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VIRUS OUTBREAK

US jobless claims drop under 1M but remain high

By Christopher Rugaber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of laid-off workers applying for unemployment aid fell below 1 million last week for the first time since the pandemic intensified five months ago, yet it remains at a high level. The pandemic keeps forcing layoffs just as the expiration of a $600-a-week federal jobless benefit has deepened the hardships for many.

The number of weekly applications declined to 963,000, the second straight drop, from 1.2 million the previous week, the Labor Department said Thursday. The decline signaled that layoffs are slowing, although the latest figure far exceeds the pre-pandemic weekly record of just under 700,000.

The pandemic, the shutdowns that are meant to fight it and the reluctance or inability of many people to shop, travel or eat out continue to weaken the economy and force companies to cut staff. Twenty-three states have paused or reversed their business reopenings. In a hopeful sign, the rate of new confirmed viral cases has declined in the past couple of weeks, though it remains far above the rates that prevailed during May and June.

Fewer people are continuing to receive state jobless aid. That figure dropped to 15.5 million from 16.1 million the previous week, reflecting that some employers are hiring or re-hiring.

SEE JOBLESS ON PAGE 9

963,000

Number of claims for unemployment aid in the U.S. last week, down from 1.2 million the previous week.

Selective services

Differing values dictate how each branch promotes top officers, study finds

By Nancy Montgomery
Stars and Stripes

Marines tend to value discipline over risk-tasking for their one-star candidates, while the Navy prizes technical expertise and relations with peers hold greater sway in the Army, a Defense Department-commissioned report found.

General and flag officers in each service all had some things in common — stellar evaluations, successful command tours, and similar backgrounds and experiences, the Rand Corp. study titled "Raise the Flag" found.

But each of the armed services trains and promotes its top officers differently by rewarding different qualities, the study released Monday said.

In the Army, where generals tend to come from infantry and armor branches, the career path tends to be "tactically focused, command-centric, doctrine based, and, especially for O-7 promotion decisions, influenced by an officer's reputation among Army senior leaders."

That encourages promotion of an officer that will be "an excellent planner of military operations but might not be highly adaptable and creative, particularly when facing challenges for which doctrine does not exist," the study said.

They might also be less likely to share innovative or controversial ideas to avoid poor performance evaluations, the report found.

SEE SELECTIVE ON PAGE 6

A flight cap with brigadier general rank rests on a desk during a promotion ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., on June 8. A recent Rand Corp. study said the armed services train and promote their flag officers in different ways.

Blake Wiles/U.S. Air Force

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Germany	$2.429	$2.841	$3.089	$2.691	Azores	--	--	$3.080	--
Change in price	-1.0 cents	-0.9 cents	-0.8 cents	+0.4 cents	Change in price	--	--	-0.8 cents	--
Netherlands	--	$3.622	$3.845	$3.654	Belgium	--	$2.258	$2.531	$2.341
Change in price	--	+0.1 cents	+0.2 cents	+0.2 cents	Change in price	--	No change	No change	No change
U.K.	--	$2.751	$2.999	$2.601	Turkey	--	--	$2.890	$2.492*
Change in price	--	-0.9 cents	-0.8 cents	+0.4 cents	Change in price	--	--	-0.8 cents	+0.4 cents

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Japan	--	$2.889	--	$2.489	South Korea	$2.249	--	$2.909	$2.509
Change in price	--	-1.0 cents	--	No change	Change in price	-1.0 cents	--	No change	+1.0 cents
Okinawa	$2.229	--	--	$2.489	Guam	$2.239**	$2.649	$2.899	--
Change in price	-1.0 cents	--	--	No change	Change in price	-1.0 cents	-1.0 cents	-1.0 cents	--

*** Diesel EFD ** Midgrade**
For the week of Aug. 14-20

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates

Euro costs (Aug. 14)	$1.16
Dollar buys (Aug. 14)	€0.8231
British pound (Aug. 14)	$1.28
Japanese yen (Aug. 14)	104.00
South Korean won (Aug. 14)	1,154.00

