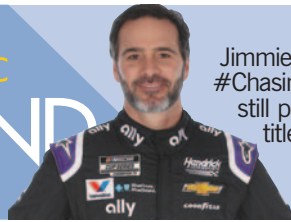


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EUROPE
& PACIFIC
WEEKEND
EDITION



AUTO RACING

Jimmie Johnson drops the #Chasing8 motto, but he's still pursuing an 8th Cup title in his final season

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AFGHANISTAN

Esper: US, Taliban take step toward talks

Defense secretary tells allies that agreement in principle to reduction of violence could lead to peace deal

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. and Taliban have agreed in principle to a "seven-day reduction in violence" in Afghanistan, which could lead to a peace deal to end 18 years of war in the country, Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Thursday at the end of a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels.

Seven days would be "sufficient" to test whether the Taliban was serious about moving toward a



Esper

peace deal, Esper said.

"But in all things, our approach to this process will be conditions-based," Esper said. "Let me say it again: conditions-based. So it will be a continual evaluative process as we go forward, if we go forward."

Esper declined to comment on whether the U.S. would cease counterterrorism operations during any period of reduced violence, saying talks were ongoing.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said

allies supported U.S. efforts to negotiate a peace deal with the Taliban.

"We welcome any steps that can lead to the reduction of violence, (but) the Taliban have to show a real will and a real ability to deliver a reduction of violence on the ground," Stoltenberg said.

American and Taliban negotiators have also laid the foundations for a political agreement in Afghanistan, Esper said.

SEE ESPER ON PAGE 3

Thousands of Marines enter Persian Gulf with USS Bataan Amphibious Ready Group

By JOSHUA KARSTEN
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — The amphibious assault ship USS Bataan entered the Strait of Hormuz into the Persian Gulf on Wednesday, becoming the first U.S. Navy "big deck" to enter the strategic waters in 2020.

"Our passage through this important strait and continued presence in the area plays a critical role in maintaining the freedom of navigation key to regional security and stability here," Capt. Lance Leshner, the

group's commodore, said in a statement.

Bataan and its amphibious ready group comprises 2,500 Marines from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, the transport dock ship USS New York and the dock landing ship USS Oak Hill, the statement said.

Also traveling with the group is the destroyer USS Carney and cargo ship USNS McClean.

The last big deck to transit the strait before the Bataan was the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, which

SEE BATAAN ON PAGE 6

The amphibious assault ship USS Bataan, front, is flanked by the amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill, left, and the guided-missile destroyer USS Carney, right, as they transit through the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday. The Bataan became the first Navy "big deck" to enter the Persian Gulf since the U.S. killed an Iranian general and Iran launched a rocket attack on a base in Iraq that left more than 100 U.S. service members with traumatic brain injuries.

LEVI DECKER/U.S. Navy



BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Germany	\$2.682	\$3.105	\$3.358	\$3.173	Azores	--	--	\$3.349
Change in price	-3.6 cents	-3.0 cents	-3.0 cents	-4.6 cents	Change in price	--	--	-3.0 cents
Netherlands	--	\$3.741	\$3.947	\$3.873	Belgium	--	\$2.878	\$3.196
Change in price	--	-2.5 cents	-7.9 cents	-11.1 cents	Change in price	--	No change	No change
U.K.	--	\$3.105	\$3.268	\$3.083	Turkey	--	\$3.159	\$2.974
Change in price	--	-3.0 cents	-3.0 cents	-4.6 cents	Change in price	--	-3.0 cents	-4.6 cents

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel				
Japan	--	\$3.149	--	\$2.959	South Korea	\$2.499	--	\$3.179
Change in price	--	-3.0 cents	--	-5.0 cents	Change in price	-4.0 cents	--	-3.0 cents
Okinawa	\$2.469	--	--	\$2.959	Guam	\$2.479**	\$2.909	\$3.159
Change in price	-5.0 cents	--	--	-5.0 cents	Change in price	-4.0 cents	-3.0 cents	--

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of Feb. 14-19

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates			
Euro costs (Feb. 14)	\$1.1162	Switzerland (Franc)	0.9780
Dollar buys (Feb. 14)	60.8959	Thailand (Baht)	31.11
British pound (Feb. 14)	\$1.34	Turkey (Lira)	6.0903
Japanese yen (Feb. 14)	107.00	(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.)	
South Korean won (Feb. 14)	1,150.00		
Commercial rates			
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769		
British pound	\$1.3044		
Canada (Dollar)	1.3246		
China (Yuan)	6.9763		
Denmark (Krone)	6.8821		
Egypt (Pound)	15.7500		
Euro	\$1.0858/0.9210		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7661		
Hungary (Forint)	310.70		
Israel (Shekel)	3.4244		
Japan (Yen)	109.75		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3049		
Norway (Krone)	9.2485		
Philippines (Peso)	50.50		
Poland (Zloty)	3.92		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7506		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3885		
South Korea (Won)	1,182.58		

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	4.75
Discount rate	2.25
Federal funds market rate	1.58
3-month bill	1.54
30-year bond	2.09

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

Esper defends Stars and Stripes decision

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Thursday defended the Pentagon's effort to strip Stars and Stripes of all of its federal funding as part of its fiscal year 2021 budget request, telling reporters in Brussels that the independent news organization is not a priority.

"So, we trimmed the support for Stars and Stripes because we need to invest that money, as we did with many, many other programs, into higher priority issues," Esper said during a news conference at NATO headquarters. He listed space, nuclear programs, hypersonic missiles and "a variety of systems" as places the money — slightly more than \$15.5 million — could be reinvested in the \$705.4 billion Defense Department spending proposal.

Pentagon officials acknowledged Wednesday for the first time that the budget proposal completely cuts the subsidy that the department provides Stars and Stripes to print and distribute newspapers to troops deployed around the world, including remote and often dangerous locations in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

Stars and Stripes receives about \$8.7 million annually in operations and maintenance funds and about \$6.9 million in contingency operations funds, said Marine Lt. Col. Chris Logan, a spokesman for Deputy Defense Secretary David Norquist.

The cut to Stars and Stripes' annual Pentagon subsidy equals about half of the news organization's annual funds to pay expenses. Stars and Stripes' remaining money comes from sales, subscriptions and advertising.

Pentagon officials confirmed Monday that the budget request would cut at least some funding to Stars and Stripes, but they declined to provide monetary figures attached to the proposal. Stars and Stripes' leadership was informed of the proposed cuts by Pentagon leadership also Monday, after The Wall Street Journal reported the news organization was eyed for a funding reduction.

Stars and Stripes first appeared during the Civil War, and it has been continuously published since World War II. It produces daily newspapers for U.S. military troops around the world and a website, which is updated with news 24 hours a day. Though it is part of the Pentagon's Defense Media Agency, Stars and Stripes retains its editorial independence and is congressionally mandated to be governed by First Amendment principles.

In Logan's statement Wednesday, he ac-



CHAD GARLAND/Stars and Stripes

Spc. Angel Ruszkiewicz, 21, a combat camera specialist from Milwaukee, reads a copy of Stars and Stripes in Erbil, Iraq, in December before a flight to Syria.

knowledgeed Stars and Stripes' value during its seven decades of continuous service to the U.S. military community.

"Their hard work and dedication in reporting on issues that matter the most to the military community continues to be of value," he said. "However, as we look forward to the current budget proposal and beyond, the DOD must prioritize spending

to support our warfighters in the most critical areas of need. Therefore, the department has made the difficult decision that, beginning in fiscal year 2021, it will no longer provide appropriated funds to Stars and Stripes."

The news organization's value to American troops has been proven, said Ernie Gates, Stars and Stripes' ombudsman. He

said the newspaper not only provides service members "a little piece of home" or a "welcome diversion" from tough missions, but it also provides independent, free-flowing information that they need to exercise their rights as Americans.

The proposal has received pushback from various directions, including lawmakers, a former commander of U.S. European Command and a key journalism advocacy and education organization.

Military veteran lawmakers Rep. Gil Cisneros, D-Calif., and Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., tweeted their support for Stars and Stripes this week.

"Stars & Stripes was a link to home when I was in Iraq and Okinawa," wrote Gallego, a Marine veteran. "It's an A+ indie take on everyday DoD news, f--- ups, and Administration & General Officer BS. No wonder this President wants to cut it. He's got a fight on his hands."

Cisneros, a Navy veteran, wrote Stars and Stripes "provides a crucial voice on the DOD, VA, and other military matters." "We need their reporting," he tweeted.

Other members of Congress reached this week for comment said they needed to take a close look at budget documents before speaking. One member expected to be briefed on the Stars and Stripes funding proposal this week.

In an email, a former top commander of American and NATO troops in Europe defended Stars and Stripes.

"Every day in my office as commander [of] U.S. European Command, I would read Stars and Stripes," said retired Navy Adm. James Stavridis, who served as EUCOM chief and NATO Supreme Allied Command from 2009 to 2013. "It was an invaluable, unbiased, and highly professional source of information which was critical to me in my role overseeing U.S. military throughout Europe."

The Society of Professional Journalists called on Esper to rethink the funding cut to Stars and Stripes, which it said would be "a huge disservice to the men and women who serve our country" who rely on the physical newspaper in areas where they cannot access the internet.

"Since it was first published during the Civil War, Stars and Stripes has been a balanced and objective source of information for members of the military," SPI National President Patricia Gallagher Newberry said Wednesday in the statement. "Its ability to inform troops about issues important to them must not be hindered."

Stars and Stripes reporters Slobodan Lekic and John Vandiver contributed to this report. dickstein.corey@hqs.com
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Esper: NATO defense ministers vow to contribute more to Iraq effort

FROM FRONT PAGE

"Progress has been made on this front and we'll have more to report on that soon, I hope," he said.

During the two-day meeting of NATO defense ministers, in addition to consulting with allies about the potential pause in fighting in Afghanistan, Esper got commitments from them to contribute more troops to NATO's effort in Iraq.

Esper has called on NATO to do more in Iraq so that the U.S. can

reduce some of its roughly 5,000 troops there and refocus them on other missions. Allied defense ministers agreed "in principle" to enhance the NATO mission in Iraq. Neither they nor Esper said which countries would be adding forces to an alliance training mission in the country.

Allies also considered ways that NATO can do more in the broader Middle East and North Africa, which has been a priority for U.S. President Donald Trump.

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US: Troops killed Syrian combatant

Associated Press

BEIRUT — The U.S. military said Thursday its troops fired on and killed a Syrian combatant when government supporters attacked an American convoy in northeastern Syria a day earlier.

The clash Wednesday was a rare direct confrontation between a Syrian pro-government group and U.S. troops deployed in the increasingly crowded area near the border with Iraq and Turkey.

A convoy of U.S. armored vehicles drove into a government-controlled area and was attacked by pro-government supporters, in-

cluding armed men who fired at the soldiers and pelted them with stones and Molotov cocktails.

Spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition Col. Myles Caggins said the person killed was a combatant. He said the U.S. soldiers had come under fire and responded in self-defense. Syrian government media maintained the person killed was a civilian.

The U.S. maintains hundreds of troops in the area as part of its fight against Islamic State group militants. In recent weeks, and following a Turkish invasion of villages and towns along its borders, the area has been swarming

with Russian, Syrian government and Turkish troops. They are deployed in part to maintain the peace but also in the latest tug over territorial control in Syria's 9-year-old conflict.

Caggins said the patrol was planned, and the route passed through a pro-government area. The convoy of U.S. armored vehicles passed through a Syrian military checkpoint, but government militia were also present.

The U.S. maintains lines of communication with Russia, Damascus's ally, to avoid such confrontations. It wasn't clear if the route was deconflicted.

PACIFIC

Philippines' plan to end pact is 'fine' with Trump

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump said he was "fine" with the Philippines' intent to terminate a security pact with the United States despite the move's potential effect on American efforts to contest China's influence in the South China Sea.

"That's fine — we'll save a lot of money," Trump said Wednesday in the Oval Office in response to a reporter's question. "I have a very good relationship there, but I really don't mind if they would like to do that."

Philippines Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. announced Tuesday that a notice of termination of the Visiting Forces Agreement, which allows U.S. forces to train and visit in the former American colony, had been submitted to the U.S. Embassy in Manila that day. The pact, which has been in place since 1999, is scheduled to end 180 days after that notification.

Adm. Philip S. Davidson, commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, said Thursday that he hoped the 180-day timeframe would "allow some time for diplomatic efforts to be pursued here."

"I hope we can get to a successful outcome," he told a foreign policy think-tank in Sydney.

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, a critic of the United States long before he was elected in 2016, had ordered the agreement terminated.

Military cooperation with the Philippines is seen by the Defense Department as a key component in pushing back on China's broad but disputed claims to sovereignty over most of the South China Sea.

In his Oval Room comments, Trump did imply that the move displayed ingratitude by the Philippines for U.S. military assistance in helping put down a jihadist uprising in the southern part of the country in 2017.

Trump said "we came in and literally single-handedly were able to save them from vicious attacks on their islands."

The U.S. provided Philippine forces with assistance and training in the areas of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance through a rotating group of special operations troops that did not number more than 100 at any given time, according to a Pentagon statement at the time. American troops were not involved in direct combat.

Trump's remarks ran counter to Secretary of Defense Mark Esper's comments to reporters Tuesday that the move sent the wrong message to China.

"As we try and bolster our presence and compete with [China] in this era of great power competition, I think it's a move in the wrong direction for the long-standing relationship we've had with the Philippines for their strategic location, the ties between our peoples, our countries," Esper said.

Duterte spokesman Salvador Panelo said Wednesday the termination should have come "a long time ago" because it was advantageous only to the U.S., according to a state-run newswire.

He said Esper's reaction was expected, "given that the VFA favors the U.S. and its abrogation affects its global strategic defensive positioning."

Panelo told reporters Tuesday that Manila is expecting "preferential attention" from the U.S. following the revocation of the security pact.

On Thursday, Philippines Senate President Vicente Sotto said lawmakers may take Duterte's decision to end the military pact to the country's Supreme Court, according to ABS-CBN News.

The Visiting Forces Agreement was approved by lawmakers and needs their concurrence if it's to be set aside, the broadcaster quoted Sotto as saying. Sotto told a Philippine radio station that a petition to review Duterte's unilateral decision may be filed as early as next week.



Rick Rycroft/AP

Adm. Philip S. Davidson, commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, said Thursday he hopes for a "successful outcome" after the Philippines terminated its security pact with the U.S.

lateral decision may be filed as early as next week.

Early in his term, Duterte signaled he would not implement the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement with the U.S., which was signed by the former administration. The agreement gave America greater access to rotate troops and store supplies in a handful of military bases throughout the country.

But Duterte was confronted by "resistance within his own military and defense bureaucracy" and appears to have waited for "a more opportune moment" to alter the military status quo, said Renato Cruz De Castro, a professor in the International Studies Department at De La Salle Uni-

versity, Manila, in a commentary posted online Tuesday by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank.

Now, two years before the end of his term, Duterte "believes that the [Armed Forces of the Philippines] will now support his move since he has increased the defense budget, funded the military's modernization program, and promoted senior officers who will be loyal to him," Cruz De Castro said.

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.
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US, Philippines expected to hold Balikatan drills

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

Joint military exercises with the United States will go on as planned ahead of the termination of a long-standing security pact between the two allied nations in six months' time, Philippines National Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Thursday.

The multinational Balikatan exercise has taken place in the Philippines every spring for 35 years. However, Philippines officials announced Tuesday they had notified the U.S. Embassy in Manila of their intention to terminate the Visiting Forces Agreement, which permits U.S. troops to deploy in the country.

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the termination after Washington reportedly canceled the U.S. visa of Sen. Ronald Dela Rosa, a stalwart ally and former Philippines National Police chief. Dela Rosa has been cited for human rights violations related to Duterte's bloody drug war that began when he was elected president in 2016.

The agreement, in place since 1999, is slated to end 180 days after notification.

"With the formal serving of the notice of termination of the

Visiting Forces Agreement, this year's planned military exercises with the Americans shall proceed as scheduled within the 180 days that the VFA remains in force," Lorenzana said Thursday in a statement released by his office.

"However, our American counterparts may opt to discontinue the scheduled exercises before the 180 days are up."

Once the termination is final, the Philippines would "cease to have exercises" with the U.S., Lorenzana said.

The U.S. Embassy in Manila could not be reached for comment Thursday afternoon. U.S. Indo-Pacific Command did not immediately respond to requests seeking comment, and a spokesman for the III Marine Expeditionary Force in Okinawa, Japan, referred all questions to the embassy.

Gen. Felimon Santos Jr., chief of staff of the Philippines armed forces, said the Philippines would look to "increase" training and exercises with other allied nations like Japan and Australia to make up for the absence of U.S. troops, the ABS-CBN television network reported Thursday.

Politicians in the country questioned the constitutionality of the termination and expressed con-

cerns that other agreements between the two countries may now be in peril, namely the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty. That treaty requires both countries to defend one another should they be attacked by a third party.

Security experts have said that ending the Visiting Forces Agreement could do real damage to the longtime Pacific allies' defense relationship as well as harm U.S. efforts to deter China in the South China Sea.

The Philippines is locked in a series of maritime territorial disputes with China and military cooperation between the Philippines and the U.S. is seen as key to containing China and pushing back against its territorial claims.

"Washington will [be] less likely to continue to commit to Philippine defense in the South China Sea, given that there was no way for its troops to be in Filipino territory," Jeffrey Ordaniel, assistant professor of international security studies at Tokyo International University, told Stars and Stripes in January.

"One of the very few options available for the U.S. to influence China's behavior in the South China Sea, long term, is to work with its ally with the Philip-

pines," he added. "It's difficult to deter China in maritime Southeast Asia from Guam, Okinawa or Darwin. They're simply too far away ... Beijing will certainly be happy with this."

President Donald Trump said he was "fine" with the Philippines' decision when queried by a reporter Wednesday in the Oval Office.

"That's fine — we'll save a lot of money," Trump said. "I have a very good relationship there, but I really don't mind if they would like to do that."

A Duterte spokesman said Wednesday that the agreement should have been terminated "a long time ago," because it was only advantageous to the United States.

Balikatan, which translates to "shoulder to shoulder" from Tagalog, took place April 1-12 in locations around the Philippines last year. It featured 4,000 Filipino, 3,500 American and 50 Australian troops taking part in amphibious operations, live-fire training, urban operations, aviation operations and counterterrorism response on the islands of Luzon and Palawan.

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PACIFIC

New rotational brigade transitions to S. Korea

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Tanks and other armored vehicles rolled off a ship onto the Korean Peninsula this week in preparation for the arrival of the new rotational brigade.

The Fort Riley, Kan.-based 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, known as the Dagger Brigade, will be the eighth rotational brigade to serve in South Korea since the system began in 2015.

It is replacing the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, which will return to Fort Hood, Texas, after its nine-month rotation.

The transition comes as the U.S. and South Korean militaries are expected to begin joint exercises next month. The allies have reduced the scale of the drills in a bid to avoid antagonizing North Korea amid stalled diplomatic efforts to persuade it to give up nuclear weapons.

The brigades bring their own equipment to the peninsula and remove some of it when they leave, including M1 Abrams tanks and M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles.

"The logistical process allows for proper maintenance and service of the old equipment and aligns our deployed forces with current Army-wide modernization and readiness efforts," the military said Thursday in a press release.

The equipment was offloaded

at the southern port of Gwangyang, then taken to its destination on the South Korean rail system, it added.

The brigades will hold the official transfer of authority ceremony in early March, officials said. It's the Dagger Brigade's first rotation to South Korea.

The rotational system was introduced in 2015 when the Army deactivated the permanently stationed unit that had served near the border with North Korea for five decades.

The Army said that it exposes more soldiers to South Korea's operating environment and enhances the alliance between the two countries that fought together in the 1950-53 Korean War.

Maj. Gen. Patrick Donahoe, the Eighth Army's deputy commander for operations, praised the outgoing Greywolf Brigade, which arrived in June 2018.

"They arrived at a high state of readiness and we're returning them to Fort Hood better trained and more experienced, like any unit marked for rotation" to South Korea, Donahoe said. "We're really looking forward to the Dagger Brigade's arrival and expect nothing but the best from a unit of the Army's oldest division."

North Korea, which commonly denounces U.S. activities on the divided peninsula as threats, has criticized plans for the rotational deployment of the new unit after it was officially announced in early December.

State-run media called it a violation of the spirit of negotiations,



U.S. Army

Tanks and other equipment are off-loaded at a port in South Korea ahead of the arrival of the Fort Riley, Kan.-based 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

as Washington has insisted that it remains open to talks despite the prolonged stalemate.

"The brigade announced the launch of transfer of its latest

tanks and armored vehicles," the Korean Central Broadcasting Station was quoted as saying in mid-January. "Such U.S. attitude discloses the deceitfulness of its

call for dialogue, which it has been speaking of in front of the world."

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'We're really looking forward to the Dagger Brigade's arrival and expect ... the best from a unit of the Army's oldest division.'

Maj. Gen. Patrick Donahoe
Eighth Army deputy commander for operations

Jewish American soldiers killed in WWII receive Star of David headstones

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

The American Battle Monuments Commission at a ceremony Wednesday replaced Latin crosses with Star of David headstones over the graves of five Jewish soldiers buried at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in the Philippines.

The crosses were originally installed in error following the soldiers' deaths during World War II, officials said. The new grave markers were requested by the families of the fallen soldiers with support from Operation Benjamin, a nonprofit dedicated to rectifying grave marker errors for Jewish-American soldiers around the world.

The ceremony was attended by family members of the service members, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim and officials from the monuments commission.

"These young men left their families, the comfort of their homes and their faith communities to answer their nation's call," commission secretary William Matz said in a statement.

The soldiers whose headstones

were replaced include:

■ Pvt. Louis Wolf, 25, of Philadelphia and the 454th Ordnance Company (aviation), who was captured at Corregidor and died of malnutrition and dehydration in a Japanese prison camp in 1945.

■ Pvt. Arthur Waldman, 27, of Detroit and the 200th Coast Artillery Regiment, who survived the Bataan Death March and died of beriberi heart failure at a Japanese prison camp in Tokyo in 1944.

■ First Lt. Robert Fink, 25, of New York City, and the 583rd Signal Air Warning Battalion, who died of scrub typhus on his birthday at a Papua New Guinea hospital in 1944.

■ Pvt. Allan Franken, 20, of New York City, and the 24th Infantry Division, who died from a gunshot wound in Mindanao, Philippines, in 1945.

■ Sgt. Jack Gilbert, 37, who was born in Poland and drafted in New York, of the 161st Signal Photographic Company. He was killed by an enemy shell on Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, in 1944.

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MIDEAST

Elevated threat

Rise in friction with Iran so soon after arrival in Mideast 'like a splash of cold water in the face'

By DAN LAMOTHE
The Washington Post

ABOARD THE USS NORMANDY IN THE NORTH ARABIAN SEA — The captain of this warship loaded with Tomahawk missiles delivered the news to his crew: Hours earlier, the United States had killed Iran's most powerful military commander in a drone strike.

Navy Capt. Christopher Stone said it wasn't clear how Iran might respond to the death of Qassem Soleimani. But the Normandy, escorting the USS Harry S. Truman near the Persian Gulf, had to be ready for anything, he said.

"We must be prepared for direct military action," Stone recalled telling the crew.

With the warning and an elevated threat level, the sailors prepared for potential combat. Additional precautions put in place on the Normandy required them to carry flame-resistant balaclavas and gloves to complement their flame-resistant uniforms, and the Internet service they used to speak to family members was temporarily cut.

Across the region, U.S. military officials made other changes as vessels were dispatched to sea, where they would be better positioned. The Navy's schedule for ships going into port also was altered.

The previously unreported details and interviews with more than 20 sailors on three Navy warships paint a picture of a military that was bracing for war in the wake of Soleimani's Jan. 3 death in Baghdad. Days later, Iran launched ballistic missiles at two sites in Iraq housing U.S. troops, briefly deepening the crisis until it became clear that no Americans were killed.

The events point to a new reality: While tensions have cooled for the moment, the Pentagon is still feeling out whether Iran will retaliate again, and how.

"I have spent 26 years in this Navy not hoping for war, but preparing for war so that we can keep our nation safe," Stone said in an interview on his warship. "I would say overwhelmingly, the response I saw was a crew that was very focused."

After Iran's missile attack, President Donald Trump declared on Twitter that "all is well." But defense officials have reported a growing number of service members who suffered mild traumatic brain injuries. As of Monday, the Pentagon said 109 had been diagnosed, with 75 treated in Iraq and returned to duty, 21 sent back to the United States and others still under treatment in Germany.

"Our great American forces are prepared for anything," Trump said in a televised address. "Iran appears to be standing down, which is a good thing for all parties concerned and a very good thing for the world."

Aboard the Normandy, sailors watched Trump's speech, said Navy Lt. David Remmers, who



MICHAEL H. LEZMAN/U.S. Navy

Seaman Charles Mazer, from Mantua, N.J., scans the horizon aboard the guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy in the Gulf of Oman, on Sunday. USS Normandy was on high alert after Iran launched missiles at two sites with U.S. troops.

Bataan: Navy assault ship's trip across strait is to 'reassure allies'

FROM FRONT PAGE

departed last November during its record-breaking 10-month deployment.

The 96-mile-long Strait of Hormuz is bounded to the north by Iran and to the south by Oman and the United Arab Emirates. Around a fifth of the world's oil passes through the strategic shipping route, which is only 21 miles wide at its narrowest point.

Bataan's passage through the strait was to "reassure allies" and ensure "stability and security essential to maritime

commerce," skipper Capt. Greg LeLand said.

"Our continued commitment to our partner nations lends to the strength of nations here in the Gulf and elsewhere in the region," LeLand said.

The transit comes after a month of tension in the region following the January killing by the U.S. of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and retaliatory rocket attacks on an airbase in Iraq that left more than 100 U.S. service members with traumatic brain injuries.

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the highest I had ever heard."

Chief Warrant Officer Jordan Buck said Stone's announcement about Soleimani was a "shocking moment."

With 17 years in the Navy and several deployments to the Middle East, Buck said he arrived on the Normandy on Dec. 28 and "just thought it was my luck" that a crisis erupted days later. He soon began refreshing sailors on how to use life rafts.

"The threat level being elevated like it was, I had never seen that," Buck said. "It was like a splash of cold water in the face."

Nearby on the Truman, a 1,092-foot vessel where 5,000 Ameri-

cans and dozens of fighter jets are deployed, the situation felt similar for some sailors.

Seaman Desiree Allen, who operates aviation support equipment on the carrier, said "of course I was scared" when she heard about the rising tension with Iran. One of the most challenging parts was not being able to share specifics with worried family members about what was happening, she said.

Still, she added, she knew she had a job to do and put her faith in the ship's defenses and her fellow sailors.

"At the end of the day, the carrier is one of the most protected ships, so I felt protected," she said. "I know what we've got on board, and I know they don't have nothing on us."

Navy officials declined to specify what prompted the elevated threat level or how high exactly it was, citing security concerns. They also asked The Post to withhold other specific information about the steps the Navy took in response.

The USS Tempest, a 170-foot patrol craft, was at sea shortly after the strike on Soleimani. But Lt. Cmdr. Andre Cleveland, the commanding officer, said it has been quiet throughout his crew's deployment.

The ship, sailing out of Bahrain, is part of a rotating fleet involved in Operation Sentinel, a mission the United States established with several partner countries last year to protect commercial vessels from Iranian attacks. The Tempest spends some time on

"sentry" duty, offering security to commercial mariners while larger warships like destroyers carry out "sentinel" duty by using powerful sensors to watch for potential attacks.

On one 12-hour day at sea, the Tempest sailed dozens of miles into the Persian Gulf. Sailors briefly deployed a battery-operated Puma drone from the ship's deck to test its abilities, practiced facing harassment from a speedboat and sailed in formation with smaller American vessels, including two Mark 6 patrol boats and two Coast Guard cutters.

Cleveland, who has been in command of the Tempest since June, said all nations have a right to sail in international waters and that the Navy is looking to de-escalate tensions. But his crew is "ready for anything," he said.

Rear Adm. Andrew Loisel, who oversees the Truman, Normandy and other ships as commander of a carrier strike group, said even at the height of the threat from Iran, the Sentinel mission continued. But he vaguely acknowledged that it changed, saying the Navy returned to the mission "almost immediately after the cessation of hostilities."

Standing on the bridge of the Normandy, Stone watched as a succession of fighter jets landed nearby on the Truman. A single fighter jet streaked by the Normandy's port side with a roar, its afterburners glowing in the twilight as it pulled into a climb.

"He's just showing off for you," Stone said with a grin.

MILITARY



DIMITRI MESSINIS/AP

Experts in a speed boat examine the damaged hull of the USS Cole at the Yemeni port of Aden, on Oct. 15, 2000, after an al-Qaida attack that killed 17 sailors. Sudan's transitional government said it has reached a settlement with families of the victims.

Sudan's government reaches deal with families of USS Cole victims

By NOHA ELHENNAWY
Associated Press

CAIRO — Sudan's transitional government said Thursday it has reached a settlement with families of the victims of the 2000 attack on USS Cole in Yemen, in a bid to have the African country taken off the U.S. terrorism list and improve relations with the West.

The settlement is the latest step from Khartoum to end its international pariah status. Earlier this week, Sudan's provisional rulers said they had agreed to hand over longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court to face trial on charges of war crimes and genocide during the fighting in the western Darfur region.

Also, Sudan's interim leader, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, earlier this month met in Uganda with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who announced that Israel and Sudan would normalize relations after decades of en-

imity. Observers and Sudanese officials have said that the settlement with the USS Cole victims was among the last hurdles faced by Sudan on its path to being removed from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terror.

At the time of the Oct. 12, 2000, attack in the Yemeni port of Aden that killed 17 sailors and wounded more than three dozen others, Sudan was accused of providing support to al-Qaida, which claimed responsibility for the attack.

Today, Sudan's interim authorities are desperate to have its listing by the U.S. as a state sponsor of terror lifted, in order to receive an injection of badly needed funds from international lending institutions. Sudan's justice ministry said that the agreement was signed with the victims' families last Friday but its statement gave no details of the settlement.

There was no immediate comment from Washington.

Sudan's information minister and interim government spokes-

man, Faisal Saleh, told The Associated Press over the phone that Justice Minister Nasr-Eddin Abdul-Bari had traveled last week to Washington to sign the deal, which included compensations for both those wounded and the families of those killed in the attack.

He said the figures could not be disclosed because the Sudanese government is still in negotiations to reach a similar settlement with families of victims of the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. More than 200 people were killed in the attacks and more than 1,000 were wounded.

The initial figures on the table had been in the billions, he said, but Sudan's interim government had "inherited an empty treasury." He said he hoped the international community would be sympathetic to the situation.

"We expect the United States and the world to understand and to be supportive instead of imposing more obstacles," he said.

Marine Raiders in California will move to NC base

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps will move its Raider battalions at Camp Pendleton, Calif., to North Carolina, the East Coast home of Marine Raiders, by 2022, officials announced Wednesday.

The move means all personnel with Marine Forces Special Operations Command will be based at Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, N.C., according to a special operations command statement.

About 900 Marines, sailors and civilian employees attached to the 1st Marine Raider Battalion and the 1st Marine Raider Support Battalion at Camp Pendleton will start their moves in summer 2021, the statement said. They will join the 2nd and 3rd Raider battalions already based at Lejeune.

Locating its special operations battalions in one place will have "significant impacts to time and money," according to the statement.

The service will save about \$55 million between 2021-26 by reducing housing allowances and the cost to move Marines and their families between duty stations, the Marine Corps Times reported Wednesday. Raiders will no longer need to make cross-country moves when switching units.

However, the move will leave the Pacific without a Raider unit as the service trains to meet a "great power" challenge from China in East Asia.

Marine Raiders are elite operators who must complete a rigorous, seven-month individual training course to earn their title. Marine Raiders earned fame in World War II, but the current command was created in 2006.

The cost-savings decision is in line with the 2018 National Defense Strategy's call on defense agencies to "build a more lethal force and reform the department for greater performance and affordability," Marine Forces Special Operations commander Maj. Gen. Daniel Yoo said in the statement.

The Camp Pendleton Raiders will move to Camp Lejeune in three phases to complement normal Marine Corps permanent change of station timelines and manage the population increase in the Jacksonville, N.C., area, according to the statement.

Camp Lejeune officials are working with area schools to plan for increases in student population "to ensure that all students will be accommodated effectively and receive a quality education," according to the statement.

The Marine Raider Training Center, which assesses and selects special operations candidates and trains designated Marines in individual, basic and advanced special operations, is also based at Camp Lejeune.

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'[The move will have] significant impacts to time and money.'

Special operations command statement
U.S. Marine Corps

Governor OKs reforms in how Wis. National Guard handles assault cases

By TODD RICHMOND
Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Gov. Tony Evers approved a plan Monday to improve how the Wisconsin National Guard handles sexual misconduct complaints.

The plan includes a ban on internal sexual assault investigations. All complaints will be reported to the adjutant general, local police and the federal National Guard Bureau's Office of Complex Investigations.

The plan also calls for a new electronic case tracking system and a new council led by the adjutant general to provide state-level oversight of all sexual assault, sexual harassment and retaliation cases. Recruiting for judge advocate, sexual assault pre-

vention and equal opportunity employment positions are a priority.

Victims will be referred to National Guard Bureau attorneys at every step of their cases and information about disciplinary actions will be passed down the chain of command to individual soldiers and airmen while protecting victim privacy.

The Guard said the plan will be implemented in phases and will be fully in place by Aug. 31.

"There is still much work to be done to ensure that our service members are safe and supported while carrying out their mission, but we are taking important steps to implement needed reforms," Evers said.

Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, the Wisconsin Guard's interim adjutant general, said in a

statement that the plan will reassure soldiers and airmen that the Guard meets out discipline in sexual misconduct cases.

"Simultaneously, our commanders, junior leaders, and all our service members will have visibility on trends and issues across the force, and see that discipline is administered consistently and with transparency across the force," he said.

Evers issued an executive order calling for the plan in December after the NGB conducted a top-to-bottom review of Guard sexual misconduct reporting protocols. The review resulted in a report revealing multiple shortcomings.

Evers and U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin requested the review in March after Master Sgt. Jay Ellis complained to Baldwin in 2018 that commanders in his 115th Fighter

Wing security squadron had brushed off at least six sexual misconduct complaints dating back to 2002.

One of the most glaring problems investigators found was commanders opening internal sexual assault investigations rather than referring complaints to Army or Air Force criminal investigators as required by federal law and Department of Defense policy.

The Wisconsin Guard's top commander, Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar, resigned at Evers' request hours before the report was made public. Air Force officials confirmed last month that Dunbar is under investigation for allegedly opening an internal investigation last year even though he knew the NGB investigators had identified such practices as problematic.

MILITARY

Army unit to train African forces on security

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Members of the Army's 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade will deploy to Africa soon to provide training and assistance to African forces as a way to compete with Chinese and Russian influence on the continent, the Pentagon announced Wednesday.

The SFAB unit, based at Fort Benning, Ga., will be deployed to conduct missions to train, advise and assist "in spotlight African countries," said Alyssa Farah, the chief Pentagon spokeswoman, in a prepared statement. No countries were listed in the statement nor how many people from the brigade will deploy.

The deployment will be the "first of many decisions regarding [U.S. Africa Command's] mission," according to the statement.

The SFAB soldiers will replace members of an infantry brigade from the 101st Airborne Division out of Fort Campbell, Ky., who will return home in the coming weeks.

"Army SFABs are manned, trained and equipped specifically for the train, advise and assist mission. This allows them to perform this important great-power competition role more effectively and more efficiently than conventional units," the statement reads.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper has been conducting a review of the military's combatant commands to determine how they can be aligned better with the 2018 National Defense Strategy, which prioritizes great-power competition against China and Russia.

"The purpose is to make sure that what we're doing is aligned with the National Defense Strategy, so I get the force sizing right, that the activities, the actions and tasks right in each theater of command," Esper said Tuesday to reporters traveling with him to Europe.

For several years, Esper has been focused primarily on counterterrorism operations as well as building relationships



PATRICK ALBRIGHT/U.S. Army

Soldiers from the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade conduct an exercise in July at Fort Benning, Ga.

and training opportunities with African partner countries. U.S. military forces and local partners have conducted operations in Somalia against the al-Shabab terrorist group, which is seen as a serious threat in eastern Africa.

While al-Shabab is considered one of the biggest threats on the continent, "competition with Russia and China on the continent is critically important. We think we have a competitive edge there," Maj. Gen. Roger Cloutier, the commander of U.S. Army Africa, said Wednesday to reporters at the Pentagon via a teleconference from Italy.

China has a military base in Djibouti,

not far from the strategic American base there, and members of the Wagner group, a Russian mercenary organization, are known to operate in Libya.

Cloutier said African allies know the U.S. is a better military partner than Russia or China.

"So the competitive advantage that we have on the African continent, I think, is the professional nature of our military, the discipline of our soldiers, the great training that we can provide, and the fact that we believe we're the partner of choice. So that's how we compete head-to-head with them," he said.

The U.S. Army Africa commander emphasized Esper's review was not taking AFRICOM away from its commitments to the region.

"The message I'm relaying to my partners is that we're not walking away. We are still engaged," he said, adding U.S. Army Africa will have its largest exercise — Exercise Africa Lion — in late March with about 9,000 soldiers from the U.S., African partners and allied nations participating.

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National Guard leaders seek Space Force National Guard

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Top National Guard leaders want the Pentagon to create a Space Force National Guard, which they said Wednesday was needed to ensure continuity between guard space operators and their active-duty counterparts who will soon join the new military branch.

Most of the National Guard's almost 1,500 space-focused troops would be moved into a Space Force National Guard so they can keep pace with changes certain to occur as the Space Force, established late last year, grows and develops its own culture, techniques and procedures, six National Guard generals told reporters at the Pentagon.

