5. Notre Dame | 11-2 | 1284 | 9 |
| 6. Michigan | 12-2 | 1232 | 3 |
| 7. Texas A&M | 8-4 | 1219 | 25 |
| 8. Utah | 10-4 | 1134 | 12 |
| 9. Oklahoma | 11-2 | 1027 | 10 |
| 10. Baylor | 12-2 | 891 | 6 |
| 11. Oklahoma St. | 12-2 | 859 | 7 |
| 12. Oregon | 10-4 | 734 | 21 |
| 13. NC State | 9-3 | 726 | 19 |
| 14. Michigan St. | 11-2 | 711 | 8 |
| 15. Southern Cal | 4-8 | 602 | — |
| 16. Pittsburgh | 11-3 | 450 | 13 |
| 17. Miami | 7-5 | 433 | — |
| 18. Texas (1) | 5-7 | 383 | — |
| 19. Wake Forest | 11-3 | 381 | 14 |
| 20. Wisconsin | 9-4 | 369 | — |
| 21. Kentucky | 10-3 | 353 | 15 |
| 22. Cincinnati | 13-1 | 339 | 4 |
| 23. Arkansas | 9-4 | 334 | 20 |
| 24. Mississippi | 10-3 | 327 | 11 |
| 25. Houston | 12-2 | 257 | 17 |

Dropped out: No. 18 Louisiana-Lafayette (13-1); No. 22 Brigham Young (10-3); No. 23 Iowa (10-4); No. 24 Utah State (11-3).

Others receiving votes: Iowa (10-4) 248; Penn State (7-6) 246; Tennessee (7-6) 163; Brigham Young (10-3) 152; LSU (6-7) 143; Auburn (6-7) 98; Central Florida (9-4) 55; North Carolina (6-7) 34; San Diego State (12-2) 25; Fresno State (10-3) 21; Mississippi State (7-6) 19; Florida (6-7) 17; Air Force (10-3) 12; Utah State (11-3) 12; Appalachian State (10-4) 10; Boise State (7-5) 10; UCLA (8-4) 10; Minnesota (9-4) 6; South Carolina (7-6) 5; Kansas State (8-5) 4; Army (9-4) 3; Iowa State (7-6) 3; Coastal Carolina (11-2) 2; Louisiana-Lafayette (13-1) 2; SMU (8-4) 2; Oregon State (7-6) 2; Purdue (9-4) 2; Florida State (5-7) 1; Louisville (6-7) 1; Texas-San Antonio (12-2) 1.

GOLF

World rankings

Through Aug. 8

| | | |
|----------------------|-----|-------|
| 1. Scottie Scheffler | USA | 10.20 |
| 2. Cameron Smith | AUS | 9.10 |
| 3. Rory McIlroy | NIR | 8.38 |
| 4. Patrick Cantlay | USA | 7.80 |
| 5. Xander Schauffele | USA | 7.30 |
| 6. Jon Rahm | ESP | 7.26 |
| 7. Justin Thomas | USA | 6.79 |
| 8. Collin Morikawa | USA | 6.61 |
| 9. Viktor Hovland | NOR | 6.37 |
| 10. Matt Fitzpatrick | ENG | 6.15 |
| 11. Sam Burns | USA | 5.92 |
| 12. Jordan Spieth | USA | 5.85 |
| 13. Tony Finau | USA | 5.27 |
| 14. Will Zalatoris | USA | 5.20 |

DEALS

the 60-day IL.

CINCINNATI REDS — Selected the contract of RHP T.J. Zeuch from Louisville (IL). Optioned RHP Ryan Hendrix to Louisville.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Recalled RHP Ryan Pepiot from Oklahoma City (PCL). Optioned RHP Andre Jackson to Oklahoma City.

MIAMI MARLINS — Sent RHP Tommy Nance to Pensacola (SL) on a rehab assignment. Agreed to terms with LHP Josh Rogers on a minor league contract.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Designated LHP T.J. McFarland for assignment. Recalled RHP Jake Woodford from Memphis (IL).

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Optioned RHP Mason Thompson to Rochester (IL). Sent RHP Will Harris to Rochester (IL) on a rehab assignment.

BASKETBALL

Women's National Basketball Association

MINNESOTA LYNX — Activated G Aerial Powers. Released F Nikolina Milic from hardship exception.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

CHICAGO BEARS — Activated LB Roquan Smith from the physically unable to perform (PUP) list.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Activated RT La'el Collins from the physically unable to perform (PUP) list.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Placed WR Ja'Keem Grant on injured reserve.

DENVER BRONCOS — Signed RB Ja'Quan Hardy. Waived RB Tyreik McAllister with an injury designation. Placed LB Christopher Allen on injured reserve.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed RB Dexter Williams and S Micah Abernathy. Released LS Steven Wirtel and WR Osirus Mitchell.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Placed RB Darius Anderson on injured reserve.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Signed DL Auzayah Alufohai. Waived DL Jeremia Ledbetter with an injury designation.

Williams loses in Toronto

Associated Press

TORONTO — Serena Williams wore her game face when she stepped out into the stadium for her first match since telling the world she is ready to leave professional tennis.

Greeted by a standing ovation, the 23-time Grand Slam champion didn't smile. She didn't wave. She took a sip from a plastic bottle as she walked in. Some folks in the crowd captured the moment with the cameras on their cellphones. Others held aloft handwritten signs — oh, so many signs — with messages such as “Queen” or “Thank you.”