Commercial rates

Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	$1.3115
Canada (Dollar)	1.3214
China (Yuan)	6.9433
Denmark (Krone)	6.2823
Egypt (Pound)	15.9252
Euro	$1.1856/0.8435
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7503
Hungary (Forint)	291.25
Israel (Shekel)	3.4031
Japan (Yen)	106.85
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3058
Norway (Krone)	8.8674
Philippines (Peso)	48.79
Poland (Zloty)	3.71
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7502
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3712
South Korea (Won)	1,184.12
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9090
Thailand (Baht)	31.04
Turkey (Lira)	7.3272

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Discount rate	0.35
Federal funds market rate	0.09
3-month bill	0.10
30-year bond	1.36

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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KRISTI KIMMEL | CustomerService@stripes.com | +49 (0) 0631.3615.9111 DSN: 314.583.9111

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MILITARY

Rape tweet prompts a visit from Air Force

By Steve Beynon
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A former airman and veterans advocate says two military investigators showed up at her Indiana home unannounced Monday after she recently tweeted about her rape, which happened more than two decades ago.

"Just cold-calling a rape survivor, it's totally fallible," Lisa Wilken said. "… It almost felt like an intimidation tactic."

Wilken, 49, served in the Air Force between 1994 and 1996. She is the chairwoman of AMVETS National Women Veterans Committee and testified before a House Veterans' Affairs Committee subpanel in 2013 about her attack, which led to two surgeries and a medical discharge.

Agents with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations told Wilken there was no record of her rape when they showed up Monday at her door, asking whether she wanted to file a report now. Her recent tweet about her attack, they said, caught the branch's attention.

There should be plenty on file about her case. She has her own copies and showed them to investigators, who were surprised to see them.

"I wanted to give those records to show how stupid their visit was. … It baffles me," she said.

She said there was nothing to be done to revisit the case, since her attacker was out of the military. He received an other-than-honorable discharge after an Article 32 hearing and served no time in jail.

Courtesy of Lisa Wilken

Lisa Wilken shows a copy of the book that contains the story of her attack to Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind.

"I also don't believe that the United States Air Force will take accountability for their bad decision in 2020 to cold-call a rape survivor, essentially revictimization, about a violent crime that happened in 1994."

She said she has a 90% service-connected disability rating from the VA, 50% of which is from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the attack, and there was an initial investigation with OSI after the attack when she was 22.

Wilken said she is disturbed that OSI has no records of the attack and didn't track down her records from other sources, saying if the Air Force lost them, the Department of Veterans Affairs should have them. Wilken also raised concerns that if the Air Force has no records, there is no evidence of the rape and the chain of command would not have that stain on its record.

OSI did not respond to questions on why military officials were acting on Wilken's tweet and why investigators went to her home as the first means of contact. Stars and Stripes contacted one of the investigators that Wilken said came to her home, but he said military rules forbid him to comment on a sensitive investigation.

Wilken said victims of sexual crimes can feel liberated talking about their attacks on social media. If survivors believe the military is looming over their social media, and could come to their homes with no warning, it could be intimidating.

"It came across as big brother-ish," Wilken said. "… I'm not in uniform anymore, I can say whatever I want." She added that she felt pressured to talk to investigators. "It should always be the survivor's choice. They put me in the position I had to talk … I just want to make sure this doesn't happen to anyone else."

She said that there are situations when the military should follow up with survivors, or inquire if veterans want to file reports for long-ago attacks. But Wilken said the first contact should be a phone call or letter.

"I don't believe they will use this as a teaching moment within their Office of Special Investigation to do their due diligence before contacting a victim, and to always notify the sexual assault response team prior to making that first contact," she said. "I do know speaking out about this may stop them from behaving … in this manner again."

The Air Force investigators drove more than two hours from Grissom Air Reserve Base in Indiana. She said she was not told which specific tweet spurred the visit.

On July 9, she tweeted a news story about Spc. Vanessa Guillen's slaying, and how the tragic event spurred women across the military to share their stories of rape, sexual assault and harassment.

"#IAmVanessaGuillen. They wonder why we don't tell! I told & expected justice. I was so young & dumb. The prosecutor said to me …

"Lisa, I can prove he raped you, but the rape wasn't violent enough for him to get any real jailtime." Government Property," Wilken tweeted.