"Personally, I don't see how we have a Space Force without a Space Guard," said Air Force Maj. Gen. Michael Loh, the adjutant general for the Colorado National Guard. "I really don't."

Air Force Brig. Gen. Torrence Saxe, the adjutant general for the

Alaska National Guard, added: "I don't think they would function very well if we didn't have a Space National Guard."

The National Guard's current space operations force is small but growing, with some 1,100 Air National Guard troops in space operations and another 300 or so Army National Guard members. It has units that conduct space missions in Colorado, California, Florida, Alaska, New York, Ohio and Arkansas, and is in the process of establishing such units in Hawaii and Guam.

Guard space operators are involved in a variety of operations, including space intelligence, homeland missions such as missile defense, and offensive electronic warfare, the generals said. Guard planners have proposed limiting Space Force National Guard operations to those nine states and territories who already have or will soon have space capabilities.

They said attempting to have a Space Force National Guard in all 50 states and four territories,

which all have Army and Air National Guards, would not be cost effective to taxpayers.

"We're not looking to stand up 54 Space [Force] National Guards," said Air Force Maj. Gen. James Eifert, the adjutant general for Florida's guard.

"The concern it would be creating this huge, bureaucratic overhead is really not what we

envision as how it would be and operate."

The generals said officials in Defense Secretary Mark Esper's office are debating the merits or structure of a Space Force reserves component. They are required to report their plans for such an organization to Congress by late March.

Already, top generals from many of the states that have space

forces have talked with lawmakers about the need to establish a Space Force National Guard.

Army Maj. Gen. David Baldwin said he hopes Pentagon officials determine on their own that they should build a space guard, but if not, he and other top guard leaders would lobby congressional lawmakers directly to add it into the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets Pentagon policy.

"It is being received very well by the members on The Hill," Baldwin said. "We are hopeful ... we don't have to [lobby Congress], but we are prepared to do that."

Pentagon leaders are in the process of building the Space Force, the first new branch of the military established since the Air Force in 1947. Gen. Jay Raymond, the chief of space operations, is now the only official member of Space Force, but officials expect it to grow to about 6,000 troops during the next year, beginning with the transfer of Air Force airmen who work on space missions. Army and Navy troops are also

expected to move into the new military service.

The Space Force on Monday unveiled a \$15.5 billion budget request for fiscal year 2021, which made no mention of a National Guard or reserves component. However, Air Force senior leadership, which oversees the Space Force within the Air Force Department, has backed a Space Force National Guard publicly.

The National Guard leaders said the lack of clarity is concerning, as they are prepared to begin planning for a Space Force National Guard as soon as possible.

"We are a proven model. We feel like it's a pretty simple solution," Eifert said.

"We're not big fans of another yearlong study to examine the same things we have already spent some time studying. We feel like it's a pretty simple solution, we'd like to be part of the solution, and we would like to move forward with it."

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Loh

MILITARY



GODOT GALGANO/U.S. Army

Effort not flagging

Staff Sgt. Kelsey Schroeder runs the ball up the middle during the 103rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command "Super Bowl" flag football game at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, on Sunday.

Soldier hurt paratrooper in brawl on street in Germany, Army says

By IMMANUEL M. JOHNSON
AND MARCUS KLOECKNER
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — An American soldier was injured in a brawl Saturday night on a Grafenwoehr street that's home to several bars, German police and U.S. military officials said.

"At this time, we are investigating a 21-year-old man" who is suspected of injuring the soldier in the brawl, said Werner Stopfer, chief of police in the town of Eschenbach, whose officers responded to calls about the melee at around 2 a.m. on Alte Amberg-er Strasse in Grafenwoehr.

The injured soldier is from the 173rd Airborne Division, said Maj. Christopher Bradley, spokesman for the division, which

has units in Grafenwoehr and in Vicenza, Italy. He was treated for his injuries and returned to duty, Bradley added.

The other person involved was also an American soldier, said Bradley, but it was unclear to which unit he was attached.

German police detained the suspect and handed him over to U.S. military police, said Stopfer.

By the time German police officers had arrived on the scene from Eschenbach, about seven miles away, about two dozen people were involved in a street brawl, said Stopfer. It was unclear if everyone involved in the fight was an American service member.

Soldiers from the 173rd have been accused of being involved in numerous violent incidents in Vi-

cenza, including a fight in which one Italian man had his jaw fractured and another sustained broken ribs.

The incident in the Italian city's old town in November led the 173rd Airborne Brigade's commander to put Contra Pescherie Vecchie — which, like Alte Amberg-er Strasse in Grafenwoehr is home to several popular bars — off limits to brigade soldiers for 45 days.

Patrols by military police will be stepped up this weekend in the Grafenwoehr area "to ensure proper discipline and provide support to any soldiers in need," said Bradley.

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Soldier, 21, dies at Bagram Airfield

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A U.S. soldier has died in a noncombat incident at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan, the Defense Department said Thursday.

Spc. Branden Tyne Kimball, 21, from Central Point, Ore., died Wednesday at the base, which is the U.S.'s largest outpost in the country, the Pentagon said.

The aircraft structural repairer was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) Combat Aviation Brigade, based at Fort Drum, N.Y.

The Pentagon provided no further details about the incident



Kimball

but said an investigation has been launched.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Spc. Branden Tyne Kimball during this very difficult time," said Lt. Col. Kamil Szalkopier, 10th Mountain Division spokesman. "He will be missed from our formations."

Kimball joined the Army in August 2016. His awards and decorations include the National

Defense Service Medal and the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Campaign Star.

Troops from the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade deployed last fall for a nine-month rotation to support the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, replacing the 1st Airborne Division Combat Aviation Brigade out of Fort Bliss, Texas.

Official photos posted online show some elements of 10th CAB rotating back to the U.S. in December and January.

Kimball is the seventh U.S. service member to have died in Afghanistan this year. Four of the deaths have been combat-related.

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GAO: DOD effort on kid-on-kid sex assaults has gaps

Associated Press

The U.S. Department of Defense is struggling to change how it handles the abuse of military kids, including cases involving sexual assault by other children, according to a report commissioned by Congress.

The military has been slow to implement reforms that lawmakers mandated more than a year ago, said the report released Wednesday by the U.S. Government Accountability Office. The Pentagon still doesn't know the extent of child-on-child sexual assaults, in part because some officials dismiss incidents without reporting them and the Pentagon has no one place to track all cases that have been logged.

Worldwide, more than 1.2 million school-age children live with military families, many on large bases that include schools, recreation centers, playgrounds and other trappings of civilian life.

While the report credited the Pentagon and some armed services for making policy changes on paper, it concluded ground-level change was lagging.

"I'd say their intentions are good. They're starting to make progress," said Brenda Farrell, the report's primary author. "But it has a long way to go in order to get it to the point where they have oversight in place to be able to say that things are actually improving or that they've got that particular area under control."

Lawmakers tasked Congress' watchdog agency with doing its review after an Associated Press investigation detailed how justice failed both victims and offenders in child-on-child sexual assaults on bases. AP's reporting showed how the Pentagon and Department of Justice were failing both victims and offenders. Cases that investigators made often died on the desks of prosecutors, even when an attacker confessed. Victims were denied help because regulations granted counseling only if the attacker was an adult.

In response, Congress passed legislation that required a series of reforms, starting in fall 2018. Wednesday's report amounted to a progress check.

The report recommended 23 changes, which the GAO's Farrell said was a high number.

"If the leadership sends the message this is a high priority, then everyone else will start to fall in line," Farrell said.

In responses included in the report, DOD generally agreed with the suggestions.

On one recommendation, the Pentagon said it was working with the Department of Justice to improve how criminal investigators

and prosecutors respond to cases. AP found that federal prosecutors with jurisdiction over many large domestic bases and all overseas bases rarely prosecute. On some bases, state prosecutors have jurisdiction — and were much more likely to take a case. Unlike the federal system, states have juvenile justice programs that focus on rehabilitation.

Another recommendation cited a lack of pediatric sexual assault forensic examiners to help build cases based on physical evidence — the military there are only 11 such specialists, the report said. The Pentagon agreed that more expertise was needed and said it was working on building that expertise.

Generally, the changes related to child-on-child sexual assault so far have focused on revising written policies for how to handle and track reports. The military's equivalent of social services, the Family Advocacy Program, published new guidelines as did the Army and the Pentagon-run school system, Department of Defense Education Activity.

AP's investigation documented nearly 700 sex assault reports on U.S. bases worldwide over 10 years, a certain undercount because the Pentagon did not systematically track cases.

The GAO also found that the Defense Department didn't know the full scope of the problem because data kept by its various branches was incomplete — and a centralized tracking system is a long way from reality. The Pentagon said it awarded a contract to develop a database in mid-November.

The Defense Department "has not yet identified all information requirements, developed a plan for how it will use the data it collects, or established a schedule for development and implementation," GAO said of a tracking database.

The report also found that some complaints weren't getting classified as abuse by staff at military bases. That staff has "considerable discretion" in deciding whether complaints are investigated or recorded in incident-tracking data.

In the DOD's education system, for example, the GAO identified incidents of student misconduct, including unwanted genital contact with peers, but schools didn't treat as serious and report to the upper administration.

"As a result, systemic issues within a particular school or district may never be reported to DoD's leadership," said the report, "and any additional resources that a school or district needs to prevent future incidents may not be identified."

NATION

Critics: Trump on 'retribution tour' after trial

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In the week since his acquittal on impeachment charges, a fully emboldened President Donald Trump is demonstrating his determination to assert an iron grip on government, pushing his Justice Department to ease up on a longtime friend while using the levers of presidential powers to exact payback on real and perceived foes.

Trump has told confidants in recent days that he felt both vindicated and strengthened by his acquittal in the Senate, believing Republicans have rallied around him in unprecedented fashion while voters were turned off by the political process, according to four White House officials and Republicans close to the West Wing who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

Since then, Trump and his aides have moved with haste to clear his administration of those he sees as insufficiently loyal, reaching all the way back to the time of former special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Democrats and outside analysts are raising red flags that Trump is exhibiting a post-impeachment thirst for vengeance that's gone beyond bending norms and could potentially cause lasting damage

to institutions.

Some Republican senators, including Tennessee's Lamar Alexander, Maine's Susan Collins and Alaska's Lisa Murkowski, said they found Trump's effort to pressure Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy inappropriate. But they also expressed hope following his acquittal that Trump had learned a lesson from the episode.

Murkowski acknowledged Wednesday that "there haven't been very strong indicators this week that he has."

After Trump vented on Twitter this week about federal prosecutors recommending up to nine years in federal prison for his confidant Roger Stone, the Justice Department abruptly announced that it would reevaluate the recommended sentence. Justice officials insisted the timing was coincidental; they'd already been planning to pull the recommendation.

In recent days, the White House has yanked a senior Treasury Department nomination away from a former Justice Department official who supervised the prosecutions of several Trump advisers.

The administration also fired an EPA official who claims he was ousted because he was deemed too friendly with Democrats.

Trump even suggested this week that the Pentagon investigate and potentially discipline former White House aide Lt. Col.



EVAN VUCCA/AP

President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting Wednesday with Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno in the Oval Office in Washington. Trump has begun a removal process of everyone he deems unloyal from his administration after his acquittal.

Alexander Vindman, who provided damaging testimony about the president in the impeachment inquiry.

That came after White House officials last week told Vindman and his twin brother, also an Army officer who had been detailed to the White House National Security Council, that their services were no longer needed and that they would be reassigned to new duties by the Pentagon.

"We are witnessing a crisis in the rule of law in America — unlike one we have ever seen before," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a speech on the Senate floor Wednesday. Schumer called for the Justice Department's independent inspector general to probe the department's action in the Stone case. Later, House lawmakers announced Attorney General William Barr would come be-

fore them next month to answer questions.

Former Justice Department officials struggled to recall a precedent, describing it as norm-shattering turmoil that raises troubling questions about the apparent politicization of an agency meant to function independent of White House sway.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Michael Bronwich, a former federal prosecutor and Justice Department inspector general who has been representing former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe in a criminal investigation before the same U.S. attorney's office.

Trump turned testy during an Oval Office appearance when reporters asked him about interfering in the Stone case and whether he learned anything from his impeachment ordeal.

He described the lesson he

gleaned from being just the third president to endure an impeachment trial: "Democrats are crooked. ... They're vicious, they shouldn't have brought impeachment and that my poll numbers are 10 points higher because of fake news."

Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat, accused Trump of being on a "retribution tour" and suggested that Senate Republicans — with the exception of Utah's Mitt Romney, who voted with Democrats to convict Trump on the abuse of power count — encouraged the president by turning a blind eye to his conduct.

"It's pretty clear the president of the United States did learn a lesson: the lesson he can do whatever he wants, whenever he wants, he can abuse his office, he'll never ever be held accountable by this Senate," Brown said.

Congress left adrift after impeachment with elections near

By LISA MASCARO

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Inside the Capitol, it's as if the impeachment of President Donald Trump never happened.

One week after the historic undertaking shuttered to a close, Congress is feverishly back at work emboldened but also arguably diminished by the outcome.

Senate Republicans are flexing their new status as Trump's unshakable allies, hitching their election pursuits to his and looking the other way as the president seems to dole out favoritism for friends and payback for critics with apparent impunity. They're back to confirming record numbers of judicial nominees viewing impeachment politically as a net gain.

"We won and they lost," declared Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

House Democrats are franti-



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., talks to reporters following a GOP strategy meeting at the Capitol on Tuesday.

cally reviving their kitchen-table agenda of health care and pocketbook priorities, a direct appeal to voters after spending the past months focused on erecting a

firewall against potential wrongdoing by the president.

What has become clear in the aftermath of the impeachment proceedings is the stark realiza-

tion that the legislative branch can only carry the country so far as a check on the executive. It's now up to voters to decide.

The outcome leaves Congress adrift, its legislative agenda uncertain, its oversight role challenged. Both parties are in flux as the nation's political energy turns toward the presidential primaries ahead of the November election, when voters will also decide control of the House and Senate.

"Everything is at stake in November," said Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, the Democratic caucus chairman, as he implored Americans to prepare to vote "as if your life depends on it."

Democrats warn that Trump, far from having learned lessons from becoming the third impeached president, is in fact engaged in an escalating pattern of retribution and political favoritism that started as soon as he was acquitted by the Senate.

"Republicans thought the pres-

ident would learn his lesson. The lesson the president learned was that the Republican Party will not hold him accountable no matter how egregious his behavior," he said.

Some Republicans who indicated the president might temper his behavior acknowledged Wednesday the limits.

"I said before that I would hope that the president would learn from that experience," said Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn.

Asked if the president has learned any lessons from impeachment, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said: "He seems the same as he did two weeks ago."

Democrats, though, are displaying only tepid enthusiasm for digging deeper into Trump's alleged wrongdoings after the Senate voted last week to acquit him of the charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress in the Ukraine matter.

NATION

2020 hopefuls focusing on Super Tuesday

By WILL WEISSERT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Nevada votes next and then South Carolina. But top Democrats vying for their party's presidential nomination are already looking ahead to the biggest prize on the primary calendar: Super Tuesday, the slate of contests when more than a dozen states go to the polls.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren is holding a town hall on Thursday night in the Washington suburb of Arlington, Virginia, a day before Sen. Bernie Sanders makes two North Carolina stops, then hits Texas. Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Ind., will campaign in California between fundraisers in San Francisco and Silicon Valley.

All four states vote March 3, along with a crush of others from Alabama to Colorado and from Maine to Utah, as well as Warren's home state of Massachusetts and Sanders' native Vermont. More than 140 delegates to the Democratic National Convention are at stake, about a third of the total.

The focus on Super Tuesday comes at a pivotal point in the campaign. For Sanders and Buttigieg, who have emerged in strong positions after contests in Iowa and in New Hampshire, the travel gives them an opportunity to show their national appeal and woo larger concentrations of non-white voters. For struggling candidates like Warren, it's a signal that they are still in the fight.



ANDREW HARNIK/AP

Democratic presidential candidate and former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg arrives to speak to supporters at a primary night election rally at Nashua Community College on Tuesday in Nashua, N.H.

And for everyone, it's a chance to prove they won't cede this swath of delegate-rich states to Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire former New York mayor who has spent months building his campaign around Super Tuesday. He campaigned in Tennessee on Wednesday and will be in Texas and North Carolina on Thursday.

"All bets are off this cycle," said Texas Democratic strategist Colin Strother, who is bullish on

Bloomberg's chances of resonating in his state and beyond.

So far, there's no sign that candidates are completely bypassing Nevada or South Carolina. Every leading contender will be in Nevada this weekend as early voting begins. Democrats will caucus there on Feb. 22.

But some are shifting their resources as they begin an awkward balancing act of paying attention to the remaining early

states while stockpiling enough money to keep themselves in the conversation in the bevy of contests unfolding next month. Warren, for instance, will be in South Carolina on Friday but is pulling television advertising from the state after this weekend. Some of that money will instead go to the Super Tuesday state of Maine.

Bloomberg, who is self-funding his campaign, doesn't have to make such considerations. He's

skipped the first four states to deploy a political shock-and-awe campaign after that, spending heavily on television ads while already hiring more than 2,100 staffers in 40 states and U.S. territories, including all voting on Super Tuesday.

Past candidates have tried to forgo the early states in favor of larger ones voting later, with little success — including another former New York mayor, Rudy Giuliani, in 2008. But Bloomberg is making a larger bet on doing so than anyone has. He's worth an estimated \$60 billion and has already spent more than \$200 million to hastily build a campaign — with promises of plenty more where that came from.

The candidates doing battle before Super Tuesday, meanwhile, are a study in contrasts. Warren has deep campaign infrastructure in around 30 states but little momentum. Former Vice President Joe Biden left New Hampshire for South Carolina before the polls even closed Tuesday, has important connections there and is counting on that to carry him in other southern Super Tuesday states. But he, so far, has fared worse than Warren.

Fresh off his New Hampshire win, Sanders has already predicted victory in Nevada and California, pointing in part to his campaign's outreach to Hispanic voters. But he's also bet on record turnout that never materialized in Iowa, despite his efforts to grow the electorate.

Bloomberg aims to move past old remarks

Associated Press

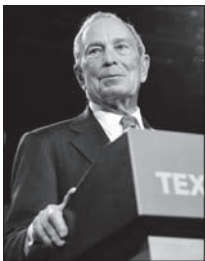
CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — Michael Bloomberg sought to move past newly resurfaced years-old comments in which he defended the controversial "stop-and-frisk" policing tactic that has been found to disproportionately affect minorities.

The billionaire former New York City mayor, who is now seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, launched a two-day tour of the South intended to build relationships with African Americans, who are a crucial voting bloc for the party. During a stop in Chattanooga on Wednesday, he told reporters: "We're going to do very well in the African American community."

"They need a good economy, they need better schools, they need more health care, they need jobs and those are the kinds of things that I can bring to the table," he said.

His trip began the same day a trio of endorsements was announced from members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The question facing Bloomberg is whether that strategy will work as the intensity of his campaign grows. The controversy over his 2015 "stop-and-frisk" remarks



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

Democratic presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg speaks at a rally at Rockettown in Nashville, Tenn., Wednesday.

demonstrated that while Bloomberg has successfully generated attention for his campaign by skipping the early voting states, flooding the airwaves with ads and traveling to multiple states a day, he hasn't faced the traditional scrutiny that comes with being a presidential candidate.

Progressive Democratic strategist Rebecca Katz noted that Bloomberg's rivals will have a

long road to sift through to try to highlight unflattering moments of his career.

"There's so much content to be unearthed," she said. "He was the mayor of New York City for 12 years. That's a lot of talking."

Indeed, the comments that resurfaced Tuesday came from a 2015 appearance Bloomberg made at the Aspen Institute. He advocated for putting "a lot of cops where the crime is, which means in minority neighborhoods."

Michael Nutter, the former Philadelphia mayor and Bloomberg's national political chair, decried the former mayor's 2015 remarks — but insisted that they didn't match the man he knows today.

"The language on that tape right at the end was just insensitive, it was inappropriate and lacking in the kind of empathy and understanding of the human condition that I know Mike Bloomberg has within him," he said.

But during that same event, Bloomberg weighed in on inequality in remarks that would seem strikingly out of place in today's Democratic Party. He declared that he'd "love to get more billionaires coming to New York. Does that give you more inequality? Yes, it does."

During his time as mayor, Bloomberg also faced controversy after The Associated Press uncovered a widespread New York Police Department surveillance program targeting Muslims, a program he continued to defend after it became public.

Billionaire activist Tom Steyer, who is working to attract black voters in South Carolina ahead of that state's Feb. 29 primary, called the comments "extremely disturbing" and said that all candidates should disavow such "racist stereotypes." Nina Turner, a national co-chair for Bernie Sanders' campaign, said that the comments reveal "the true nature" of Bloomberg and called on him to drop out because of them.

Bloomberg has apologized for his oversight of the stop-and-frisk program. But in Tennessee, he refused to directly apologize for the 2015 comments. In response to repeated questions, he said, "I don't think those words reflect how I led the most diverse city in the nation."

"I apologized for the practice and the pain that it caused," he said Wednesday. "It was five years ago. And it's just not the way that I think, and it doesn't reflect what I do every day."

\$60M raised for Trump in January

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Pro-Trump groups raised more than \$60 million in January and have more than \$200 million on hand for this year's general election, shattering fundraising records for both the path toward a goal of raising \$1 billion this cycle.

The Republican National Committee and President Donald Trump's campaign have raised more than \$525 million since the start of 2019, a record for two joint fundraising committees. The January haul coincided with most of the Senate's impeachment trial, which resulted in the Republican president's acquittal earlier this month.

"We already have 500,000 volunteers trained and activated, and this record-breaking support is helping us grow our grassroots army even more," said RNC Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel.

The pro-Trump effort said that it has gained more than 1 million new digital and direct mail donors since Democrats launched their push to impeach Trump in September.

NATION



SUSAN WALSH/AP

Former Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch speaks at Georgetown University on Wednesday.

Ex-Ukraine ambassador: State Department leaders lack vision

By BEN FOX
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The career U.S. diplomat who was ousted from her post in Ukraine by President Donald Trump, then was criticized by him as she testified at his impeachment hearings, warned that the State Department is facing a crisis with senior leaders who lack “vision.”

Marie Yovanovitch, accepting an award at Georgetown University on Wednesday, portrayed the department as “in trouble” and under threat even as she sought to encourage her audience of mostly students not to give up on diplomacy as a career.

Yovanovitch urged students to follow in her footsteps because the U.S. “needs diplomats that are ready and capable.”

“This country needs a robust foreign policy,” Yovanovitch, the former ambassador to Ukraine, said as she accepted the Trainor Award for excellence in diplomacy from the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown.

But she noted that the State Department is being “hollowed out” under Trump and that the art of diplomacy has become less of a priority under his administration.

“Right now, the State Department is in trouble,” Yovanovitch said in accepting the award. “Senior leaders lack policy vision, moral clarity and leadership.”

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been criticized by former diplomats and others for not coming to the defense of Yovanovitch, a charge he has denied.

Yovanovitch praised the “quiet work of diplomacy” as a way to ensure peace and prosperity in the world.

“It sounds so old-fashioned in our high-tech world, but diplomacy is about human interaction, and creating relationships of trust is more important than ever,” she said. “It’s not as exciting as sending in the Marines, but it’s cheaper and usually more effective in the long term.”

Yovanovitch was making her first public appearance since her testimony to Congress about her

efforts to press the government of Ukraine to address long-standing U.S. policy concerns about corruption. At that time, a back-channel effort led by Trump’s personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, sought to push the government of the eastern European nation to dig up political dirt to help Trump’s reelection.

She did not address the back-channel efforts explicitly, but warned about the state of diplomacy at a time when authoritarianism seems to be on the rise.

“To be blunt, an amoral, keep-‘em-guessing foreign policy that substitutes threats, fear and confusion for trust cannot work over the long haul,” she said.

Trump publicly criticized her as she testified before Congress, saying on Twitter that “everywhere Marie Yovanovitch went turned bad.” Yet, in a nearly 34-year career at the State Department, she received a series of promotions under both Republican and Democratic administrations, with positions that included ambassador to Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.

Senate votes to restrict Trump’s options on Iran

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate approved a bipartisan measure Thursday limiting President Donald Trump’s authority to launch military operations against Iran.

The measure, authored by Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., says Trump must win approval from Congress before engaging in further military action against Iran. Eight Republicans joined with Democrats to pass the resolution by a 55-45 vote.

Kaine and other supporters said the resolution was not about Trump or even the presidency, but instead was an important reassertion of congressional power to declare war.

While Trump and other presidents “must always have the ability to defend the United States from imminent attack, the executive power to initiate war stops there,” Kaine said. “An offensive war requires a congressional debate and vote.”

The Democratic-controlled House passed a separate, non-binding war powers resolution last month. The House could take up the Senate resolution later this month, said House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md.

Two-thirds votes in the House and GOP-run Senate would be needed to override an expected Trump veto.

Answering a claim by some of Trump’s supporters and Trump himself that the measure would send a signal of weakness to Iran and other potential adversaries, Kaine said the opposite was true.

“When we stand up for the rule of law — in a world that hungers for more rule of law — and say

‘this decision is fundamental, and we have rules that we are going to follow so we can make a good decision,’ that’s a message of strength,” Kaine said.

Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, agreed. Lee supports Trump’s foreign policy, including toward Iran, but said Congress cannot escape its constitutional responsibility to act on matters of war and peace.

“We want to make sure that any military action that needs to be authorized is in fact properly authorized by Congress. That doesn’t show weakness. That shows strength,” Lee said Wednesday.

The principle of congressional approval is established for an important reason, Kaine said. “If we’re to order our young men and women ... to risk their lives in war, it should be on the basis of careful deliberation by the people’s elected legislature and not on the say-so of any one person.”

Trump disputed that, arguing in two tweets Wednesday that a vote against Kaine’s proposal was important to national security.

Kaine has long pushed for action reasserting congressional power to declare war. At Republicans’ request, he removed initial language that targeted Trump in favor of a generalized statement declaring that Congress has the sole power to declare war. The resolution also directs Trump to terminate use of military force against Iran or any part of its government without approval from Congress.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, a co-sponsor, called the resolution “much needed and long overdue.”

Trump slams ex-adviser who defended key impeachment witness

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — On Thursday, President Donald Trump lashed out against former White House chief of staff John Kelly for being disloyal after the ex-adviser came to the defense of a former national security aide who offered key testimony in the impeachment inquiry.

The president’s comments targeting Kelly came after Kelly defended Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, who was among administration officials who raised concerns about Trump’s July phone call with Ukraine’s president. That call spurred the president’s impeachment trial, which ended in an acquittal last week.

“Like so many X’s, he misses the action & just can’t keep his

mouth shut ... which he actually has a military and legal obligation to do,” Trump tweeted about Kelly. “His incredible wife, Karen, who I have a lot of respect for, once pulled me aside & said strongly that ‘John respects you greatly. When we are no longer here, he will only speak well of you.’ Wrong!”

Kelly, speaking at a public forum on Wednesday in Morristown, N.J., said that Vindman did exactly as he was trained in raising concerns to his superiors after hearing “questionable” comments from Trump, according to a report by The Atlantic magazine. Vindman was ousted last week from his position as a Ukraine specialist detailed to the White House National Security

Council.

“He did exactly what we teach them to do from cradle to grave,” said Kelly, a retired Marine general who served as Trump’s chief of staff from the summer of 2017 until early last year. “He went and told his boss what he just heard.”

The Army officer was ousted from his job on the White House National Security Council last Friday, just two days after the Senate acquitted Trump on abuse of power and obstruction of justice charges. He is to be reassigned by the Pentagon.

Kelly came to Vindman’s defense after Trump suggested this week that the Pentagon should review Vindman’s conduct in the Ukraine episode and potentially consider disciplinary action

against him.

Trump has insisted that his call to Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was “perfect.” During the conversation, Trump asked Zelenskyy to do him “a favor” and look into former Vice President Joe Biden and his son’s business dealings in Ukraine.

Vindman testified that he raised his concerns inside the White House after concluding that Trump was inappropriately conditioning nearly \$400 million in military aid to the country on getting Zelenskyy’s help digging up dirt on the Republican president’s political rival.

Kelly said at the forum that Vindman’s decision to raise his concerns was valid.

“Through the Obama admin-

istration up until that phone call, the policy of the U.S. was militarily to support Ukraine in their defensive fight against ... the Russians,” Kelly said. “And so, when the president said that continued support would be based on X, that essentially changed. And that’s what that guy (Vindman) was most interested in.”

Trump initially targeted Kelly after the 2016 election to serve as his secretary of Homeland Security before Trump asked him to become his chief of staff. Kelly suggested at the forum he had some hesitation about joining the administration, but ultimately decided to at the urging of his wife.

“I frankly think he needs you and people like you,” Kelly recalled his wife telling him.

NATION

Weinstein lawyer: Prosecutors have 'movie,' not case

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Harvey Weinstein's lawyer told jurors Thursday that prosecutors in the rape case against him were acting like moviemakers, creating a world where "women are not responsible" for how they interact with men.

Weinstein is innocent, attorney Donna Rotunno said, appealing to jurors to ignore "outside forces" and use their "New York City common sense" in weighing a case seen as a watershed for the #MeToo movement. It was fueled by the downfall of Weinstein, who was once one of Hollywood's most influential figures.

Rotunno, who has taken heat from #MeToo supporters for her advocacy for the disgraced movie producer, argued that prosecutors had to come up with a "sinister tale" about him because they didn't have the evidence to prove the charges.

"The irony is that they are the producers and they are writing the script," Rotunno said. "In their universe, women are not responsible" for their behavior when they engage with men, she added.

Rotunno faces a tricky task: convincing the jury of seven men and five women that there are too many inconsistencies and contradictions in the testimony of Weinstein's accusers, without breaking his earlier promise that jurors wouldn't hear any "victim shaming."

"You don't have to like Mr. Weinstein," she told jurors. "This is not a popularity contest."

Weinstein is charged with raping a woman in a Manhattan hotel room in 2013 and forcibly performing oral sex on a different woman, Mimi Halesy, in 2006. Other accusers testified as part of a prosecution effort to show he used the same tactics to victimize many women over the years.

Weinstein, who did not testify, has maintained any sexual encounters were consensual.

The Associated Press has a policy of not publishing the names of people who allege sexual assault without their consent. It is withholding name of the rape accuser because it isn't clear if she wishes to be identified publicly.

The jury is scheduled to hear the prosecution closings Friday before getting instructions on the law from Judge James Burke next week and starting deliberations.

In often emotional testimony, Weinstein's accusers said he lured them to hotels in New York and Los Angeles on the pretense of promoting their acting careers and then sexually assaulted them. The defense countered by confronting some accusers with warm emails and other communications with Weinstein that continued for months or even years after the alleged attacks.

In her closing argument Thursday, Rotunno said the emails offered "real-time evidence" of what happened between Wein-



RICHARD DREW/AP

Harvey Weinstein defense attorneys Donna Rotunno and Arthur Aidala, left, arrive at court for his rape trial, in New York, on Thursday.

stein and the women.

She pointed to a 2007 message from Halesy asking how Weinstein was doing and signing off with "lots of love" — the year after he allegedly sexually assaulted Halesy, whom he had gotten a job on the Weinstein-produced TV show "Project Runway."

"Not an email you send to your sexual assaulter, even in the world they want to create," Rotunno told jurors. "This is where you need to say, 'Wait a minute — do I have doubt about the story she's telling?' How could you not?"

Witnesses testified about wanting a professional relationship with Weinstein, Rotunno said, "because if they label it what it was, we wouldn't be here."

During the trial, the jury also heard about emails in which the victim of the alleged rape wrote to Weinstein afterward to accept party invitations from him, give him new phone numbers and even express gratitude. One message read: "I feel so fabulous and beautiful, thank you for everything."

Rotunno delivered her closing argument less than a week after she came under fire on social media for telling The New York Times' podcast "The Daily" she'd never been attacked "because I would never put myself in that position."

Prosecutor Joan Illuzzi-Orbon rebuked Rotunno for calling the prosecution's witnesses "liars" in the interview.

Official says Puerto Rico lost \$2.6M in email scam

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Puerto Rico's government has lost more than \$2.6 million after falling for an email phishing scam, according to a senior official.

The finance director of the island's Industrial Development Company, Rubén Rivera, said in a complaint filed to police Wednesday that the agency sent the money to a fraudulent account.

Rivera said the government agency transferred the money on Jan. 17 after receiving an email that alleged a change to a banking account tied to remittance payments, according to a police statement.

Manuel Laboy, executive director of the agency, told The Associated Press that officials found out about the incident earlier this week and immediately reported it to the FBI.

"This is a very serious situation, extremely serious," he said. "We want it to be investigated until the last consequences."

Laboy declined to say how officials found out about the scam, whether anyone has been dismissed or how the company's operations have been affected by the missing funds. He said an internal investigation is underway to determine whether someone was negligent or did not follow standard procedure, adding that government officials are trying to recover the money.

"I cannot speculate about how these things might happen," he said, addressing heavy criticism from Puerto Ricans who were incredulous upon hearing the news.

Census Bureau at risk of being unprepared, report says

By MIKE SCHNEIDER

Associated Press

With the start of the 2020 census just a month away for most U.S. residents, the U.S. Census Bureau is behind in recruiting workers and establishing partnerships with civic groups, and it is at risk of missing some informational technology testing goals, according to a report released Wednesday.

While the Census Bureau has succeeded so far in early tasks of verifying addresses across the U.S. and launching an advertising campaign, the agency's readiness for upcoming operations is mixed, according to the report from the Government Accountability Office.

The report was made public Wednesday during a hearing by the House Committee on Oversight and Reform.

The GAO report said the bureau was at risk of missing testing milestones for five IT operations,

“This administration’s failures risk causing grave harm to this year’s census that could jeopardize a complete and accurate count.”

Rep. Carolyn Maloney
D-N.Y.

including one that will allow people to self-respond and another for following-up with households that haven't answered the questions on their own.

"Where the risk is, is just time. We are in a pressure cooker of time to get things done," said Nick Marinov, the GAO's director of information technology.

Lawmakers held the hearing Wednesday to get an update from Census Bureau director Steven Dillingham and other agency officials on its readiness for the largest and most complex head count in U.S. history.

Dillingham testified that the bureau was on its way toward reaching its goals for hiring and partnerships.

"We are confident that we are on mission, on budget and on target," Dillingham said. "The 2020 census is positioned for success."

The chairwoman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform said the GAO report was sending "flashing red lights" that the bureau wasn't ready.

"Whether through incompetence or intentional action, this administration's failures risk causing grave harm to this year's

census that could jeopardize a complete and accurate count," Democratic Rep. Carolyn Maloney of New York said.

U.S. Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Debra Haaland of New Mexico, both Democrats, asked what the Census Bureau was doing to overcome misperceptions that there was a question about citizenship on the 2020 questionnaire.

The U.S. Supreme Court last year rejected a Trump administration attempt to add a citizenship question to the form.

Research indicates that people respond to positive messages about the 2020 census, so instead of focusing on what could be considered a negative, like the citizenship question, "we enforce the positive," Dillingham answered.

Other lawmakers, led by Democratic Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida, were unhappy that the bureau hadn't yet shared with them a breakdown by con-

gressional district of the partnerships the agency had established in each congressional district.

Dillingham said some partners hadn't given permission to make their affiliation with the Census Bureau public.

The 2020 Census started last month in a remote part of rural Alaska.

But the rest of the nation won't be able to start answering the questionnaire until the middle of next month.

For the first time, the U.S. Census Bureau is encouraging most participants to fill out the form online, although they can still answer the questions by telephone or by returning a paper form.

The 2020 count will help determine the allocation of \$1.5 trillion in federal spending and how many congressional seats each state gets.

NATION

Suit seeks to block transgender athletes

Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — The families of three female high school runners filed a federal lawsuit Wednesday seeking to block transgender athletes in Connecticut from participating in girls sports.

Selina Soule, a senior at Glastonbury High School, Chelsea Mitchell, a senior at Canton High School and Alanna Smith, a sophomore at Danbury High School, are represented by the conservative nonprofit organization Alliance Defending Freedom. They argue that allowing athletes with male anatomy to compete has deprived them of track titles and scholarship opportunities.

"Mentally and physically, we know the outcome before the race even starts," said Smith, who is the daughter of former Major League pitcher Lee Smith. "That biological unfairness doesn't go away because of what someone believes about gender identity. All girls deserve the chance to compete on a level playing field."

The lawsuit was filed against the Connecticut Association of Schools-Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference and the boards of education in Bloomfield, Cromwell, Glastonbury, Canton and Danbury.

"Forcing girls to be spectators in their own sports is completely at odds with Title IX, a federal law designed to create equal opportunities for women in education and athletics," attorney Christiansa Holcomb said. "Connecticut's policy violates that law and reverses nearly 50 years of advances for women."

The Connecticut Association of Schools-Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference says its policy follows a state anti-discrimination law that says students must be treated in school by the gender with which they identify and the group be-



PAT EATON-ROBB/AP

Danbury High School sophomore Alanna Smith speaks during a news conference Wednesday at the Connecticut State Capitol in Hartford, Conn.

lieves the policy is "appropriate under both state and federal law."

The lawsuit follows a Title IX complaint filed last June by the girls' families and the Alliance Defending Freedom with the U.S. Education Department's Office for Civil Rights, which is investigating the policy.

The lawsuit centers on two transgender sprinters, Terry Miller and Andraya Yearwood, who have frequently outperformed their cisgender competitors.

The two seniors have combined to win 15 girls state indoor or outdoor championship races since 2017, according to the lawsuit.

The three plaintiffs have competed directly against them, almost always losing

to Miller and usually behind Yearwood. Mitchell finished third in the 2019 state championship in the girls 55-meter indoor track competition behind Miller and Yearwood.

"Our dream is not to come in second or third place, but to win fair and square," Mitchell said. "All we're asking for is a fair chance."