No one knows exactly how many more matches Williams will play before she puts her rackets away for good, and the 40-year-old American exited the National Bank Open on Wednesday night with a 6-2, 6-4 loss to Belinda Bencic.

While there were some familiar fist pumps and yells of “Come on!” during competition, it was only afterward that Williams really allowed her feelings to show, her voice shaking and her eyes welling during an on-court interview when Bencic ceded the spotlight.

“A lot of emotions, obviously,” Williams told spectators who offered her encouragement throughout the clear, 75-degree evening.

The second-round match at the hard-court tuneup for the U.S. Open came a day after she announced “the countdown has begun” on her playing career, saying she wants to have another child and pursue business interests.

She did not state precisely what her last event will be, but did make it sound as if her final farewell will come at the U.S. Open, which begins Aug. 29 in New York. Williams has won the singles title at Flushing Meadows a half-dozen times — first in 1999; most recently in 2014 — to go along with seven championships apiece at Wimbledon and the Australian Open, plus three at the French Open.

“It's been a pretty interesting 24 hours,” Williams said after Wednesday's match.

“I'm terrible at goodbyes,” she added, her hand on her chest, “but goodbye, Toronto!”



Williams

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



PHOTOS BY MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

Caleb Williams followed head coach Lincoln Riley from Oklahoma to Southern California after a freshman season in which he passed for 1,912 yards and 21 touchdowns.

Transfer of power

Riley rebuilds Southern Cal with veteran arrivals

BY GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

When Brett Neilon looks around Southern California's locker room, the Trojans' sixth-year center sees a few teammates who were with him all the way from the heights of a Pac-12 title to the depths of this storied football program's worst season in 30 years.

Neilon also sees the nation's top receiver at Pitt in 2021, Oklahoma's former freshman quarterback sensation, an ex-Alabama linebacker and a few dozen other guys he just recently met, all wearing new cardinal jerseys and preparing to restore the Trojans to glory this fall.

They aren't quite an expansion team, but college football also hasn't really seen anything quite like these Trojans. From his vantage point between two eras of USC football, Neilon loves the view.

"It kind of feels like a whole new team," Neilon said. "There's a lot of excitement. There's some of the best players in college football in there. It's all a melting pot for a really fun, exciting season."

Most of the Trojans share Neilon's mix of uncertainty overwhelmed by excitement about what Lincoln Riley is attempting in his first season at USC.

Rebuilding after the Trojans' worst season in 30 years, Riley dug deep into the newly flush transfer portal to add 24 veterans from across the country. Many are elite skill-position players — including



Riley has rebuilt the USC roster by adding 24 transfers to a team that went 4-8 last year and retained just 37 lettermen and only eight starters.

Biletnikoff Award winner Jordan Addison, ex-Oklahoma receiver Mario Williams, and two prolific running backs and two receivers from other Pac-12 schools.

The centerpiece of the group is Caleb Williams, who passed for 1,912 yards and 21 touchdowns at Oklahoma last year. The quarterback said he rejoined Riley "to be a part of something historic. I mean, being a part of USC is already historic, but trying to get USC back to what it was is also historic."

This massive influx is joining a USC roster with 71 returning players from last season's 4-8 team, but only 37 lettermen and just eight starters. Add in at least a

dozen true freshmen, and it's clear Riley's staff has amassed a remarkable amount of new talent — and given itself a daunting task to mold it into a cohesive team capable of immediately contending for a Pac-12 title.

"This probably won't be the way we build our roster in the future," Riley said. "Because of the circumstances we were in when we came here, and because of the opportunities afforded to us, we felt that getting players in the transfer portal was the best way to get us to where we want to be. In the future, I think we will look more traditional. For now, I'm excited about this group."

USC's unusual offseason was possible because college football is in unprecedented times amid the collision of four factors: a long-awaited regime change at an attractive, underachieving football powerhouse; the still-new transfer freedom allowing college athletes to play wherever they please; the opportunity to play for one of the sport's top coaches without waiting in line behind his hand-picked recruits; and the chance to hitch a ride on the rising rocket of NIL earnings at schools with USC's market size and cachet.

"USC is a blue blood, simple as that," Caleb Williams said. "Teams and organizations and things like that, they have rough moments, and that's all USC has had. And we're here trying to turn that around, because I know that Shane's not a loser. I know that I'm not a loser. These guys around us want to win. They have that in them."

Utah's Rising set to show off skills

BY JOHN COON
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Unlike last season, Cam Rising isn't facing a battle to become Utah's starting quarterback heading into a new year.

Rising cemented his spot atop the depth chart when he led the Utes to their first Pac-12 championship and first Rose Bowl berth a season ago. Now, he's eager to show off all his skills.

"There's no weakness in Cam Rising right now," coach Kyle Whittingham. "He's doing everything right coming off an outstanding year."

One area where Rising has made strides is his arm strength. Rising did not test his surgically repaired shoulder with deep balls much last season. He had five 200-yard games and one 300-yard game as a passer. This season could be a much different story.

He has been fearless about taking shots down the field in camp and pushing his receivers to make plays on the outside.

"(My arm) feels like it's back," Rising said. "Last year, didn't feel all the way getting comfortable throwing the deep ball. But this year, it definitely feels more comfortable getting the ball downfield and pushing it."

Rising's teammates are believers. His accuracy on deeper routes has left them impressed.

"He's slinging it a little faster and a little harder," tight end Dalton Kincaid said. "I can definitely tell the arm strength's there and there's a lot of confidence in it."