She first spoke publicly about her rape in 2012 at a conference for female veterans in Indiana. In 2013, The Indianapolis Star reported a detailed account of the rape, the botched investigation and how her attacker essentially walked away. The same story appeared in USA Today. She testified on Capitol Hill in 2013. She also told her story in "Finding the Words: Stories and Poems of Women Veterans," a 2016 book about 10 female veterans.

beynon.steven@stripes.com
Twitter: @StevenBeynon

Trump reportedly weighs replacing Esper after election

By Jennifer Jacobs
Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has privately said that he intends to replace Secretary of Defense Mark Esper after the November election, according to people familiar with internal discussions.

One person said Esper has told people close to him that he intends to leave regardless of the election's outcome, meaning he could exit the administration about two months before Trump does, if the president loses.

Trump has been frustrated that Esper, who became secretary in July 2019, hasn't done more to publicly defend him on key issues, including reports that Russia paid Taliban fighters "bounties" for the killing of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

Trump was also angered that Esper in June publicly opposed the idea of deploying active-duty military to contain nationwide protests over racism.

He confronted his defense secretary June 3 at the White House after Esper held a news conference in which he said that using active-duty military forces to perform law enforcement within the U.S. is "a matter of last resort" and that the National Guard was better-suited to the task, people familiar with the matter said.

The pushback from Esper followed Trump's threat to send military forces to cities and states that failed to quell violence from the protests, which were sparked by the death of an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, in Minneapolis police custody.

Esper

Asked at the time whether the president still had confidence in Esper, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany responded that "should the president lose faith, we will all learn about that in the future."

White House spokesman Judd Deere said Wednesday: "We have no personnel announcements at this time nor would it be appropriate to speculate about changes after the election or in a second term."

Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said it's Esper's "highest honor and privilege" to serve the nation.

"He first swore an oath to the Constitution as a West Point cadet over 38 years ago, and has done so many times throughout his adult life, in both war and peace, in uniform and out of uniform," Hoffman said. "He continues that same commitment to duty, honor, and country today, recognizing that he serves the Nation and leads the men and women of this Department as Secretary of Defense at the pleasure of the president."

An official close to Esper, who asked not to be identified, added that Esper is committed to serving as long as Trump wants him to.

John McEntee, head of Trump's presidential personnel office, is helping strategize possible changes, people familiar with the matter said.

Before pushing back on deploying troops to cities with large-scale protests, Esper and Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had joined Trump on a walk through a public park in front of the White House on June 1, after it had been cleared of peaceful protesters, a move that provoked a bipartisan outcry in Congress and from former military leaders.

Esper, though, has shown more willingness than his predecessor to work with Trump on issues such as drawing down forces in Syria, Afghanistan and Germany, sending U.S. troops to the border with Mexico and shifting funding for military construction and weapons programs to help build a border wall.

Since taking office, Esper has also made himself and top officials more available to the media, a practice that had been limited under Trump's first defense secretary, Jim Mattis. Pentagon officials brief reporters on a almost-weekly basis now and, during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, addressed reporters multiple times per day on occasion.

Trump — who has claimed he is "smarter" than his generals — has had a tumultuous relationship with military leaders since taking office.

Mattis abruptly resigned in December 2018 after the president announced plans to withdraw troops from Syria with little planning.

Trump later nominated Patrick Shanahan, who withdrew from consideration in June 2019 after news reports of a messy divorce years earlier surfaced.

More recently, Trump's nominee for another top job at the Pentagon, Brig. Gen. Anthony Tata, foundered last month when his confirmation hearing was abruptly canceled and the White House withdrew his nomination. Tata had been dogged by controversy over his past remarks, including derogatory comments about Islam.

Even if he stays in his role until the next presidential inauguration on Jan. 20, 2021, Esper would be one of the shortest-tenured secretaries of defense in decades. After Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates, combined, served more than 10 years in the role, most Pentagon chiefs have lasted fewer than two years.

Correction

An Aug. 6 article about historians' thoughts about the atomic bombings on Japan during World War II should have said the official historian of Los Alamos National Laboratory is Alan Carr.

MIDEAST/MILITARY

U.S. MILITARY CENTRAL COMMAND/AP

Iranian commandos fast-rope down from a helicopter onto the MV Wila oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman off the coast of the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday.

US says Iran briefly seized oil tanker near Strait of Hormuz

BY JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The Iranian navy boarded and briefly seized a Liberian-flagged oil tanker near the strategic Strait of Hormuz amid heightened tensions between Tehran and the U.S., a U.S. military official said Thursday.