Yearwood, a senior at Cromwell High School, and Miller, a senior at Bloomfield High School, issued statements vehemently defending their right to run in girls events.

"I have faced discrimination in every aspect of my life and I no longer want to

remain silent," Miller said. "I am a girl and I am a runner. I participate in athletics just like my peers to excel, find community, and meaning in my life. It is both unfair and painful that my victories have been attacked and my hard work ignored."

Yearwood said she also is a girl and has been hurt by the efforts to "tear down my successes."

"I will never stop being me!" she said in her statement. "I will never stop running! I hope that the next generation of trans youth doesn't have to fight the fights that I have. I hope they can be celebrated when they succeed not demonized. For the next generation, I run for you!"

The American Civil Liberties Union said it will represent the transgender teens and defend the Connecticut policy in court. Attorney Chase Strangio, deputy director for Trans Justice with the ACLU LGBT & HIV Project, said transgender girls also are protected by Title IX.

"The idea that the law only protects the individuals with XX chromosomes as compared to individuals with XY chromosomes is found nowhere in the legislative history of Title IX, in any implementing regulation or in any other aspect of the interpretation of Title IX over the last 50 years by the courts," he said.

The attorneys for Alliance Defending Freedom is asking the court to prevent the transgender girls from competing while the lawsuit moves forward. No hearing date on that request had been scheduled Wednesday, the day before the state's indoor track championships begin.

Connecticut is one of 17 states that allowed transgender high school athletes to compete without restrictions in 2019, according to Transathlete.com, which tracks state policies in high school sports across the country.

Media seek open hearing on NFL team's emails with church

Associated Press

New Orleans news outlets were set to hear Thursday for an open hearing on the confidentiality of emails between Roman Catholic officials and the city's NFL franchise concerning clergy sex-abuse scandals.

As the Associated Press reported last month, victims' lawyers allege that hundreds of Saints emails show team executives did behind-the-scenes public relations damage control amid the Archdiocese of New Orleans' clergy abuse crisis. The team has

gone to court to keep the emails from being made public, saying court rules would ordinarily keep them under seal and that the plaintiffs' lawyers want them released "for publicity purposes."

A state court hearing is scheduled in New Orleans next week before a court-appointed special master to determine whether they may be released.

The AP has been allowed to intervene in the effort to get the emails released and lawyers for the news cooperative are being allowed to participate in arguments



Benson

Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate, WVUE-TV, WWL-TV and WDSU-TV had filed a motion for access to the

for release of the emails. However,

the Feb. 20 hearing before the special master was to be closed to the public.

The owners of The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate, WVUE-TV, WWL-TV and WDSU-TV had filed a motion for access to the

hearing. Judge Ellen Hazeur was set to hear arguments at Civil District Court in New Orleans.

The Saints, whose devoutly Catholic owner Gayle Benson is close friends with the local archbishop, have disputed as "outrageous" any suggestion that the team helped cover up crimes. They have accused plaintiffs' attorneys of mischaracterizing what is in the emails.

Benson said in a news release Monday that the NFL team played no role in determining which

priests would be named in the list of "credibly accused" clergy published by the archdiocese.

Attorneys for about two dozen men suing the church allege in court filings that the confidential emails show executives joined in the church's "pattern and practice of concealing its crimes."

The attorneys contend that included taking an active role in helping to shape the archdiocese's list of 57 credibly accused clergy, a roster an AP analysis found was undercounted by at least 20 names.

Iowa Democratic Party chairman resigns in wake of caucus chaos

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the Iowa Democratic Party announced his resignation Wednesday after a disastrous caucus process beset by technical glitches led to a dayslong delay in reporting the results, inconsistencies in the numbers and no clear winner.

The embarrassing episode also threatened Iowa's cherished status as the first voting contest of

the presidential primary season and led both front-runners to request a partial recanvass of the results.

"The fact is that Democrats deserved better than what happened on caucus night. As chair of this party, I am deeply sorry for what happened and bear the responsibility for any failures on behalf of the Iowa Democratic Party," Chairman Troy Price wrote in a resignation letter a week and a half after Iowa's caucuses.

"While it is my desire to stay in this role and see this process through to completion, I do believe it is time for the Iowa Democratic Party to begin looking forward, and my presence in my current role makes that more difficult."

Price said his departure would occur as soon as the state party elects a replacement, and he called an emergency Saturday meeting to do so.

After a breakdown in tallying

the results on Feb. 3, it took until Feb. 6 for the state party, which operates the series of roughly 1,700 local meetings statewide, to issue what it said are complete results.

In those figures, released by the party, former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg leads Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders by two state delegate equivalents out of 2,152 counted. That is a margin of 0.09 percentage points.

The Associated Press said it

was unable to declare a winner, based on the available information. The results as reported by the Iowa Democratic Party, the AP believes, may not be fully accurate.

Price had called the delays in reporting results "unacceptable." He said the party would conduct a "thorough, transparent and independent examination" of what caused the delays.

He apologized for the breakdown in the process.

NATION



AP photos

A ship sails into the harbor at Pago Pago, American Samoa. Residents of the U.S. territory are concerned about how a court ruling on citizenship will affect their way of life.

'We are so proud of who we are'

American Samoans weigh in on federal court's ruling on US citizenship

Associated Press

HONOLULU — Growing up in American Samoa, Filipo Ilaoa's neighbors were his cousins on a plot of land full of banana and breadfruit trees shared by his extended family and overseen by a chief elected by his relatives.

He worries that a federal judge's recent ruling in Utah saying those born in the U.S. territory should be recognized as U.S. citizens could threaten "fa'a Samoa," the Samoan way of life. This includes cultural traditions like prayer curfews, communal living and a belief that the islands' lands should stay in Samoan family hands.

"Basically, what it comes down to is freedom — the freedom to own communal land," said Ilaoa, 66, a retired Marine Corps sergeant major who works at the American Samoa government's office in Hawaii.

In December, U.S. District Judge Clark Waddoups sided with three people from American Samoa who live in Utah and sued to be recognized as citizens. The judge ruled that the Utah residents are entitled to birthright citizenship under the 14th Amendment. He then put his ruling on hold pending appeal.

The U.S. government, which argues that automatic citizenship should be a decision for Congress, filed an appeal Friday. The American Samoa government filed its notice of appeal Monday, said Michael Williams, a Washington lawyer representing the territory in challenging the lawsuit.

"We look forward to showing the Court of Appeals that Judge Waddoups's decision is incorrect as a matter of law and needlessly dismissive of Samoans' self-determination rights," he said in a

statement.

American Samoa is the only U.S. territory where residents have no birthright claim to citizenship. Instead, those born in the cluster of islands some 2,600 miles southwest of Hawaii are granted "U.S. national" status, meaning that they can't vote for U.S. president, run for office outside of American Samoa or apply for certain jobs. The only federal election they can cast a vote in is the race for American Samoa's nonvoting U.S. House seat.

Supporters of automatic citizenship say that it would benefit the estimated 150,000 to 160,000 nationals who live in the states.

The territory's population is about 55,000. Yet many there say they're happy being nationals and worry that birthright citizenship would influence customs, like their unique land ownership system.

"Right now, the government of the United States doesn't own a square inch of land in American Samoa," said Ilaoa, who left his village of Leone at 18 to join the Marines and later became a citizen to qualify for military jobs that require top-secret clearance. "We build what we want. Any time we want."

Most property in American Samoa is owned communally among families. Family members select chiefs, or matai, to regulate village life and oversee the land. Samoan law restricts the sale of most property to anyone with less than 50% Samoan ancestry.

Some are uncomfortable with a faraway judge making decisions about their relationship with the U.S., Williams said.

"Everybody else will come and impose their right in the village that is perfectly designed to fit



Dancers representing Hawaii and the Samoa join to form a link at a ceremony celebrating the launch of a new fiber optic cable in Pago Pago, American Samoa.



Filipo Ilaoa, left, and Bonnelley Pa'uulu pose with the American Samoa flag at the American Samoa government office in Honolulu.

every family's need that occupies that land," said Tisa Fa'amuli, who owns Tisa's Barefoot Bar in the village of Alea on Tutuila, the largest island in the American Samoa archipelago.

"At the end of the day, we are so proud of who we are," she said. "We love who we are, and we don't want to change that."

There also are concerns that automatic citizenship would disrupt religious norms such as prayer curfews that are enforced by local leaders in a territory where 100% of Samoans report

being Christian, according to the American Samoa government.

Bonnelley Pa'uulu, acting director of the American Samoa government's office in Hawaii, remembers how village police would ring a 6 p.m. bell that signaled it was time to go indoors for family prayer.

Imposing "blanket adult curfews to United States citizens could be unconstitutional under existing case law," the American Samoa government said in a court filing opposing the lawsuit.

A path to U.S. citizenship exists

for those who want it, but some say that it's costly and cumbersome.

Roy J.D. Hall Jr., who lives in the village of Vitotogi, says that he became a citizen more than 50 years ago, when it was easier. As an attorney, he helps others obtain citizenship, which he said now requires more documents and a \$750 fee. Such roadblocks are unfair, he said.

Pa'uulu opted to remain a national, even though her soldier husband became a citizen.

Maintaining the land ownership structure is important to Pa'uulu, in part because she plans to return someday. The land "ties you back to your family name, and it's like where you belong," she said.

From a legal perspective, citizenship won't lead to the downfall of American Samoa's land ownership system, said Rose Cuisson-Villazor, an expert in immigration, citizenship and property law at Rutgers Law School in New Jersey.

"Citizenship would not have the domino effect people are worried about," said Sean Morrison, a former American Samoa assistant attorney general now living in New Orleans. "I think the biggest worry is ... you don't know what a future judge might say."

WORLD

Spike in China cases with new way of counting

By YANAN WANG
Associated Press

BEIJING — China on Thursday reported a sharp spike in deaths and infections from a new virus after the hardest-hit province of Hubei applied a new classification system that broadens the scope of diagnoses for the outbreak, which has spread to more than 20 countries.

The new diagnostic approach came on the same day that Hubei and its stricken capital, Wuhan, replaced their top officials in an apparent response to public criticism of how authorities have handled the epidemic.

The death toll in China reached 1,367, up 254 from the previous day. The number of confirmed cases jumped 15,152 to 59,804. The unusually large increases were due to the change in Hubei's approach.

The toll now includes more than 13,000 cases of "clinical diagnosis" in Hubei, which appears to include those based on a doctors' analysis combined with lung imaging, as opposed to waiting for laboratory test results.

In breaking down the large number of new cases in China, National Health Commission spokesman Mi Feng said Hubei had adopted a revised diagnosis and treatment plan aimed at accelerating the identification and treatment of patients.

That adds a "clinical diagnosis case" classification to identify suspected cases who appear to have pneumonia so that patients can be accepted as soon as possible and treated as confirmed cases, Mi said, adding that should "reduce severe illness and mortality."

One expert said the changed case definition in Hubei likely speaks to the crush of patients the health system is experiencing and the backlog of untested samples.

"Clearly in Wuhan, the health system is under extreme pressure and so the first priority has to be the patient," said Mark Woolhouse, a professor of infectious disease epidemiology at the University of Edinburgh.

He said it wasn't unprecedented for case definitions to rely on doctors' diagnoses rather than wait for laboratory confirmation, and that these kinds of changes usually happen when there are simply too many patients to process in a fast-moving outbreak.

"I'm not surprised that this has happened given the way the outbreak has been going in China," Woolhouse said. "You have to be pragmatic and take the concerns of the patient first and treat them

as if they already have the disease, even in the absence of lab confirmation."

China also appointed new high-level officials in Hubei and Wuhan.

Former Shanghai Mayor Ying Yong succeeded Jiang Chaoliang as the ruling Communist Party chief in the beleaguered province, the Xinhua state news agency reported, while Wang Zhonglin took over from Ma Guoguang as the party secretary in Wuhan.

The appointments follow the sacking earlier this week of two leaders of the provincial health commission. State media also reported that a slew of others were expelled from the party for transgressions related to the epidemic.

The public has widely criticized local officials for failing to respond quickly and decisively to the new virus. Authorities initially assured people that there was little to no risk of human-to-human transmission, a statement that was later retracted. Wuhan residents said hospitals were overcrowded and lacked sufficient medical supplies. Doctors who tried to share information early on were reprimanded by police for "spreading rumors."

Many countries have implemented travel restrictions on recent visitors to China, which has more than 99% of the world's reported infections.

In an unprecedented measure to contain the disease, recently named COVID-19, the Chinese government has placed the hardest-hit cities — home to more than 60 million — under lockdown. One district in Shiyan, a city in Hubei, has implemented "wartime measures," barring residents from leaving even their apartment compounds for two weeks.

According to a local government notice, neighborhood committees will distribute basic necessities at a fixed time and at fixed prices, as well as help residents purchase any medicine they might urgently need.

Xu Min, a resident of Shiyan's Zhangwan district, said her neighborhood entrance was being guarded by community workers and security staff.

"It doesn't have too much of an impact on our life, except that we're not allowed to go out," Xu said.

World Health Organization spokesman Tarik Jasarevic said the agency is seeking more clarity from China on the updates to its case definition and reporting protocol.

"It is our current understanding that the new case definition widens the net, and includes not



CHINATOPIC/AP

A doctor checks the conditions of a patient in Jinyintan Hospital, designated for critical COVID-19 patients, in Wuhan in central China's Hubei province on Thursday.

Japan reports its 1st death from virus and 44 more cases on ship

By MARI YAMAGUCHI
Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan announced Thursday its first death from a new virus from China, hours after confirming 44 more cases on a cruise ship quarantined near Tokyo as fears of the spreading disease mount in the country.

Health Minister Katsunobu Kato said the first fatality is a woman in her 80s who had been hospitalized since Feb. 1 when she was diagnosed with pneumonia. Her confirmed diagnosis came after her death, he said. The woman, a resident of Kanagawa prefecture near Tokyo, had no record of traveling to China or contacts with Chinese visitors, and health officials are investigating how she contracted the virus.

Kato also confirmed two other cases of the virus, a Tokyo taxi driver in his 70s and a doctor in his 50s who works at a hospital in western Japan.

Earlier Thursday, he announced 44 new cases on the Diamond Princess, which is still carrying nearly 3,500 passengers and crew members. The ship now has 218 people infected with the virus out of 713 tested since it entered Yokohama Port on Feb. 3, the largest cluster of infections outside China.

In all, Japan has 250 confirmed cases of the new disease that apparently started in Wuhan, a city in central China, in December.

China has reported 1,367 deaths among 59,804 cases on the mainland. Two other locations outside the mainland, Hong Kong and the Philippines, have recorded one death each.

Kato said five of the patients sent to hospitals

earlier have severe symptoms and are on artificial respirators or under intensive care.

The government has decided to allow passengers older than 80 to get off the ship after testing negative for the virus, Kato said. He said the results of tests on about 200 eligible passengers are underway, and those with chronic health problems or in cabins without operable windows will be given priority.

Kato said the measure is to reduce health risks for passengers stuck in rooms under difficult conditions. Those who are released will be asked to stay at a designated facility through the end of the quarantine period.

"We are doing our utmost for the health of crew members and passengers who remain on the ship," Kato told a news conference.

Some experts have questioned Japan's strategy of isolating the passengers and crew in a potentially virus-affected environment on the ship while the disease is already slowly making its way into the country.

"On the ship, infections are getting very dense," said Shigeru Omi, an infectious disease prevention expert and former regional director for the World Health Organization. "It's like we are seeing a very condensed version of what could happen in a local community."

Later Thursday, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced a \$139 million economic package to fight the virus, including funding for the development of vaccines and virus test kits, support for hundreds of returnees from Wuhan and measures to strengthen border controls to minimize the spread of the virus in the country.

only lab-confirmed cases but also clinically diagnosed cases based on symptoms and exposure," Jasarevic said in an email to The Associated Press.

"The jump in cases today reflects the broader definition," he said.

An advance team of WHO experts has been in China since Monday. The team is here to "discuss specific arrangements for the China-WHO joint mission with the Chinese side," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman

Geng Shuang said at a daily online briefing.

"The purpose of the joint mission is that experts of both sides can have in-depth communication on the situation and efforts of prevention and control, and come up with advice for China and other affected countries," Geng said.

In Vietnam, official media reported that a village of 10,000 northwest of the capital, Hanoi, was put in lockdown due to a cluster of cases there.

The online newspaper VN Ex-

press cited a senior official of Vinh Phuc province as reporting an increase in cases in Son Loi. Vietnam has confirmed 16 cases, most of them in the province.

Another cruise ship, the Westerdam, finally docked Thursday in Cambodia after being turned away by several Asian and Pacific governments. No cases of the viral illness have been confirmed among its 1,455 passengers and 802 crew members, according to operator Holland America Line.



VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIALS

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Missing bald eagle found safe

CT ASHFORD — A bald eagle missing from a Connecticut raptor rehabilitation center and feared stolen was found.

The Horizon Wings Raptor rehabilitation and education center announced Tuesday on Facebook that Atka, a 10-year-old male eagle that cannot fly because of a permanent shoulder injury, was found on the organization's Ashford property.

No additional details were disclosed.

Mary-Beth Kaeser, owner and founder of the nonprofit, found the door to Atka's aviary open and the lock on the ground when she went to feed him Monday.

Atka came to the center about nine years ago and is used in its education programs.

City's last call might be a little earlier

FL MIAMI BEACH — The mayor of Miami Beach wants the last call for alcohol to be a little bit earlier for spring break.

Mayor Dan Gelber wants alcohol sales to end at 2 a.m. in the South Beach entertainment district for 17 days in March. It's 5 a.m. now across the city.

The Miami Herald reported the proposal was to come before the city commission for a preliminary vote. It could then be finalized at a Feb. 26 commission meeting.

The rollback would begin March 6 and continue for 17 days. It would affect the sale of alcohol for on-site consumption, like at bars and restaurants.

Dead birds disguised as cat food confiscated

VA CHANTILLY — A package of tiny dead birds passed off as pet food was confiscated by Customs agents at a Virginia airport.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said the package came in to Dulles International Airport on a flight from Beijing on Jan. 27.

Agents discovered the bag of dead birds in the baggage of a passenger who was on their way to Prince George's County, Md.

The passenger said the package was cat food. The plastic packaging had pictures of a cat and dog.

The birds are barred from importation to prevent the spread of avian flu.

Man posed as deputy to undercover cop

NM ALBUQUERQUE — A New Mexico man is facing charges after authorities say he tried to impersonate a sheriff's officer to an undercover police officer.

A criminal complaint said Daniel Mitchem was arrested following a high-speed chase in Albuquerque.

According to police, Mitchem, 46, had approached an undercover detective during an auto-theft operation and told the offi-



KELSEY BRUNNER, THE ASPEN (COLO.) TIMES/AF

It takes two

Twins Colette Abrahams, 6, left, and Emilie Abrahams, hold on to each other while waiting for instructions from coach Drew Barr during an Aspen Gymnastics practice Tuesday at the Red Brick Gym in Colorado. Barr said this group of girls have the potential to be the next competitive team.

cer he was a sheriff's deputy and showed a gun.

When the detective said he was an officer, Mitchem fled in his Chevy Tahoe, according to the complaint. Mitchem was eventually arrested and charged with impersonating a peace officer and felon in possession of a firearm, police said.

Meteorologists: 209 mph gust likely a mistake

CA SOUTHLAKETAHOE — A gust of 209 mph recorded atop a California peak recently was likely not a new state wind record but a mistake resulting from a faulty sensor, meteorologists said.

The wind recording was made by an instrument at 9,186 feet on Kirkwood Mountain south of Lake Tahoe. If accurate, it would have broken the previous wind record of 199 mph at Ward Mountain west of Lake Tahoe in 2017.

But forecasters now suspect the sensor wasn't working properly, said Cory Mueller, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Sacramento.

Man accused of paying addicts to shoplift

WV CHARLESTON — A West Virginia man is accused of organizing a network of shoplifters, many of them drug addicts, to steal hundreds of thou-

THE CENSUS

20K

The Coast Guard said the campaign against drug cartels involves numerous U.S. agencies as well as the Navy.

The approximate weight in pounds of seized cocaine the Coast Guard offloaded at Naval Base San Diego. The cocaine, estimated to be worth \$338 million, was seized in the eastern Pacific Ocean in eight operations by the crews of four cutters between mid-November and mid-January.

sands of dollars in store merchandise that he then resold on the internet.

Nedelitcho Vladimirov of Cross Lanes was charged in a criminal complaint with acquiring nearly 3,700 stolen items that were later resold for profit, U.S. Attorney Mike Stuart said at a news conference.

Vladimirov, who is charged with money laundering, allegedly paid cash to the shoplifters for a fraction of the stolen items' worth. Many of the shoplifters then would use the money to support their drug habits.

Officials: Thief dropped list of homes to hit

TN NASHVILLE — Authorities in Tennessee said they busted a well-organized burglar after he allegedly dropped a notebook during a break-in that contained a list of other places he planned to target.

Robert Shull Goddard, 49, is accused of smashing a glass door and breaking into a Nashville

area home, stealing a TV and a gun from the residents, according to records filed in Davidson County court.

But prosecutors said Goddard left something behind that allowed authorities to solve the case — a notebook that listed multiple addresses, including one for another home a few miles away that had been burglarized that same day, The Tennessean reported. Investigators were able to identify the suspect, in part, through notes his daughter left in the journal, along with her address.

Goddard was caught on video kicking in the back door of another house the next day, court records state.

Spirits sales soar, but beer buying sinks

ID BOISE — Idaho residents are buying less beer and more liquor, according to the state Liquor Division.

Director Jeff Anderson told the legislature's budget-writing committee that the Liquor Divi-

sion returned a record dividend of more than \$83 million in fiscal year 2019, the Idaho Press reported. That's about \$6.8 million more than the previous year.

Idaho resident's purchases mirror a national trend, Anderson said, with consumption of spirits increasing at the expense of beer. But Idahoans still consume less liquor overall compared to national averages.

Man gets trampled by deer in parking lot

NC LOCUST — A suspect escaped from a hit and run in a North Carolina McDonald's parking lot last month. But police aren't looking for who's responsible.

Ken Worthy was leaving the restaurant in Locust with his wife and a Diet Coke in hand, when he saw something approaching him, the victim told news outlets.

What he saw coming wasn't a car, but a frenzied deer that had run startled, likely from woods nearby, and was stopping for nothing in its way. Security video taken from the store showed the animal barreling toward Worthy before plowing him over and continuing on.

Worthy and his wife were surprised, but not hurt during the incident, he told the station. In fact, he didn't even spill his Diet Coke.

From wire reports

WORLD

Climate change makes its mark on Alpine skiing

Bloomberg

At the northern edge of the Alps, ski runs near the foot of Germany's highest mountain snake down the greenish-brown slopes in narrow white ribbons of artificial snow.

Like other resorts at relatively low altitude, global warming has left its mark on Garmisch-Partenkirchen — the site of the 1936 Winter Olympics — putting the town's identity and affluence at risk. It's January, and there's so little natural snow that anxiety is building whether upcoming ski races can go ahead.

In Garmisch and across the Alps, tourism is a key support for local economies. In neighboring Austria, it makes up just over 6% of economic output, while in the mountainous region of Tyrol the share is more like 18%. The ratio is similar for the Swiss canton of Graub thanks to resorts like St. Moritz, Klosters and Davos. In France's Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, home to Courchevel and Val d'Isère, tourist spending totaled \$23 billion in 2018, generating nearly a 10th of gross domestic product and 171,000 jobs.

That source of income is under

genuine threat. Climate change is expected to cost Austrian tourism 300 million euros a year, according to one of the country's leading environmental protection organizations. In France, authorities in Tignes delayed the start of the ski season by several weeks, citing the effects of global warming on the Grande Motte glacier.

"If greenhouse-gas emissions continue at the same level, snow will almost disappear at lower levels by the end of the century," said Marc Olefs, head of department for climate research at Vienna's Central Institute for Meteorology and Geodynamics.

At an elevation of 800 meters, Garmisch — known for its landmark ski jump — has little prospect of maintaining its status as a winter-sports mecca.

Among visitors, the changing conditions are accepted with quiet resignation.

Juergen Hilla, a school teacher from near Frankfurt, predicted that skiing and other winter sports may not be viable in Garmisch in the longer term and that he and his wife may have to consider alternatives for their ski vacation.

"Probably in 20 or 30 years,



MICHAEL HANDEK-REHLE/Bloomberg

A snow-covered jump is seen last month in Olympic Stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

it won't have the same role as it does now," he added after a day on the slopes. The higher runs were in good shape but the lower ones needed cannons spraying artificial snow to keep them passable, Hilla said.

To make up for a lack of natural snowfall, resorts switch on the cannons, although they're energy intensive and unpopular with environmentalists. Producing artificial snow will get harder as temperatures rise, Olefs predicted.

The practice didn't start because of climate change originally — it was meant to make ski resorts less dependent on the whims of nature, according to Robert Steiger, an assistant professor at the University of Innsbruck. But it's

become unavoidable to cope with global warming.

"Some regions and areas will lose ski tourism by the mid of the century, or even earlier," said Steiger, who has studied the impact of climate change on tourism. "Higher areas will survive, but they will have to invest more in snowmaking and to cope with the additional tourist inflow."

Another option is snow farming, where mounds of the precious white flakes are collected in spring and covered with sawdust for use later in the year.

Areas most affected by warming are on the outskirts of the Alps — in Austria's east, the foothills in France and Italy and in Germany. They were never as dependent on ski tourism as some

regions in the central Alps, and are more attuned to welcoming guests around the year, Steiger said.

Already, the summer generates 60% of the tourism intake, according to Garmisch Mayor Sigrid Meierhofer. That's a development seen elsewhere. In Switzerland, summer overnight hotel stays were a third higher than the winter of 2018-19.

At Garmisch City Hall, Meierhofer is putting on a brave face, citing the town's brisk conference business.

"Of course, we have to come up with concepts to maintain the winter tourism that we still have," she said. "You say it's brown, I say the hiking paths are open."

Fire sale: An Iran plant makes the US flags protesters burn

Associated Press

KHOMAIN, Iran — Near the hometown of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, workers at a small Iranian factory diligently add all 50 stars and 13 red-and-white bars to what are supposed to be U.S. flags, and carefully imprint the blue Star of David on Israeli ones.

That's even as all their work is destined to go up in flames.

The company Diba Parcham Khomeini serves as a major producer for the American and Israeli flags constantly burned at pro-government rallies in the Islamic Republic. Such flag-burnings are a sign of support for Iran's embattled clerical rulers and a throwback to the iconic images of the 1979 Islamic Revolution that branded the U.S. Iran's greatest foe and the "Great Satan."

Another batch of flags was prepared for Tuesday's celebrations marking the 41st anniversary of the Iranian revolution. The celebrations had special symbolic importance amid renewed tensions with Washington after a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad killed Iran's top general, Qassem Soleimani, last month.

Yet the factory's owner, like



EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP

A worker sews a U.S. flag at the Diba Parcham Khomeini factory Saturday in Heshmatieh village, a suburb of Khomeini, Iran.

many middle-class Iranians, still hopes for better relations between Tehran and the U.S.

"I hope there is a day that the flags we produce are presented as a gift," factory owner Abolfazl Khanjani told The Associated Press.

That day, however, has yet to come to Khomeini, a city best known as the birthplace of the Islamic Republic's founder.

workers said. Iran continues to support anti-Israeli militant groups like Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Diba Parcham Khomeini produces 1.5 million flags a year, many bearing Islamic phrases for religious and official occasions across the country. The factory also makes Iranian flags and a small number of Iraqi national flags for export.

But on a recent visit by the AP, the American and Israeli flags stood out, each 59 inches by 39 inches. The factory makes as many as 6,000 American, British and Israeli flags in a year, all destined to be passed onto retailers. Iranian political hard-liners then purchase them for around \$2 apiece to be stomped on, torn and ultimately set ablaze.

"In recent years, the production of the U.S. flags has been tripled," Khanjani said. "What eventually happens to my products is on its end user."

Khanjani, 36, identifies himself as supporting Iranian reformist groups that want to slowly change, and open up, the Islamic Republic. But he acknowledged the anger hard-liners feel toward the U.S. Tensions have particu-

larly been high since President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers in May 2018.

In the time since, regional tensions across the Mideast have steadily worsened, leading to the Jan. 3 U.S. drone strike in Iraq that killed Soleimani as he was leaving Baghdad's international airport.

Smiling images of Soleimani and Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appeared on small Iranian flags in the factory, hanging behind women working at sewing machines on American flags.

Khanjani said burning the American flag offered Iranians a direct way to express their anger at U.S. policies, including the economic sanctions now choking the country.

"Does the production of U.S. flags for burning pose any danger to anyone? Does it hurt anyone? My answer is no. It is an insult at worst," he said. "But what about the production of weapons, bombs and drones for terror that have been used against our people and our country's general? Has it not harmed my country?"

WORLD

Riding high

Annual llama race in Ecuador draws attention to wetlands

Associated Press

LLANGANATES, Ecuador — The tiny rider sat — well, was tied — atop the towering steed that would carry him to victory in the annual llama races at Ecuador's Llanganates National Park.

Wellington Barrera, clad in a wool poncho, sheep-leather pants and a cowboy hat, was the only finisher in his under-3 category, bouncing 1,640 feet to victory.

But two dozen children in other age groups also competed in an annual event meant to draw attention to the park's high wetlands and the need to preserve them.

The park, roughly 80 miles east of Quito, is famed for dramatic Andean vistas, and the race took place between the wetlands at altitudes nearing 15,000 feet.

A llama named Rayo McQueen carried Eric Javier Chicaiza, 6, to a win in his category. His mother, Fatima Guanotuna, said the animal was a gift to the family when the boy was born, and the two have always been close.

Ibeth Santafe, 9, three times a winner in past races, was somber after finishing third. But she came out a winner in a llama-training contest, showing mastery over her beast.



Above: Riders race their llamas at the Llanganates National Park, Ecuador, on Saturday. Woolly llamas become the star for a day each year when Ecuadorians dress up their prized animals for children to ride them in 500-meter races.

Right: A child sits on a llama before racing it.

Bottom right: Milena Jami whips her llama to win first place in a race for children ages 7 and 8. Bottom left: A girl waits for the start of a race.

Photos by Dolores Ochoa/AP



WEEKEND



Jessica Simpson
tells her story
Books, Page 38

A black and white photograph of the band Lumineers. The five members are standing in front of a rustic wooden building with vines growing on the wall. From left to right: a man with glasses and a dark shirt, a woman with long dark hair, a man with a beard and a hat, a man with long blonde hair holding a hat, and a man with curly hair in a leather jacket.

‘III’ TALES

Co-founder of Lumineers shares inspiration
behind personal latest album

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WEEKEND: GADGETS



Disney Plus

Disney Plus is one of the latest subscription streaming services to offer fantastic new programming, such as the wildly popular Star Wars series "The Mandalorian," above. If only it consistently worked.

'Please stand by' How to troubleshoot the inexplicable

By JAMES LILEKS
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Have you heard of Disney Plus? It's a new streaming service that lets you watch, for a monthly fee, the movies you saw in theater, then bought on VHS, then bought on DVD, then bought on DVD again because the kid put the disk in the toaster, then bought on Blu-ray, then rented because the Blu-ray box was empty and the disk was probably under the sofa but you'll look later.

I signed up for a seven-day free trial, which is another way of saying I committed to the service for the rest of my life. Yes, the deal said that I can cancel at any time, but we—and by that I mean me and the Disney company—all know that I won't. Eventually I expect to find myself saying, "Maybe Disney will go out of business and the charges will stop."

There is plenty of new content I hadn't seen, though. But first, let's watch all the "Star Wars" movies again! Now let's watch "The Mandalorian," because it's supposed to be good. Hey, it's great! It's so good it makes you angry at the other "Star Wars" movies that now seem like silly kiddie romps. Can't wait to watch another one.

So... turn on the TV. Go to the TV's menu. Go to the Input menu. Go to the AppleTV menu. Go to the Disney+ menu. Rub some liniment on your menu-button finger, which has started to cramp. Ah, there's the Disney+ options. Select "Star Wars." Select "The Mandalorian."

"Oh no!"

Really, that's what the screen said. "Oh no! Something went wrong."

That's a rather broad statement, isn't it? It covers "your password has expired" on one end and "an unexpected supernova has destroyed the electrical infrastructure of the West Coast with a gamma-ray burst" on the other. So you turn to Google in hopes of seeing what this means.

There are no news headlines about a supernova, so cross that one off the list—unless, of course, the supernova wiped out the news transmissions, too. But there's only so much a person can worry about at a time, and right now it's "Star Wars."

I went to a site that troubleshoots Disney+, and there it said that the simplest solution is to try again. So I tried again.

"Oh no!" said the screen.

What else could I try? The website, which could be accessed only if the internet was working, said: "Make sure your internet is working."

The next step: Turn the internet off and then back on. This I did, and it worked.

Just kidding. "Oh no!" was the result.

I went to the next step: making the app, downloading it again and signing back in with my e-mail and password. What was that password? Oh, yeah, it was my address.

"Password not recognized," the app said. Granted, it was nice to get some other message than "Oh no!" But this wasn't getting us anywhere. Then I realized that I forgot to capitalize one of the letters. Same result. I tried capitalizing a different letter, to no avail. So I tried capitalizing all the letters. Nothing.

Finally it hit me: I had registered this account when we were at the old house. When I used that address, it worked.

Except by this point I was getting tired and wanted to go to bed. Plus, this was depressing.

It wasn't supposed to be like this, was it? The streaming era would liberate us from cable packages that had 128 channels we could not possibly want, including those shopping channels that had shows like "Toe Fungus Kennedy Now!" And 65 sports channels that had shows about the 1965 Jai-Alai Regional Championships and all those infomercials about products that sound really neat until you order one and discover that you've been conned for the 122nd time.

Now we can subscribe to Amazon Prime, AppleTV, HBO Now, HBO Then, HBO In The Foreseeable Future, Hulu, Crackle, Pluto, and everything else that replaced the act of watching TV with the interminable power of find something you might want to watch, perhaps later.

Before: "I'm paying \$115 for all this stuff I never watch! Let me choose my channels individually, OK?"

Now: "I'm paying \$116 for all this stuff I never watch, but the quality is incredible! I've never not watched so many good shows in my life."

But then, when we finally make an effort to sit down and watch something, "Oh no!" happens.

It was so much better in the old days. Let's imagine it's 1964. You turn on the TV. There is a picture. It's fuzzy, but you're used to a little static. Perhaps you adjust the antenna atop the TV set, perhaps you jiggle the wires that attach the TV to the roof antenna. Then a card appears on the TV. "Technical difficulties," it says. "Please stand by."

Disappointing? Sure. But not nearly as frustrating as now. Because in those days, all you could do was stand by and wait for someone else to figure out what was wrong.

Simpler times. I miss them too.

GADGET WATCH

Lock a cabinet with your phone

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Welock's AI.X1 Smart Hidden Cabinet Lock is a simple do-it-yourself kit to give a drawer added security.

The kit consists of a lock, which installs in a easy three-minute process inside the drawer with 3M tape, and without drills, holes or anything to damage the lock or drawer.

Bluetooth is built into the Smart Hidden Cabinet Lock to make a connection with your smartphone so the drawer can be locked or unlocked in seconds with the We.Lock app (Android and iOS).

I only used it for a short time to avoid exhausting the 3 AA batteries, but there's a low battery reminder when they need to be replaced. If the batteries do go totally dead, the drawer will automatically open trouble-free.

Timers can also be set for convenience and access can be shared with others to unlock.

The lock is made of anti-UV material (corrosion and wear resistant), which is aging resistant to ensure newness for long term.

Online: welockglobal.com; \$26

The TMA-2 Modular Headphone System from AIAIAI is an interesting concept, but first and foremost produces great sound.

I'm not into head-banging sound at high volume; I prefer a medium sound level as long as it's crystal clear and comfortable. And right away, the TMA-2 HD Bluetooth headphones gave me exactly that, so they were a winner in my book.

My sharp-looking and lightweight TMS-2 HD wireless sample (\$350 Bluetooth, \$295 wireless) had a modular design of 505 40mm drivers, E08 earpads and a

H05 Bluetooth headband.

While my TMA-2 HD headphones were perfect for me, the company allows you to choose the pieces you want in your customized headphones based on your listening and how they are going to be used and, of course, your budget.

The TMA-2 modular headphones are available in more than 1,000 combinations; the wireless versions will give you about 16 hours of battery life. Each part of the headphones is modular, enabling you to swap out the speakers, headband and ear cups to get your preferred sound, fit and feel.

When ordering the headphones on the AIAIAI site, you'll see choices and recommendations for users on the move, DJs, in the studio and at the office.

Speaker choices with 40 mm drivers (\$130) include

neutral, punchy, warm, vibrant and detailed, and each option's sound profile is described. The top-of-the-line S05 speakers are 40mm drivers engineered with a speaker diaphragm made from stiff Bio-Cellulose for more defined high-frequency details, more pronounced mid-range sound, better dynamics and more natural tonality, according to AIAIAI.

Six choices of headbands (\$30 to \$125) range from slim with PU foam padding lightweight Polycarbonate headband with soft durable PU foam head padding, up to high-end H06 Bluetooth headband with built-in microphone. Wireless options offer high-quality audio transmission and 20 hours of playback time.

Ear cups have four choices (\$25-\$55) ranging from on-ear cushion covered in microfiber for direct and open sound representation, good for all-around purposes.

If you go wireless, obviously you don't need a cord. But if you go corded, you have choices (\$25-\$50) in colors, coiled or straight, length, microphones and controllers.

While selecting features, an animated version of your choices is put together right in front of your eyes, with a description and sound details listed in treble, mids and bass.

Or you can't go wrong with the TMA-2 HD Wireless version of the box.

Online: aiaiai.audio



AIAIAI/TNS

The TMA-2 Modular Headphone System from AIAIAI allows you to choose the pieces you want in your customized headphones.