Becoming a threat with the deep ball will simply add a new wrinkle to Rising's skillset, which

routinely flummoxes defenses.

He kept opposing teams off balance with his running ability last season, totaling 499 yards while averaging 6.7 yards per carry. Rising even chipped in on special teams as an emergency punter. He averaged 32.7 yards on three punts last season.

Still, Rising said he entered Utah's fall camp with the same determination to prove himself that he's shown since joining the program as a transfer from Texas.

"I still got to attack it and prove I'm the best guy for the job each and every day," Rising said.

Rising won the confidence of his teammates and coaches long before he replaced Charlie Brewer halfway through a Week 3 loss to San Diego State last season. The junior quickly showed what inspired that confidence in the first place.

He threw for 2,493 yards and 20 touchdowns while tossing only five interceptions to help fuel Utah's successful championship run. Rising completed 63.8% of his pass attempts.

Among Pac-12 quarterbacks, he ranked third in passing yards per game (214.1), third in passing efficiency (145.74), and second in passing yards per completion (12.76) in conference games. At season's end, Rising earned All-Pac-12 first-team honors.

Whittingham attributes Rising's emergence to his work ethic. The coach described him as one of the hardest workers on the team and said it has impacted every facet of his game.

"I just keep trying to improve," Rising said.



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Utah quarterback Cameron Rising runs for a touchdown during the first half of the Rose Bowl against Ohio State on Jan. 1.

MLB

Pushing hard for playoffs

Streaking Phillies in line for wild card, first berth since 2011

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Bob Boone waved to the Phillies crowd that accentuated the “Booooo” in his name in honor of the Gold Glove-winning catcher that caught the last out of the 1980 World Series.

He was an All-Star, a defensive whiz in Philly, a revered member of that championship season who, along with the late Tug McGraw — his arms stretched high to the sky, bounding on the turf — was swallowed up into a mass of burgundy pinstripes in an image that resonates here to this day.

This year's Phillies are on a 12-1 winning streak, have an NL wild-card berth in sight and have the city again in a frenzy. And Boone, on Sunday, fumbled the endorsement of the Phillies as a contender as much as he did a Frank White pop foul in Game 6 of the 1980 playoffs.

“I’m a Yankees fan now, sorry. My son’s there,” Boone said of Aaron Boone, who has the Yankees at 71-41, tied for the best record in the American League. He added of the Phillies: “They ain’t beating the Yankees, I’ll tell you that.”

Aaron Nola and Rhys Hoskins; Kyle Schwarber and Alec Bohm; Zack Wheeler and Noah Syndergaard — they all may disagree. Their team is looking to crack the postseason for the first time since 2011 and break the longest playoff drought in the National League.

If they can, they’ll have a shot at the franchise’s third World Series championship in their 139-year history, though this year’s Phillies aren’t quite the no-doubt-about-it contenders as the 1980 and 2008 teams that had MVPs and All-Stars like Pete Rose, Chase Utley, Steve Carlton, Cole Hamels, Mike Schmidt and Ryan Howard.

But with Hoskins, Schwarber and a stout front end of the rotation leading the way, anything less than a playoff berth would be considered a bust.

The Phillies won the first two games of a three-game home series against the Marlins. The Phils are 62-48 — 14 games over .500 — and are coming off of their third four-game sweep of the season.

They moved ahead of San Diego for the second NL wild-card spot and interim manager Rob Thomson is a whopping 40-19 since he took over for Joe Girardi, who was fired June 3.

The Phillies are doing all of this without league MVP Bryce Harper, who is still out indefinitely with a broken left thumb that happened when he was hit by a pitch at



CHRIS SZAGOLA/AP

Phillies Kyle Schwarber, left, and Rhys Hoskins celebrate Schwarber's home run during the seventh inning against the Washington Nationals on Aug. 5 in Philadelphia.

the end of June. The Phillies are 23-13 since then.

Harper, hitting .318 with 15 home runs, 48 RBIs and .985 OPS, had pins removed last week and hit Sunday off a tee. So when he comes back, it will be like the Phillies made a Juan Soto-esque trade deadline deal without giving up any prospects.

With apologies to the 76ers, here they come. Is this Philly's team of the year?

“Usually, winning teams have to

face some sort of adversity throughout the year,” Hoskins said. “We have. Not to say we won’t these last couple of weeks of the season, last six weeks of the season, but we know that we can.”

Hoskins has seen his share of sizzling summer stretches melt into fall swoons during his first five seasons with the Phillies. But right now, they’re peaking in early August, doing what’s needed (winning 21 of the last 28 games against the NL East) and hoping trade-

deadline acquisitions Syndergaard, veteran reliever David Robertson and center fielder Brandon Marsh will push the Phillies into the playoffs.

It’s not all outsiders contributing to the success: Hoskins, Nick Maton, Bohm and Bryson Stott comprise a completely homegrown infield, and Maton had four RBIs and Stott three in Philadelphia’s 13-1 win Sunday over the Nationals.

As a coach with the Yankees, Thomson saw Yogi Berra, Whitey Ford and other franchise legends come through the clubhouse with a World Series ring or two ... or 10. Catching up with Rose, Carlton and other 1980 winners over the weekend stirred championship feelings.

“Any time you can hang around a world champion and start talking about that stuff, I think it helps,” Thomson said.

The Phillies play 35 of their final 54 games against teams with losing records, and Thomson can’t wait see to see how far the Phillies can go.