U.S. Central Command published a black-and-white video showing what appeared to be special forces fast-roping down from a helicopter onto the MT Wila, whose last position appeared to be off the eastern coast of the United Arab Emirates near the city of Khorfakkan.

The Iranian navy held the vessel for some five hours before releasing it Wednesday, said a U.S. military official who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet made public.

The Wila made no distress calls before, during and after the seizure, the official said.

The Iranian helicopter involved appeared to be a Sikorsky SH-3 Sea King, which only Iran's navy operates.

The Iranian navy also handles all operations in the Gulf of Oman on the eastern side of the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of all oil traded passes. Two other Iranian naval vessels took part in the seizure, CENTCOM said.

U.S. military officials did not offer any reason for Iran seizing the vessel. Iranian state media and officials did not acknowledge the seizure or offer a reason for it.

Officials in the UAE, a U.S.-allied federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula, did not respond to a request for comment.

The Wila's registered owner is a Liberian firm called Bandit Shipping Co., managed by Greek firm IMS SA, according to United Nations records. Bandit Shipping could not be reached, while IMS did not respond to requests for comment.

The Wila had been off Khor Al Zubair, Iraq, in early July before traveling to near Dubai and later Khorfakkan, where it's been for around a month, according to data firm Refinitiv. It wasn't immediately clear what cargo it carried.

Private maritime intelligence firm Dryad Global said it suspected two other ships had been harassed by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in the Persian Gulf over the last week as well, based on the ships' behavior.

As tensions between Iran and the U.S. heated up last year over America's unilateral withdraw from its 2015 nuclear deal, tankers plying the waters of the Mideast became targets, particularly near the strait, the Persian Gulf's narrow mouth.

Suspected limpet mine attacks the U.S. blamed on Iran targeted several tankers.

Iran denied being involved, though it did seize several tankers.

In July, a U.S.-sought oil tanker was "hijacked" off the coast of the United Arab Emirates after allegedly smuggling Iranian crude oil. The vessel later ended up back in Iranian waters, suggesting Iran itself seized the vessel.

Move to digital customs forms put on hold

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A change to electronic customs forms at U.S. post offices on overseas military bases that was due to happen Thursday has been placed on hold.

"The implementation of non-handwritten customs forms is now postponed due to [the U.S. Postal Service] discovering issues with the new process," the postmaster at Yokota, home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo, said in a Facebook message Thursday.

Handwritten customs forms will be accepted until further notice, the postmaster added.

Similar messages were posted on Facebook by post offices at U.S. Army Garrison Japan and Osan Air Base, South Korea, on Thursday.

The Military Postal Service Agency could not be reached Thursday for further information on the scope of the delay.

The Postal Service began transitioning to electronic customs forms in March due to international regulations but granted military post offices an extension, the service said on its website.

Electronic customs forms can be filled out on the website, which allows people to pay postage online and print shipping labels at home.

Post offices on bases in Europe and the Pacific have been installing kiosks, which include a computer, printer and a scale, to help people submit the electronic forms.

CENTCOM chief: Syrian camp might lead to ISIS 2.0

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The top U.S. general overseeing military efforts across the Middle East said Wednesday that he worries a massive refugee camp in northern Syria holding families of former Islamic State fighters could be a breeding ground for future terrorists, calling the issue one of his chief concerns.

Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie urged partner nations to repatriate their citizens, especially children, held at the overcrowded al-Hawl camp run by U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, where he fears horrid conditions put them at risk for radicalization by ISIS.

He warned that without intervention and new de-radicalization efforts, the United States and its allies would likely be fighting the children of al-Hawl on the battlefield in 10 to 15 years.

"We're going to do this all over again," McKenzie said Wednesday, speaking at a virtual event hosted by the Washington think tank U.S. Institute of Peace. "And I would prefer to avoid that."

His comments come as the fight against ISIS in Syria and Iraq has largely been confined to a counterterrorist effort to root out underground cells of its loyalists in those countries where it once held a swath of land the size of the United Kingdom.

McKenzie said the group retains global influence through internet channels and likely still seeks to recover land and establish a caliphate.

The war against ISIS will likely never come to a clean end, he said.