WELOCK/TNS

Welock's AI.X1 Smart Hidden Cabinet Lock allows you to use your smartphone to lock or unlock your cabinet in seconds.

ON THE COVER: Steth Uluang, Lauren Jacobson, Jeremiah Fraites, Wesley Schultz and Byron Isaacs are members of the Lumineers, who are now on a U.S. tour.

Big Hassle Media

WEEKEND: MOVIES



‘Parasite’s’ Oscar win for best picture suggests a new Hollywood globalism

By STEVEN ZEITCHIK
The Washington Post

Several hours after he left the Oscar stage, “Parasite” director and producer Bong Joon-ho took another stage a few miles west in Beverly Hills, Calif.

The man behind the newly minted best-picture winner was introduced by Tom Quinn, the head of the film’s U.S. distributor, Neon, and a key player in its Oscar campaign, at a party celebrating the win.

“Tonight was so unbelievable,” Bong told the invitation-only crowd, to loud cheers.

“Parasite’s” big win turned what had previously been simply a night of outliers — with director, screenplay and international-feature victories for “Parasite” earlier in the evening — into the stuff of history. Screenplay and directing wins for non-English movies are rare, but not unprecedented. Before Feb. 9, however, every best picture in the 91-year history of the Oscars had been predominantly in English. “Parasite” is in Korean.

Quinn added his observation. “Tonight, we put the industry in check,” he said, to another decibel-shattering surge of cheers.

It would be hard to overstate the disruption caused by “Parasite’s” win. Hollywood has exported its product to countries around the globe with increasing vigor in recent years. Overseas box office exceeded \$31 billion in 2019, a record, and nearly 2½ times the amount the studios generated in the U.S.

Yet importing other countries’ output has been much rarer. Broad hits from outside the English-speaking world until now were almost non-existent; the previous foreign-language best-picture nominee to be released widely in theaters, 2012’s “Amour,” generated \$7 million in U.S. receipts.

And the best-picture award was the ultimate sign

that the industry club that until relatively recently had ensured that its big prize didn’t go to films made outside the studio system, let alone one made in a country 6,000 miles away, had fractured.

Agents, producers, directors and publicists — but notably no major studio executives — who populated the party wondered if “Parasite,” with \$36 million in U.S. box office receipts and likely a bunch more after the Oscar exposure, is a sign that globalism will now cut the other way.

“I think what you’re seeing here is that this isn’t just Hollywood telling people in Europe, Asia and everywhere else what to see,” Celine Sciamma, the French director whose drama “Portrait of a Lady on Fire” was nominated for a Golden Globe this year, said in an interview at the party. “It’s a dialogue, and sometimes the rest of the world might tell America what’s worth seeing, too.”

The Oscars were created for an essentially local industry that now exists in a world that’s gone beyond the local. Sciamma raised the questions that had been percolating even before Oscar voters decided to offer an answer: What are now the responsibilities of an industry that exports so much of its product to the rest of the world to hear what the rest of the world has to say in return? Can it continue looking outward for money but turn inward for glory?

The “Parasite” gathering following the Oscars — essentially a more darkly lit and well-tailored version of an election-night victory party — was taking place at Soho House, the private club atop a skyscraper that serves as a kind of cultural nerve center for modern Hollywood. It is the space where deals are hashed out over meals during the day and triumphs are celebrated at night; every network or studio in town has hosted an event there.

That it was the place where the night’s best picture was celebrated was not a surprise.

That such a celebration was filled with representation of Korean culture was.

A Korean boy band, A.C.E., played, jumped and danced in matching suits as they gave shoutouts to the movie. In one corner sat Miky Lee, the 61-year-old South Korean media magnate who, as vice chair of the country’s C-J Group, financed “Parasite” along with many other shows, movies and K-pop outfits. She held court, greeting a long line of well-wishers while sitting next to the legendary American music producer Quincy Jones, making literal the transpacific moment that “Parasite” is now represented.

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Above: South Korean newspapers report on the success of the film “Parasite,” written and directed by Bong Joon-ho, left, which won four Oscars, including best picture.

AP photos

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Casting doubt

Asians still waiting to be well-represented among Academy Awards' acting nominations

By ELAHE IZADI
The Washington Post

The cast of "Parasite" gasped and jumped from their seats last month when they heard the news: They won the Screen Actors Guild award for best ensemble, a first for a foreign-language film. Hollywood's biggest stars gave them a standing ovation as they collected the prize bestowed upon them by their fellow actors.

"Although the title is 'Parasite,' I think the story is about coexistence and how we can all live together," lead actor Song Kang-ho said through an interpreter. "But to be honored with a best ensemble award," he jokingly added, "it occurs to me that maybe we haven't created such a bad movie."

By every metric available, South Korea's "Parasite" is far from a bad movie. It did well at the box office, earned near-universal praise from critics and won four of the six Oscars it had been nominated for, including best picture. But despite the accolades for Bong Joon-ho's biting drama, none of the film's actors received nominations. And its director, who won best actor for 1982's "Gandhi,"

It follows a familiar pattern. Just a handful of actors of Asian descent have ever won an Oscar, including Miyoshi Umeki, a Japanese American who won best supporting actress for 1957's "Sayonara," and Ben Kingsley, whose father was of Indian descent, who won best actor for 1982's "Gandhi."

Asian actors have historically had few roles in major theatrical releases; in 2018, they held 4.8 percent of roles in the 200 top-grossing films, according to the latest

Hollywood Diversity Report released last week by the University of California at Los Angeles. Some films featuring largely Asian casts have received academy recognition. But while "Last Emperor," "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," "Memoirs of a Geisha," "Slumdog Millionaire" and "Life of Pi" all received more than five Oscar nominations, none was for acting.

Other films have racked up at least the same number of nods with no recognition for acting, including this year's "1917." But of the 58 movies that reach that threshold, ones featuring Asians and Asian Americans are overrepresented, said Ben Zauzmer, author of "Oscarmetrics."

"Historically and to the present day, the academy is more willing to honor films with Asian casts than to honor individual Asian actors," Zauzmer said.

The history of Asian and Asian Americans in Hollywood has been one of troubling or very little representation, said Catherine Ceniza Choy, a professor of Asian American and Asian diaspora studies at the University of California at Berkeley.

They've been shown on-screen "as one-dimensional stereotypes," such as subhuman villains, "a racialized horde or invasion" or "superhuman" model minority characters, she said. The moviegoing public, including Oscar voters, may therefore be conditioned to seeing Asians as "a type, as opposed to a human being with an individual personality who would be of interest, a nuanced character," she added.

During the silent-film era, Asian actors were confined to playing stereotypical parts, and soon the movie industry's depiction of Asians came via white actors



AL SEIB, LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

Jeong-eun Lee, Woo-sik Choi, Sun-kyun Lee, Song Kang-ho and So-dam Park celebrate their best ensemble cast victory Jan. 19 at the Screen Actors Guild Awards in Los Angeles. The Academy Awards does not have an ensemble category.

"with scotch-taped eyes," said Elaine Kim, a professor emerita of Asian American and Asian diaspora studies at UCB.

Kim cited decades of policy that excluded Asian immigrants from entering the United States as influencing perceptions of Asians, including on-screen. "Until recently, many Americans thought that Asians were foreigners who could never be considered American," so naturally it would be jarring, they thought, for white viewers to see Asians portraying "Americans" on the silver screen even as black Americans were coming to be thought of as quintessentially "American," Kim said via email.

And while "yellow face" may no longer be a standard Hollywood practice, "white-washing" — white actors playing Asian characters — still happens, from Emma Stone's casting in "Aloha" to Tilda Swinton in "Doctor Strange."

"Asian and Asian Americans couldn't even play themselves, the assumption being that talented acting belongs to white, Western actors," they said. That has also influenced the industry's consciousness, as well as of the general public."

To be considered in the Oscar acting categories, Asian and Asian American actors often have to compete against their better-known white counterparts, who

are more likely to have star power and a history of appearing in top films. "To even be put in the dialogue about who gets to deserve the awards — do we even know who this person is?" said culture critic and "They Call Us Bruce" podcast co-host Jeff Yang. "We have a self-fulfilling prophecy of people who have already gotten visibility getting more visibility."

The conversation around representation has become more prominent in the wake of the #OscarsSoWhite campaign. The academy made pledges to diversify its membership and, since 2016, the share of voting members who are people of color has doubled — to 16 percent.

The lack of acting nods for "Parasite," as well as "The Farewell," another critically acclaimed film with Asian and Asian American actors, speaks "to the membership of the academy and who is actually doing the voting," said #OscarsSoWhite founder April Reign.

Because new members are being added to an Oscars voting body that was overwhelmingly older, white and male, "it's going to take years and years before you approach anything resembling the diversity of America," said Darnell Hunt, a sociologist and dean of social sciences at UCLA who co-authors the annual Hollywood Diversity Report.

FROM PAGE 23

The convergence was not lost on people throughout the film industry.

Thierry Fremaux, the director of the Cannes Film Festival where "Parasite" got its start, said "this shows that America and Cannes can come together, not live apart." He also added that "it means cinema belongs in theaters" — a clear jab at Netflix, with which the festival has feuded and which came away with just an acting and documentary prize Feb. 9 despite spending hundreds of millions of dollars to produce and market its awards contenders.

Producers were equally buoyed.

"I think it changes Hollywood forever," said Rodrigo Teixeira, the Brazilian-born producer behind both foreign- and English-language films, including this year's cult favorite "The Little Shop of Horrors" ("The Father's Shadow" (foreign language) and past Oscar winner "Call Me by Your Name" (multilingual).

Already he and others are relishing the chance to pitch projects to financiers with "Parasite" in their back pockets. In a town that elevates a fear of missing out from social-media anxiety to



AHN YOUNG-JOON/AP

"Parasite" actor Jeong Hyeonjun, left, and his mother, Lee Min Ja, cheer as they watch director Bong Joon Ho receive the Academy Award for best original screenplay, in Seoul, South Korea, on Feb. 10.

professional animating principal, "Do you really want to risk losing the next best-picture winner?" packs a big pitch-neeting punch.

"Parasite's" disruption was not limited to its global aspects.

Also behind the movie's success was social media, particularly "film Twitter," the loose collection of critics, fans and other voices whose support has become increasingly important in recent years.

Oscar campaigning, consultants say, has changed. Where many past best-picture winners have been part of efforts organized by studios that aim directly at the top — members of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences — the "Parasite" campaign worked differently.

Orchestrated by Quinn and a consultant group led by longtime indie-film marketer Ryan Werner of Cinetic Media, its goal

was to seed the grassroots first. Werner and his team courted "film Twitter" out of the movie's Cannes premiere last May and then in the award-season months that followed in the fall.

The idea was that the group had become instrumental enough to basically send the buzz the other way — from its own digital wilds up to mainstream media outlets, then on to younger academy members and ultimately to an older academy guard that is still required to secure the best-picture vote. Far from just measuring the buzz, "film Twitter" propelled it.

"You need the right movie, the right moment — all of that," said an executive at a rival company who spoke on condition of anonymity. "But does anyone doubt these champions online played a big role in this win?" The executive said he believed it would be a playback others would follow.

Movie awards experts said the win showed that, foreign-language or not, the academy has now become the place that sees no distinction between studios and independent companies, and in fact sometimes prefers the latter. This marks the third time in five years the top prize has gone to an independent studio. Neon is certainly that, not part of a global

media conglomerate but owned and funded by the Gulf States Toyota mogul Dan Friedman, who also finances Neon's sister entities 30 West and Imperative — a kind of mini-cluster of independent film financing, production and distribution.

It remains to be seen what the award efforts from the studios, who dived in massively this year as Universal, Sony and Warner Bros. all made big plays with studio films — and all came up short for the big prize. That was particularly true in the case of Universal, which had one of the year's biggest bombs in "Cats" but an apparent surefire best-picture winner in "1917," the prohibitive frontrunner. That the movie has grossed \$288 million around the world might help ease the sting.

One sales agent said he was certain that, in a culture of global franchises, the academy might swing awards toward foreign-language films but that studios were unlikely to take the plunge. Even if they don't, companies with the "Parasite" mindset might carry the baton. Imperative has recently financed "Mosul," a new dramatic thriller about an Iraqi police force directed by a Hollywood filmmaker. Its primary language? Arabic.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

‘I love this character’

Ben Schwartz voices excitement over ‘Sonic’ role

By PETER SLENORIO

New York Daily News

Ben Schwartz was up to speed on Sonic the Hedgehog long before he voiced the lightning-quick character in a new movie.

The comedian grew up playing the Sonic video games on SEGA Genesis with friends in the Bronx during the early 1990s, so it was a dream come true when the chance to star in the upcoming “Sonic the Hedgehog” flick presented itself.

“We would go after school, we would watch ‘Disney Afternoon,’ and then when that was over, we would play Genesis,” Schwartz, 38, recalled recently.

“We would play Sonic. We would play Sonic 2. I remember the thing that made it so exciting is that you could play a board at a certain speed, and then you could play the same board trying to go as fast as you can, and you could have a totally different experience ... I have incredibly fond memories of it.”

Fast-forward to present day, and Schwartz is still making fond memories with the rapid-running Sonic.

The actor, who played Jean-Ralphio on “Parks and Recreation,” initially became attached to the new film when director Jeff Fowler and producer Tim Miller asked him to lend his voice to Sonic in a test reading as they pitched the movie to studios.

“It was the quickest ‘yes’ in the universe,” Schwartz said. “Then I got lucky enough that they loved my voice so much that I guess it didn’t matter that there were probably a million people out there that wanted to play the role. They just liked my performance so much that they let me keep doing it.”

“Sonic the Hedgehog” centers on the

title character arriving on Earth from a faraway planet and attempting to evade the evil Dr. Robotnik, played by Jim Carrey, who wishes to capture the spunky blue hedgehog and use his unmatched powers to dominate the planet.

The movie features a live-action cast other than Sonic, who was created using computer animation. The film’s release was pushed back after Fowler opted to redesign Sonic’s appearance, including teeth that some viewers deemed humanlike, following feedback from fans.

The eagerness for excellence from the fan base left Schwartz feeling excited.

“I love this character,” Schwartz told The News. “I hope people cared. Then the trailer came out, and you saw that there were millions of people that cared. This fan base, which is so passionate, came out and really showed itself and showed how much they care about this thing. ... So it just made me want to make them really proud.”

Schwartz is hopeful the movie introduces the franchise to new fans as well. He credits the writers for including references to the Sonic and Super Smash Bros. video games that audiences can look for as they watch.

Schwartz says Sonic’s attitude and speed always stuck out to him in the games, and after the actor read the movie’s script, he found other attributes he wanted to bring to the character, too.

“It’s like this little kid that’s filled with energy and positivity and wants to get out and just, like, do everything he couldn’t do for all these years,” Schwartz said. “It’s like, ‘I want to live life for the first time and not be in the shadows.’ It’s this great story of an outsider ... that finally gets to live his life.”



Ben Schwartz attends a “Sonic the Hedgehog” screening Jan. 30 at Vue Westfield in London. The live-action adventure is inspired by the classic Sega video games.

GETTY IMAGES FOR PARAMOUNT PICTURES/TSN

‘Sonic’ is swift, smart and brings back the Jim Carrey we missed

By KRISTEN PAGE-KIRBY

Special to The Washington Post

Ah, the joy of a kids’ movie that doesn’t have any fart jokes.

Or at least one that comes close. “Sonic the Hedgehog” may have one moment of flatulence, but this hybrid of live-action and CGI animation gets away with it, otherwise bypassing the all-too-common cheap laughs for a story that’s loaded with smart humor, snappy dialogue and the big blue heart beating at its center.

Inspired by the popular series of video games, “Sonic” tells the eternal tale of a blue hedgehog from another planet who runs at near-warp speed. After a relatively pointless exposition — there are a lot of plot elements audiences will just have to roll with — Sonic (voiced by Ben Schwartz) arrives in a small Montana town where he has to hide his speed, because otherwise people will want to steal it. There, he lives a solitary existence, peering into the lives of the townspeople in an attempt to assuage his loneliness.

During a one-man baseball game, Sonic runs fast enough to produce an electronic pulse that not only knocks out the town’s power, but causes satellites to go wonky, attracting the attention of some vaguely menacing government figures. Along with said government figures arrives Dr. Ivo Robotnik (Jim Carrey), a brilliant, slightly bent scientist now fixated on tracking down and experimenting on our fuzzy friend. In an effort to escape from Robotnik, Sonic teams up with the town’s sheriff, Tom (James Marsden), with whom he hits



PARAMOUNT PICTURES/Sega of America

James Marsden, right, and Ben Schwartz (voice of Sonic) star in “Sonic the Hedgehog.”

the road to San Francisco in search of a lost bag of rings that enable Sonic to travel between planets. Now that Sonic has been spotted by the Feds, it seems he has to head off planet for his own protection.

These shaky plot elements exist only to set up Sonic and Tom’s westward odyssey. Luckily, the destination is worth the journey. Sonic is grateful to have someone to converse with — when he’s on his own, he talks to himself — and that sweetness tames what could have been a character built solely on snark. Sonic’s engaging and expressive face, combined with Schwartz’s always-excellent voice acting, creates a character worth rooting for. Marsden is charming as he goes through the traditional arc usually found in this type of movie: first, bewilderment at his discovery of Sonic; followed by a desire to

help him get off the planet; and ultimately ending up with a sincere friendship.

Carrey’s Robotnik makes for an egotistical, slightly unhinged villain, whose fundamental weirdness is fun to watch, without ever being really scary. This version of Carrey has been missing from screens for a while. The last time we saw anything remotely similar was in 2014’s “Dumb and Dumber To.”

Jeff Fowler’s direction keeps the movie moving at a brisk pace and includes a few scenes that are creative enough, visually, to be truly impressive.

“Sonic” is quippy without being mean, and sweet without being sappy, making this a trip that’s well worth taking.

“Sonic the Hedgehog” is rated PG for action, some violence, rude humor and brief mild language. Running time: 100 minutes.

ALSO PLAYING

‘The Photograph’

When famed photographer Christina Eames unexpectedly dies, she leaves her estranged daughter Mae Morton (Issa Rae) full of questions. When a photograph tucked away in a safe-deposit box is found, Mae finds herself on a journey delving into her mother’s early life and ignites an unexpected romance with a rising-star journalist, Michael Block (Lakeith Stanfield). A review of “The Photograph” was not available at press time. The romantic drama is rated PG-13 for sexuality and brief strong language. Running time: 106 minutes.

‘Fantasy Island’

The enigmatic Mr. Roarke makes the secret dreams of his guests come true at a remote tropical resort. But when the fantasies turn into nightmares, the guests have to solve the island’s mystery in order to escape with their lives. A review of “Fantasy Island” was not available at press time. The horror film stars Michael Pena and Maggie Q, and is rated PG-13 for violence, terror, drug content, suggestive material and brief strong language. Running time: 156 minutes.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



A lively time with the dead

Despite glitches, VR lifts Walking Dead: Saints & Sinners above zombie clichés

BY CHRISTOPHER BYRD

Special to The Washington Post

In the decrepit blue mansion, I waited behind the doorway of one of the upstairs bedrooms for the zombie to approach. Its monosyllabic grumblings gave it away. I raised a shiv above my head. The blade extended from the bottom of my fist, as Norman Bates did in the famous shower scene from “Psycho.”

Then, as the lumbering zombie reached the threshold of the room, I stepped into its view. Before it could react, I plunged the shiv into its skull and gave the knife an extra push to sink the blade in up to its hilt. The action is one of the most visceral I have

performed in any video game and, generally speaking, I could not care less about zombies.

In virtual reality, visual clichés are reinvigorated. Though I can’t count the number of times I’ve seen a variation of the scene in which someone stands around a corner, clutching a weapon, waiting for their mortal enemy to pass to catch them unaware, I’d never, until recently, acted out such a scenario with all of its accompanying physical fanfare. It’s for reasons like these that I found The Walking Dead: Saints & Sinners to be a captivating survivor horror game, regardless of the technical and design issues

that marred my enjoyment.

Set in New Orleans, Saints & Sinners casts the player as the Tourist, a person trying to make their way to the Reserve, which is a place reputed to be rich in the sort of supplies one would want in a zombie apocalypse. (The devastated landscapes of the city evoke the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.) Aside from being overrun by zombies, the streets are a place for armed combat between two large groups of survivors, the Tower and the Reclaimed. The Tower prides itself on order and com-

munity while the Reclaimed are more anarchic. The former is led by an authoritarian leader, the latter by a charismatic one; you can choose to help, harm or ignore either faction.

Your base in Saints & Sinners is a weathered school bus hidden away by a cemetery. Nearby is a skiff — your portal for fast travel. There is a recycle bin in the bus. Items found in the world can be placed into the bin to be converted into parts for crafting weapons, food, medical supplies, etc. The items you find while out and about are generally banded-

up, soiled, or of otherwise cheap quality; thus, it’s practical to use one of the crafting tables next to the school bus to create better supplies. This emphasis on crafting, coupled with the scarce number of checkpoints in the game, makes Saints & Sinners feel a bit grindy.

Reaching over the left side of my shoulder, with an Oculus Touch controller, takes out a knapsack. An item found in the world can be placed in it by using one of the controllers, which doubles as my hands in the game. Reaching across my right

shoulder I pull out and replace a shotgun. On the left side of my chest is my flashlight; on my right is my notebook where I can find information about my current tasks. On either side of my unseen hips are holsters that I can place weapons into. Rarely has inventory management felt so tactile.

Playing the game on an i5-4690K computer with a second-generation Nvidia Titan X graphics card, I encountered plenty of framerate hiccups as well as audio glitches where the sound dropped in or out. Framerate hitches in VR are immersion-shattering. Although I rarely get motion sickness from VR, there were times where technical issues prompted me to close my eyes for a moment or take off the headset. Of particular annoyance is the fact that to crouch in the game you must press a button on the controller rather than simply crouching down. To ward off (relatively light) vertigo as best I could, I found myself haphazardly trying to synchronize button presses with crouching down in my living room so that the shift in scale wouldn’t bother me as it would if I remained standing up.

I hardly thought of the Saints & Sinners storyline because I was more focused on the game’s performance issues. If you have a PC capable of running the game smoothly, congrats — you’ll certainly have a more comfortable experience than I did.

Platforms: Cosmos, HTC Vive, Oculus Rift, Oculus Rift S, Oculus Quest (via Link cable), and Valve Index

Online: vrwalkingdead.com



Skydance Interactive photos

The game takes place in a New Orleans reminiscent of the city in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

More than golden, light beer

Historic 16th-century architecture surrounds Pilsner Urquell brewery

By IMMANUEL JOHNSON

Stars and Stripes

You may know Pilsen in the Czech Republic as the birthplace of light, golden pils beer and the home of the Pilsner Urquell brewery, but there are other things to do in this town than just drink a good brew.

For a start, you could visit Republic Square, one of the largest squares in Europe. There, you'll find the cathedral of St. Bartholomew, Pilsen's 16th-century city hall, and, at the right time during winter, a Christmas market.

The cathedral dominates the landscape in Pilsen with its 337-foot spire, the tallest in the Czech Republic. Inside, the Pilsen Madonna graces the main altar, while outside, there's a statue depicting Jesus on the Mount of Olives, protected by angels who, local legend has it, will grant you one wish.

Near the cathedral is City Hall, a renaissance jewel built between 1554 and

1559. Special exhibitions are held in the lobby, and in a room behind that, there's a scale model of Pilsen center as it was in days of yore. Both are open and accessible free of charge from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

Also in the square is the Plague Column, by local sculptor Kristian Widman. The column dates back to 1681, when it was erected to give thanks for the fact that the plague didn't come to the city.

But even with all that history and architecture to marvel at, the jewel in the crown of this city is, to my mind, the Pilsner Urquell brewery.

Tours of the brewery are offered in Czech, English, German and Russian and last around two hours. The brewery also offers workshops — there's currently one on how to correctly pull a draft pils. Many, if not all, of the tours include tastings at the end for those 18 and older.

Tour sizes are limited, so it's best to make reservations in advance.

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PHOTOS BY IMMANUEL JOHNSON/Stars and Stripes

Pilsen's City Hall is located in Republic Square, one of the largest squares in Europe.



The cathedral of St. Bartholomew has the tallest church spire in the Czech Republic.



The unique strain of yeast used to make Pilsner Urquell lager is stored in yeast banks like this one in Pilsen. The others are in Prague and London.



The brewery tour finishes inside the cellars at the Pilsner Urquell brewery in Pilsen, Czech Republic, where you can taste unfiltered pilsner beer.



The Plague Column in Pilsen's Republic Square was built in 1681 by local sculptor Kristian Widman to express thanks that the town was spared the ravages of the plague.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Pilsen is about 90 minutes east of Grafenwoehr. To get to the brewery, put Pilsensky Prázdň in your GPS. The brewery is also a five-minute walk from the main train station.

TIMES

The brewery is open daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. from April to September, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. from October to March.

COSTS

The cost of tours varies. To reserve a spot on a tour, email reservations@asahibeer.cz. (Yes, that's the Japanese Asahi Breweries. They bought Pilsner Urquell in 2016.)

INFORMATION

More information about Pilsen in general is online at pilsen.eu for brewery tours and information, go to prazdrojvisit.cz/en.

— Immanuel Johnson

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Britain still a great destination post-Brexit

Britain, even while engulfed in Brexit politics, is constantly investing in renovations and first-class exhibits to share its heritage — and, in so many ways, Britain's heritage is linked to ours.

While many travelers are understandably curious about how Brexit is affecting tourists, from my experience it's at least not yet — but even if Britain ends up taking an abrupt exit from the EU, I don't expect American travelers to face any significant disruptions. The only impact I've found is that the country is cheaper for visitors (with the pound weaker than it's been in a while), and that the tourism industry seems to appreciate visitors even more than usual. (And, for those who like to talk politics, the topic is a fascinating conversation starter.)

Here's a rundown on the latest for travelers going to Britain in 2020:

Timed-entry tickets and advance reservations are becoming increasingly popular throughout Europe, as popular sights grapple with growing crowds. More than ever, it's worth considering booked advance tickets — especially in peak season — for some of London's top sights: the Churchill War Rooms, Houses of Parliament, St. Paul's Cathedral, Tower of London, London Eye, any West End play you're set on seeing, and the newest addition inside Westminster Abbey, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries (which offers nice views of the nave and a small museum with objects from royal ceremonies). Beyond London, it's also good to book ahead for visits to Stonehenge, Tintagel Castle, the Lennon and McCartney homes in Liverpool, and any

Edinburgh Festival performances.

Several London sights are temporarily closed for renovations this year: The Orangery at Kensington Palace is undergoing a multi-year restoration; during this time, its famous tea service will be hosted at the equally elegant Kensington Palace



Rick Steves

Pavilion. The Courtauld Gallery, which exhibits medieval to Post-Impressionist paintings, will remain closed until 2021. The Museum of the Home (formerly known as the Geoffrey Museum), which covers the history of making, keeping and being at home

over the past 400 years, will reopen this summer after a thorough renovation.

The big transportation news in London is the construction of the first new underground line since 1999: the 73-mile-long Elizabeth line, aka Crossrail, which promises to relieve congestion on some of London's main Tube lines, while providing a faster public-transit option to Heathrow Airport. Travelers will see plenty of construction underway this year, but no new trains — the project's completion has been pushed back (again) to next year. And a promised improvement in international train travel — direct Eurostar train service from Amsterdam to London — is also delayed beyond 2020. (Until then, travelers need to change in Brussels for passport control.) At latest travelers going in the other direction, from London to Amsterdam, do already have direct-train options (three direct trains per day).



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONICCELLI/RickStevens.com

Canterbury Cathedral, a masterpiece of English Gothic architecture, is being renovated.

Elsewhere in England, several big sites are undergoing changes. At Canterbury Cathedral — the mother church of the Anglican Communion — a new welcome center complex, with an info desk and viewing gallery, will open this spring. But in 2020, visitors are still likely to see scaffolding and some missing stained glass, as the church's multiyear structural restoration isn't due to wrap up until next year.

Cornwall's dramatic Tintagel Castle, where King Arthur was supposedly born, now requires timed-entry tickets, which are best booked ahead. The castle also

has a new steel footbridge that spans the chasm between the two parts of the castle (once joined by a natural land bridge that collapsed several centuries ago).

In England's idyllic Lake District, poet William Wordsworth's home — Dove Cottage — is currently closed for restoration. It will reopen as Wordsworth Grasmere this spring, marking his 250th birthday, with updated museum exhibits.

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Kew Gardens celebrates orchids

As most of Europe eagerly awaits the coming of spring, London's Kew Gardens fast-forwards into the positively balmy weather that characterizes Indonesia, an equator-straddling land of 17,000 islands known for its tremendous biodiversity in terms of both plants and animals.

Through March 8, an exhibition simply titled "Orchids" transports nature lovers into the heart of the rain forest, onto the slopes of volcanoes, where brightly-hued displays of exotic orchids can't fail to delight the eye. Organizers promise an immersive journey through several zones displaying the myriad facets of Indonesia's nature.

Life-size models of an orangutan, a tiger and a rhinoceros are decked with hundreds of tropical blooms, and cleverly arranged orchids evoke the image of an erupting volcano. An archway crafted of carnivorous pitcher plants is likely to spark a squeamish form of delight.

On the evenings of Feb. 27-28 and March 7-8, separately ticketed After Hours events will offer cultural immersion through ensembles playing traditional gamelan music, traditional dancing and cooking demos.

The gardens are located just west of London in Richmond and can be reached from central London by bus, rail or



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

river within just half an hour or thereabouts. They're open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. Owing to its popularity, booking a specific time slot for a visit to the exhibition is essential. This can be done upon purchase of an online ticket at a cost of 16.50 pounds, or about \$21.45. Entry to Orchids is included in the regular price of entry to the gardens. First-time visitors will want plenty of time to explore other parts of the expansive grounds. Online: kew.org

Cocoa and a warm glow in Brussels

Brussels promises to be sweet by day and bright by night through the weekend.

Bright Brussels is a light festival best experienced by means of a walking tour leading past some 20 playful and interactive light installations. Along

a route stretching through the city's historical center, installations display the journey of light through space, a painting of Claude Monet, luminous lanterns and other visual delights. The lights can be experienced from 7 p.m.-11 p.m. nightly through Feb. 16. Entry is free. Online: bright.brussels/en

The Salon du Chocolat is a traveling fair that makes its rounds through some of the world's major cities. This edition unites some of Belgium's biggest names in chocolate and pastry under one roof. Attendees can enjoy perusing the stands, workshops, tastings and a demo stage with a lineup of top chefs. Chocolate sculptures and a fashion show in which models wear creations made of chocolate are always event highlights.

The salon takes place at the Tour & Taxis. Entry goes for 10 euros adults and 5 euros for those aged 6-12. Online: brussels.salon-du-chocolat.com

Ghent celebrates Jan Van Eyck

Lovely Ghent, perhaps one of Belgium's lesser-known gems, has gained mention in the art and travel press of late for an unusual reason: the restoration of a painting unveiled in December features a disconcerting rendering of a lamb's face.

The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb forms the center panel of the Ghent Altarpiece, a work



Wikipedia Commons

Native to Asia, the delicate, heart-shaped flowers of the bleeding heart make it a popular plant this time of year. It's one of the many plants visitors may encounter at London's Kew Gardens.

by the artists Hubert and Jan Van Eyck dating back to 1432. Restorers, having discovered the artwork had been painted over sometime in the 16th century, stripped away the old paint to reveal a lamb with an intense gaze and front-facing eyes. Smithsonian Magazine deemed it "alarmingly humanoid," and social media users were quick to chime in with similar opinions.

The confrontational, controversial lamb and the Ghent Altarpiece are just one of the city's attractions. Throughout 2020, Ghent celebrates the great Flemish Master Jan Van Eyck with a year of events and exhibitions.

In addition to calling in at the new visitor's center at St. Bavo's Cathedral to see the altar, art aficionados won't want to miss "Van

Eyck. An optical revolution," featuring 13 of the 22 works by Van Eyck to have survived into the present era. These will remain on display alongside works by Van Eyck's contemporaries at the Museum of Fine Arts through April 30. "Lights on Van Eyck," a multimedia spectacle at the St. Nicholas Church, runs from March 28-Nov. 1. "Van Eyck in Depth" is the title of a pop-up exhibition on perspective and geometry, using Van Eyck's famous masterpiece Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele as its focus. This shows March 21-Dec. 30 in the Ghent University Museum, a science museum slated to open next year. More on Ghent's offerings online: visit.gent.be/en/omg-van-eyck-ware here

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe

Battle of the Brats

Bratwursthaule or Roeslein: Who will win between these Nuremberg bratwurst kings?

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

Nuremberg's bratwurst is a pretty big deal in Germany's vast pantheon of sausages.

They're emulated all around the country, but often lack the nuance and preparation that sets them apart in this Bavarian city, where historians say they were first served more than 700 years ago.

The links don't look at all like hefty Milwaukee ballpark brats in buns or the footlong-plus bratwursts at Germany's seasonal carnivals.

They're tinier, golden brown, seasoned with marjoram and seared over beechwood. They were the first sausages granted protected geographic status by the European Union, and like beer and many other things German, regulations govern everything about them.

Nuremberg bratwurst are often eaten as street food with an order of "drei im weggla," local slang for "three in a bun." But if I'm going to eat sausages backed by this much hype, I'm going to do it right.

Bratwurstglocklein and its sister restaurant, Bratwursthaule (pronounced hoys-leh), originated the full bratwurst meal in its current form in the 19th century, complete with an even number of links, sauerkraut, potato salad and horseradish as a condiment.

Roeslein, near the St. Lorenz church in the city center, bills itself as the largest bratwurst restaurant in the world.

I figured the differences between the two would be the twists typically found among restaurants that aim to turn the mundane into the sublime — a German version of the Pat's vs. Geno's cheesesteak rivalry in Philly, or Chick-fil-A against Popeye's. Alas, I was mistaken.

The Bratwursthaule's terrace was closed for the winter, but we were immediately seated inside at a small communal table surrounded by rustic wood and hanging copper kettles. Two older women at the table from Stuttgart somehow learned everything about the past 10 years of my life from my family during the five minutes I was using the bathroom. The beers were already on the table and the servers were ready to take our order, which is astonishingly quick service for Germany.



"Three in a bun" bratwurst is popular street food found throughout Nuremberg.

While we waited for our bratwurst dinners, we munched on an array of large pretzels and bread — they'll ask what you ate at the end of the meal and charge accordingly.

The bratwurst came out quickly, considering the crowd, and it was everything it's cracked up to be. The aged wood and spice blend gave the tender sausages something I've never associated with German food — subtlety. The sauerkraut accented with juniper had a soft texture that reminded me of the version found across Germany's western border in Alsace.

The potato salad wasn't the chunky, mayonnaise-dominant stuff of childhood picnics, but an artfully sliced side dish with a vinegar base that served as a counterpoint to the bratwurst.

I spent about 16 euros on dinner, drinks and service with a smile. Roeslein was going to have to be pretty spectacular on our visit the next day for lunch to top that.

We walked into Roeslein and



Bratwursthaule's "three in a bun" brats taste good outside or inside.



PHOTOS BY ERIK SLAVIN/Stars and Stripes

Bratwurst and sauerkraut, a Nuremberg specialty, are served at the restaurant Roeslein in the city's center.

were told to take any seats we liked inside the beer hall-style restaurant that can accommodate hundreds, but which was about a third full.

We were able to flag down a waiter after 15 minutes. I ordered a rotbier, which is also an old city specialty. The waiter came back with two beers and left quickly.

The most noticeable thing about my rotbier — which is German "red beer" — was that it was yellow. The less noticeable but more serious problem was that one in our party ordered a nonalcoholic beer and her face began turning red as she drank, a pretty solid cue that it was a regular beer.

When the waiter came back with the food, he insisted that we had a rotbier and a nonalcoholic beer on the table. We were somewhat surprised, but tried to forget about it and dug in.

The bratwurst was just ... fine. They tasted like sausages, without the beguiling spice or the beechwood aroma. The sauerkraut was also respectable but unnoteworthy. One member of our party did think the similarly vinegar-based potato salad here outdid the one at our dinner.

When the bill came, it clearly showed that my rotbier was actually a nonalcoholic beer and that should have been a nonalcoholic beer was a raddler, a mixture of beer and lemonade.

The waiter walked away, pretending not to hear when we asked to see the manager.

So if you like combative service, potentially dangerous alcohol mix-ups and above-average potato salad, by all means go to Roeslein. But even if you do get a better server, Bratwursthaule should be the clear first choice.

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ROESLEIN

Address: Rathausplatz 6, 90402 Nuremberg
Hours: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily; grill closes 10:30 p.m.
Prices and menu: Between six and 15 euros, depending on number of bratwurst; more extensive list of Bavarian-Franconian dishes, including duck, liver dumplings, pork knuckle, sauerbraten.
Information: 0911-214-860; Online: bratwurst-roeslein.de



A few people relax with beer and bratwurst on Dec. 21 outside Roeslein in Nuremberg, Germany.



The smoky, marjoram-laced links at Bratwursthaule pair very well with sauerkraut and a vinegar-based potato salad.

BRATWURSTHAULE BEI ST. SEBALD

Address: Rathausplatz 1, 90403 Nuremberg
Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily; grill closes at 9 p.m.
Prices and menu: Eight bratwursts with sides, 10.70

euros; smaller and larger sizes available. Menu also has pork knuckle, tongue and heart.
Information: 0911-227-695; Online: die-nuernberger-bratwurst.de

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe



Where sustainable cuisine is a palatable option

Chefs in Sweden's Malmö make exquisite dishes out of what's locally available

By LIZA WEISTUCH
Special to The Washington Post

Most days, chefs around the world call their distributors to order food items for the days ahead. They might opt for seasonal produce, or a standby ingredient for a signature dish. Not so for Erik Andersson Mohlin. He's at the whim of his distributors. Regular menu items are as relevant to the chef-owner of Spill as a vintage Burgundy is to a fast-food joint. You see, every dish on the nightly menu is made with ingredients that were destined for the rubbish bin, often because they're bruised or slightly overripe. But here in Malmö, a port city in Skåne, Sweden's southernmost province, one distributor's trash is a visionary chef's treasure.