“I know the last few years we haven’t played well in September. But each team was a little different,” Thomson said. “It wasn’t the same exact group. This is a different group and there’s a lot of leadership in the clubhouse and a lot of winners on the field and they’re playing well. We’ve got an outstanding bullpen that’s pitching very well.

“I have a lot of confidence that this team can get right through at the end.”



MATT SLOCUM/AP

The Phillies' J.T. Realmuto reacts after hitting a run-scoring single against Marlins pitcher Sandy Alcantara on Wednesday.

Scoreboard

| American League | | | | |
|---|----|----|------|-----|
| East Division | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB |
| New York | 71 | 41 | .634 | — |
| Toronto | 60 | 50 | .545 | 10 |
| Baltimore | 58 | 52 | .527 | 12 |
| Tampa Bay | 58 | 52 | .527 | 12 |
| Boston | 54 | 58 | .482 | 17 |
| Central Division | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB |
| Cleveland | 58 | 52 | .527 | — |
| Minnesota | 57 | 53 | .518 | 1 |
| Chicago | 56 | 55 | .505 | 2½ |
| Kansas City | 46 | 66 | .411 | 13 |
| Detroit | 43 | 69 | .384 | 16 |
| West Division | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB |
| Houston | 71 | 41 | .634 | — |
| Seattle | 61 | 52 | .540 | 10½ |
| Texas | 49 | 61 | .445 | 21 |
| Los Angeles | 49 | 63 | .438 | 22 |
| Oakland | 41 | 71 | .366 | 30 |
| National League | | | | |
| East Division | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB |
| New York | 73 | 39 | .652 | — |
| Atlanta | 66 | 46 | .589 | 7 |
| Philadelphia | 62 | 48 | .564 | 10 |
| Miami | 49 | 61 | .445 | 23 |
| Washington | 37 | 76 | .327 | 36½ |
| Central Division | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB |
| St. Louis | 61 | 49 | .555 | — |
| Milwaukee | 60 | 50 | .545 | 1 |
| Chicago | 45 | 65 | .409 | 16 |
| Pittsburgh | 45 | 66 | .405 | 16½ |
| Cincinnati | 44 | 66 | .400 | 17 |
| West Division | | | | |
| | W | L | Pct | GB |
| Los Angeles | 77 | 33 | .700 | — |
| San Diego | 63 | 51 | .553 | 16 |
| San Francisco | 54 | 57 | .486 | 23½ |
| Arizona | 50 | 60 | .455 | 27 |
| Colorado | 49 | 64 | .434 | 29½ |
| Wednesday's games | | | | |
| Milwaukee 4, Tampa Bay 3, 10 innings | | | | |
| Seattle 4, N.Y. Yankees 3 | | | | |
| L.A. Angels 5, Oakland 4, 12 innings | | | | |
| Cleveland 3, Detroit 2 | | | | |
| Atlanta 8, Boston 4 | | | | |
| Kansas City 8, Chicago White Sox 3 | | | | |
| Texas 8, Houston 4, 10 innings | | | | |
| L.A. Dodgers 8, Minnesota 5 | | | | |
| Toronto at Baltimore, p.p.d. | | | | |
| N.Y. Mets 10, Cincinnati 2 | | | | |
| Chicago Cubs 4, Washington 2 | | | | |
| San Diego 13, San Francisco 7 | | | | |
| Philadelphia 4, Miami 3 | | | | |
| St. Louis 9, Colorado 5 | | | | |
| Pittsburgh 6, Arizona 4 | | | | |
| Thursday's games | | | | |
| Cleveland at Detroit | | | | |
| Chicago White Sox at Kansas City | | | | |
| Texas at Houston | | | | |
| Baltimore at Boston | | | | |
| Miami at Philadelphia | | | | |
| St. Louis at Colorado | | | | |
| Pittsburgh at Arizona | | | | |
| Chicago Cubs at Cincinnati | | | | |
| Friday's games | | | | |
| Cleveland (Quantrill 8-5) at Toronto (White 1-3) | | | | |
| Baltimore (Watkins 4-2) at Tampa Bay (Kluber 7-6) | | | | |
| Detroit (TBD) at Chicago White Sox (Kopech 4-8) | | | | |
| N.Y. Yankees (Germán 1-2) at Boston (Eovaldi 5-3) | | | | |
| Seattle (Flexen 7-9) at Texas (Dunning 2-6) | | | | |
| L.A. Dodgers (Gonsolin 13-1) at Kansas City (Lynch 4-7) | | | | |
| Oakland (Oller 1-5) at Houston (Garcia 8-8) | | | | |
| Minnesota (Mahle 5-7) at L.A. Angels (Sandoval 3-7) | | | | |
| Atlanta (Fried 10-4) at Miami (López 7-7) | | | | |
| San Diego (Clevinger 3-4) at Washington (Abbott 0-1) | | | | |
| Philadelphia (Suárez 8-5) at N.Y. Mets (Scherzer 8-2) | | | | |
| Milwaukee (Lauer 8-3) at St. Louis (Montgomery 4-3) | | | | |
| Arizona (Davies 2-4) at Colorado (Senzateña 3-6) | | | | |
| Pittsburgh (Wilson 2-6) at San Francisco (Rodón 10-6) | | | | |
| Saturday's games | | | | |
| Cleveland at Toronto | | | | |
| Baltimore at Tampa Bay | | | | |
| Detroit at Chicago White Sox | | | | |
| L.A. Dodgers at Kansas City | | | | |
| Oakland at Houston | | | | |
| N.Y. Yankees at Boston | | | | |
| Seattle at Texas | | | | |
| Minnesota at L.A. Angels | | | | |
| Atlanta at Miami, 2 | | | | |
| Chicago Cubs at Cincinnati | | | | |
| San Diego at Washington | | | | |
| Philadelphia at N.Y. Mets | | | | |
| Milwaukee at St. Louis | | | | |
| Arizona at Colorado | | | | |
| Pittsburgh at San Francisco | | | | |

NFL

Getting some veterans from the USFL

NFL teams have turned to spring league for help in training camp

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Cornerback Terrell Bonds has talked about being a member of the NFL's Tennessee Titans since he played in college at Tennessee State.