But eventually, he believes, the problem of ISIS will be small enough that local, U.S.-trained forces — the SDF in Syria and Iraqi forces — can handle it without the need for U.S. troops.

Currently, the U.S. retains 5,200 troops in Iraq, where their anti-ISIS mission has been complicated by tensions with neighboring Iran.

Militias backed by Iran have routinely fired rockets and other weapons in recent months at locations where American service members operate.

The two sides neared war in January after an American drone killed one of Iran's top military officials in Baghdad, and Tehran retaliated by firing ballistic missiles into a base housing U.S. troops, injuring more than 100, who suffered brain injuries in the barrage.

Pentagon officials have repeatedly declined to say how many U.S. troops operate in Syria, but at least several hundred remain in the eastern part of that country.

President Donald Trump last October ordered a withdrawal of troops from Syria, but officials elected to retain a small presence centered on key oil fields controlled by the SDF.

"I don't think we're going to be in Syria forever," McKenzie said Wednesday. "I don't know how long we're going to be in Syria. That's going to be a political decision. Not a military decision to be made by a uniformed officer."

McKenzie

But, the general said, if the refugees at al-Hawl are not moved to better conditions, the U.S. will find itself dragged into fighting the next phase of radical ideology in the Middle East.

The camp of 70,000 women and children, he said, is "one of the worst places in the world."

Most of those held at al-Hawl are Iraqis and Syrians, according to the United Nations.

But thousands of the women and children held in the camp traveled from other countries alongside ISIS fighters or to join the cause themselves.

The U.N. estimates there are about 28,000 non-Syrian children in the camp, including 20,000 from Iraq.

Human Rights Watch estimated in April that at least 500 people, mostly children, died in the al-Hawl camp last year.

McKenzie on Wednesday said the U.S. military was prepared to return those women and children to their home countries, if they would agree to take them. Most European countries, and other including Australia, have said they would not take back those who traveled to join ISIS.

"I'm happy to provide the resources to move them," McKenzie said Wednesday. "I can move them anywhere in the world and very quickly in a safe and transparent manner."

He urged others to consider new methods to deradicalize children of ISIS fighters and reintroduce them into society.

Without such measures, he worried, those kids will likely become the next generation of jihadist to take up arms against the U.S. and others.

"Bad things are going to happen if you keep people [at al-Hawl] — bad things are going to happen in terms of radicalization," he said. "Unless we solve that problem, we are setting a strategic barrier for ourselves … in 15 or so years."

dickstein.corey@stripes.com
Twitter: @CDicksteinDC

MILITARY

Virus limits USAF exercise, but new squad flying high

By Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes

The coronavirus pandemic forced the postponement of the first two phases of the Air Force's Red Flag-Alaska exercise earlier this summer, but the crisis has turned out to be a bust-out occasion for the budding squadron of F-35 fighter jets at Eielson Air Force Base.

The pandemic fortuitously thrust those F-35s into a central role during the two-week Red Flag 3, which ends Friday.

The 356th Fighter Squadron was reactivated last fall to become the first F-35 squadron in the Indo-Pacific theater. As of the beginning of August, the squadron had received 11 F-35s, with the final 13 scheduled to arrive before the end of next year.

"Our plan was to begin doing Red Flag training after we've gotten more airplanes and pilots, which would have been in October," said Lt. Col. James Christensen, commander of the 356th.

With coronavirus restrictions in place, however, the number of units able to participate in Red Flag 3 was limited, he said, and as a result, the 356th was invited to fly in it.

They have been joined by 12 F-35s from Hill Air Force Base in Utah and 20 F-22 fighters from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage. Eighteen F-16s from Eielson's 18th Aggressor Squadron pose as the "bad guys" in training scenarios.

Roughly 900 personnel stationed at Eielson and Elmendorf-Richardson are participating in the drills, with another 300 out-of-state personnel temporarily stationed at Eielson.

It is the first Red Flag to focus training solely on F-35s and F-22s, so-called fifth-generation fighter jets, which are defined by stealth, advanced avionics and a highly integrated computer systems for battlespace awareness.

Red Flag Alaska is a premiere air combat training exercise for the Air Force, Christensen said. It is always held at the vast Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex, which provides a realistic training environment.

Pilots have been flying about 50 sorties each day, he said.