On a weeknight this past September, that treasure took the form of prime rib in smoked-tomato, chile, pickled cabbage and carrot. My skepticism quickly vaporized. As flavorful as it was colorful, it was the kind of meal you mourn when it's gone.

This city of 344,000 is about 30 minutes by train from Copenhagen Airport over the Øresund Bridge, a five-mile marvel completed in 2000, and three-ish hours south of Gothenburg, along Sweden's western coast. Yet despite its accessibility, it gets far fewer visitors than those popular destinations. Over the past few years, however, in part as a result of the increased access the bridge provides, construction has boomed and an urban renaissance has begun to take shape. The creative and progressive, sustainability-focused food and drink scene, a major point of interest in most Scandinavian cities, has blossomed accordingly and helped put Malmö on the culinary traveler's radar.

The cityscape is a tableau of old and new. The canals that ring the center of the city, built as a defense system in the early 1800s, delineate the old city. Half-timbered buildings around the cobblestoned Lilla Torg (Little Square) date back to the late 16th century, only to be outdone by the centrally located Gothic-style St. Peter's Church, completed in the 14th century near one of the town's canals. The western harbor, a short walk away, has seen a construction boom in the past 20 years. Once



Traditional Swedish pastries, such as these cinnamon rolls topped with pearl sugar, are easy to find around Malmö, but these days old-world treats are just a small part of this city's culinary allure.



PHOTOS BY LIZA WEISTUCH/The Washington Post

Above: At Meeting Place, the eatery at Hallakra Vineyard, meals prepared in the open kitchen include salmon, burnt butter and lime on a bed of searocket.

Top: Canals and centuries-old architecture delineate the center of Malmö, a southern Swedish port city with a progressive restaurant scene.

a gritty center of herring fishing, now it's the site of sleek new hotels and Malmö Live, an event center that opened in 2015 and serves as home to Malmö Symphony Orchestra. Stroll another 20 minutes and you end up in an ultramodern neighborhood anchored by the neo-futuristic Turning Torso, a mesmerizing skyscraper that twists a full 90 degrees from base to roof. Completed in 2005, it's Scandinavia's tallest building.

But despite these symbols of modernity, an Old World, locally focused sensibility defines how many restaurants operate. In countless cities, restaurants brandish "local" ingredients as a badge of honor, but in Malmö they are de rigueur. At Lyran, a compact neighborhood restaurant with an open kitchen, rustic decor and a humble brick exterior that belies its posh yet relaxed elegance, the local ingredients dictate the menu. It's presented as a simple list of ingredients, with entries such as "Chanterelles from Mushroom-Mike" and "Yogurt from our neighbor." Chef Jorgen Lloyd carries out what he calls "instinctive cooking," a practice that's partially improvisational and entirely focused on low-impact dining.

One thing that stood out over the few days I spent exploring Malmö's restaurants and bars is the way large and small food and drink businesses work together to spotlight one another. It's a practice evident at Bishops Arms, a Swedish chain with more than 40 outposts around the country. It has all the trappings of a classic English pub, but the beer on tap veers wildly from the standard ales and lagers one expects at a pub chain. I was stunned to spot an IPA from Alewife Brewing Company, a brewpub just a few miles from my apartment in Queens. But more intriguing were the hyperlocal beers. Sure, brewpubs serving beers made in-house proliferate in most cities. But this particular Bishops Arms locale has exclusive rights to the beers produced at Minus-1, a brewing cooperative located downstairs from the bar. Eight brands brew at the facility on a revolving schedule, much like a commissary for food start-ups. And the beers are excellent. Four of the eight producers, including the women-run Secret Sisters, make beer that landed them one of the 30 coveted spots on a "best of" list from Untappd, a popular beer app.

But long before Minus-1, there was Malmö Brewing Co. and Taproom. The colorful, high-ceilinged space was a brewery when it opened in the late 1800s and after housing other operations, it's a brewery again. The owner is Anders Hansson, a warm host with an epic beard and a burly stature that suggests he can trace his lineage back to the Vikings. Anders, a creative type whose Technicolor Pop Art-style prints adorn the walls on the second floor,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

FROM PAGE 30

started brewing in 1983. He was 12. The beers he makes today occupy at least 15 of the 42 taps at the bar on any given night.

Scandinavia has become known for its molecular gastronomy, but before spherification or foams there were just the unique, fragrant fruits themselves. Sweden's native berries and lush orchard fruits are being made the most of these days by drink producers like Anders. At MJ's, an airy bistro with a vibe that blends Victorian grandama and Port Lauderdale patio-chic, there are several Fruktstereo cidr options on the menu, all listed along with the sparkling wines, not with the beer, as is typical for ciders. A long-standing barrier, broken.

Each of the two I tried takes the base fruit — pears or apples or berries or some combination thereof — and amplifies the flavor. It's delivered with an understated carbonation that evokes twinkles of light in the night sky. If traditional Normandy ciders are dry and subtly sweet — are acoustic, these are surround sound. Stereo, indeed.

Karl Sjöström, Fruktstereo's co-founder, is a lanky man of muted intensity with a shoulder-length ginger mane and a full beard to match. He makes his ciders using an ancient method of bottle-fermentation long practiced in winemaking. But don't let the esoteric technicalities scare you. In fact, the company's primary goal is to eradicate snobbishness. To that end, each cidr has a winking music-related name (see: Ciderday Night Fever, Britney's Pears).

Karl made his first batches about 25 miles east of Malmo at Hallakra Vineyard. He quickly outgrew the winery's space and moved to a facility next to Malmo's central train station. But his ciders are still offered at Meeting Place, the vineyard's restaurant. The farmhouse dining room is a portrait of nature-inspired, stripped-down glamour, the kind Williams-Sonoma catalogues aim to emulate.

Hallakra, a small family farm, was transformed into a vineyard in 2003 by Hakan Hansson, a fifth-generation family member and reformed banker. Sweden isn't a globally noted wine country, but the sandy soil here is chalky and packed with minerals like many European wine-producing regions. Unlike many European nations, however, there are no established rules for Swedish wine production, so Hakan is pioneering the style. His natural wines, most notably a sparkling and rose, are dry, light, fresh and floral.

All this was explained to me by Michael and Joanna Daly, newlyweds who run the kitchen here — he as a manager and she, trained as a sommelier, as the chef. On this night in September, she prepared an exquisite meal that started with a medley of salmon, burned butter, lime and sea-rocket, a whimsically named relative of wild radish.

The Swedes are not a flashy or dramatic people. There is no pomp or pretense in the serene landscapes, either, be it the sea-side villages or fields anchored by ancient castles. The region's food and drink are an extension of that, an articulation of the earth, the place. Like everything else in Malmo.

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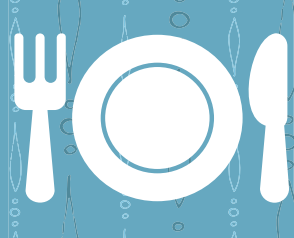


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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific

History illuminated

Japan Olympic Museum highlights significance of the Olympic Games

By HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

With the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics just around the corner, get psyched up for the games with a trip to the newly opened Japan Olympic Museum.

Just across the street from New National Stadium in central Tokyo's Gaien area, this museum offers history and insight to the Olympics and Paralympics.

Visitors are first welcomed by a large Olympic rings statue outside of the museum. Even on a cold winter day, visitors lined up to take photos by the rings with the new stadium in the background.

The small, two-story museum opened in September to promote the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics and illuminate the history and significance of the games.

The first floor is free to enter, with a small museum shop, cafe and a big-screen TV showing memorable moments of past Olympics. Visitors may browse a small library of books on the Olympics and settle on nearby sofas for a read.

At a table holding paper for origami, visitors are encouraged to fold the paper according to instructions and write messages for the Japanese athletes participating in the Summer Games.

On the day I visited, a small display highlighted the role of Pierre de Coubertin, father of the modern Olympics.

The second floor, which costs 500 yen for adults, offers a detailed history of the Olympics and of Japan's participation in the games. The history starts with the ancient Greek Olympics

and continues into the beginning of the modern Olympics and how wars had affected countries' participation.

A discuss made from stone to show what the Olympians in the ancient Olympics were using is on display. I was surprised how heavy it was as I was unable to lift it with one hand.

Also on display were torches used in past Olympic opening ceremonies going back to the 1936 Berlin Games, which inaugurated the torch relay. A costume worn by a performer during the closing ceremony at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics is part of the collection.

One section is devoted to Japan's participation in the Olympics. In it, visitors will find posters and tickets from Olympics held in Tokyo, Sapporo and Nagano. There is also a display on the 1940 Tokyo Olympics, which was canceled due to war. The exhibit features posters and tickets meant for those events.

In another section, visitors using simulators can compare themselves with Olympians' physical ability. Using interactive screens, visitors can experience shooting, ski jumping and pairs figure skating and compare their results with Olympians.

At one section, visitors imitate a ski jumper and jump onto a cushion to measure their balance and then compare the result to how an Olympic athlete would perform. There were also videos on the Paralympic Games and interviews of Olympic athletes.

Although the museum is small, it's an in-depth learning experience that's definitely worth a visit if you're in the area.

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PHOTOS BY HANA KUSUMOTO/Stars and Stripes

Visitors to the Japan Olympics Museum in Tokyo check out steps representing the stride of Jamaican gold medalist Usain Bolt.



A visitor tries a shooting simulator that allows people to compare their aim to an Olympic athlete.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

First and second floors of Japan Sport Olympic Square at 4-2 Kasumigaoka-machi, Shinjuku Ward, Tokyo.

A 5-minute walk from exit 3 at Gaienmae Station on Tokyo Metro's Ginza line; 10 minutes from exit 2 at Kokuritsu Kyogyo Station on the Toei Oedo line; 12 minutes from Sendagaya or Shinanomachi stations on the Chuo and Sobu lines.

TIMES

Open daily (except Mondays), 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Must enter before 4:30 p.m. If a Japanese holiday falls on a Monday, it is open on that day but will be closed on the following day. Also closed during the end of the year and New Year holidays. Could be closed on an irregular basis. Check the website for closing dates.

COSTS

Admission is free for the first-floor exhibits. 500 yen for adults and 400 yen for those 65 years or older for the second-floor exhibit. High school students and younger enter for free.

FOOD

A small cafe within the museum sells beverages. There are a variety of restaurants around the nearby train stations.

INFORMATION

Online: japan-olympic museum.jp/en

— Hana Kusumoto



Torches from past Summer and Winter Games opening ceremonies are displayed at the Japan Olympic Museum.



A visitor poses with the Olympic rings near the National Stadium.



A woman points to the name of a past Japanese Olympian etched in a glass wall at the museum.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



Passport for a broken heart

7 travel destinations around the world to avoid after a breakup

By NATALIE B. COMPTON
The Washington Post

There are a lot of reasons to travel after your heart gets broken. All of the new sights, sounds and smells you encounter on a trip can distract you from the dizzying, all-encompassing pain throbbing in your chest. Traveling can boost your confidence at a time when you're feeling broken and vulnerable.

But traveling post-split can be a terrible idea at the wrong destination. Going full "Eat Pray Love" in India? Great idea. Spending a week at a major honeymoon magnet? You're probably better off weeping at home.

Here are a few places to avoid if you're still healing.

Paris

It's perfectly possible to have a fantastic time alone in Paris, but it's referred to as the City of Love for a reason. The city oozes romance from every cobblestone corner, there are lovers drinking wine everywhere you look, and even the architecture manages to look romantic.

If the sight of beautiful, scarf-wearing people kissing each other's necks might send you into a grief-wracked downward spiral, skip Paris. A better alternative for brokenhearted fans of European food and architecture is Lisbon.

Venice

You don't have to skip Italy completely. There are other cities there that will, yes, be full of lovers, but have lower potential for sending you into a weeping fit in a canal. Like Florence. The Renaissance city has so much to offer besides a close-up of Michelangelo's "David." Get lost in the food and flower markets of Sant'Ambrogio, or hike off your pecorino coma on the paths near Piazza Desiderio.

Hawaiian resorts

Hawaii is a spectacular place to visit for people who love the outdoors, tropical weather, incredible food, culture and surfing. However, Hawaii is also a destination-wedding and honeymoon magnet. The islands are teeming with couples.

Skip the islands altogether while you're mourning your relationship. Instead, try Tel Aviv, where you can eat and surf just as well, plus distract yourself from the fact that your heart was shattered into a billion pieces: Dance until dawn, thanks to the Israeli city's world-famous nightlife.



Certain islands

Do not, under any circumstances, plan a post-breakup trip to the Maldives or a comparable far-flung island nation such as Fiji or Bora Bora where you're stranded on a resort with nothing but honeymooners and couples celebrating big anniversaries.

Sure, you could hole up in your overwater villa and bawl your eyes out. But if you plan to eat dinner outside your quarters, you're going to be surrounded, perhaps exclusively, by tables of two.

Escape to our planet's other beach destinations, like Indonesia, where you can pour your heart out to friendly backpackers who might be on the road for the same reason. A few options include Bali, where you'll find all of the modern conveniences known to man against a backdrop of tropical jungles and mesmerizing ocean views, or the more remote Gili Islands, where the roads are rough but the natural beauty is just as stunning.

Any Sandals resort

Have you ever seen a commercial for Sandals Resorts? They're composed of scene after scene of couples walking down the beach holding hands, couples laughing in hot tubs, couples eating dinner alone under the stars.

These commercials should serve as a signal that adults-only all-inclusive resorts, like Sandals, are made for pairs. And you want to suffer at a couples' paradise in the wake of a broken heart? No. No, you do not.

Save Sandals for your next big relationship, and get swept up in the magic of Mexico's culture this time around. Choices abound for the despondent to find solace south of the border. For beaches and mezcal, there's Oaxaca. For endless art and fine dining, there's Mexico City. For architecture and your Instagram clout, there's San Miguel de Allende.

Las Vegas

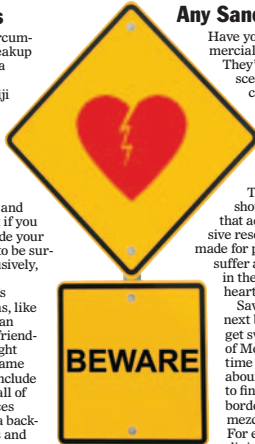
Las Vegas may sound like a great place to rebound when your heart feels as though it's been ripped out of your chest, then lit on fire, and even though it's out of your chest you can still feel it being burned alive — but beware. Even if you're with friends, Vegas can be incredibly lonely. Although there's something for everyone here, you'll find yourself surrounded by a lot of couples and a lot of sad distractions.

If you're still hellbent on going to Vegas, don't end up sobbing on the Strip guzzling down yardsticks of Long Island iced tea. Instead, try seeing Vegas like a local. You can eat, drink and attempt to be merry in neighborhoods like Chinatown, Fremont East and the Arts District.

Santorini, Greece

Couples from across the world are pulled to the Greek island of Santorini like moths to a flame. Maybe it's the twinkling Aegean Sea that shines beyond the cliff-perched towns, or the spectacular sunsets that dazzle. Regardless of the romantic reason, the happy couples are all over.

Dodge the hordes of Instagram husbands dutifully photographing their beaming brides, and opt for a trip elsewhere in Greece. Start with a few days in Athens, nursing your wounds in its relaxing hammam baths and sampling cocktails and fantastic meals. Then get your sun-and-sea fix with a few days in the other Cyclades.



WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

A GOOD FIT?

Traditional retailers aim to boost profits by offering clothing rental but face challenges

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
Associated Press

Renting clothes could be the future of fashion — or it could just be a fad. But traditional retailers can no longer afford to wait on the sidelines to find out. That's why a growing number are now offering customers the option to rent clothes for a monthly fee instead of buying them. Bloomingdale's, Banana Republic and Urban Outfitters are the latest to offer the services. Even footwear chain Designer Brands says it's considering launching a rental service for shoes.

Now a booming \$1 billion business, the clothing rental sector is expected to reach \$2.5 billion by 2023, according to research firm GlobalData. When combined with resale, it will account for 13% of the total \$360 billion U.S. clothing market within the decade, up from 7.3% today.

Clothing rentals are one more piece of the sharing economy, where customers — particularly those in their 20s and 30s — are less interested in owning or making big investments but still want access to different brands and services, says Steve Barr, consumer markets leader at PwC.

"You no longer have to buy into the myth of continuous consumption and that there's pride in wearing something as opposed to pride in owning something," said Jennifer Hyman, CEO and co-founder of Rent the Runway, which in 2009 pioneered the business model that many retailers are now trying to replicate.

For clothing retailers, rentals offer a glimmer of hope at a time when they are dealing with mounds of unsold goods that often need to be deeply discounted. Several have already gotten into the secondhand business — another popular trend in the sharing economy led by companies like The Real Real and ThredUp.

J.C. Penney and Macy's, for instance, have partnered with ThredUp to sell gently worn clothes in a couple dozen locations. Nordstrom is testing resale at its women's flagship store in Manhattan and online.

Many in the industry consider these necessary steps as clothing retailers watch their fortunes erode. They, along with department stores, are expected to see their fourth-quarter earnings sink 11.3% compared with a 5.7% drop for the overall retail sector, according to research firm Retail Metrics LLC. Last year, clothing retailers accounted for an outsized share of retail bankruptcies, according to a recent report by consulting firm AlixPartners.

"Clothing retailers are dealing with pressures on multiple fronts," said Ken Perkins, president of Retail Metrics. "Heavy promotions, chronic traffic declines, e-commerce investment. And now they've got rental and resale services as well. The rental market is small, but it's going to grow, and they have to invest in it."

Christine Hunsicker, CEO and founder of CaaStle, a startup that manages inventory and shipping for retailers, says rental services have anywhere from a 20% to 25% operating profit compared with only 5% for traditional retailers. Last year, Hunsicker's retail clients saw total spending for both renting and buying increase two-fold on average for each customer.

But unlike Rent the Runway, a dedicated rental service for high-end designer clothing, the economics for traditional retailers — from marketing to dry cleaning and shipping, on top of running their normal day-to-day operations — pose significant challenges.

About a dozen retailers, including Banana Republic and Bloomingdale's, have left it to CaaStle to handle the logistics. But Urban Outfitters, which lets shoppers rent their brands as well as outside labels like Reebok and Levi's, is doing it all on its own — a formidable task.

"(Retailers) are very used to marketing products, not services, so it's challenging knowing which customers to message, and how often," Hunsicker said.

Some experts wonder whether it even makes sense for lower-priced clothing chains to get into the rental business since customers could just buy the clothes used, or get them at a deep discount. Also, the clothes may not hold up well after multiple wears, says Rod Sides of Deloitte LLP.



You no longer have to buy into the myth of continuous consumption and that there's pride in wearing something as opposed to pride in owning something.

Jennifer Hyman
CEO and co-founder, Rent the Runway

Elizabeth Kashin, 53, of Indianapolis, says she tried Urban Outfitter's Nuuly rental service last month. She never received her package of six items but was charged anyway. After contacting customer service via social media, she got another package but said the clothes didn't look clean.

"I can go to a secondhand store to get a better experience," she said.

Urban Outfitters said that it is constantly listening to feedback so that it can "make the experience even better for Nuuly's subscribers." It says it's on pace to have 50,000 subscribers in the first 12 months of operation.

Renters also face the same challenges that still dog Rent the Runway. Consumers complain about spotty customer service and a slew of added fees. For example, Rent the Runway charges \$50 for every day that a customer is late in returning an item, up to double the retail value of that item.

There is also the issue of too few locations to return rented items. Retail expert Melissa Gonzalez says retailers should have kiosks in their stores in key cities but right now, most don't have any and shoppers must drop off their garments bags at a UPS or the post office. Rent the Runway has five stores and nearly 50 drop-off locations.

Rent the Runway itself has had to adapt to an increasingly demanding customer. It started out with special occasion dresses but its customers now rent on average more than 120 days per year. The New York-based company launched children's wear last year and later unveiled pillows and other home decor items through a partnership with home furnishings retailer West Elm.

Vava Pikor, 26, an insurance broker from Manhattan who's been using Rent the Runway for many of her clothing needs, says she is hooked.

"This could be my forever habit," she said.

Vava Pikor poses for a picture in front of a Rent the Runway store before returning items in Manhattan last November. Pikor is wearing some of the items she rented from the company, including her jacket and earrings.

SETH WENIG/AP

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Honest and unflinching

The Lumineers don't mince words about addiction on latest album

By ERICA THOMPSON
The Columbus Dispatch, Ohio

Released last September, the Lumineers' album "III" tells the story of the fictional Sparks family in three chapters. (There are three bonus tracks on the album that aren't part of the narrative.)

The listener is wrapped in a saga that spans three generations, each touched by a common problem: addiction.

"There's been so much feedback or outpouring of emotion, meeting people around talking about these songs on this album in a way that was pretty unexpected," said Lumineers co-founder and singer Wesley Schultz.

Listeners can glean more from the story by watching accompanying videos on the Lumineers' website (thelumineers.com); seen together, they create a short film.

Schultz, 37, also gave more insight into "III."

Columbus Dispatch: What inspired you to tackle addiction as subject matter for the album?

Schultz: My wife and I have been caring for a loved one for about 10 years, and that person has been in and out of rehab. And then for [Lumineers co-founder Jeremiah Fraites], he lost his brother (to) a heroin overdose. I think we thought, "Well, we went through these things as individuals, but we're probably pretty unique in that way or alone."

But I realized that addiction has touched more lives than I could have imagined.

Were you cautious about the way you wanted to portray addiction?

I think the thing you want to avoid as a writer is trying to make too much of a caricature of something. And so in order to avoid that, I was trying to say things in an unflinching or honest way. And I think that when you do that, even though some of the things that are said are harsh, like, "Maybe when she's dead and gone, I'll get some sleep" (in "Leader of the Land-slide") or "There's easier ways to die" (in "Gloria").

I think there's a lot of compas-

sion in those moments, even though some people hearing that would say, "Wow, that's really cold" or "that's really cruel."

When you love an addict and you're going on the ride with them emotionally, I think that there's a lot of confusion and there's a lot of resentment mixed with that love, and there's a lot of anger. There's so much dissonance there. And I think trying to capture that in a song, you can't just sing and say there's dissonance. I think you have to tell stories to display that.

You portray three generations of one family struggling with some of the same problems. Were you trying to explore the idea of generational curses or patterns?

We talked a lot about the sins of the father, the sins of the mother, and what is passed down. My dad was a psychologist, and I wanted to work for him. I admired my dad a lot, and I was naturally interested in people and psychology. So I'm looking at, if addiction is a social disease, how does that work? Or is it genetics or a mixture of the two?

I'm realizing that it's definitely not only your willpower at play here. And I think as a musician, as a person who tries to be driven and motivated, you trick

yourself into believing that you could do just about anything with that attitude, (but) it's not so simple as that.

How has revisiting these topics impacted you personally night after night?

You think I'd be a depressed person because I'm singing about these things that can be kind of heavy, but I think to express those things publicly like that with a group of people has been quite cathartic, and it's a good reason to sing. You don't really feel like you're performing. It's not like a Broadway show where you're putting on a face every night.

Speaking of performing, how will you present this concept album at the show?

It's a lot of (video) footage and sometimes unseen b-roll or archival footage that we shot while on set. And so it's kind of like you're transported into that world. If you've never seen the videos, I think people are a little bit caught off guard by some of the imagery. Bringing that to the live show has been really dynamic (and helps) tell the story. We're trying to be entertaining up there, but also it's really focused on the music. We just want the music to stand up for itself.

How have you and Jeremiah

Fraites kept your bond and your songwriting strong during the past 15 years?

We're just each trying to search for the best idea, and may be the best idea win. That's what kept us trusting each other all this time. We weren't like, "Well, why do you want that idea on the song?" It was always, "I know you're doing that for the right reasons." And I think that's kept us really honest. I think it was way easier to be in a band when there were these lean years. In 2011, we were in (Los Angeles) and we got robbed of almost all of our instruments. And we ended up playing a show that night with borrowed instruments and kept going on the tour. And that was a galvanizing experience that brought us together.

And then a year later, you had a massive hit with "Ho Hey!" How do you handle being defined by that song?

If I thought that was what we were defined by, I would feel defeated. That song was a huge shot in the arm or a kind of icebreaker. It got us known to a lot of people. But there are a lot of bands that have a big song and kind of quickly burn out or go away. And I think we were really interested in writing music, and we've been doing that ever since.



Big Hassle Media



“When you love an addict and you’re going on the ride with them emotionally, I think that there’s a lot of confusion and there’s a lot of resentment mixed with that love, and there’s a lot of anger.”

Wesley Schultz
Lumineers co-founder and vocalist

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS



Warner Records

Age hasn't mellowed Green Day

'Father of All...' as urgent and angry and anti-establishment as previous albums

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Green Day recently caught some people unaware. The trio performed at the NHL's All-Star Game in St. Louis, and singer Billie Joe Armstrong dropped some swear words into the mix. NBC had to bleep the band. What did everyone expect?

Age hasn't blunted the band's urgency. Green Day come out of the gate, as always, snarling on its latest release, "Father of All..." They may have pulled back on the official title—if you want to know what the ellipses replace, look at the

album cover—but the spirit of punk lives on in the band, even if you'll detect some strong rockabilly tendencies.

"Father of All..." represents Green Day's first album in the Donald Trump era, and the trio's angry, anti-establishment voice has been missed. "What a mess because there's no one to trust," Armstrong screams in the title track. On "Sugar Youth," he warns: "All hell is breaking loose."

It's a very lean album, clocking in at just over 26 minutes. Two of the 10 songs don't even hit the 2-minute mark. Alien-



Green Day

Father of All...
(Reprise Warner)

ation and drug use run through the album, as do violence and aggressive language. But the vocals sound more distant than when we last heard a crisp urgency to Armstrong delivering such songs as "Bang Bang" in 2016.

The '50s-ish sock hop of "Stab You in the Heart" is undercut by murderous lyrics, while the band even approaches doo-wop in "Meet Me on the Roof." (By the way, maybe skip the date with Armstrong on the roof: "How high is your low gonna go, girl?")

On the glam rocker "Oh Yeah," which samples a tune by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, the band mocks social media

addiction ("Everybody is a star") and how we're failing our kids ("Burning books in a bulletproof backpack.") Bassist Mike Dirnt shines on "Junkies on a High" and drummer Tre Cool propels "Graffiti," a song that is as close to Bruce Springsteen as Green Day can get.

Perhaps the best song, "Fire, Ready, Aim," sounds a little like the Hives, and it's a driving scream about daily outrage. The NHL has bought the song and seems to want it to be their equivalent to the NFL's "Are You Ready for Some Football." One wonders if they really spent time with the lyrics. "Knock your teeth out / To the ground / You're a liar," Armstrong sings. Watching this corporate tie between hockey and punk will be interesting. Someone's teeth are going to end up on the ground indeed.

Stone Temple Pilots

Perdida (Rhino)

What a strange trip it's been for fans of Stone Temple Pilots. Two decades ago, they gave us the grunge masterpiece "Push." Now they are offering folk songs with flute solos.

That's not a knock, just a gentle warning. Bands evolve, and the Pilots have moved so beyond their sonic beginnings that they've followed their muse into a completely different genre. They deserve credit—and listeners.

Acoustic songs are more delicate than electricity-fueled ones and there's more pressure on singer Jeff Gutt, who has



taken over from original frontman Scott Weiland. But these 10 songs show off the musicianship of the band and its members' versatility, sounding organically acoustic, not reverse-engineered. The songwriters—Gutt, DeLeo, and DeLeo's bass-playing brother Robert—even offer the wordless "I Once Sat at Your Table." An acoustic instrumental? That wasn't what many were likely expecting from Stone Temple Pilots. You'll get used to it.

—Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

Various Artists

Birds of Prey: The Album
(Atlantic Records and Warner Bros.)

The all-female roster assembled for "Birds of Prey: The Album" represent uniquely different worlds, and a variety of music styles, but their message on the movie soundtrack is singular: DON'T MESS WITH US.

It's a perfectly on-brand message from the girl gang, as they channel the explosiveness, unpredictability and badassery of Harley Quinn, the unhinged DC character, whose romance with the Joker has ended just as "Birds of Prey," the film, begins.

Naturally there's a breakup anthem



(with a twist of vengeance, of course), by way of the Charlotte Lawrence single "Jokes on You." Then there is "Smile" by English singer Maisie Peters, whose sweet

voice delivers an awesome dose of Quinn-inspired communication: "...got bridges to burn, and places to run / yeah this smile is a loaded gun."

The in-your-face energy of the 15-song soundtrack doesn't stop, making it just the companion piece that "Birds of Prey" calls for.

—Melanie J. Sims
Associated Press

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Juicy details are only part of Jessica Simpson's story

Singer, actress and fashion designer shares her inner monologue and most intimate struggles in 'Open Book'

By EMILY YAHR
The Washington Post

Even casual readers of celebrity news have probably seen the headlines over the last few weeks as excerpts from pop star-turned-fashion mogul Jessica Simpson's new memoir, "Open Book," leaked to the internet:

"Jessica Simpson Details the Last Time She Slept with Ex Nick Lachey: 'I Could Feel His Hate'"

"Jessica Simpson Had An 'Emotional Affair' with Johnny Knoxville While Married to Nick Lachey"

"Jessica Simpson Revealed Justin Timberlake Kissed Her to Win a Bet with Ryan Gosling"

"Jessica Simpson Takes the Narrative Back From John Mayer, Who Seems To Be Even Worse Than We All Thought"

Websites also published the more serious revelations: When Simpson was young, she was sexually abused by the daughter of a family friend. Several years ago, she got sober; at the time, she was drinking so much that her friends, who feared for her life, had started planning an intervention.

But taking in each anecdote individually is a disservice to someone who has a truly unique story of fame to tell—particularly because Simpson was one of our first reality TV stars, before anyone could absorb the psychological damage it could cause. At one point, she writes about the disorienting experience of going home to Texas for Christmas with the camera crew from "Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica" in tow and being forced to not like everything was fine, even as her marriage to Lachey was crumbling.

"Nowadays, I see so many people performing their identities on social media, but I feel like I was a guinea pig for that," Simpson, now 39, writes. "How was I supposed to live a real, healthy life filtered through the lens of a reality show? If my personal life was my work, and my work required me to play a certain role, who even was I anymore?"

It's a passage that should send chills down the spines of aspiring influencers, hoping to one day be followed by cameras. But they probably won't care, because, as Simpson readily admits, "Fame and money are great distractions."

Many of Simpson's issues stemmed from the fact that for many years, she was defined by the men in her life. The first was her father, a former Baptist minister who encouraged Simpson's career after she was nearly cast on "The All-New Mickey Mouse Club" in middle school. Producers "told him his daughter was a star, and it was his responsibility to make that happen for me." He eventually became her manager, and she felt increasing pressure to be her family's breadwinner. (Years later, she fired him.)

Then there was record executive Tommy Mottola, who took a keen interest in Simpson when she signed with Sony's Columbia Records in 1997; she was their blond response to Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. One of the first things he said to her: "You've got to lose 15 pounds."

"It was as if he tied my value as an artist to my weight right there, like a rock, and then threw it out the window of the thirty-second floor of the Sony building," she writes. When her first single, "I Wanna Love You Forever," became a huge hit, she says Mottola's reaction was, "This video is great. But you can do better. I want a six-pack for the next video."

It kick-started her lifelong body-image issues and adds more upsetting context to the conversation around Simpson's infamous "mom jeans" incident in 2009, when she wore high-waisted jeans to perform at a chili cook-off and the internet exploded with mockery about her weight. She was devastated. "I had always been in on the joke, and that gave me power," she writes.

"Now that it was everybody else making it, I didn't think it was funny."

"In on the joke" alludes to her performance as Lachey's ditsy wife on "Newlyweds," MTV's popular early 2000s reality show that followed Simpson and Lachey, the 98 Degrees boy-band star, through their first years of marriage.

In one of the most notorious "Newlyweds" episodes, Simpson held a can of Chicken of the Sea tuna and said: "Is this chicken that I have, or is this fish? I know it's tuna, but it says 'Chicken by the Sea.'" That line cemented Simpson's pop culture image as she and Lachey became international stars and paparazzi obsessions. She emphasizes that she played up her mistakes for the cameras, and it worked: Her album sales skyrocketed as people thought they were seeing the "real" Jessica Simpson. "Being the butt of the joke ironically gave my music credibility," she writes.

She spends time detailing her toxic relationships. She met Lachey when she was 18 and he was 25, and she turned to him for guidance for almost everything. But their relationship soured soon after the wedding. If you want more proof of the drawbacks of fame, she admits that she was terrified to go to couples counseling because she thought a therapist might sell them out to the tabloids.

One person who comes off terribly is musician John Mayer, whom Simpson describes as obsessed with her, "sexually and emotionally," in their on-and-off relationship. He would suddenly break up with her only to show up and want to get back together. During that time, her self-esteem plummeted, and her drinking increased. He also drove a wedge between her and Dallas Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo, whom she dated after Mayer.

Although Simpson's alcohol consumption reached frightening levels after years of anxiety, in 2017, she got sober. To support her, her husband, Eric Johnson (with whom she has three children), also stopped drinking.

In the book, she makes a point of reflecting on her mistakes but is cognizant of the pressures and expectations that others put on her. She's most proud of what she's achieved on her own, which she sums up in an anecdote about the financial settlement during her divorce. She ultimately agreed to pay Lachey a large sum. Her father was furious, but Simpson assured him that she would earn all that money back.

"And then I did," she wrote. "Give or take a billion."



WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

"A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" In these trying times, even small acts of empathy can feel radical, but this story featuring a certain beloved TV host feels revolutionary.

Inspired by a 1998 Esquire profile by Tom Junod, the film follows jailed journalist Lloyd Vogel (Matthew Rhys), who is sent to interview Fred Rogers (Tom Hanks, giving a soothing performance) while his deadbeat dad (Chris Cooper) attempts to come back into his life. As Lloyd struggles to accept Fred's vibe as genuine, Fred's seeming ability to see through to the soul prompts a journey of forgiveness.

Director Marielle Heller beautifully captures each character's humanity, from the prickly to the patient, the pleading to the peaceful. The narrative beats and visual style encourage the viewer to slow down and express gratitude for life, no matter how messy, much like the real-life Rogers did. And while it's not quite as much of a tear-jerker as the 2018 documentary "Won't You Be My Neighbor?," it's sure to tug at the heartstrings.

"Jojo Rabbit" Jojo (Roman Griffin Davis) is an enthusiastic member of the Hitler Youth who fawns over der Führer to such an extent that Hitler (Taika Waititi) is his imaginary friend. After discovering his idealistic mother (Scarlett Johansson) is hiding a Jewish teenage girl (Therese van den Bosch) in their home, the 10-year-old grapples with his blind fanaticism and innate humanity.

Waititi, who also wrote and directed the film (based on "Caging Skies" by Christine Leunens), took home the Academy Award for best adapted screenplay at this year's ceremony. (He's the first win of Maori descent to win an Oscar.)

The visual style and snappy dialogue screams "Wes Anderson meets the Nazis," though the "satirical" story aspects tend to fall flat. It's tough to pull off that zaniness while also trying to be simultaneously emotionally moving and biting. The tonal shifts are jarring, with more schtick than social commentary. Still, it's ambitious, with plenty of moments both tragic and touching.

"Midway" Six months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the infamous World War II battle between the Japanese and American forces begins.

"21 Bridges" A New York detective (Chadwick Boseman) searches the city for a pair of cop killers while all of Manhattan's bridges are closed.

"Frankie" A famous French movie star with terminal cancer (Isabelle Huppert) gets her extended family together in Portugal in an attempt to wrap up her affairs.

"Disturbing the Peace" An ex-Texas Ranger (Guy Pearce) faces a biker gang.

"The Twilight Zone" The first season of the CBS All Access series based on Rod Serling's 1959 original series stars Jordan Peele as the narrator of the eerie sci-fi vignettes.

—Katie Foran-McHale/TNS

Diversifying Austen's world

In PBS' 'Sanditon,' Crystal Clarke plays Miss Lambe, the sole character of color in author's works



PHOTOS BY RED PLANET PICTURES, PBS/AP

Crystal Clarke stars as Miss Lambe in the series "Masterpiece: Sanditon," airing Sundays stateside on PBS.

BY LYNN ELBER
Associated Press

Crystal Clarke could imagine herself playing the heroine of a period costume drama, a genre that regularly makes its way to TV and film screens with potential breakout roles for young actresses. But the African American tempered her expectations. "I had hope for myself and I knew what I could do. But the sad part comes in: 'Oh, other people around me would never see me that way,'" said the New Jersey-born Clarke, a graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland whose credits include "Black Mirror" and two Star Wars films.

Then Jane Austen came to the rescue. When the novelist died in the summer of 1817, she left behind an unfinished draft that served as source material for PBS' "Masterpiece" drama series "Sanditon" and offered Clarke an unexpected oppor-

tunity: Miss Lambe, the sole character of color in Austen's works.

When the script first came to her, Clarke, 26, approached it with understandable reservation. What would such a woman be if not in the background and servile?

"It's just going to be another (expletive) maid," she recalled thinking. "When I was reading it, I was like, 'Wait a minute, there's actually a lot to it.' I was really surprised at what kind of character this was they were trying to create."

Lambe is a historically credible figure, not modern wish fulfillment for diversity, according to an expert on Austen and her times.

"Race relations were a real thing and very complex in 18th-century Britain," said Devoney Looser, author of "The Making of Jane Austen" and an Arizona State University professor. There were an estimated 10,000 people of African or Afro-Caribbean descent in London as the

19th century approached, she said, about 1% of the city's population of around 1 million.