Five years after his college days ended, he's finally on the Titans' roster as a training camp signee.

"For it to actually come true now, it's crazy and I'm thankful for it," Bonds said.



Turpin

Bonds owes his latest football opportunity to the revived USFL, where he played 10 games this spring with the Pittsburgh Maulers, and he's got lots of company as the NFL started its first week of preseason games Thursday night. Bonds is among 42 players from the USFL's inaugural season signed through Tuesday by 26 of the NFL's 32 teams.

USFL MVP KaVontae Turpin now is with Dallas, while All-USFL offensive lineman Cameron Hunt signed with the Chargers and All-USFL tight end Sal Cannella joined the Green Bay Packers. Wide receiver (12) has been the most popular position for NFL teams followed by cornerback (nine) as NFL teams look for help

in training camps.

Like Bonds, Turpin has been scrambling to keep his dreams of professional football alive since his college career at TCU ended during the 2018 season. Turpin has bounced from the Fan Controlled Football League, Spring League and finally the USFL before being signed by Dallas for camp.

"Man, it's like a dream come true. It's a blessing," Turpin said. "I've been in four leagues before I came here. So, it's a blessing to be here and know the Cowboys gave me a wonderful opportunity to come here and prove myself. I'm just happy to be here."

Many of these USFL players have been in the NFL before.

Hunt played with both Denver and the Raiders. Bonds played four games with Baltimore in 2020 and spent last offseason with Miami before being waived last August. Darrius Shepherd caught six passes over 2019-20 with Green Bay and signed with Denver after reviving his career with the New Jersey Generals.

"It was really beneficial," Shepherd said of the USFL. "I'm really happy that they put that league on. They did a great job and provided a lot of opportunities for guys as you see people get signed all over the league."

NFL teams certainly were watching. Not only did 32 officials



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

Safety Terrell Bonds played in the USFL in the spring before joining the Tennessee Titans' roster as a training camp signee. Bonds has talked about joining the Titans since his college days at Tennessee State.

from the NFL Development Pipeline work USFL games, NFL teams had no issues quickly accessing USFL game tapes so pro scouts could watch breakdowns for any players they liked.

Tennessee general manager Jon Robinson said their pro staff had specific teams to evaluate and grade and met to rank those players just before the USFL's championship.

The Titans previously had worked out both Bonds and cor-

nerback Shakur Brown, Bonds' teammate with Pittsburgh who signed with Tennessee a few days before Bonds.

"But then certainly watching the USFL and seeing how they performed or things they needed to work on, it gave us more, I'd guess, comfort knowing that we're bringing a guy in that's played football recently," Robinson said.

Having practiced and played this spring gave USFL players a couple of big advantages over

those working out on their own hoping for an NFL team to call. First, they're physically ready for the grind of training camp.

"I just got finished with a whole season so I'm definitely like mid-season for me," Brown said.

For the USFL players who spent three months practicing in pads, a full preseason will take a physical toll that will only grow.

AP pro football writers Schuyler Dixon and Arnie Stapleton and AP sports writers Tom Canavan, Larry Lage and Steve Megargee contributed.

Where: Parsons is a natural competitor

FROM PAGE 48

"It's something the more you can keep him involved, the better he is in that setting," McCurley said. "He's a natural competitor by heart. I think the meeting room is kind of the same way, in staying involved in everything that's going on."

Ask Dan Quinn about Parsons spending time in both meeting rooms, and the defensive coordinator doesn't need long to remember that his young star believes there isn't much he can't do.

"That's a good question because he does spend time in different rooms and different spots, to go from D-line, LB some," Quinn said, trying to keep a straight face. "I'm sure you probably heard he's working with the running backs ... wide receivers, kicking."

Quinn finally cracked a smile, but there was a serious side to the answer.

"What's unique about Micah is the way we can align him in different spots where he's counted as a down guy, an off-the-ball guy, so I

think that's important to say, 'Where's the alignment in how we would deploy him from there?'" Quinn said. "Because certainly they value his rush ability and his speed, but we want to make sure we're not just putting him into one spot."

Parsons' value as a pass rusher probably went up when defensive end Randy Gregory switched to Denver in free agency after agreeing to a contract to return to the Cowboys. The signing of Barr was the next step — an important piece for depth at the position Parsons vacates when he joins the defensive front.

Still, the conversation appears to stop short of Parsons becoming a full-time pass rusher.

"I hate to limit myself, because of how much I can do in coverage and man on man," Parsons said. "I think that's what adds the versatility, that's what adds the matchup nightmare. So I'm going to keep floating around and make these people try to find me."

They will be looking for him,

which is something his coaching staff knows. McCurley said Parsons' competitive nature works in his favor in trying to improve on such a remarkable debut.