"The whole purpose of Red Flag is to give pilots their first taste of a combat-representative mission," he said. "When we do daily training in a squadron, we typically only train against maybe one other adversary or within the squadron. Occasionally, we'll have another unit come in."

Red Flag "expands that playlist" to include ground forces, surface-to-air missile threat simulations, bombers, air refueling, reconnaissance and intelligence gathering, he said.

"As that list gets bigger and bigger and bigger, we are now representing the way the United States Air Force would go to war, and how we would integrate with our partners in the Pacific," he said.

Australia, South Korea and Japan all fly F-35s. Allied and partner nations did not participate in Red Flag 3.

Aaron Larue Guerrisky/U.S. Air Force

An F-35A Lightning II from Hill Air Force Base, Utah, takes off from Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, on Aug. 3, during the Red Flag exercise.

Every person arriving in Alaska for the exercise was required to test negative for the virus within 72 hours of travel, said Lt. Col. Bettina Watkins, the 18th Aggressor Squadron flight surgeon who oversaw most of the health precautions. Those personnel were tested again on arrival and then placed on restricted movement.

They could work for the first 14 days, but were restricted from leaving base or using base facilities. Tents were erected as makeshift dining halls for the visitors so that they did not mix with the Eielson community, she said.

"Thankfully, we have done very well," Watkins said Tuesday regarding COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. "Eielson continues to have no community spread. As well, we've had no cases of COVID within the visiting community."

The effects of the pandemic on Red Flag also inadvertently dovetailed with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's shift to "distributed command and control," whereby missions can be accomplished without planners being centrally located, Christensen said.

"We already knew we wanted to look toward distributed operations," he said. "There's a concept of agile combat employment, and it just means we have the capability of maneuvering our forces around the [region] to get the force lay-down to be more dynamic and not so static.

"It wasn't intended this way, but because of COVID, we have adapted and then learned, one, how to execute a flag-level exercise, even while trying to maintain all of our public health precautions. But, two, we've gotten to practice how we would execute if we weren't able to be all in the same location and planning in the same rooms. So, we've learned lessons about integration."

olson.wyatt@stripes.com
Twitter: @WyattWOlson

Missouri-based bombers deploy to Diego Garcia for B-2 Spirit task force mission

Stars and Stripes

Three B-2 Spirit stealth bombers are on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia for a bomber task force mission, the Air Force announced Wednesday.

The planes, from the 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., flew 29 hours to reach Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia on Wednesday, the service said in a news release.

"We are excited to return to this important location. [Diego Garcia] puts the 'INDO' in INDOPACOM," Lt. Col. Christopher Conant, the bomber task force commander, said in the release. INDOPACOM is military shorthand for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

Despite a global pandemic, the airmen with the task force are ready to support the command, he said.

U.S. Strategic Command routinely conducts bomber task force operations across the globe.

The last B-2 Spirit task force in the region took place in January of last year, the Air Force said. The 393rd Bomb Squadron, also from Whiteman, sent three of the bombers and 200 airmen to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

During that deployment, the B-2s flew 27 sorties for a total of 171 hours in multiple local and long-duration missions, conducted hot-pit refueling training and accomplished eight integrated sorties with the Hawaii Air National Guard's 199th Fighter Squadron F-22 Raptors, the service said.

news@stripes.com

'We are excited to return to this important location. [Diego Garcia] puts the 'INDO' in INDOPACOM.'

Lt. Col. Christopher Conant
Bomber task force commander

MILITARY

Tangle with Taliban earns troop Silver Star

By Corey Dickstein
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Concussed and peppered with shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade blast, then-Senior Airman John Grimesey felt Taliban bullets whiz by as he saw his Green Beret teammate injured on the ground nearby.

His ear still ringing, the Air Force combat controller grabbed the wounded soldier by his body armor and dragged him 25 feet to cover, turned his rifle on the Taliban attackers and got to work — directing airstrikes from the F-16 fighters and AC-130 gunships circling overhead. More than seven years after that battle in Afghanistan's Ghazni province, Grimesey, now a master sergeant, will receive a Silver Star on Friday for his heroic and lifesaving actions that day.

"I am incredibly honored," Grimesey said in a video conference Thursday. "There are a number of men and women who have earned the Silver Star who have done things that are extraordinarily heroic. ... To earn the same award as other people who have done things so incredibly selfless is incredibly humbling, to be part of that elite fraternity."