Austen, who famously referred in letters to "the little bit (2 inches wide) of ivory" as her artistic canvas and "four or five families in a county village" its contained focus, should not be viewed as uninformed or indifferent to the outside world, Looser said.

"This idea that she wasn't paying attention to history or politics is false. I think she was very keyed into history and politics," she said, which in Austen's time would have required an understanding of the anti-slavery movement. Two Austen works, "Mansfield Park" and "Emma," mention slavery, with one character defending another as "always rather a friend to the abolition."

Wherever Austen intended to take her incomplete novel, the task of developing it for "Sanditon" fell to screenwriter Andrew Davies, whose Austen adaptations include 1995's "Pride and Prejudice" miniseries. The characters he inherited this time around included the briefly sketched Lambe, a young, biracial heiress from the West Indies — the center of the British slave trade that was part of her heritage.

"There were only two words used by Jane Austen to describe Miss Lambe, 'chilly' and 'tender.' And I took 'chilly' very literally to mean that she found the climate very unpleasant," Davies said. "Tender" is ambiguous. I took it to mean vulnerable, quick to see slights and prejudice in others, which she does find, of course."

She became a more spirited character in Davies' hands. Georgiana Lambe and the

drama's central female character, Charlotte (Rose Williams), meet and bond as visitors to the seaside village of Sanditon. Charlotte's love interest, Sidney (Thea James), is the orphaned Lambe's guardian on the series (airing stateside through Feb. 23 and available online at pbs.org).

"It would seem quite natural that Charlotte would befriend her, because Charlotte is a very open-minded sort of character and quick to see injustice and call it out," Davies said. "They'd be natural companions, and I thought it would be fun to give Miss Lambe quite a playful and rebellious sort of character, so as to give Sidney a hard time."

From the start, Clarke refused to approach the role passively.

"I was very wary because the writers are white, producers are white, director is white," she said. "There were some things that, through nobody's fault except not knowing, didn't sit well with me and that I would want changed to suit the perspective of a character who's supposed to be so much in her power, or trying to find her power."

Among her concerns: story lines that suggested Lambe's wealth would have protected her from racism, and a scene in which she laments that a man's anti-slavery efforts were taking precedence over her.

"She would never say that. She grew up on a plantation, and she understands the horrors of it," Clarke said. "It's very much of an important thing to her."

It was at the first cast dinner that Clarke realized that she and Lambe were in good hands. The producers assured her that "we don't want to just have you here. We want to make sure that it's done right," she recalled.



From left, Juuddah James, Rose Williams and Crystal Clarke.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Q&A



iStock

‘Guys need the cover of the group’

Social worker says peer support improves outcomes for men with depression

BY GAIL ROSENBLUM
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Mark Meier knows there's only one thing tougher than getting a man into therapy — and that's keeping him in therapy. Meier is a licensed clinical social worker and co-founder of the Face It Foundation (faceitfoundation.org), whose mission is to help men understand and recover from depression. Face It, founded in 2009, offers individual and group support, community events and training for mental health professionals in the Minneapolis area. In 2019, the nonprofit launched an unusual program pairing traditional therapy with peer support to see if that combination improved outcomes for men. Early results look promising. Meier talks about the program and what men need most to get and stay mentally healthy.

(Star Tribune) You've said that men will go to therapy, but they tend to only stay with it for a session or two. Why?

The literature is clear that men stop going to psychotherapy after one or two visits. For a number of reasons, it hasn't served them well. Sitting down for 50 minutes of talking is counterintuitive for most men. These guys never got Emotion 101. Guys need the cover of the group.

So you provided that cover while still requiring that they see a therapist. And they were good with that?

These are all men who have already participated in Face It support groups. Many have been coming to us for years

and have built friendships. But we're not a therapy organization. I wanted them to also go to therapy and have it be more effective. We kind of promised these guys that we could help them in a new way. I sent out an email about this new program, and it was like I was selling tickets to the seventh game of the World Series.

In other words, they're hungry for professional help, but in a way they can best receive it.

The men who come in this door are starved to get better. They're experiencing depression, anxiety, a lot of hospitalizations and suicide attempts. They're 40, 50, 60 years old, finally revealing secrets they've carried their whole lives, including sexual and physical abuse. They've been medicating with alcohol, drugs, gambling. Many no longer have relationships with their partners or kids. They're alone.

How many men participated in the initiative in 2019?

We had three groups of nine men each. Each group met for about eight weeks, seeing the therapist individually five times. Then they came back to Face It for four peer-led sessions where they could discuss and reinforce the skills they were learning in the professional therapy sessions with a clinical psychologist.

What did they say helped most in those therapy sessions?

The guys loved the psychologist because he's direct. Some attended sessions with their wives. The psychologist shared real-life stories and did skills-based therapy with these guys, such as guided imagery, breathing techniques, (the eye movement approach) EMDR—not just talk therapy.

What did you and Face It co-founder Bill Dehkes hear in your group sessions while the men were also seeing the psychologist?

Sometimes it was funny. When we'd gather in our friendly group environment, they'd say, "What just happened?" Or, "I don't understand how that tapping works." But they also said they had started sitting at work listening to his guided meditations and they'd feel less anxious. Their confidence was going up. We started seeing optimism in them.

What were some measurable outcomes?

Ninety-eight percent of the men completed all five therapy sessions. Fifty-one percent strongly agreed, and 39% agreed that having a peer support group to attend was an important component in helping them complete the five therapy sessions. And, most important, they showed significant improvement on the depression and

anxiety rating scales they were provided in therapy. Twenty-five of the 27 men said they strongly agreed or agreed that their depression improved because of the combination of peer support and five therapy sessions. A few of the men are still seeing the psychologist.

Is this a pricey proposition?

It was actually very cost-effective. We negotiated a substantially reduced hourly rate with the psychologist to maximize the number of therapy sessions the men could attend. And I facilitated all 15 peer support groups. Based on market rates, we accomplished our goal at half the cost and achieved better outcomes because of our coordinated efforts.

Where did funding come from?

The O'Gara Family Foundation has been instrumental in helping Face It grow and in supporting this project. Richard and Deborah O'Gara connected us to the Katherine B. Andersen Fund of the St. Paul Foundation, which has also helped to fund this project. Thanks to individual and family foundation funding, we can serve more than 200 men, ranging in age from 32 to 70, and we don't charge them a nickel.

This is tough work. Why do you do it? Bill (Dehkes) and I started it because of our own desire to help ourselves. In turn, we've helped a lot of people.

Will you offer this combination program again?

If we can get funding, we'll do more. It's a no-brainer. I'd do five cohorts if we could get the dollars. It works.



Mark Meier, above, cofounded the Face It Foundation with Bill Dehkes.

Mark Meier

WEEKEND: FAMILY

Take a bite out of picky eating

To break through food aversions, try therapy

By JOSH SCHONWALD
Chicago Tribune

The breakthrough bite took place about 30 minutes into treatment. My daughter Kate bravely raised a cracker to her mouth and, with little hesitation, took a bite. That cracker had cinnamon in it, a spice she hadn't tried in years.

Most parents have struggled with picky-eating children. But Kate, my funny, ordinarily easygoing 12-year-old daughter, is an extremely picky eater.

She has never met a fruit she likes. She won't sit next to someone eating bananas, blueberries or yogurt. And she's so choosy about breakfast and lunch foods that for the past four years, she's been drinking Ensure, a nutritional supplement, for those meals.

That's what led us to seek the aid of Karen Diller, a Chicago-based occupational therapist who specializes in food therapy. There are many pediatric food therapists in the Chicago area who cover a wide range of issues — from infants struggling to swallow food, to preschoolers with sensory processing challenges, to teens with food-related anxieties — but Diller was one of a smaller subgroup of therapists who were willing to refer us to Kate: 7 to 18, often bright, well-adjusted, with no other special needs or medical issues.

Here are our most valuable take-aways:

Change in attitude

Instead of focusing on what Kate didn't eat, Diller sought to understand why Kate has certain taste preferences, and went from there. It was a glass-half-full view of picky eating.

Diller started with lots of questions — about goals, challenges, Kate's likes, dislikes, former likes, turning points, hardships, even our family food history. Diller's questioning helped develop her treatment strategy, but it also gave me more insight into Kate's pickiness. After sharing some details from Kate's history with fruit, Diller observed that she likely has a hypersensitive sense of smell, which could be a reason for some of her aversions. Her dislike of fruits is also consistent with her taste profile. Kate loves "sassy over sweet."

When I confessed, almost shamefully, the details of my kid's diet — pasta with cheese, pizza, hamburgers, Cheez-Its — Diller put a positive spin on it. Kate liked savory, had a protein-heavy diet, and was someone eating at restaurants. Even Kate's ramen habit had an upside: "Noodles are a food group."

The value of this positive attitude readjustment soon became clear. Our goal was to start in Kate's food comfort zone, and then use a technique called "stretches," so she could have positive experiences with new foods.



CAMILLE FINE, CHICAGO TRIBUNE/TNS

Kate Schonwald, 12, tops a pizza for dinner Dec. 2 in her home in Evanston, Ill., while working with occupational therapist Karen Diller.

Empowerment

Of all of her experiences with food, Kate says the worst happened at camp. Extra-anxious, away from home, surrounded by cabin mates at breakfast, her counselor pushed her to clean her plate and eat "more than bread." She was shamed and embarrassed.

Diller made it clear that "clean your plate" should never happen in our house. And after meeting one-on-one with Kate, she presented us with a six-point list titled "Food Guidelines" and posted it on our refrigerator.

These said Kate should refuse food and never had to eat more than she wanted.

"If she says no to a food, that's fine. That's her right. That cannot be the end of the story. You have to say, it's OK, and keep presenting her with new options. That's the art."

Karen Diller

Occupational therapist specializing in food therapy

Decades of research on children and feeding has found that pressuring children to "clean the plate" is bad for kids. Diller, who trained with Marsha Dunn Klein, food therapist and author of "Anxious Eaters, Anxious Mealtimes," uses an approach that focuses on reducing anxiety around mealtimes by building trusting relationships and making mealtime a "safe place."

Kate's newfound power also came with new roles. Under the new order, she would play a bigger role in shopping, preparing and serving food. Even if she didn't like a food, Diller encouraged us to give her a role, such as serving the salad.

Toolkit, treatment plan

Diller demonstrated a method she called "redefine try it" on one of Kate's biggest needs: breakfast foods. The method looked, at first, like a lab examination of a cracker. Diller guided Kate through several steps — she looked, touched, smelled and listened to the sound of the cracker. After each step, Kate was asked to describe what she thought the cracker would taste like.

It wasn't until going through the pretesting process, gaining comfort and confidence at each step, that Kate actually tasted a cracker crumb. Although tasting just a crumb struck Kate as comical, that method has extraordinary success in palate changing, according to research.

After the crumb, Kate took a "mousebite," and decided she didn't like the cinnamon cracker. "If she says no to a food," Diller said, "that's fine. That's her right. That cannot be the end of the story. You have to say, it's OK, and keep presenting her with new options. That's the art."

The therapist recommends trying a combination method too. It's pairing a new food with a liked, familiar flavor, using dips and spreads. When Kate dined a chocolate cracker that she was just OK with, Diller encouraged her to try spreads. Hazelnut? Butter? Peanut butter? She kept saying "no." Diller kept brainstorming. Finally, they stumbled on an approved option: chocolate and peanut butter on saltine crackers.

Her diet won't completely change overnight, and it will require energy and patience, but Diller's visit affected us more than expected. Learning more about Kate's perspective, and thinking differently about our role in feeding her has already made us more thoughtful, creative and relaxed about food.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



A day set aside for torture, tenderness

As much as I'd like to blame Hallmark, FTD, Whitman's Sampler, Russell Stover, Brachs and The Melting Pot for inventing Valentine's Day to benefit the blood-sucking consumer industry, unfortunately I can't. The fact is, February 14th has commemorated Saint Valentine, the patron saint of romantic love, since A.D. 269.

However, that day was not a happy one with chocolates and lace doilies. It was the time in history that Valentine, a holy priest, was arrested on orders from Roman Emperor "Claudius the Cruel" for refusing to deny Christ. He was sentenced to death — imprisoned, beaten with clubs, and when that didn't kill him, beheaded on Feb. 14. Romantic, huh? Believe it or not, it gets worse.

A couple hundred years later, in A.D. 496, Pope Gelasius wanted to put an end to an ancient pagan fertility festival called Lupercalia, celebrated annually on Feb. 15 in Rome, involving a brutal matchmaking lottery, the colors red (blood) and white (milk), and drunken naked men whipping women with strips of sacrificed goat skin. Understandably, the Pope was not thrilled by Lupercalia, so he banned it and declared the Feast of Saint Valentine an acceptable Christian substitute.

Although there was no real evidence connecting St. Valentine to the patronage of romantic love, myths and legends cropped up over time. One story was that Valentine was martyred because he was defying Claudius the Cruel's order banning marriages, performing secret ceremonies for couples in love. Another tale of imprisoned Valentine curing his jailor's daughter of blindness, and having grown fond of her, writing her a letter signed, "From your Valentine." But it wasn't until Chaucer wrote poems inspired by mating birds in the fourteenth century that Feb. 14 was finally able to shed its dark history and take on the sweet sappiness that it encompasses today. Doubtably, today, the Valentine's Day has questionable origins and costs consumers nearly \$2 billion per year, but is there anything wrong with reserving one day a year for a little love and tenderness?

As a child, I clipped construction-paper hearts, opened cards emblazoned with Ziggy and Snoopy, and crunched Nocco Sweethearts stamped with "Cutie Pie" and "Be Mine," imagining innocent love. During my desperate teen years, my best friend and I ordered each other Valentine's Day \$1 carnations at school, and signed them "from your secret admirer," in case we didn't receive any from boys. The only boy who ever bought me a flower was nicknamed "Goober," but my dreams of romance persisted.

We finally able to experience this bliss after meeting my Navy husband in 1992. There is nothing quite like true love, and in the early years, we spent hours picking out cards for each other, covering every square millimeter with hand-written words professing how doggone happy we were to have found our soul mates.

In the decades that followed, we tried to fulfill Valentine's Day's expectations of us. Some years, we succeeded, like the year we were stationed in Germany and went on the Valentine's Day wine tasting trip in France. But other times, Francis would race home from work, stopping at the 7-Eleven for a lousy card that he signed hastily in the car, only to find me in our kitchen, frantically trying to feed the kids while folding laundry and helping our daughter study for a chemistry test. We'd exchange a quick kiss and the year we were stationed in Germany and glue. He'd rush to change out of his military uniform, and I'd spritz on perfume to hide the scent of tater tots. We'd do out the requisite bedtime threats to the kids, climb into our dirty minivan and fight traffic to make our restaurant reservation. Once there, we'd make our best effort at romance, ordering wine, holding hands, sharing dessert. But the next day, the fluorescent lights, the blood and sugar, we'd start yawning before the clock struck nine.

Our "hurry-up-and-be-romantic-before-I-fall-asleep" Valentine's Day routine was sometimes the best we could muster. We learned that even the most tortured schedule can squeeze in a little time for tenderness.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

WEEKEND IS: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

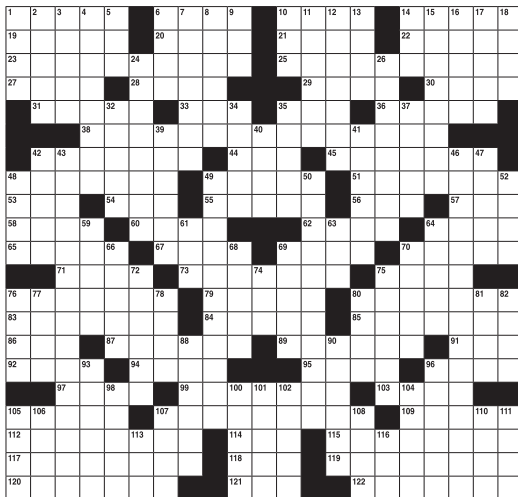
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

AUDUBON SOCIETY

BY BRIAN HERRICK AND CHRISTOPHER ADAMS / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Brian Herrick of Brooklyn does communications work for a nonprofit that funds diabetes research. Christopher Adams of Iowa City is a puzzle maker and crossword connective. Guess who wrote the clue for 71-across? They met through the Crossword Puzzle Collaboration Directory on Facebook. The idea for the puzzle's theme was Brian's. Chris added to Brian's examples. They spent an afternoon filling the grid together by email. —W.S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Part of L.G.B.T., for short
6 Like wine, but not grape juice
10 Chances
14 Hogwartz headmaster
19 "The Jungle Book" bear
20 Part of a theater?
21 Do for a few months?
22 "Lovergirl" singer
23 "Soak Up the Sun" singer, 2002
25 "Fictional protagonist who attends elementary school in Maycomb County"
27 Smooth over
28 Overtime "Come hungry. Leave happy" sloganizer
29 Tolkien trilogy, for short
30 Hawk
31 Pick up from school
33 Nat ____ (documentary channel, for short)
35 Gentle attention-getter
36 Divert
38 "Actress in "Alien" and "Avatar"
42 Farthest orbital point from the moon
44 ____ smcar
- 45 Patois
48 Grace's partner on Netflix
50 Synagogue item
51 Avoids attention for now
53 Ingredient in bananas Foster
54 Cease
55 Completely lost
56 Speck in la mer
57 Ivanovic who won the 2008 French Open
58 Lend a hand when one shouldn't
60 "Cool your jets!"
62 Directs
64 Really, really hope
65 Agib ____ five-time Pro Bowl cornerback
67 #carpediem
69 Kitchen timer sound
70 Labors
71 Iowa college city that isn't Iowa City
73 Corrida combatants
75 One of the Spice Girls
76 Swedish vodka brand
79 Tease relentlessly
80 Hamilton and Burr, e.g.
83 "Nice job, dude!"
84 Poker-faced
85 You might gain knowledge through this
86 Direction from Tampa to Orlando, for short
87 "Don't include me in this!"
89 Dispanmias
91 Bronze
- 92 Costco competitor, informally
94 Italian wine region
95 Bottom of Britain?
96 Some square-dance participants
97 Bill passes, briefly
99 Some woolen blankets
103 Peter or Paul (but not Mary)
105 Ballerina's balancing aid
107 Exhibition mouser
109 Anne with the Pulitzer-winning novel "Breathing Lessons"
112 "First African-American U.S. poet laureate
114 Uraeus, in ancient Egypt
115 2017 film nominated for Best Picture ... or a hint to the answers to the eight starred clues
117 Northern race
118 President whose veep was Dick
119 Lone female Argonaut
120 "Copacabana" hitmaker, 1978
121 ____ St. James, first female Indianapolis 500 Rookie of the Year
122 Comes to light
- DOWN**
- 1 Amt. of cooking oil
2 Bobby in the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America
3 Advil alternative
4 "Because I felt like it"
5 Makeup of some meat substitutes
6 Prefix with conservative
7 Ignore orders
8 Romeo or Juliet
9 Mountain ____
10 Covert ____
11 Render harmless, so to speak
12 Wasn't stuff
13 N.S.F.W. stuff
14 Antismuggling grp.
15 Idle periods
16 Elaine on "Seinfeld"
17 Cry from the defeated
18 Jokerster movie
21 Traitoria dish
26 Labors
32 Rainer Maria ____ writer of "Letters to a Young Poet"
34 Baked, in a way
35 Herman Melville's first book
37 Fracas
39 "Eventually ..."
40 Vittles
41 Sick
42 Island whose name rhymes with a popular thing to do there
43 "Portrayer of Fallon Carrington Colby on "Dynasty"
46 ____ "The Silence of the Lambs" protagonist
47 Like the Vietnamese language



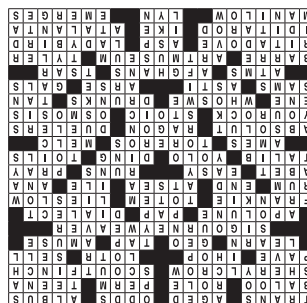
- 48 Kegger locale
49 "Singer with the most American Music Awards of all time (29)
50 "Janet Leigh played her in "Psycho"
52 How, with "the"
53 Asian island divided between two countries
61 One on a bender, perhaps
63 Young ____
- 64 Arroz accompanier, often
66 In the hold
68 Keynote, say
69 R2-D2 or C-3PO
70 Overflows (with)
72 "For example ..."
74 Bigheadedness
75 Weapon with a lock, stock and barrel
76 Passing judgments?
77 ____ fide
78 M.M.A. stats, for short
- 80 Mob bosses
81 Money in the Mideast
82 1040 figures, for short
88 Gawked
90 "The Little Mermaid" villain
93 Certain clouds
96 Stonewall Inn, e.g.
98 Make it to the podium
100 App with an envelope icon
101 Kind of voice or dog
102 Word that's good for matchmaking
- 104 Word with house or high
105 Hat part
106 Hit musical with music by Elton John
107 Swear
108 ____ in three (chees challenge)
110 The Father of Art Deco
111 Nutrition figs.
113 Guadalajara gold
116 Horse's female parent

GUNSTON STREET



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FACES

'Wagon Wheel' rolling

Darius Rucker song certified 8 times platinum, making it one of the top 5 country singles ever

BY KRISTIN M. HALL
Associated Press

Country singer Darius Rucker couldn't quite believe it when he was surprised this week with the news that his song "Wagon Wheel" was certified eight times platinum, making it one of the top five most popular country singles ever.

On Wednesday, Rucker stopped by the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum to see his items in an exhibit, but his label, Universal Music Group Nashville, surprised him with a plaque featuring eight platinum-colored records.

After repeating the word "Wow!" over and over, Rucker muttered to himself, "That can't be true," as he inspected the plaque in his hands.

According to the Recording Industry Association of America, "Wagon Wheel" now joins other multiplatinum hits among country music's biggest songs in RIAA's 60-year history, including Taylor Swift's "Love Story," Lady Antebellum's "Need You Now," Florida Georgia Line's "Cruise," and Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road."

"It's amazing to me because I came here to make country music, and I didn't expect success and I didn't expect to be on

the radio," said Rucker, who had already had a highly successful rock career as lead singer of Hootie and the Blowfish.

He joked about seeing his CMA new artist of the year trophy behind glass, noting it happened for him when he was in his 40s. But the South Carolina native also represents the changing face of country music, as one of two black artists among the RIAA's top country singles.

"Lil Nas X being up there, it just shows that country music is starting to open its doors and broaden its horizons and realize there's a lot of different faces, a lot of different colors and a lot of different things to country music," Rucker said.

It's another interesting chapter in a song with a unique history. Ketch Secor, lead singer of string band Old Crow Medicine Show, first encountered the song when he heard a Bob Dylan bootleg that contained an outtake of a song called "Rock Me, Mama" that was mostly just a chorus and a muddled verse. Secor wrote verses about being homesick for the South and made it a signature song for the popular folk band in the early 2000s.

For years, the foot-stomping banjo and fiddle song "Wagon Wheel" was popular on the live circuits. Then Rucker heard a



Darius Rucker, shown in 2018, can barely play the first chord of his eight-times-platinum song "Wagon Wheel" at his concerts before fans start cheering.

country style cover version at his child's school.

Rucker's version, released in 2013 and featuring backing vocals from Lady Antebellum, went to the top of the country chart for multiple weeks, earned him a Grammy for best country solo performance.

These days, he can barely get past the first chord of the song before fans start cheering.

"You hit that first chord and people just lose their minds, cause by the time we get to the third chord they know exactly what it is," Rucker said.

Snoop apologizes to Gayle King for rant over Bryant

BY NEKESA MUMBI MOODY
Associated Press

After days of blistering criticism, Snoop Dogg has finally apologized to Gayle King for attacking her over her interview with former basketball star Lisa Leslie about the late Kobe Bryant.

"Two wrongs don't make no right when you're wrong, you gotta fix it," he said in an Instagram post on Wednesday.

"So with that being said, Gayle King, I publicly tore you down by coming at you in a derogatory manner based off of emotions of me being angry at a question you asked. Overreacted," he said. "I should have handled it way different than that. I was really way better than that, so I would like to apologize publicly for the language that I used and calling you out your name and just being disrespectful."

Snoop Dogg was furious that the "CBS This Morning" anchor brought up rape allegations from Bryant's past in her interview with Leslie, a friend of Bryant. The retired Lakers star was killed in a helicopter crash last month along with his young daughter and seven others.

Snoop Dogg called King crude names on Instagram. He also said she had better back off "before we come get you," and posted a slew of insulting photos and memes about her.

King herself was angry at CBS News for promoting a snippet of what was a wide-ranging interview on social media, which drew sharp reaction and accusations from some that she crossed the line. King, in her own Instagram message last week, said she could see why people might be upset if they only saw a brief portion of what was discussed.

Snoop Dogg, a friend of Bryant and ardent Lakers fan, was hardly the only one who was angry at King for her questioning — LeBron James and even Bill Cosby were among her critics — but his



RICHARD SHOTWELL, INVISION/AP

Rapper Snoop Dogg has apologized to Gayle King for lashing out at her over an interview where she asked about a sexual assault charge against late NBA star Kobe Bryant.

comments were among the most inflammatory and seen as a threat. King's best friend, Oprah Winfrey, said that King was "not doing well" and getting death threats because of the interview.

Soon, an avalanche of support came in for King, from the head of CBS News to former Obama administration official Susan Rice to award-winning author Ta-Nehisi Coates, who in an Instagram post chastised black men who attacked her.

"We did not calmly express our dislike of the question. We were too weak for that. We threatened. We dragged. And we attacked," he wrote. "It's wrong. We should want more. We should be better."

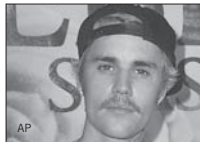
Snoop Dogg was also heavily criticized in essays in black media, including one that accused him of hating black women.

Last week, Snoop Dogg responded to some of the backlash and denied threatening King, but in Wednesday's post, he offered a full apology. He said in the post's caption that a talk with his mother set him right.

"I didn't mean for it to be like that. I was just expressing myself for a friend that wasn't there to defend himself," he said.

He noted that he knows some people look up to him, so it added to his importance to apologize.

"Anytime you mess up, it's OK to fix it, it's OK to man up to say that you're wrong," he said.



Bieber says he let fear keep him from music

Justin Bieber admits getting back in the studio to record his first album in five years wasn't easy.

"I was dealing with a lot of fear," the singer told Zane Lowe in an interview with Apple Music released on Thursday. "Just was afraid of, at that point, just even the process; what am I going to talk about again, is it gonna be received. I'm starting to compare with other artists."

Bieber releases his first album of new music since 2015 on Friday with "Changes," the follow-up to his Grammy-winning, multiplatinum album "Purpose."

Bieber has talked about enduring several challenges in the past few years, including dealing with depression, recovering from Lyme disease, which he says seriously affected his health.

Bieber said it wasn't until he performed on stage with Ariana Grande last year at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival and received an ovation that he got a "boost of confidence."

"It kind of reminded me ... this is what I do, this is what I'm good at, and I don't need to run away from it," he said.



Kinney writes another 'Wimpy Kid' spinoff

The "Wimpy Kid" and author Jeff Kinney are both embarking on new paths.

Amulet Books announced Thursday that Kinney's latest novel is called "Rowley Jefferson's Awesome Friendly Adventure" and comes out April 7 with an announced first printing of 3 million copies, among the highest for any fiction writer. Rowley Jefferson, "Wimpy Kid" Greg Heffley's best friend, is the book's narrator. He will tell the story of "Roland the Kind" and "Gary the Barbarian" and their quest to vanquish the evil White Warlock.

Kinney also plans an unusual promotional tour this spring. There is no advance itinerary, not even for Kinney. Every day a new destination, decided upon by his publisher and various booksellers, will be announced. Kinney will "surprise children at under-served schools and meet his fans at independent bookstores, all without knowing where he will be heading next."

Kinney said in a statement that he's "thrilled for the adventure that awaits, and I'm looking forward to epic moments with my fans along the way."

From The Associated Press

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OPINION

Trump just pretending to tackle deficit

By DOYLE MCMAUS
Los Angeles Times

“Promises made, promises kept” has been one of President Donald Trump’s favorite boasts in his campaign for a second term.

So it was a little awkward this week when his own proposed budget acknowledged, in the fine print, that several of his key promises haven’t been kept at all.

When Trump ran in 2016, he promised that if Congress enacted big tax cuts for corporations, economic growth would soar to 4% or more. “I actually think we can go higher,” he said.

He promised to balance the federal budget in eight years, a longstanding Republican aim that those economic growth rates could make possible.

Neither goal is being met — not even close.

In 2017, a Republican Congress approved Trump’s corporate tax cut. It gave the economy a boost, but only a temporary one. Growth reached 2.9% in 2018 before slowing to 2.3% last year. It’s running about 2% now, according to private-sector economists.

That has extended the long economic expansion that began under President Barack Obama, as well as reduced unemployment and raised wages — all good things. But it’s far short of Trump’s initial 4% promise, and it’s done nothing to balance the federal budget. Quite the contrary: Trump’s tax cut ballooned the deficit by about \$1 trillion a year — and his new budget forecasts that pace to continue.

To which Trump’s budget chief said as he unveiled the new budget this week: Never mind.

“This president is a ‘promises made, promises kept’ kind of president,” Russell

Vought, the acting director of the Office of Management and Budget, told reporters. The promises are still there, he said. They’ve just been scaled back.

They’re also still wildly unrealistic. Trump’s proposed budget forecasts 2.8% growth this year, growing to a steady 3% after that. Those numbers are way above realistic expectations.

With 3% growth, Vought said, the federal budget could come into balance 15 years from now, in 2035. That’s 10 years later than Trump promised, but who’s counting? His pie-in-the-sky growth number is what budgeteers call a “magic asterisk” — a statistical device that allows a president to claim that he’s meeting his goals even when he’s not. Obama and earlier presidents used them too.

But Trump’s election-year budget plan uses a second magic asterisk to make the deficit look better. It assumes that the Federal Reserve will keep interest rates low for the next 10 years, which will reduce the cost of interest on the national debt. That’s a wish more than a forecast.

And a third magic asterisk, maybe the biggest. It assumes Congress will enact all of Trump’s proposed cuts in domestic spending, from Obamacare and Medicaid to environmental protection and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

That’s not going to happen. House Democrats have promised to resist draconian cuts in the social safety net, health and the environment, as well as they did last year and the year before.

Republicans in the Senate have rejected many of Trump’s proposals, too, including cuts in farm subsidies and foreign aid.

Many of his domestic spending proposals represent other broken promises. When he ran last time, Trump pledged he would not touch Medicaid. He promised to replace Obamacare with a better, cheaper health insurance plan. He vowed to protect

clean air and clean water. He’s done none of those things.

Presidents’ budgets are often little more than a wish list that Congress politely ignores. But Trump’s new budget, with that mountain of magic asterisks, is wholly untethered from reality.

His 2016 campaign promises were always unrealistic. You can’t cut taxes and balance the budget at the same time without cutting spending so deeply that even Republicans will blink.

So Trump blames Democrats for failing to embrace the Republican agenda of gutting domestic programs.

“We have not been able to make progress ... because Democrats in Congress have opposed his previous budgets,” Vought said. “We hope that changes. We probably need to have a national election before it does.” Translation: If Trump wins a second term and the GOP takes control of the House, those budget cuts will begin to look possible.

Many moderate Democrats want to be fiscally responsible, just as Republicans once were (and still might be, under a different president). But if a Democrat wins the White House, the first thing GOP leaders in Congress will do is demand a balanced budget and claim that Democrats are responsible for the \$1 trillion deficit Trump bequeathed them.

All the Democratic presidential candidates say they would reverse Trump’s tax cuts. Republicans will say it’s bad for growth and unfair to hardworking corporations. They’ll claim the only way to reduce the deficit is to cut domestic spending.

Don’t listen. Trump’s fantasy budget proposal shows how cynical that argument is.

Doyle McMaus is a Washington columnist for the Los Angeles Times and director of the journalism program at Georgetown University.

New Hampshire brightens Dems’ prospects

By GEORGE F. WILL
Washington Post Writers Group

After three failures as the Democratic presidential nominee (1896, 1900, 1908), Nebraska’s William Jennings Bryan, a populist teetotaler, told a story about a drunk who, after being hurled out of a club a third time, dusted himself off and said: “They can’t fool me. Those fellows don’t want me in there.” Joe Biden can sympathize.

He was already in his third Senate term when he sought the Democrats’ 1988 nomination. His campaign, which began before Iowa, in September 1987. In 2008, his campaign collapsed the night he received 0.9% of Iowa’s vote. He has never won anywhere outside Delaware, which has not elected a Republican as congressman since 2008, as senator since 1994, or as governor since 1988.

In New Hampshire, Elizabeth Warren finished fourth and closer to last than to third. This effectively ended one of the two candidacies that could have guaranteed Donald Trump’s reelection. The other, that of Bernie Sanders, probably reached its apogee Tuesday because the success of Amy Klobuchar, who finished before Iowa, much closer to first than to fourth, demonstrated Democrats’ realism about how to defeat Trump at a time when 70% of voters self-identify as moderate or conservative.

Today’s nomination process has myriad defects but one manifest virtue: It provides ample time and small early venues for aspirants who, like Klobuchar, start with more luck than money, and less notoriety

than seriousness. Sanders’ coming defeat might send some of his most despicable supporters — those most like him — into hibernation or opposition. Putting would be in character for true believers who are self-righteous and ideologically inebriated. But it would not necessarily be fatal to the Democratic Party, which has survived defeat before.

Mike Bloomberg’s 30-second ads do not resemble the Federalist Papers but neither do they lower the intellectual tone set by the Democrats’ “debates,” and they have propelled him into contention. There is, however, some point at which such blast marketing has steeply diminishing effectiveness. In the last five months of the 2016 campaign, in two hotly contested metropolitan areas in swing states, Las Vegas saw 20,471 presidential campaign ads and Columbus, Ohio, saw 15,658. Such media blitzkriegs become like wallpaper — there but not noticed.

Whether Bloomberg’s campaign succeeds or fails, the republic will benefit. If nominated, he might go on to fumigate the Oval Office, and the political scolds who lament “too much money in politics” will be ecstatic about what his spending accomplished. If, however, his “overwhelming” spending does not overwhelm, this will vent the scolds’ inner mythical assertions about the irresistible power of money-bought advertising. In 1957, Ford Motor Co. put its enormous marketing power behind a new product, but the Edsel’s unhappy life lasted just 26 months.

In politics, too, the product itself matters more than the marketing of it. Bloomberg’s incurable anti-charisma makes him

the equivalent of a no-nonsense sedan, an agreeable contrast with the gaudy chrome and tailfins of Trump, a human land yacht. Bloomberg’s demeanor is that of someone who knows how to smile but resists the inclination. There are, however, credible reports of a dry — arid, actually — Bloomberg witlessness. Asked about a possible fall partnership with Hillary Clinton, he replied: Who would be the second one?

Bloomberg has a knack for getting under Trump’s microscopically thin skin. His needling of Trump would augment the public stock of harmless pleasure, and could leave Trump wallowing waist deep in his insecurities, a sight that members of a cult never to see and everyone else would enjoy seeing.

Among Democratic activists, a nascent Anybody But Bloomberg faction is decrying New York’s “stop and frisk” anti-handgun police measures during his mayoralty, measures often applied to young minority males. The measures, which have been lamented by white liberals living in buildings with doormen that by minorities living in danger. Nevertheless, a party whose most fervid members consider “billionaire” an unsavory epithet might flinch from nominating one of those who was last elected to office as a Republican.

A Bill never-Klobuchar ticket is less feasible, and probably would be less potent than, say, a Klobuchar-Deval Patrick (the African American former two-term governor of Massachusetts) ticket. So, after Tuesday, it is somewhat less likely that the Trump-Mike Pence ticket will repeat in a Midwest victories or add Minnesota to them.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editors have provided the context of the piece and other statewide syndicates.

Sanders benefits from splintered Democratic vote

The Wall Street Journal

The good news for democracy Tuesday was that in New Hampshire they know how to count votes. That's especially good news for Bernie Sanders, who was denied his election night TV time in Iowa last week but not this time as he narrowly won the Granite State. Whether that's good news for the Democratic Party or not is another matter.

The socialist from next-door Vermont repeated his triumph from 2016, albeit with a smaller (26%) share in a much larger field. The result showed the loyalty of Sanders' millennial and left-wing supporters. In poll after poll, in state after state, Sanders has retained that plurality base of more than 20%.

The New Hampshire win after his near tie in Iowa gives him considerable momentum going into Nevada, then onto South Carolina and the Super Tuesday states on March 3. He is already leading in California, the March 3 state with the biggest delegate count. That plurality win holds will keep him above the 15% threshold needed to rack up delegates all the way to the Milwaukee convention. In a splintered field, Sanders has staying power even if most Democratic voters prefer someone else. Donald Trump took similar pluralities all the way to the Republican nomination and the White House in 2016.

The other winners Tuesday night were Midwesterners Pete Buttigieg (about 24%) and, in a mild surprise, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar at 20%. She won a major chunk of the deciding vote. Klobuchar may have benefited from the campaign implosion of Joe Biden, as she picked up his theme of electability and a "return to normalcy" after the Trump presidency. Her challenge now will be to raise enough money to organize and compete as the race expands. She has always struggled to raise enough money to compete and message to give Trump a strong race in swing states.

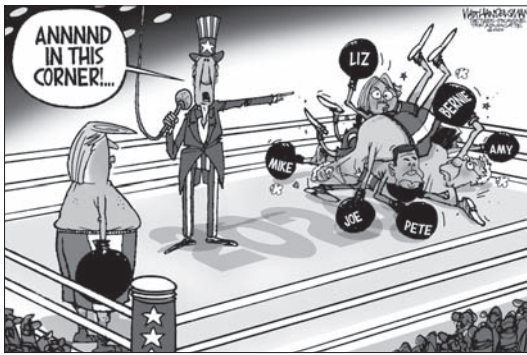
Buttigieg capitalized on his apparent Iowa victory and showed he can attract voters who think Sanders is too far left to beat Trump. The former South Bend, Ind., mayor has enough momentum to compete in the next states, but he will need to show he can appeal to minority voters in addition to the white gentrily liberals who like his biography and his ability to speak in Barack Obama-style aspirational tones.