"That's a starting point that he's going to continue to grow off of, once he gets on the field, he comes alive," McCurley said. "Aside from that, he just needs to understand that there's still going to be bumps in the road."

Besides believing he can play several positions in football, Parsons fancies himself a multisport athlete. Cornerback Jourdan Lewis, a basketball enthusiast, chuckles at Parsons' eagerness to challenge on the hardwood.

Parsons will concede on one sport, though.

"Golf," he said. "But that's an older man's game. I'm going to get there."

Still, he never said he wasn't up to a challenge.

"When we go to Top Golf, \$50 a shot," Parsons said. "Who can hit it further? I got a Happy Gilmore swing right now."

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NFL



PHOTOS BY CHARLIE RIEDEL/AP

Kansas City Chiefs running back Isiah Pacheco runs during training camp. Pacheco, an unheralded rookie, has earned first-team reps on a near-daily basis and is pushing starter Clyde Edwards-Helaire.

Chiefs running back job surprisingly up for grabs

By **DAVE SKRETTA**
Associated Press

ST. JOSEPH, Mo. — Clyde Edwards-Helaire and Isiah Pacheco were chosen by the Kansas City Chiefs on opposite ends of the draft spectrum, one of them a first-round pick with the accompanying expectations and the other a seventh-round longshot.

Midway through training camp, they might as well have been picked one after the other.

That's because Edwards-Helaire, the incumbent-if-injury-prone starter, and Pacheco, the unheralded rookie, have swapped first-team reps on a near-daily basis.

And while veterans Jerick McKinnon and Ronald Jones II are fighting for roster spots of their own, the competition between Edwards-Helaire and Pacheco has become must-watch stuff for fans at camp.

"I'm curious to see those guys compete in games," Chiefs coach Andy Reid admitted. "We know a couple of (the running backs) because they've been here and we're learning about the others. But it looks like a good group."

The first chance to see them in games comes Saturday, when the Chiefs visit Chicago for their pre-season opener.

Edwards-Helaire, the 32nd overall pick in the 2020 draft, is the known quantity in Kansas City, where he has started 23 games over his first two seasons. He's averaged nearly 4½ yards per carry, caught 55 passes and has proven that despite his small, 5-foot-8 stature that he can protect Patrick Ma-

homes from would-be blitzers.

His biggest problem, though, has been that he's only played 23 regular-season games, thanks to a litany of injuries that put him on the sideline nearly as much as on the field. And along with missing seven games last season, Edwards-Helaire also missed the Chiefs' wild-card game before serving as a backup to McKinnon in the divisional round and AFC title game.

"Clyde has done a heck of a job — a heck of a job — staying healthy this entire offseason," said Chiefs offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy, who spent nine seasons playing running back in the NFL. "At the end of the day we've just got to make sure that we're emphasizing putting him in position to have an opportunity to make plays."

What could give Edwards-Helaire an advantage in the race for the No. 1 job? His ability to catch the ball out of the backfield — "I am a thousand-and-ten percent confident in my hands," he said — and his experience in Reid's offense.

The playbook is thick. The terminology is complicated. The entire system takes time to learn.

Pacheco seems to be picking it up in a hurry.

He was the 251st overall pick in April's draft, which means only 10 players were selected after him, and his résumé at Rutgers hardly made him a hot prospect.

It was at the NFL scouting combine that Pacheco jumped onto the radar of scouts. He ran the 40 in 4.3 seconds, the best among running backs, and backed up that sizzling speed with good numbers in just



Edwards-Helaire is the Chiefs' incumbent starting running back but has split first-team reps in training camp.

about everything else.

Based on raw athleticism, many teams no doubt would have made Pacheco a priority among undrafted free agents had the Chiefs not spent a seventh-round pick on him.

But it was clear their gamble could pay off big as early as voluntary summer workouts, when Pacheco began turning heads in Kansas City every time he stepped on the field.

"The thing you're guaranteed of is he's going to run hard. That's what he's going to do," Reid explained. "Will he have to learn the different schemes and how they work against certain defenses and at times be patient? He'll learn that. But you're guaranteed he's going to run hard. He's a good catcher. The rest of all that we can work with."

Gilmore appears to have found right landing spot in Indy

By **MICHAEL MAROT**
Associated Press

WESTFIELD, Ind. — Stephon Gilmore arrived at training camp two weeks ago with an impressive résumé — and something to prove.

After two injury-filled subpar seasons in New England and Carolina, the 31-year-old cornerback chose Indianapolis to revive his career.

So far, it looks like a winning match.

"I feel good, I feel strong, I finally feel like myself," Gilmore said at the team's camp complex, nestled between the cornfields in suburban Indianapolis. "I like the vibe here, I like the guys, I like the coaches. Everybody here does everything to help the team win. That's one thing I've noticed."

Gilmore has learned plenty of lessons over a decade-long career, none more valuable than detecting the difference between teams built to contend and everyone else. It's one reason he took nearly a month to sift through the free agent suitors before signing a two-year deal with the Colts.

On paper, Gilmore saw a promising defense on the verge of becoming an elite unit, an offense led by new quarterback Matt Ryan and defending league rushing champ Jonathan Taylor and an opportunity to shore up one of the Colts' most glaring weaknesses: pass coverage.

On the field, Gilmore has been one of Indy's most productive players. He's dominated the one-on-one matchups with rookie receiver Alec Pierce and has blanketed virtually anyone who dares to challenge him.

His instincts also appear to be back and Gilmore's penchant for routinely batting away passes has become contagious in this young rebuilding secondary.

New defensive coordinator Gus Bradley welcomes the impact Gilmore has made as does Ryan, the league's 2016 MVP, who has been victimized more than once by a familiar foe.

"Unfortunately, that's not the first time he's picked me off," Ryan said after Gilmore made an acrobatic interception during Sunday's practice. "He's got excellent pattern recognition, really good — savvy, good ball skills. He's talented, and he's one of those guys who sometimes can put a seed of doubt in your mind of what he's going to do."

That's been Gilmore's trademark for most of his career.

He earned a Super Bowl ring during Tom Brady's final championship run in New England by batting away 20 passes and was selected as the league's 2019 Defen-



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Pro Bowl cornerback Stephon Gilmore waited for the right team to sign with in free agency and picked the Colts.

sive Player of the Year with 20 more passes defensed, tying for the league lead with six interceptions and returning two for scores.

But winning consistently has proven elusive for the former South Carolina star.

He endured four losing seasons and never made the playoffs during a strong five-year run in Buffalo. After appearing in back-to-back Super Bowls each of his first two seasons in New England, the Patriots suffered a rare wild-card round loss in 2019 before the bottom fell out.

Gilmore's 2020 season was derailed first by a positive COVID-19 test, then a torn quadriceps and finally by a rare Pats' postseason absence. When the injury lingered through the next summer's training camp, he landed on the physically unable to perform list and was eventually traded to Carolina.

There, he had 13 tackles and two interceptions in eight games and earned his fourth straight Pro Bowl selection despite not playing like one of the league's top coverage guys.

So when Gilmore became a free agent, he took his time, weighed his options and when the Colts finally came through, it was an offer Gilmore couldn't refuse. The Colts haven't regretted it, either.

And now that he's healthy, back in a system where he can thrive and working with four Pro Bowl teammates on defense, Gilmore believes he can be back on top of his game this season.

"I asked him how it was and how the guys were in the locker room, the vibe," Gilmore said, describing a spring conversation with another Pro Bowl cornerback Kenny Moore II. "He said all good things. I'm happy I made that decision. I think I'll be a great player for this team."

The Colts are counting on it.

NFL



JASON GETZ, ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/AP

Falcons tight end Kyle Pitts reacts after a touchdown catch during training camp. Pitts had 68 receptions for 1,026 yards as a rookie.

Goal-setting Pitts eager to build on strong rookie season

By PAUL NEWBERRY

Associated Press

FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga. — Kyle Pitts likes to set goals.

He's not much for talking about what's on the list — "that's confidential," he quipped — but one thing is definitely on his mind after a brilliant rookie season.

Getting to end zone more often.

Pitts was held to a single touchdown catch in 2021, which is about the only thing he had to complain about in his Falcons debut. He tallied 68 receptions for 1,026 yards and earned a trip to the Pro Bowl, cementing him as one of the cornerstones in Atlanta's massive rebuilding project.

Blessed with a receiver's speed and a 6-foot-6, 245-pound frame, Pitts fits right in with a new generation of tight ends who are far more than just an extra blocker.

"He got a chance to be elite," said Falcons cornerback Casey Hayward, who's spent time in training camp trying to defend Pitts. "He's big and he's fast. He's got a different speed than most tight ends."

Pitts still sounds miffed that he didn't score more touchdowns in his rookie campaign.

"That's something I'm thinking about at every practice, every morning in the meetings," he said. "It's just like a steady thing in the back of my mind. I'm telling myself every day I come out here that I have a bigger goal to achieve."

Longtime Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan was traded to Indianapolis in the offseason, leaving a leadership void.

Pitts is eager to fill that hole, though speaking out is something he's still growing into.

"That's something that comes with adulthood and maturing, just being able to do it," he said. "You've got to take your guard down and just speak. Just be yourself. Don't do anything more or less."

With Ryan now playing for the

Colts, a new quarterback will be throwing to Pitts.

Marcus Mariota, the No. 2 overall pick in 2015 who hasn't been a full-time starter since 2018 with Tennessee, is looking forward to having such a dynamic weapon at tight end, which becomes even more vital with the Falcons' shortcomings at receiver.

None of the wideouts had more than 34 catches in the NFL a year ago, though first-round pick Drake London will certainly pick up some of the slack.

Pitts was targeted 110 times last season. He might see the ball coming his way even more with Mariota at quarterback.

"He makes it easy," Mariota said. "It's fun throwing to a guy like that. You don't have to be perfect, you just have to give him the opportunity to go catch the ball. When you do that and he can go out and make plays, he makes the entire offense look really good."

Pitts certainly feels much more comfortable with the playbook and other aspects of his game that will need to improve, such as reading defenses and taking advantage of gaps in the coverage.

Coach Arthur Smith was impressed by all the work Pitts put in during the offseason.

"He had a good rookie year and I love the way that he is working," said Smith, whose team opens the preseason Friday night at Detroit. "I like his mindset. Like a lot of our guys in Year 2, they're more comfortable. So, we'll see how it plays out, but very pleased with how he's doing."

The Falcons, who are projected to be one of the worst teams in the league after going 7-10 in Smith's first season, are hoping Pitts can speed up the rebuilding process.

More touchdowns is the obvious goal for Pitts. He's not revealing what else is on the list.

"I can't reveal my secrets," he said. "I have it somewhere, and I look at it pretty often."