Overall the results show an unsettled race. Even Democrats are still looking for the candidate they hope can beat Trump. Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg joins the fray on Super Tuesday with the biggest checkbook in the history of politics. But as long as the field contains multiple candidates, Sanders' socialist plurality has the advantage.

Trump's proposed budget is self-serving and dishonest

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump's proposed budget for fiscal year 2021, which begins in October, is not only dishonest in some respects, that's not unusual. Trump is hardly the first president to obey his legal requirement to present a spending plan to Congress by sending one that has no chance of passing. In fact, Trump signed legislation—a two-year budget agreement last October—that would have to be repealed if this budget proposal were to be passed.



come operative.

Nor is he the first to engage in rosy forecasting—but in this case, the exaggeration is especially flagrant. Trump misleadingly projects a future of declining federal deficits in part by claiming economic growth exceeding consensus forecasts. The Trump budget beats the Congressional Budget Office's projection for the annual growth rate a decade hence by more than a percentage point, enabling him to claim an extra \$4.5 trillion in 10-year deficit reduction, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. Also not forthright is the underlying assumption of the budget, which is that the country's structural fiscal deficits can be addressed almost entirely through cuts to nondefense discretionary spending. In fact, additional revenue, too, is needed, yet Trump's budget adds \$1.5 trillion to the next 10 years' debt by assuming that the individual income tax cut he and a GOP Congress enacted in December 2017 will be extended beyond their scheduled December 2025 sunset.

Inevitably, perhaps, this much dishonesty leads to what can only be called cruel inequities. Upper-income tax cuts are preserved, so Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits must be denied to those who cannot meet tightened work requirements, and redefined to include boxes of preselected foods rather than spendable funds. The last vestiges of federal cash anti-poverty benefits, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant, would get cumulative cuts totaling \$15.2 billion by 2030.

This country badly needs an honest debate about equitable tax and spending reforms. What we are getting instead from the administration is a budget—which serves but one useful purpose: to record the warped priorities upon which Trump is willing to campaign for a second term.

Closer to ensuring candidate with most overall votes wins

Los Angeles Times

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear two cases involving the Electoral College, the antiquated system that twice in recent history has installed the loser of the popular vote for president in the White House and could have done so again this year in 2020. Alas, it's beyond the power of the court to do away with the electoral vote system, but the justices can prevent it from becoming even less democratic.

Although U.S. citizens cast ballots for president on Election Day in November, they are actually choosing people to serve as electors—usually party loyalists—who convene in state capitals in December to formally choose a chief executive. Laws in 29 states and the District of Columbia bind those electors to reflect their citizens' votes. (In 48 states, all of the electoral votes go to the winner of the statewide popular vote, and D.C. also allocates its electoral

vote on a winner-take-all basis. Maine and Nebraska allocate some electoral votes to candidates who finish first in congressional districts.)

But in 2016, as in previous elections, some electors decided to support people other than the candidate who carried the popular vote in their states. The two cases the court will review—one from Washington state, the other from Colorado—raise the question of whether states can penalize or remove such "faithless electors." The court should answer yes.

In the Washington state case, three electors voted not for Hillary Clinton, who carried the state, but former Secretary of State Colin Powell, who wasn't even on the ballot. They were fined \$1,000 each for violating a state law binding electors to vote for the popular vote winner. The Supreme Court of Washington upheld both the law and the fines. In Colorado, where Clinton also won the popular vote, Michael Baca was removed as an elector after he tried to vote for then-Gov. John Kasich, of Ohio, who had lost to Donald Trump in the Republican primary. Baca appealed to the U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled in his favor, holding that "the Constitution provides no express role for the states after appointment of its presidential electors." The court also said that the definitions of the words "elector," "vote" and "ballot"—all occurring in the Constitution—imply the right to make a choice or voice an individual opinion.

This is a close question, but the court should uphold the laws against faithless electors, for two reasons.

First, the overriding goal of the framers of the Constitution was to give states authority over the election of the president. It's true that early in American history, electors were chosen by state legislatures, states long ago decided that the better approach was to award electoral votes on the basis of the popular vote. Second, ensuring that voters have the final say in the selection of electors is consistent with a trend toward participatory democracy that is also reflected in changes in the Constitution, especially the 17th Amendment ratified in 1913, which took the choice of U.S. senators away from state legislatures and provided for popular election for the Senate.

Of course, the ultimate culmination of that democratizing trend would be a constitutional amendment to abolish the Electoral College and provide for popular election of the president. But even if approved by a two-thirds vote in both houses of Congress, such an amendment would require ratification by three-fourths of the states.

Because amending the Constitution is such a daunting proposition, reformers have proposed an alternative called the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. Under that arrangement, participating states pledge to award all their electoral votes to the candidate who wins the national popular vote. The compact, how-

ever, doesn't go into effect until it includes enough states to constitute a majority of 270 electoral votes. So far it has been endorsed by states representing 196 electoral votes. Enforcement of the compact would mean, effectively, that the winner of the popular vote would become president. That would of course be preferable to the current system, but its prospects are also uncertain. It's up to the American people to make it clear to their elected representatives that the Electoral College is an undemocratic anachronism.

NFL happy to run with its false social justice narrative

The Palm Beach (Fla.) Post

Amid the gaudy spectacle and commercial blitz of this month's Super Bowl, a somber advertisement appeared that featured, to our surprise, a Palm Beach County story, a story that, unfortunately, could have taken place anywhere in the U.S.

It was the story of Corey Jones, the 31-year-old black man whose car broke down at an intersection of Interstate 95 in the lonely after-midnight hours of Oct. 18, 2015, and who was shot to death by an undercover officer of the Palm Beach Gardens Police Department who did not identify himself. Jones, as it happens, had a cousin, Anquan Boldin, a Palooka native who became a star wide receiver in the National Football League. And now that retired player, impelled by the injustice of Jones' death, is heading an effort by the NFL called "Inspire Change."

"Inspire Change" is an initiative that lets current and former players receive grants for their causes as decided by a committee of players and team owners. The league says it began dispersing money for fighting social injustice in April 2018.

But the NFL did not tell the whole story in the advertisement. The game was underway between the Kansas City Chiefs and San Francisco 49ers, and the league was basking in its cultural and corporate dominance, the 49ers' former quarterback Colin Kaepernick remained blackballed after leading the protests that pushed the NFL into the controversies and ultimate compromises that produced such a thing as "Inspire Change."

Or, as writer Samer Kalaf put it in an essay for The Washington Post: "Inspire Change" is a shameless strategy for Commissioner Roger Goodell and the league's owners to pretend that they not only supported the movement to bring attention to police violence and systematic oppression all along, but that they were really the progenitors of the whole idea."

It was Kaepernick, remember, who started it all by refusing to stand for the national anthem during the 2016 preseason game.

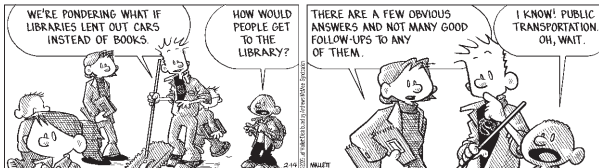
What was a public-relations headache for the NFL became a full-blown crisis when President Donald Trump began tweeting about it in September 2017, twisting the protest against police brutality into an attack on patriotism and the U.S. armed forces. The controversy soon consumed the NFL, and the controversy over players joined the protests, voices threatened NFL boycotts. Owners got nervous.

In one response, owners started working with a group called the Players Coalition, co-founded by Boldin, to financially support causes important to players. Kaepernick was not in the coalition, seeing the NFL's offer as hush money.

Kaepernick stopped playing for the 49ers after the 2017 season. There's little doubt that the NFL has shunned the player, his politics too unsettling for the business of pro football, the league even settled a contract dispute with the player.

It takes a special kind of hypocrisy to celebrate the activism of players who are concerned about the mistreatment of minorities by police departments while at the same time exiling and erasing the player who was brave enough or foolhardy enough to use his celebrity to make a public issue of it in the first place.

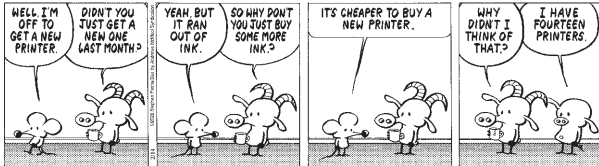
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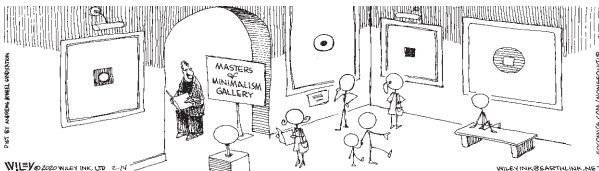
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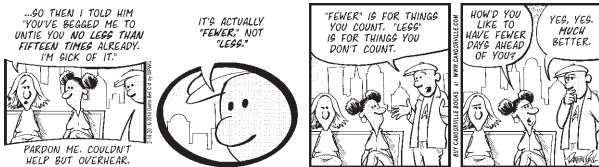
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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52				53			54			
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ACROSS

- Fusses
- Ewe's mate
- Win — nose
- Prepared to propose
- Clean air org.
- Rule, for short
- Orange variety
- Sweetheart
- Jurassic Park's bird
- Con
- Yon maiden
- Fall from grace
- "Skyfall" singer
- Walrus tooth
- Abe Lincoln feature
- Women's clothing size
- Frozen spike
- Slogan
- Lighten
- Relay stick
- de-France
- Wish undone
- Ms. Brockovich
- Japanese entertainer
- Cherished one
- Domesticates
- Toronto's prov.
- Actress Adams
- Beethoven's "Für —"
- Mas' mates

DOWN

- Ring decision
- Switch positions
- Most loved
- Gymnast Korbust
- Dance moves
- Make over
- On — with
- Scratch the surface
- Pickle juice
- Streisand title role
- Texas A&M student
- Wing Scot
- Nepal's neighbor
- NASCAR advertiser
- Coloration
- Rainbow shape
- Japanese robe
- Garlicky mayo
- Heavy sweetie
- Boston Rouge sch.
- Shoe width
- Make a colorful T-shirt
- Jazz genre
- Where the action is
- Leans
- Park, Colorado
- Jewels
- Sentry's cry
- Cistern
- Immigrant's subj.
- Observe

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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CRYPTOQUIP

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VEEPA, G AZGRU PZY JQGRUP F

DELRAFG R JQYI.

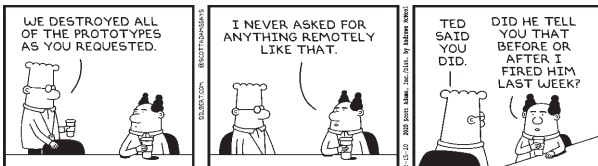
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SPECIAL ORGANS FOUND THROUGHOUT THE BODIES OF BEAUTIFUL MYTHICAL MAIDENS: NYMPH NODES.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals R

Frazz



Dilbert



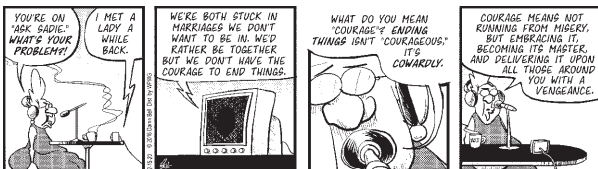
Pearls Before Swine



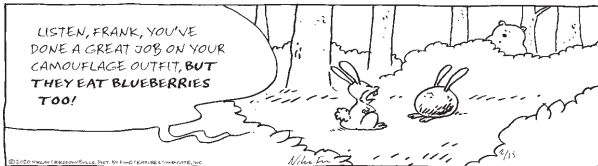
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



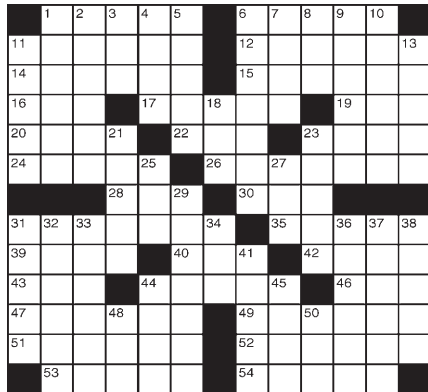
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Ice bucket accessory
- 6 Secret rendezvous
- 11 One way to serve café
- 12 Downy ducks
- 14 Non-chalant
- 15 Have at
- 16 Notable time
- 17 Author Walker
- 19 Code-breaking gp.
- 20 Shore bird
- 22 Punk rock offshoot
- 23 Needing a massage
- 24 Eyelid woes
- 26 Flowering shrubs
- 28 Heart chart (Abbr.)
- 30 "—-hoo!"
- 31 Artists' workplaces
- 35 — apso (small dog)
- 39 Faucets
- 40 Dance syllable
- 42 Prayer ender
- 43 Toronto's prov.
- 44 Got up
- 46 Suffix with human or fact
- 47 Big lizard

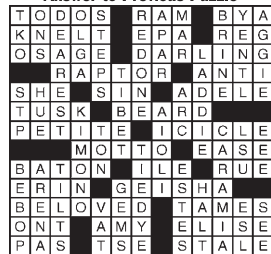
49 Companion

- 51 Sea of —
- 52 Pueblo structures
- 53 Lustrous white
- 54 Unit

DOWN

- 1 Castle tower
- 2 Kevin of "Shark Tank"
- 3 Scott's refusal
- 4 Sphinx site
- 5 Fashion
- 6 Cover for a chai brewer
- 7 Ascend
- 8 QB's gains
- 9 Spooky gathering
- 10 Singer Yearwood
- 11 Helps crooks
- 13 Dispatches, as a dragon
- 18 "— Believer"
- 21 Essentials
- 23 Hello hello
- 25 Enjoy Aspen
- 27 MSN narrative
- 29 Flip out
- 31 Unemotional
- 32 Ballroom dances
- 33 Rising trend
- 34 HBO puppeteer
- 36 One-celled creature
- 37 Took by force
- 38 Warhol and Murray
- 41 Indian tea region
- 44 From the start
- 45 Within (Pref.)
- 48 From — Z
- 50 Very long time

Answer to Previous Puzzle



2-15

CRYPTOQUIP

V BQZPN BDCGF SODS V
UVCOS PVEG SQ MQLSPI
MSFQEG KZKKVGM DYN
EVSSGYM, VL V BGFG D
KGSSVYC UDY.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN ACTRESS BARRYMORE COULD REALLY USE A CAFFEINE BOOST, I THINK SHE DRINKS A MOUNTAIN DREW. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals L

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NBA/GOLF



PHOTOS BY KELVIN KUO, ABOVE, AND DAVID ZALUBOWSKI, BELOW/AP

The jerseys of the late Los Angeles Laker Kobe Bryant, right, and his daughter Gianna are draped on the seats the two last sat on at Staples Center, prior to the Lakers' game against the Portland Trail Blazers in Los Angeles on Jan. 31. Bryant will be announced Friday at All-Star Weekend in Chicago as one of the finalists for this year's Basketball Hall of Fame induction class.

Mourning continues for Kobe

Lakers great's tragic death hangs over Hall of Fame announcement

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

Kobe Bryant will be announced Friday at All-Star Weekend in Chicago as one of the finalists for this year's Basketball Hall of Fame induction class, which isn't a secret and never was.

Bryant always was a lock to be a first-ballot pick. Fellow first-time nominees Tim Duncan and Kevin Garnett will almost certainly also be among those announced Friday as finalists. The complete class that will be enshrined at Springfield, Mass., in August will be announced on April 4 at the Final Four in Atlanta.

But Friday's announcement of the finalists in Chicago will be largely about the memory of Bryant, and rightly so. This All-Star weekend is the first huge gathering of the NBA family since Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter Gianna and seven others were killed in a helicopter crash in Southern California on Jan. 26. They'll be remembered and honored throughout the weekend.

Giannis Antetokounmpo's team will play Sunday's All-Star Game wearing the No. 24 on their jerseys, in tribute to the number Bryant wore in the second half of his career with the Lakers. LeBron James' team will wear No. 2 that night, in tribute to Gianna Bryant and her jersey number. Everyone in the Rising Stars game Friday, the All-Star Saturday events and then the game itself will also wear a patch with nine stars, one for each of the victims of the crash.

A week after everyone leaves Chicago, the NBA will gather again in Los Angeles for the memorial for Bryant and his daughter. It's on Feb. 24 — 2/24, which is not a coincidence. The numbers on the calendar made it seem like the appropriate day, so that's what Vanessa Bryant, Kobe's wife and Gianna's mom, ultimately chose.

That's not the end, of course. The emptiness that the league is feeling without Bryant will come up again in April, when the Hall of Fame officially says he's going to be enshrined. Then in June, when someone wins a championship. Then in July, when someone on the U.S. men's national team wears No. 10 — Bryant's Olympic number — at the Tokyo Games. Then in August, at the Hall of Fame ceremony. Then in January, the anniversary of the crash. And so on.

"What I'm looking forward to is the time of healing," USA Basketball managing director Jerry Colangelo said. "It'll give us a chance to kind of focus on the entire class because everyone is entitled to their due."



A young fan roots for the Lakers' LeBron James during Wednesday's game against the Nuggets in Denver. With James' 16th All-Star Game start on Sunday in Chicago, he will break the record of 15 he currently shares with Kobe Bryant.

LeBron watch: Assuming he starts on Sunday as planned, LeBron James will become the first player in NBA history to start 16 All-Star Games.

He currently shares the record of 15 starts with Bryant. James' 16th All-Star appearance will be second-most in NBA history, two shy of matching the mark of 18 set by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. If he wins MVP, James would tie the record of four such All-Star trophies — matching Bob Pettit and, again, Bryant.

James is the All-Star all-time leader in points, field goals and three-pointers made, plus field goals and three-pointers attempted. If he plays 10 minutes, he'll pass Abdul-Jabbar (449) for most All-Star minutes in a career.

All-Star weekend

Friday, Rising Stars game in Chicago: The U.S. vs. the World format remains in play this year.

Saturday, All-Star Saturday in Chicago: A newly tweaked three-point contest, plus the dunk and skills events.

Sunday, All-Star Game in Chicago: \$500,000 at stake for Chicago-area charities, and an untimed fourth quarter with a target score.

Tiger's pursuit of 83 resumes at Riviera

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — There is no better place for Tiger Woods to set the PGA Tour record for most career victories than at Riviera.

Because this is where he played his first PGA Tour event as a 16-year-old amateur?

No.

Because he now is tournament host of the Genesis Invitational, giving it the kind of elevated status — smaller field, bigger purse — enjoyed only by Jack Nicklaus at the Memorial and the late Arnold Palmer at Bay Hill?

Not necessarily.

Because it's the course Woods has played the most times — 10 as a professional — without ever having won and he's due?

Not at all.

What makes Riviera ideal is because it's the next one on his schedule. And the sooner Woods can win No. 83 to break the record he shares with Sam Snead, the sooner everyone can stop speculating about the inevitable.

The question came up Tuesday — how could it not? — about how special it would be for Woods to set the record at Riviera. He interjected by saying with a smile, "Yes, that's been mentioned."

It was mentioned three weeks ago at Torrey Pines when he started the new year, and that made just as much sense. Torrey Pines was the first PGA Tour event he attended with his father, the course where he won eight times, including that 2008 U.S. Open that he played with a double stress fracture and shredded knee ligaments.

Then again, Woods has left such an enormous trail in golf that winning anywhere would have some

historical perspective.

It could be Bay Hill, where he has won eight times. Maybe the Masters, where he could set the record and tie Jack Nicklaus with a sixth green jacket. The U.S. Open is at Winged Foot, the first major he played after his father died and the first cut he ever missed in a major.

It's a long list.

Woods hasn't decided where he is playing or even how much this year — even the Mexico Championship next week remains up in the air — but odds are he will have won every tournament on his schedule except L.A.

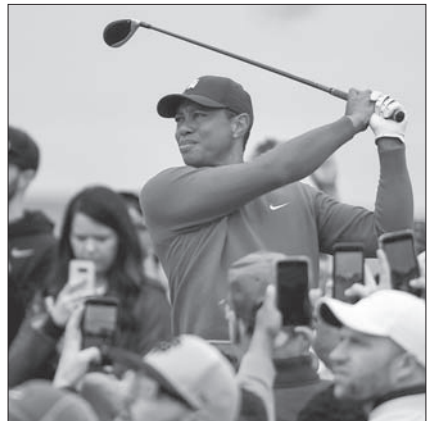
Oddly enough, what made the career record feel so inevitable was a tournament he had never played.

Winning the Tour Championship (for the third time) at the end of the 2018 season was the first step in his comeback from four back surgeries. Winning the Masters (for the fifth time) made the comeback complete, for it was his first major after a drought of nearly 11 years.

But it was when he returned from a fifth knee surgery — this one of the maintenance variety — and played the ZoZo Championship in Japan where he showed such a comfort level with his swing and with his game that more victories seemed certain to follow.

So how about now?

"I've played in a number of events over the years, and for me not to win an event that has meant so much to me in my hometown ... I've done well in San Diego, I've done well at Sherwood, just haven't done well here," Woods said. "So hopefully, I can put it together this week and we'll have a great conversation on Sunday."



DENIS POROY/AP

Tiger Woods watches his tee shot on the second hole during the final round of the Farmers Insurance on Jan. 25. Riviera is where Tiger Woods played his first PGA Tour event as an amateur. It would be a fitting place to set the tour record for most wins.

COLLEGE BASEBALL

Louisville, Vandy well armed for national title runs

By ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

With almost all of its pitching staff back from the team that made the program's deepest postseason run, Louisville begins the season Friday ranked No. 1 in three of the six major polls.

Defending national champion Vanderbilt lost six everyday players but is atop the other polls largely because it returns possible No. 1 draft pick Austin Martin and postseason pitching sensation Kumar Rocker.

Louisville coach Dan McDonnell embraces the high expectations.

When six of your top eight arms come back and you finish third in the country, and with good position players, you feel like, 'OK, we're probably going to be ranked pretty high this year,'" McDonnell said. "We tried to prepare for the kids before Christmas as to what the rest of the country will think about us. You have to be mature in how you handle that."

Reid Detmers, the 2019 Atlantic Coast Conference pitcher of the year, Bobby Miller and Luke Smith make up the weekend rotation. Each started games in the College World Series. The Cardinals also have a proven closer in Michael Kirian.

Third baseman Alex Binelas, a freshman All-American last year, is among five position players who are back from a 51-18 team.

The Cardinals lost all three of their games with Vanderbilt last year, including two in the CWS. The last was in a bracket final, with the Commodores scoring twice in the ninth inning for a 3-2 win.

The teams have a regular-sea-

son game scheduled May 5 in Nashville, Tenn.

Vanderbilt has two of the college game's biggest names in Martin and Rocker.

Martin played mostly third base last year but is able to play shortstop or even in the outfield. He flirted with 400 last year, finishing at .392, and is in line to join Atlanta Braves shortstop and ex-Vandy star Dansby Swanson as a No. 1 draft pick.

The 6-foot-4, 255-pound Rocker won 12 games as a freshman, struck out 19 while throwing the first no-hitter in the NCAA super regionals and was the CWS Most Outstanding Player. Rocker probably will remain the No. 2 starter, with Mason Hickman (9-0, 2.05 ERA) moving from Sunday to the Friday spot.

Vanderbilt went 59-12, setting a Southeastern Conference record for wins, and tied the league record with 13 players taken in the draft. Even with a revamped outfield and new starters at first base and shortstop, the Commodores remain the team to beat. They open Friday with a rematch against CWS finals opponent Michigan in Scottsdale, Ariz.

"You put this 'V' star on your chest," Martin said, "you're going to have a target on your back. That's a given. Everybody wants to beat Vanderbilt regardless of what happened last year. That's just the mentality everybody has."

Arizona State (38-19)

No drop-off is expected by one of the top offensive teams in the nation. The Sun Devils batted .310, hit 94 homers and averaged better than eight runs a game. Spencer Torkelson has gone deep



WADE PAYNE/AP

Vanderbilt's Kumar Rocker, a 6-4, 255-pound right-hander, was the talk of the NCAA Tournament after throwing a 19-strikeout no-hitter against Duke in super regionals and going 2-0 with a 1.46 ERA to earn Most Outstanding Player at the College World Series.

'You put this 'V' star on your chest, you're going to have a target on your back.'

Austin Martin
Vanderbilt third baseman

48 times the past two years and has a strong supporting cast. The Pac-12 favorites brought in a top-10 recruiting class.

Cal St. Fullerton (27-26)

The Titans locked up coach Rick Vanderhook through 2024 before last season and then missed the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1992 and failed to win 30 games for the first time in the program's 45-year history. Vanderhook has reconfigured his coaching staff to lead what will be a young team. Cal State Fullerton is the preseason Big West favorite.

Florida State (42-23)

Mike Martin Jr. takes over for his father, the all-time wins leader in college baseball, and will field a team that brings back five position players, two starting pitchers and three relievers who appeared in the CWS. Reese Albert, who hit nine homers despite missing 18 games because of injury, will be counted on to bolster the offense. Ten-game winner CJ Van Eyk is the ace of a strong pitching staff.

Florida (34-26)

The Gators won their fewest games since 2013 and didn't make the CWS for the first time since 2014. SEC coaches nonetheless picked the Gators to finish second in the conference. The spotlight will be on starters Tommy Mace and Jack Leftwich — poster boys

for Florida's struggles on the mound (5.37 ERA) — and prized freshman left-hander Hunter Barco. Six starters are back from an offense that has pop.

Georgia (46-17)

The Bulldogs will go as far as their starting pitchers take them. Emerson Hancock's 1.99 ERA was the best by a Georgia starter since 1977. Cole Wilcox got better as his freshman season progressed. In SEC play, he went 3-1 with a 2.57 ERA and .188 opponent batting average. With the top three hitters gone, offense is the biggest question.

Miami (41-20)

The Hurricanes made an NCAA regional for the first time since 2016 and are looking to go farther in Gino DiMare's second year. The main contributors from a potent offense are back. Alex Toral hit 24 of Miami's 85 homers. Fifth-year senior Brian Van Belle won 10 games and anchors the pitching staff. The Canes also are excited about No. 2 starter Chris McMahon.

Michigan (50-22)

The Wolverines were the feel-good story of 2019. They made it to the CWS finals in their first trip to Omaha since 1984 and their runner-up finish was their best since the 1962 team won the national title. Erik Bakich's club lost a couple of big bats, but much

is expected from Jordan Nwogu and Jack Blomgren, among others. Jeff Criswell will be the No. 1 starter, and Willie Weiss is back as the closer.

Oklahoma State (40-21)

The buzz around the Cowboys is about the newcomers. The recruiting class was ranked as high as No. 3, Kaden Polcovich is Big 12 preseason newcomer of the year and Bryce Osmond is preseason freshman of the year. The switch-hitting Polcovich hit 12 homers at Northwest Florida State and is projected to start at second base. Osmond is in line to be the Cowboys' No. 2 starter.

Texas Tech (46-20)

Tim Tadlock has coached four of his past six teams to the College World Series, with the 2019 Red Raiders making it to the final four. Tech is ranked as high as No. 3 and favored to win the Big 12. Dylan Nunez, Brian Klein and Braxton Fulford are the core of an everyday lineup that should be potent again despite losing a couple of sluggers. John McMillon, Micah Dallas and Clayton Beeter headline the pitching staff.

UCLA (52-11)

The defending Pac-12 champion Bruins set school records with 52 wins overall and 24 conference wins. They also were the No. 1 national seed in the NCAA Tournament, losing a thrilling super regional at home to CWS runner-up Michigan. There's plenty of returning talent, led by All-American Garrett Mitchell and the nation's top closer in Holden Powell, and a recruiting class ranked among the top five.



CHRIS MACHAN, OMAHA WORLD-HERALD/AP

Louisville's Reid Detmers was the 2019 Atlantic Coast Conference pitcher of the year as a sophomore after going 13-4 with a 2.78 ERA and 167 strikeouts in 113.1 innings. He set the school record for strikeouts and tied the mark for wins.

COLLEGE BASEBALL

10 players worth watching this season

By ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

Ten players to watch in college baseball this season:

OF-LHP Alec Burleson, East Carolina

Burleson could be the best two-way player in the country as the Pirates' starting right fielder and closer. He also could play first base or, if needed, be a weekend starter on the mound. Last season he batted .370 with nine homers and 61 RBIs and posted a 6-2 record and five saves with 68 strikeouts in 60⅓ innings.

LHP Reid Detmers, Louisville

The Louisville ace with a devastating curveball made a huge jump from his freshman season. He was 2019 ACC pitcher of the year after going 13-4 with a 2.78 ERA and 167 strikeouts in 113⅓ innings. He set the school record for strikeouts and tied the mark for wins.

2B Nick Gonzales, New Mexico State

Gonzales' .432 batting average led the nation, and he had 16 home runs, 80 RBIs, 19 doubles and four triples. He hit 11 homers in his first 14 games last season and reached base in all 55 games. He ended the season on a 66-game on-base streak dating to 2018, the longest in the country. He showed what he can do with a wood bat in the Cape Cod League, batting .351 with seven homers.

RHP Emerson Hancock, Georgia

Hancock is in line to be the first player taken in the Major League Baseball draft in June. He had a team-high 90⅓ innings despite a lat injury, went 8-3 and posted a 1.99 ERA that was lowest by a Georgia starter since 1977. He allowed zero or one run in nine of 14 starts and had 97 strikeouts against 18 walks.

LHP Asa Lacy, Texas A&M

Lacy is the best left-hander in the country and could overtake Jeff Granger, the No. 5 overall pick in 1993, as the Aggies'



ETHAN HYMAN, THE (RALEIGH, N.C.) NEWS & OBSERVER/AP

East Carolina's Alec Burleson is one of the best two-way players in college baseball. He was 6-2 with 68 strikeouts in 60⅓ innings and hit .370 with nine homers and 61 RBIs last season.

highest-drafted player. He moves to No. 1 in the rotation after going 8-4 with a 2.13 ERA and 130 strikeouts in 88⅓ innings. His career 5.41 hits allowed per nine innings ranks fourth among active players.

3B Austin Martin, Vanderbilt

Martin is widely considered the best pure hitter in the nation and is in contention to be the No. 1 overall draft pick. His SEC-leading .392 batting average was the highest by a Vandy player since 2004. He went from one homer as a freshman to 10 last season, with two in the super regional-clinching win over Duke and two more in the College World Series opener against Louisville.



RINGO H.W. CHIU/AP

UCLA's Garrett Mitchell led the nation and set a school record with 12 triples, with 10 of them coming over the last 22 games. He also batted .420 over that final stretch.

OF Garrett Mitchell, UCLA

Mitchell led the nation and set a school record with 12 triples, with 10 of them coming over the last 22 games. He batted .420 over that final stretch and .349 for the season. He started 48 games in right field and 14 in center and committed no errors in 124 chances.

OF Dylan Neuse, Texas Tech

Neuse played a major role in the Red Raiders making the College World Series for the fourth time in six years. He led the Big 12 with six triples and also had 12 doubles and eight homers, including two grand slams. He started every game in the outfield and made only two errors.

RHP Kumar Rocker, Vanderbilt

The 6-4, 255-pound Rocker was the talk

of the NCAA Tournament after throwing a 19-strikeout no-hitter against Duke in the super regionals and going 2-0 with a 1.46 ERA to earn Most Outstanding Player at the College World Series. And he was just a freshman. Rocker enters this season after closing 2019 at 10-1 in his last 11 starts.

1B Spencer Torkelson, Arizona State

He's only the third player in Pac-12 history to hit 20 homers in back-to-back seasons and is a projected top-three pick in the draft. With 48 homers in two seasons, he's 25 away from cracking the NCAA top-10 list and nine from breaking Bob Horn-er's school record. Torkelson went deep 23 times last season to become the first player since Oregon State's Michael Comfor- to lead the Pac-12 in homers in consecutive seasons.



JOSHUA JONES, ATHENS (GA.) BANNER-HERALD/AP

Georgia's Emerson Hancock went 8-3 with a 1.99 and 97 strikeouts in 90⅓ innings last season and may be the first player taken in the MLB draft in June.

HIGH SCHOOL/OLYMPICS

Far East wrestling

Upsets in semis

Several reigning champs fall, showing past accomplishments mean little at Far East

By DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — Austin Fisher wasn't expected to be in this position.

Despite pinning defending Far East champion Haydn Peterson of Kubasaki in last month's "Beast of the Far East" Tournament final, the Yokota senior was considered an underdog as the 42nd Far East High School Wrestling Tournament got started on Thursday.

But Fisher showed that victory in 31 seconds was no fluke. He pinned Peterson again in the semifinals of the 215-pound weight class on Thursday.

Fisher said he was prepared for anything the second time around.

"I knew he was going to be at his best for this one," Fisher said.

Upsets ruled the semifinal round of individual-freestyle competition. The fifth-place, third-place and championship matches are set for Friday, followed by the dual-meet competition, which runs through Saturday.

Caleb Heino learned a lesson similar to Peterson's last year. The Yokota senior won the 101-pound title in 2017-18 as a sophomore, but fell short of a repeat, losing 11-1 to his seasonlong nemesis, Jordan Van Druff of Christian Academy Japan in the 108 final.

Heino says being unable to beat Van Druff all of last season motivated him to end his career back on this season at 122 pounds.

Heino won his semifinal bout, against defending champion Jaylan Mayers of Kubasaki, and faces

Zama's Kaito Hayashi in Friday's final.

Other wrestlers and coaches said they know all about not letting past results affect your preparation.

Kubasaki, which won the Far East team title last year, won the "Beast" team title despite Peterson's loss.

"I know we have it in us," Dragons coach Brent Cook said of possibly repeating the D-1 team title, "but until we get on the mat, we just don't know. I'm 22-2 against Kadena. Two losses. We're not unbeatable."

"I think there are several teams that could win the individual team title," Kinnick coach Gary Wilson said, adding that Kubasaki is "solid throughout, with several favored to win their brackets. It will be close enough, though, that a few fifth- and sixth-place matches may decide the title."

Cook describes the D-1 team-title chase as "wide open, especially the way the brackets are set up."

As for the Division II title, that could come down to Perry, which just won the DODEA Japan tournament title last Saturday, and Osan, which fielded a near-full lineup this season and gave its D-1 rival Humphreys serious head-aches all season.

That matchup could hinge on the last bout, which would pit two-time defending heavyweight champion Marshall China of Perry against Osan's first-year wrestler Myles Bradley, who went unbeaten this season.



BRENNA McNEU/Special to Stars and Stripes

Perry's Nemo Matthews pins Osan's Marcus Inthavay in Thursday's Far East 168-pound semifinal.



DAVE ORNAUER/Stars and Stripes

Yokota's Caleb Heino locks in a cradle on Kubasaki's Jaylan Mayers en route to a semifinal pin at 122 pounds.

"If he can wrestle smart, stay in good position and go six minutes, he'll give China the six toughest minutes of his life," Cougars coach Andrew Grant said of Bradley.

Of their chances at the team title, Grant said: "I've had positive conversations with my kids. I'm fairly optimistic. With us only being one weight short, we're not going to give away a lot of free points."

While Osan seeks its first title since 2009, Perry has yet to win one, something the Samurais are trying to change.

The DODEA Japan title "was definitely a nice thing to accomplish; any history we can set is great," coach Chris Munsell said. "But obviously, our eyes are on the biggest prize. We've been close before. We're just hoping that this is our year."

Scoreboard

Far East wrestling tournament
Thursday at Osan Air Base, South Korea
Semifinals

101: Isaac Shane, St. Mary's, dec. Jeremy Cho, Humphreys 15-8; Nicholas Aguirre, Kubasaki, pin Kaisei Smith, ASU.
108: Bryce Clement, ASU, pin Cruz Cruz III, Zama; Aiden Russell, Kadena, pin Noah Vazquez, Kubasaki.

115: Iki Minamiyama, St. Mary's, pin Joel Paciel, Perry; Vincent Rodriguez, Kubasaki, pin Juan Smith, Kinnick.

122: Kaito Hayashi, Zama, pin Marcus Irons, Perry; Caleb Heino, Yokota, pin Jaylan Mayers, Kubasaki.

129: Take Zoot, ASU, tech. Jaythan Baythavong, Perry; Kurt Chapman, Kadena, dec. Eli Kasahara, St. Mary's.

135: Victor Saavedra, Kubasaki, tech. Caleb Jones, Yokota 12-2; Kenerick McDaniel, Kinnick, dec. Crispen Covington, Kadena, 10-10 last point.

141: Shi Hikaru Shimada, St. Mary's, mada tech. Adrian Misenheimer, Kubasaki, 10-0; Toy Williams, Osan, dec. Josiah Millare, Kinnick, 19-16.

148: Ethan Hamilton, Kinnick, tech. Ruben Saavedra, Kubasaki, 10-0; Rin Zoot, ASU, tech. Rami Celones, Osan, 10-0.

156: Cole Kalesh, Kubasaki, tech. Luke Robertson, St. Mary's, 10-0; Kaleb Leon Guerrero, Kinnick, tech. Dennis Martinez, Humphreys, 10-0.

168: Austin Fisher, Yokota, pin Haydn Peterson, Kubasaki; Dan Rahman, ASU, pin Isaiah Owens, Humphreys.

Heavyweight: Marshall China, Perry, tech. Dorell Powers, Humphreys, 11-0; Myles Bradley, Osan, pin Desmond Martin, Zama.