Preseason games taking back seat to joint practice

By ROB MAADDI

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Tom Brady will get his reps in joint practices against the Miami Dolphins this week instead of an exhibition game. Aaron Rodgers hasn't played a preseason snap since 2018.

Justin Herbert is expected to again watch from the sideline this month.

Thirty of the NFL's 32 teams will kick off their preseason schedules this week — the Raiders and Jaguars already played in the Hall of Fame Game — and many teams will hold their starters out until the games count in the standings.

For Buccaneers coach Todd Bowles, it's an easy decision to keep the 45-year-old Brady on the bench when Tampa Bay hosts Miami on Saturday night. The teams will hold joint practices on Wednesday and Thursday. Those are valuable reps in a more controlled setting.

"Obviously, with one less preseason game right now, you need to get all the work in that you can get in," Bowles said about joint practices.

Coaches have been getting used to the shortened preseason since the league and the NFL Players Association eliminated one exhibition game in the 2020 collective bargaining agreement. That year, there were no preseason games because of COVID-19.

"I thought we were OK last year with it," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said. "I felt pretty good about that. You're going to make sure that your guys get enough work in there that are going to play. And at the same time, you try to balance it

out where you can see the young guys. So, it's always that fourth game that you got to see the young guys quite a bit. But again, we've worked that out where we'll get a good look and we'll see them."

More teams are holding joint practices with their opponents ahead of games now that the preseason schedule has been cut down. A total of 23 teams are doing joint sessions with one team and seven clubs are doing it with two. Teams weren't permitted to hold joint sessions last season because of COVID-19 protocols.

"Live exposure versus different people is a really good evaluation tool to see where we're at," Eagles defensive coordinator Jonathan Gannon said.

Philadelphia will have joint practices with Cleveland and Miami.

First-year coaches have a slight disadvantage with one fewer game. Undrafted rookies and players competing for a roster spot miss out the most.

"I think every coach has their own philosophy," Giants coach Brian Daboll said. "There's people who don't play their guys at all. There's people that play them a little bit more than others. I think you have to do, what I've learned, is what's best for your team. Being around different teams and different coaches, kind of what you need as your team and your team development. Being our first year, we'll try to decide what's best for us with our guys."

Los Angeles Chargers coach Brandon Staley took a conservative approach in his first preseason in 2021 and plans to do the same so Herbert isn't expected to

take any snaps. The Chargers have joint sessions with Dallas next week.

"I think that it will be similar philosophically as last year," Staley said. "If we know who you are, from an evaluation standpoint, we don't need to evaluate you, then you're probably not going to play in the preseason, but if there's — whether it's a role or whether it's a young player that we feel like those experiences are going to benefit them, then that's the direction that we're going to go. Then, your health is a big, big factor in it, too."

Packers coach Matt LaFleur has already said Rodgers won't play Friday in Green Bay's first two preseason games, but he has not ruled him out of the last one.

If he plays, Rodgers wants more than one series.

"I definitely don't see any benefit to playing one series," he said. "If we're going to play, we should play and play a quarter, a couple of series, two to three series. Just suiting up for four plays, to me, is a waste."

Raiders coach Josh McDaniels was pleased to have his team play the NFL preseason opener last week. The Raiders beat Jacksonville 27-11 with Derek Carr, Davante Adams and several starters sitting out.

"We're grateful that we have four. I know somebody else may not like that, but I'm really happy that we have four opportunities to do this," McDaniels said afterward. "There are definitely some things that we noticed during the game flow and operation that we can do better and fix, and we'll focus on that this week."



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady puts on his jersey prior to a practice with the Miami Dolphins on Wednesday in Tampa, Fla. Brady is not likely to play in any preseason games.

SPORTS



Serena ousted in Toronto

Williams loses first match since saying she'll soon step away from tennis » **Page 42**

NFL

Where is he?

Opponents will be on the lookout for star Dallas linebacker Parsons

By SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

Micah Parsons might not lobby for playing time in the preseason this month the way the Dallas linebacker did last year in one of the “Hard Knocks” highlights for the Dallas Cowboys.

The reigning NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year wants to be clear. Parsons still wants to play in preseason games, even though there's a decent chance he won't because of how the Cowboys set up their training camp schedule in California.

“I don't care what game it is, I'm going to try to win,” Parsons said. “If you don't have that competitiveness, I wouldn't want to play with you. I even get mad at my sister when we play Scrabble.”

The question is no longer whether Parsons is playing. That was answered in a 13-sack season that was among the best for a rookie at his position in NFL history. The question now is where the first-round pick from a year ago will play.

After the addition of free agent linebacker Anthony Barr a week into camp, there's even more talk of “hand in the ground” Parsons — meaning the three-point stance of an outside pass rusher.

The same conversation started early last season, after defensive end DeMarcus Lawrence broke his foot in practice the week after the opener.

By then, Parsons had already shown versatility with his knack for getting to quarterbacks. He played almost exclusively on the line in just his second game — a victory at the Los Angeles Chargers that started a six-game winning streak.

Now he has something of a traveling companion on work days. Linebackers coach Scott McCurley goes with Parsons when he meets with the defensive line group.

SEE WHERE ON PAGE 45

Dallas Cowboys outside linebacker Micah Parsons is the reigning Defensive Rookie of the Year after recording 13 sacks in his first season.

MATT PATTERSON/AP



Phillies looking to end long playoff drought » MLB, Page 44