They're on: IOC reiterates virus will not stop Games

By STEPHEN WADE
Associated Press

TOKYO — Tokyo Olympic organizers reiterated their message on Thursday at the start of two days of meetings with the International Olympic Committee: The 2020 Games will not be waylaid by the virus that is spreading from neighboring China.

I would like to make it clear again that we are not considering a cancellation or postponement of the games. Let me make that clear," organizing committee president Yoshiro Mori said, speaking through an interpreter to dozens of top IOC officials gathered in Tokyo.

The Olympics open in just more than five months, and the torch relay begins next month in Japan — a clear signal the games are getting close.

Although there have been no deaths in Japan attributed to the coronavirus, Tokyo and IOC officials are clearly jittery. Sitting



JA E. C. HONG/AP

A tourist wearing a mask poses for a photo with the Olympic rings in the background on Jan. 29 at Tokyo's Odaiba district.

among the officials this time was Dr. Richard Budgett, the IOC's medical and scientific director.

Last week, Toshio Muto, the CEO of the Tokyo organizing committee, said he was "seriously

worried that the spread of the infectious disease could throw cold water on the momentum toward the games."

He backed down a day later and said he was confident the games

would go forward, which is the message this time.

On Wednesday, the virus forced the cancellation of a Formula One race set for April in Shanghai, which draws more than 100,000 over a race weekend.

The Hong Kong and Singapore rounds of the World Rugby Sevens Series were rescheduled from April to October on Thursday, with organizers saying the decision was taken "in response to continued health concerns relating to" the outbreak of the virus. Also, the SportAccord conference, an event with close ties to the Olympic movement, will not take place in Beijing in April as scheduled, organizers said Thursday.

The virus has also wiped out the indoor world track and field championships in Nanjing, golf tournaments, soccer matches, and almost all sports in China, including Olympic qualifying events. It is also keeping Chinese athletes from traveling to qualify, which could put their presence in Tokyo

in jeopardy.

Saburo Kawabuchi, a former Olympian and the so-called mayor of the Olympic Village that will house 11,000 athletes and thousands more staff members, suggested Tokyo's hot and humid summer would stop the virus.

"The biggest concern is the coronavirus and the infection," he said, speaking in Japanese. "Currently we don't have any clue when this issue will be resolved. Based on various pieces of information we receive, it seems that this virus is not as strong as the influenza virus. The virus is susceptible to humidity and heat. In Japan, we have the rainy season, which could defeat the virus."

John Coates, an IOC member who heads the regular inspection visits to Tokyo, said he expected to receive reports on the virus from the Japanese government, the Tokyo city government and local organizers in order to see the "extraordinary precautions that are being taken."

HIGH SCHOOL: DODEA EUROPE

Wrestling championships

150 contenders go for 14 individual titles

6-time defending champ Stuttgart may face challenge from Ramstein

By GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

The main event of the 2019-20 DODEA Europe wrestling season arrives this weekend as close to 150 contenders take to the mats of Wiesbaden's Clay Fitness Center on Friday and Saturday.

The six-time defending champion Stuttgart Panthers remain the team to beat until an opponent officially ends their grappling dynasty. The Ramstein Royals, the Panthers' perennial challenger, will try again this year armed with an edge in both raw numbers and championship pedigree.

Individual titles in 14 weight classes are at stake over the two days as the teams also compile points in pursuit of divisional team championships.

The event starts Friday with four preliminary rounds. Saturday holds a fifth and final preliminary round, followed by semifinals and third-place bouts and, finally, a slate of 14 European individual championship matches.

106 pounds: Stuttgart co-captain McKinley Fielding returns for another shot at history this season. The junior has finished second in this class in the last two European tournaments, falling just short of becoming the first female wrestler to win a DODEA Europe individual championship.

Fielding is facing as tough a bracket as she's seen over her three-year run. Among her rivals are sectional champions Jacob Rivera of Rota, Ethan Bell of Brussels and Skyler Hickman of Spangdahlem, the latter of whom edged Fielding for first place in last weekend's central sectional qualifier.

113: This 11-wrestler bracket might be the first to produce a head-to-head showdown between the Royals and Panthers in Saturday's elimination rounds. And there's a narrow margin separating the two: Ramstein has 24 wrestlers in the tournament to Stuttgart's 22.

Ramstein's Brandon Lapitan and Stuttgart's Connor Swain will seek to swing those valuable points in their respective school's favor, while Rota entry Evan Gantt attempts to aid the Admirals' chase for a repeat Division II championship.

120: Spangdahlem sophomore Carson Hicks is coming off a dazzling, undefeated debut as a 113-pound freshman champion and looking for an equally dominant run to another title this weekend.

Fellow sectional champions Ethan Gumabon of Naples and John Odom of Ramstein join Hicks as top seeds in the bracket, while Stuttgart's Brogen Fielding, the latest entry in the remarkable

family wrestling dynasty, lurks as a contender.

126: Ramstein senior Connor Mackie is back to defend his crown in this class as one of two reigning European champs for the Royals. The younger Panthers enter the tournament without an incumbent champion.

Mackie will be challenged by fellow sectional winners Brenden Castillo of Spangdahlem and Phillip Rivera of Rota.

132: A pair of 2019 runners-up are on the short list of top contenders to win this competitive class.

Atreyu Allen of the hometown Wiesbaden Warriors is eyeing another gold medal to go with the 113-pound title he won two years ago. Allen lost to Mackie in a 126-pound bout a year ago that was among that tournament's most evenly matched finals.

Ramstein senior Matthew Oreskovich finished second at 113 pounds a year ago.

138: Another Stuttgart-Ramstein showdown is a strong possibility in this class as each school fields wrestlers with elimination-round tournament experience. Ramstein's Christian Griffith lost by decision in the 132-pound championship bout, while Stuttgart counterpart Carter Hanes was a 2019 semifinalist at 126.

Fellow sectional winner Caleb Debelitz of Vilseck ranks among the top candidates to prevent a Royals-Panthers final.

145: Aviano's Michael Hauser headlines a field of 11 in this un-



BRIAN FERGUSON/Stars and Stripes

High school wrestlers from across Europe participate in a tournament at Kaiserslautern High School Germany on Jan. 18. Many of those wrestlers will be competing this weekend at the European championships, where 14 weight classes as well as team titles will be on the line.

predictable bracket.

Hauser is the most accomplished of the group with a semifinal appearance in this class in 2019 and a southern sectional triumph last weekend.

Fellow sectional winners Jack Engelke of Stuttgart and Philip Severance of Lakenheath join Hauser as top seeds in the bracket.

152: A well-traveled new con-

tender ranks atop this bracket after an impressive season on the DODEA Europe mats. Jacob Caricato, an American enrolled at Finland's International School of Helsinki, became a mainstay in regular-season meets this winter, won the central sectional last weekend at Stuttgart and is now in line for a European title run.

Caricato will meet resistance from Aviano's Xavier Wells, Ramstein's Tyler Worley and Stuttgart's Noah Moten, among others.

160: Roberts Swart fell just short of delivering a European title to the distant DODEA Europe school of Ankara last year, dropping the 145-pound title bout on a technical fall. Swart is back at a bulkier class this year for another shot at the crown.

This class also contains a Royals-Panthers subplot as Ramstein's Dominic Marts and Stuttgart's Christian Just won their respective sectional brackets and are in position to earn valuable points for their squad.

170: A strong defending champion sits atop this bracket in the form of Sigonella's Amari Pyatt, who claimed last year's 170-pound crown with a convincing pinfall win in the title bout.

Jimmy Birchfield of Wiesbaden also returns after a strong semifinal showing in this bracket a year ago, while Lakenheath's Nick Scifo, Ramstein's Oliver Seelig, Aviano's Nick Smith and Stuttgart's Tyler Savage try to bring new blood to the finals.

182: Rota expects to further add to its Division II points total

based on the efforts of Brenon Colvin, a favorite to claim victory in this 11-deep bracket. Colvin, who finished third in this bracket a year ago, beat out Vilseck's Hyrum Draper, last year's 160-pound European runner-up, for the southern sectional's top seed last weekend to claim a top seed.

Wiesbaden's Daniel Iverson, Ramstein's Caleb Hill, Stuttgart's Noah Carges and SHAPE's Samuel Hennig round out the top half of the field.

195: Ramstein's Nick Mooney is the heir apparent to win this weight class after dropping a 7-5 decision in last year's final.

Stuttgart's Cameron Wolfer will look to keep this title on Stuttgart's side of the ledger, while southern sectional Nick Luminarias works to improve on last year's solid showing.

220: Ramstein hopes to finish strong with powerful contenders in the event's two heaviest classes.

Gabe Davis is the favorite to win this bracket after a frustrating loss by default in last year's 182-pound championship match.

Vicenza's Alex Ramos and Alex Meno of the hometown Warriors are among Davis' primary obstacles.

285: Teddy Ward, the 2019 European champion at 220 pounds, will look to add a heavyweight title to his résumé on Saturday. He'll face two other foes in search of important last-minute points in Stuttgart's Danny Rodriguez and Rota's Charlie Everhart.

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NORMAN LLAMAS/Stars and Stripes

Rota's Vincent Bonavita, top, tries to get the upper hand against Vilseck's Max Bellanger during their 160-pound on Jan. 18 at Aviano. Bonavita won by pin in the final seconds of the match.

NHL

Around the league

No shortage of talent available

Standings have separated out a handful of notable sellers ahead of the trade deadline

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

Chris Kreider watched teammates Mats Zuccarello and Kevin Hayes handle all the speculation before getting traded a year ago and saw others do the same in previous seasons.

With the New York Rangers still in the process of transitioning to contender status, it is Kreider's turn, and he's dealing with it his way.

"I think I'd be disingenuous to try to embody how someone else went about this situation, so I'm just trying to be myself every day," Kreider said. "I feel like my name's been out there for the last seven years. It's just the nature of the beast."

Kreider may be bracing for a trade that seems inevitable. The NHL standings suggest the Rangers, New Jersey Devils, Ottawa Senators, Detroit Red Wings and Los Angeles Kings are clear sellers ahead of the Feb. 24 trade deadline.

While Kreider is the biggest name likely on the move, there is no shortage of talent available. New Jersey's Sami Vatanen and Wayne Simmonds, Ottawa's Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Ron Hainsey, Detroit's Mike Green and Trevor Daley, and Los Angeles' Troy Tofoali and Trevor Lewis are all pending free agents.

There is also Senators forward Anthony Duclair, who can be a restricted free agent, and Kings

defenseman Alec Martinez is drawing interest with a year left on his contract. The Kings have already traded goaltender Jack Campbell and forward Kyle Clifford to Toronto and made no secret they are open for business.

"We all signed up for the plan," first-year Kings coach Todd McLellan said. "We know where we're going with the team and what we want to do with it. So, none of this approach to the deadline has been a shocker to us as a coaching staff."

Duclair was traded three times his first five NHL seasons, so his approach hasn't changed despite being in the midst of an impressive comeback year.

"I've been through it for a couple of years in a row now," Duclair said. "I just try to focus on the team and I just try to win, help the team win as many games as possible and we'll go from there."

A Massachusetts native who played at Boston College, Kreider has been linked to the Bruins and the Stanley Cup champion St. Louis Blues, who have more than stayed afloat amid significant forward injuries.

He said last month at All-Star weekend that the Rangers winning games would go a long way to keeping the group together. Despite five victories in seven games after the break, New York is still nine points back of a play-off position and Kreider is almost certainly gone unless he signs an extension.



The Rangers' Chris Kreider, left, congratulates goaltender Igor Shesterkin after a win on Sunday. Kreider may be bracing for a trade that seems inevitable.

ADAM HUNGER/AP

The same goes for Lewis, who might be the perfect kind of low-risk deadline pickup that has proven to be the blueprint for recent Cup winners. Kings general manager Rob Blake is attempting to quickly rebuild, but players are in wait-and-see mode.

"I talk to my agent quite a bit, but it's kind of up to them with what they want to do," Lewis said. "Obviously when you play your whole career somewhere, I'm sure they know you'd like to stay. We'll see what happens."

Giant-killing Flyers

The Flyers are on the playoff bubble and have had their share of inconsistencies. But Philadelphia has shined against the top four teams in the Eastern Conference, picking up 12 of a possible 18 points against Boston, Tampa Bay, Washington and Pittsburgh.

"We're a tough team to play against," winger Jakub Voracek said. "It can give us a lot of confidence that against the top teams in the league that we really perform very well. Playing good defense, the goalie shows up every time we play the big teams and we just play a good overall game."

The Flyers fell flat in a 5-0 loss to the Devils before bouncing back to beat the Capitals 7-2.

"It's just important to stick to-

gether and get game after game the same kind of efforts," center Sean Couturier said. "You look at our lineup, we have some depth. I think we can match up with anyone in the league. It's just a matter of doing it night after night."

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	58	35	11	12	82	192	144
Tampa Bay	57	37	15	5	79	203	152
Toronto	57	30	19	8	68	203	189
Dallas	56	29	21	6	79	203	152
Montreal	59	27	25	7	61	180	180
Buffalo	57	25	24	8	58	162	178
Ottawa	56	18	27	11	47	147	191
Detroit	58	14	40	4	32	120	216
Metropolitan Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	56	36	15	5	77	202	172
Pittsburgh	58	34	16	6	74	182	150
N.Y. Islanders	55	33	16	6	72	166	151
Columbus	57	30	17	10	70	148	139
Philadelphia	57	31	19	7	69	184	170
Carolina	56	32	21	3	67	181	157
N.Y. Rangers	56	28	23	4	60	181	174
New Jersey	55	20	25	10	50	152	195

Western Conference

	Central Division						
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
St. Louis	56	32	15	9	73	178	160
Colorado	55	33	16	6	72	200	154
Dallas	56	32	19	5	69	151	142
Winnipeg	58	29	24	5	63	174	176
Minnesota	56	27	23	6	60	173	181
Nashville	55	26	22	7	59	178	183
Chicago	57	25	24	8	58	166	181
	Pacific Division						
Vancouver	58	32	21	5	69	190	175
Edmonton	58	30	22	6	66	181	176
Vegas	59	28	22	8	64	182	178
Calgary	58	29	23	6	64	164	178
Arizona	59	23	28	8	64	165	162
Anaheim	55	23	26	7	53	146	173
San Jose	54	24	28	4	52	147	187
Los Angeles	58	20	33	5	45	142	186
Note: Two points for a win, one point for a tie.							

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Wednesday's games

Boston 4, Montreal 1

Los Angeles 5, Calgary 3

Vancouver 3, Chicago 0

Thursday's games

Detroit at Buffalo

Dallas at Toronto

Detroit at New Jersey

Edmonton at Tampa Bay

Philadelphia at Florida

Arizona at Ottawa

N.Y. Islanders at Nashville

N.Y. Rangers at Minnesota

Washington at Colorado

Calgary at Anaheim

St. Louis at Vegas

Friday's games

Montreal at Pittsburgh

N.Y. Rangers at Columbus

San Jose at Winnipeg

New Jersey at Carolina

Saturday's games

Detroit at Boston

Nashville at St. Louis

Edmonton at Florida

Philadelphia at Tampa Bay

San Jose at Minnesota

Dallas at Montreal

Toronto at Ottawa

Los Angeles vs. Colorado at Falcon Stadium, Air Force Academy, Colo.

Chicago at Calgary

Washington at Arizona

N.Y. Islanders at Vegas

Sunday's games

Detroit at Pittsburgh

Boston at N.Y. Rangers

Edmonton at Carolina

Anaheim at Vancouver

Columbus at New Jersey

Dallas at Ottawa

St. Louis at Nashville

Toronto at Buffalo

Chicago at Winnipeg

Vegas has gotten a boost from DeBoer

By W.G. RAMIREZ
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Peter DeBoer could have chosen a life inside a courtroom arguing in front of a judge's bench, considering he has law degrees from the University of Windsor and the University of Detroit.

Instead, he's enjoyed a mostly successful career behind an NHL bench. In each of his first seasons with the New Jersey Devils and San Jose Sharks, he took his team to the Stanley Cup final.

But in December, just 33 games into his fifth season with San Jose, the Sharks fired him after a lackluster start. He wasn't out of work long. The Vegas Golden Knights hired him just over a month later.

The 51-year-old veteran coach can make strong arguments he can guide the three-year-old franchise back to the postseason.

"They're right in the middle of being one of those teams that has the opportunity to win now and for the near future," DeBoer said. "Sometimes when you're bringing in some new concepts and some new ideas there's some hesitation in the play that shows up on the ice just because guys are overthinking instead of reacting. The one thing I've appreciated, (this is a) really smart group. They've seemed to have incorporated what we're asking them to do without slowing them down, and that's been important."

Vegas was 24-19-6 when Gerard Gallant was fired as coach last month. Under DeBoer, the Golden Knights are 4-3-2 and have outscored their opponents 31-27, even after back-to-back losses, including Tuesday's 4-0 setback in Los Angeles. Their shots per game have increased slightly from 34.0 to 34.9, while their shots-allowed have decreased from 30.5 to 27.8 per contest.

The Golden Knights have shown a commitment to hustling, they're making an extra effort to block shots, they exit the defensive zone and they move in transition quicker and more cleanly.

Since DeBoer's arrival, forwards Paul Stastny and Mark Stone are tied for 28th in the league with 10 points each, while defenseman Shea Theodore has registered nine of his 37 points (24.3%).

"The second he stepped into that room he had a lot of good things to say," Theodore said. "I think he's got some really important systems that he put in place that makes us a stronger team. A lot of times it forces us to communicate. Maybe work a little bit harder towards the puck and I think key things that bring our game together."

In a stacked Pacific Division, the Golden Knights will need to get through an upcoming tough slate if they want to make the postseason for a third consecutive season.



JEFFREY T. BARNES/AP

Detroit Red Wings defenseman Mike Green passes the puck during a game against the Buffalo Sabres on Tuesday. Green is among the players on losing teams that could be available at the trade deadline.

MLB



PHOTOS BY JEFF ROBERSON/AP

Above: Houston Astros infielder Alex Bregman delivers a statement from the podium as teammate Jose Altuve, seated at right, listens along with manager Dusty Baker, left, and owner Jim Crane during a news conference before the team's first official spring training practice Thursday in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Astros open spring training with apologies from players

BY SAM FORTIER, CINDY BOREN
AND ADAM KILGORE
The Washington Post

Two Houston Astros players expressed shame for the sign-stealing scandal that has engulfed Major League Baseball and owner Jim Crane promised greater control, saying that technologically advanced sign-stealing would “never happen again on my watch” as the team opened spring training Thursday in West Palm Beach, Fla.

The remarks came amid calls for the team to be stripped of its World Series victory in 2017 and were the first since the scandal resulted in the firing of General Manager Jeff Luhnow and team manager A.J. Hinch.

Astros star Alex Bregman directly apologized in a brief statement at the beginning of the news conference, which lasted less than 30 minutes. “I am really sorry about the choices that were made by our team, the organization and by me,” he said. “I have learned from this and hope to regain the trust of fans. . . . We as a team are totally focused on moving forward to the 2020 season.”

His teammate, José Altuve, added, “We had a great team meeting last night and the whole organization and the team feels bad about what happened in 2017. We especially feel remorse for our fans and for the game of baseball.”

The players spoke for less than 90 seconds and declined to take questions, with Crane taking the bulk of the questions.

Dusty Baker, the veteran manager brought in to restore honor to the franchise, pointed to the outside role technology played in the scandal.

“I must admit that when technology gets as advanced as it has become, the boundaries seem to change. The guys said what they did was wrong. Hopefully baseball can help clean up the game and control the technology so this doesn’t happen again.”

Crane noted that he’d never been the kind of owner who hung out in the clubhouse and admitted that may have to change.

“We’ll have better controls in place,” he said. “Baseball will have better controls in place,” without specifying what those would be because “this came very close to the dugout.”

Teams who lost to the Astros have called for the team to forfeit wins and the 2017 World Series title. “Our opinion is this didn’t impact the game,” Crane said. “We had a good team. We won the World Series and we’ll leave it at that.”

Meanwhile, Yankees closer Aroldis Chapman, who surrendered a series-clinching, walk-off home run to José Altuve in the 2019 American League Championship Series, called Altuve’s actions “a little suspicious.”

As Altuve crossed the plate, he told teammates not to rip off his jersey and clutched the buttons with his hands, video of which was widely circulated amid speculation Astros hitters had used buzzers affixed to their bodies to alert them to what pitch may be coming.

Baseball proceeds with rules changes to speed up games

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Major League Baseball went ahead with its planned rules changes for this season, including the requirement a pitcher must face at least three batters or end the half-inning, unless he is hurt.

The changes were agreed to by MLB and the players’ association last March 8, subject to the study of a joint committee. The three-batter minimum will start in spring training games on March 12.

There were 2,162 pitching appearances of three batters or fewer last year, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, but 1,471 of them finished with the end of a half-inning or a game.

The active roster limit will increase by one to 26 from opening day through Aug. 31, will drop from 40 to 28 through the end of the regular season and return to 26 for the postseason. Each team may have a maximum 13 pitchers through Aug. 31 and during the postseason, and 14 from Sept. 1 through the end of the regular season.

Two-way players who have at least 20 innings pitched or 20 games started at a position or designated hitter with at least three plate appearances in the previous season may pitch without counting against that game’s pitcher limit. For this year, a player can use 2018 or 2019 to meet the requirement.

What had been a 26th player for certain day-night doubleheaders through Aug. 31 will become a 27th player in those situations, and that player won’t count against the pitcher limit.

Position players are prohibited from pitching through the ninth inning unless the player’s team is winning or losing by six or more runs when he takes the mound.

The injured list and option recall minimum period for pitchers will increase from 10 days to 15, an effort to slow the use of re-

DID YOU KNOW?

MLB rules changes for this season:

- Relievers must face three batters unless they are injured or the end of the inning comes first.
- Active roster limits increase from 25 to 26 through Aug. 31.
- Teams can carry a maximum of 13 pitchers during the regular season through Aug. 31 and again in the postseason. Teams can have 14 pitchers from Sept. 1 through the end of the regular season when rosters expand to 28 instead of 40.
- Position players can pitch in a game only after the ninth inning unless their team is losing or winning by more than six runs.
- In an effort to speed up games, managers will be given 20 seconds, instead of 30, to declare if they will challenge a play.
- Rosters can be expanded to 27 players for doubleheaders, including a 14th pitcher.
- Pitchers placed on the injured list can be recalled after 15 days instead of 10.
- Two-way designations will exist for players who have pitched at least 20 innings and started 20 games as a position player or designated hitter with at least three plate appearances in the previous season. They will not count toward the roster limit of pitchers.

SOURCE: Los Angeles Times

lievers by teams who shuttle off pitchers between the majors and minors. There still is a seven-day concussion IL.

Managers’ time to challenge a play with a video review has been cut from 30 seconds to 20.

MLB did not say whether it was going ahead with its right to cut between-innings breaks from 2 minutes to 1:55.



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

New York Yankees manager Aaron Boone said he’s not convinced the Houston Astros’ use of electronic sign stealing didn’t continue during last year’s AL Championship Series with the Yankees.

Yankees had doubts about Houston last year

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Yankees catcher Gary Sánchez and manager Aaron Boone are not convinced the Houston Astros’ use of electronics did not continue into last year’s AL Championship Series.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred found the Astros broke rules against electronic sign stealing in 2017, including during the postseason, and during the 2018 regular season. The 2019 Astros were not implicated.

José Altuve sparked speculation of nefarious conduct when he hit a pennant-winning homer off the Yankees’ Aroldis

Chapman in Game 6 of the 2019 AL Championship Series, then told teammates not to rip off his jersey as he completed his home-run trot. Some suggested he may have been wearing a buzzer underneath the jersey that could have signaled anticipated pitches.

“It’s a good question. I’ll tell you that if I hit a homer and I get my team to the World Series, they can rip off my pants,” Sánchez said through a translator Thursday as Yankees pitchers and catchers reported for spring training. “They can rip everything off if I get the team to the World Series hitting a walk-off homer like that. They can rip anything off.”

Boone said he was not sure there was no rules breaking in last year’s playoff against the Astros.

“That’s certainly one of those great unknowns,” Boone said. “I’ve spent time, as I’m sure a lot of people have, wondering all the things that could have potentially been going on, and we’ll probably never know for sure, frankly.”

Boone still considers the three managers that lost their jobs to be friends: Houston’s A.J. Hinch, Boston’s Alex Cora and the New York Mets’ Carlos Beltrán. Boone says he has struggled “making sense of it all.”

“Wrestle with my emotions, in a way get some clarity,” Boone said.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Famous 'family'

Iceland players connected by hoops

BY ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

Thorir Thorbjarnarson is one of the key pieces in Fred Hoiberg's building project at Nebraska.

Jon Axel Gudmundsson of Davidson was the Atlantic 10 player of the year last season and has filled up box scores in his career like few players in college basketball history.

Hakon Hjalmarsson is just starting his American basketball experience and trying to find his role at Binghamton.

Though at far-flung schools, the three are connected as the only Division I players from Iceland this season. They talk, text or Snapchat nearly every day and follow each other's games on television or streaming video.

"I know every basketball player in Iceland, essentially," Thorbjarnarson said. "It's a small family. We call ourselves the 'basketball family.'"

Iceland is no basketball hotbed, but college coaches will go most anywhere for talent. The island in the North Atlantic is about the size of Virginia geographically and has a population of 360,000. Basketball's popularity in Iceland ranks far behind soccer and is about even with team handball.

There are 6,800 registered male and female basketball players in the country, according to the sport's national federation. That includes recreational players. Far fewer are at the elite level.

"When you play with the youth national teams, you're always practicing in the same gyms, you're always around each other, you take trips together," Gudmundsson said. "And we played against each other in the adult league in Iceland, so we kind of grew close from there."

The best basketball players must go to Europe or the United States to test themselves against top competition. Only one Icelandic, Petur Gudmundsson (no relation to Jon Axel), has played in the NBA. He logged 150 games for three teams in the 1980s.

Thorbjarnarson is the only player who suited up for the 2018-19 Nebraska team that Hoiberg kept. He's shooting 44.6% on three-pointers to rank among the Big Ten leaders.

The junior guard from Reykjavik began drawing recruiting interest in 2016 when he played for Iceland's under-18 national team.



JOHN PETERSON/AP

Nebraska guard and Iceland native Thorir Thorbjarnarson is one of the cornerstones of Fred Hoiberg's building project at Nebraska. Iceland is no basketball hotbed, but that hasn't stopped it from producing some Division I talent.

He scored 30 or more points in four games at the European Championships and was MVP of the Nordic Championships. He first heard from former Nebraska coach Tim Miles in July 2017, visited Lincoln the next month and 10 days later was enrolled.

"I was mesmerized by the facilities, enjoyed the coaching staff, and it's not a big town. The people are similar to people in Iceland," he said. "I was, 'Sure, let's do this.' I wanted a challenge, so I decided to come."

Jon Axel Gudmundsson grew up in a basketball family. His father played on national teams and professionally, and his brother, Ingvi, played one season at Saint Louis.

The senior guard from Grindavik has hit career marks of 1,500 points, 700 rebounds, 500 assists, 200 made three-pointers and 150 steals. No other Division I player since 1993 has reached those milestones.

Gudmundsson starred on Iceland's national teams beginning at age 15, and recruiters started showing interest when he went to a boarding school in Philadelphia. He didn't like the fit, though, and he returned to Iceland after one semester. Davidson coach Bob McKillop kept in touch, made a trip to Iceland to see him play and offered a scholarship.

"I always wanted to play in March Madness and also play in the NBA," he said. "I felt the

best way to do it was coming to the States and proving yourself against the guys who are most likely to go to the NBA."

Gudmundsson nearly led Davidson to an upset of Kentucky in the 2018 NCAA Tournament, making six three-pointers in the second half and finishing with 21 points in a 78-73 loss.

Hjalmarsson, who turns 21 next month, is an older freshman who played on national age-group teams with Thorbjarnarson. The Reykjavik native started 10 straight games for Binghamton early in the season but his minutes have decreased.

"I think I'm progressing all right but I'm not doing as well as I could. I have to be patient," he said.

Hjalmarsson said he might not be playing college ball if he hadn't been selected for an NBA-sponsored Basketball Without Borders camp in Finland four years ago. He met a scout who helps international players connect with college coaches, and Binghamton was among the first to show interest.

"Coming here, I didn't think I would have to adjust to anything because I just thought it was basketball," Hjalmarsson said. "After being here a few months, it's a completely different sport. Not being able to hand check at all. I'm seeing all these illegal screens being called. It's more physical (in Iceland) but I think guys here are more athletic, they're faster, they jump higher."



MARY ALTAFFER, ABOVE, AND KEITH SRANOCIC, BELOW/AP

Above: Davidson guard Jon Axel Gudmundsson, a senior from Grindavik, Iceland, was the Atlantic 10 Player of the Year last season and has hit career marks of 1,500 points, 700 rebounds, 500 assists and 150 steals. Below: Hakon Hjalmarsson, left, a compatriot of Gudmundsson's, is just starting his American basketball experience and is trying to find his role at Binghamton.



"I know every basketball player in Iceland, essentially. It's a small family."

Thorir Thorbjarnarson

One of three Division I basketball players from Iceland

AUTO RACING

Road: No pressure in final season

FROM BACK PAGE

thing that helped me with all of it is it didn't happen at once. I knew in my heart of hearts, it was months prior to that where the real opportunity lied and where we missed it."

Team owner Rick Hendrick hired Chad Knaus in 2001 when he launched the 48 team to be built around Johnson, and the driver and crew chief

were together for all seven championships and 17 seasons. Then Hendrick made a change before last year, moving Knaus to William

Byron's team; his replacement didn't work out and Johnson was given Cliff Daniels midseason.

Daniels has helped Johnson relax and believes the team is headed in the right direction. In fact, pairing Johnson with Daniels was the catalyst in Johnson deciding to make 2020 his final year. He knew all of last year he'd need to make a decision on contract talks with Hendrick and it weighed on Johnson until Daniels arrived and changed the mindset of a struggling driver.

"I was thinking about it pretty hard through the course of the year knowing I was going to have to talk to Rick about a contract extension. I started feeling less likely to come back when I started working with Cliff," Johnson said. "When I sat Cliff down to talk to him, I wasn't sure how he was going to react to that. But the peace he brought me and the leadership he has for our race team and where I know our team is going really helped me identify with 2020 as probably my best chance to win a championship."

Johnson said he is encouraged by an updated Camaro that Chevrolet will use starting this weekend, as well as a second year adapting to NASCAR's new rules package.

NASCAR next year will move to entirely new car, and Johnson indicated he was leery of going through another overhaul. He wants to enjoy life with his two daughters, pick and choose the kinds of races he competes in going forward, and he remains adamant he'd like to give IndyCar a try on a road or street course.

"In my own head, I'm not done yet, and I don't want to get to a point where I'm pissed off going to the track and don't want to be there," Johnson said. "I want to give 100% and through reflection, I know I can do that in 2020, knowing what I can give and what level I want to give it. It just feels right."



TERRY RENNA/AP

With the Daytona 500 scheduled for Valentine's Day in 2021, NASCAR's Speedweeks — the opening stretch of racing at Daytona International Speedway that includes run-up events like Daytona 500 pole qualifying, the exhibition Busch Clash, pictured, and the ARCA Series opener — could shrink from two weeks to one, eliminating two 'dark days' at the track between qualifying and Daytona 500 practice.

Speedweeks facing significant shake-up

Drivers anticipate changes next year

By MARK LONG
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Speedweeks is facing a significant shake-up.

The Daytona 500 is scheduled for Valentine's Day in 2021, a week earlier than usual and putting NASCAR's version of the Super Bowl seven days after the actual Super Bowl. The revised date could cause changes to Speedweeks, the opening stretch of stock car racing at Daytona International Speedway that includes run-up events such as Daytona 500 pole qualifying, the exhibition Busch Clash and the ARCA Series opener.

It could ultimately lead to "Speedweek," singular. Cranking everything into one week seems like the obvious outcome, which would eliminate two "dark days" at the track between pole qualifying and Daytona 500 practice and help shorten a long, tiring regular season that drivers and crews have been complaining about for years.

But the allure of spending two weeks in Florida, where drivers often can be spotted at Disney World and other various tourist spots, still has an appeal for some.

"I'd miss it," driver Austin Dillon said Wednesday during Daytona 500 media day. "I like being down here for this long. I enjoy this week. I think it's a great start to our season."

NASCAR also could simply run its Daytona 500 lead-in events a day earlier to avoid having anything on Super Bowl Sunday. Of course, that would still leave NASCAR vying for attention in the shadow of the dominant NFL finale.

"I don't think anybody should do that," said Stewart-Haas Racing driver Clint Bowyer, a huge Kansas City Chiefs fan. "It'd be like somebody trying to go on top of the Daytona 500. We're all in this business together. It's the entertainment business. There's a footprint for all of them."

"The Super Bowl is not a game. The Super Bowl is an event. The Daytona 500 can't be just a race. It's got to be an event. The second that we lose sight of that, we've got problems."

The Super Bowl is set for Feb. 7, 2021. NASCAR and Daytona International Speedway announced earlier this week that the 500 will be the following Sunday, but the rest of next



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Driver Clint Bowyer has expressed reservations about changes to NASCAR's schedule that could leave the Daytona 500 vying for attention with the Super Bowl.

year's Speedweeks calendar has yet to be finalized.

Pole qualifying, the Clash and the ARCA race typically run the weekend before the 500. NASCAR has been hesitant to go head-to-head against the Super Bowl, even moving the Daytona 500 back a week in 2012 to avoid any potential conflict in case the league lengthened its regular season.

NASCAR switched the opener back to President's Day weekend before the 2018 season, but still hasn't returned Speedweeks to its original form that included the Rolex 24 at Daytona, pole qualifying/Clash and the Daytona 500 on back-to-back-to-back weekends. They're spread out a bit more now, but still integral to Speedweeks.

There are also sprint cars, late models and modifieds racing at nearby short tracks like New Smyrna and Volusia speedways, all in the general vicinity of Daytona Beach, the birthplace of NASCAR.

"It takes all of that," Bowyer said. "Hey, the

'The Super Bowl is not a game. The Super Bowl is an event. The Daytona 500 can't be just a race. It's got to be an event. The second that we lose sight of that, we've got problems.'

Clint Bowyer
NASCAR driver

weather does not suck. It sucks in a lot of places right now in America. It does not suck down here and there's a lot of good racing going on. Why wouldn't you be down here?"

Tweaking Speedweeks would be the first hint of an anticipated overhaul to NASCAR's 2021 schedule. The sanctioning body has said it won't shy from trying new venues while heeding calls from fans and drivers to visit more short tracks and dirt tracks.

NASCAR purchased sister company International Speedway Corp. last year to create one private company that gives the series the flexibility to alter race dates, venture to different tracks (new and old) or even shake things up like adding this year's doubleheader at Pocono in Pennsylvania.

"Based upon all the conversations that I've had with everybody from NASCAR, they're going to be aggressive and actively looking at things that are outside the box and different from what we've done in the past," 2014 Cup Series champion Kevin Harvick said. "It's kind of like ending at Daytona with the regular season. The story's already built and we need more of those types of situations."

"Even if only go there for one year, who cares? It was a great story, right? If the race is no good, what difference does it make? Every body wants to have a great game. Well, guess what, sometimes you get a Super Bowl like we had this year and sometimes you get a rout. But the anticipation and hype up to that point, we need a lot of those on the schedule."

Speedweeks, as historic as it might be, probably won't be immune.

"I don't mind them starting a week earlier," defending Daytona 500 winner Denny Hamlin said. "I think the schedule changes, things like that they've made, have definitely made things better."

SPORTS



Well-armed

Louisville, Vanderbilt positioned for title runs » College baseball, Page 56



AUTO RACING

One for the road?

7-time champ Johnson just enjoying the ride in 19th — and final — full NASCAR season, but title No. 8 is still in reach



JARED C. TILTON, GETTY IMAGES/TNS, above, AND RANDY HOLY/AP, below

Jimmie Johnson stands on the grid next to his No. 48 Chevrolet during qualifying for NASCAR's 62nd Annual Daytona 500 on Sunday in Daytona Beach, Fla. Johnson — the most accomplished driver of his generation — is determined to enjoy his final Cup season, casting aside the #Chasing8 hashtag of years past for the motto "One Final Time."

BY JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

Jimmie Johnson has been chasing NASCAR history for so long that his relentless pursuit of rewriting the record books has become part of his legacy.

Johnson, tied with Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt with seven Cup Series titles, has been racing for sole possession of the record since 2017. He made a hashtag for his social media posts — #Chasing8 — and his push to make history has never wavered.

As he heads into his 19th and final full season in stock car racing, Johnson has dropped the motto. He'd love to close his full-time career with a record eighth title, but the 44-year-old Californian said he would rather remove self-inflicted pressure and enjoy his final season in the No. 48 Chevrolet.

His new motto will be "One Final Time" and it begins Saturday with practice at Daytona International Speedway. The season-opening Daytona 500, a race Johnson has won twice, is Feb. 16.

"Through reflecting back since I made



the (November retirement) announcement it just kind of dawned on me — the more I thought about it, I never chased anything," Johnson said. "One final time just felt like the correct thing to say and now we've struck the chasing eight from everything and one final time just fits well."

It's been a bumpy ride for Johnson since winning his seventh title. Hendrick Motorsports stalwarts Jeff Gordon and Dale Earnhardt Jr. retired, leaving Johnson as the veteran on a team of 20-somethings. Chevrolet was not competitive with the Camaro it rolled out two years ago, a setback for Johnson and an organization in a rebuild.

The slide was gradual — Johnson won three races in 2017 — but now the win-

ningest driver of his era is in a full slump. He has gone two full seasons without a win, missed the playoffs last year for the first time and had a pair of crew chief changes.

"It was definitely frustrating (not making the playoffs), I was angry, embarrassed, all of those things," Johnson said. "One

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Astros open spring training with apologies » MLB, Page 61