Grimesey's Silver Star, the United States' third highest honor for combat valor, is an upgrade of an award he received for his life-saving actions during that May 25, 2013, fight on his first of many combat deployments. During the ceremony Friday at Pope Field in North Carolina, he will also receive a Bronze Star Medal with "V" device for valor for actions in a 2017 firefight in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province.

Now the operations flight chief for the Air Force's elite 21st Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Field, Grimesey said Thursday he still recalls that bloody incident almost every single day.

Grimesey and the team of Green Berets he was attached to had just completed training a new group of Afghan local police who had begun an operation to clear a local village of Taliban fighters and take control of its security. The Special Forces team and its Afghan special forces teammates expected light resistance from the Taliban that day.

That would not be the case. A group of Taliban trainers were visiting the village drawing in an unexpected force of 80 to 100 fighters, Grimesey said. The enemy unexpectedly engaged the new local police officers, pinning them inside a compound. When Grimesey and the unnamed Green Beret arrived to help their partner forces, they peeked around a compound wall and saw that many were already injured or, perhaps, killed.

"It was around that time that the Taliban realized we were outside attempting to make entry," Grimesey recalled. "That's when we started to exchange fire."

A Taliban fighter leaned over the wall opening fire from 15 feet away, according to Grimesey's Silver Star citation. The airman "leaned back and killed the insurgent with his personal weapon," it read.

Then the RPG hit the wall, sending Grimesey and the Green Beret airborne.

Grimesey remembers trying desperately to figure out what was going on around him. The situation, he said, had grown dire. But after getting himself and his partner to cover, he was able to direct the airstrikes that ultimately allowed him and his teammates to enter the compound, save several Afghan police lives and recover those who were killed.

The Air Force credited his action with saving dozens of lives and helping to kill 31 Taliban fighters during the battle.

"It is an event that left an impression on me," Grimesey said Thursday. "And while it was a harrowing experience, if you will, I also look back on it with great pride. I believe I was able to … make a difference on people's lives and to help ensure the security of that local village — especially once we were able to push the Taliban out and put the Afghan local police in."

Grimesey said that opportunity to help make a difference on the battlefield is what attracted to him to join the Air Force and become a combat controller after graduating from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in May 2008.

"During college, I spent a lot of time thinking about how can I make the single greatest impact on the battlefield," he said. "I read about how there's an Air Force special operations community, and that really appealed to me."

Friday will not mark the first time Grimesey has stood at attention to receive an award for battlefield heroics. He has received at least three — two Bronze Stars with "V" device and an Air Force Commendation Medal with "V" device — as well as a Purple Heart. But it might mark the last. He said he is in the process of medically retiring from the service.

He said he will miss most of all the service members he has worked hand-in-hand with for the last 12 years.

"I think back on my time in Air Force special tactics and all the incredibly talented and smart and motivated men and women that I've had the opportunity to work with and the missions that we have successfully completed," he said. "They truly are working to make the world a better and safer place."

dickstein.corey@stripes.com
Twitter: @CDicksteinDC

Comrades mourn 'respectful' Marine who died in Bahrain

By Chad Garland
Stars and Stripes

A service member who died in Bahrain earlier this week was a noncommissioned officer that friends remembered as a model Marine.

Sgt. Trevor Goldyn of the 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade was found dead in a noncombat-related incident Tuesday, 1st Lt. John F. Coppola, a spokesman with Marine Corps Forces Central Command, said in a statement.

The incident remains under investigation, said the command, which is headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. It provided no further information in the statement Wednesday.

Both the Marines and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service were looking into the circumstances of Goldyn's death, it said in an earlier statement.

Goldyn

Goldyn, who worked in communications, joined the service in June 2016.

On Facebook, Erik Antorbeza posted a photo of himself from a few years ago standing beside Goldyn, who'd apparently just been promoted to corporal. Along with the image, Antorbeza shared a story from a promotion board he'd been on when Goldyn stood before it as a lance corporal.

During the panel review, an unidentified sergeant major tried to rattle Goldyn's bearing by arguing that his name should be pronounced "Gol-dine." He then challenged the lance corporal to explain why he believed it should be pronounced "Golden," Antorbeza wrote.

"Without missing a beat, he looks at the [sergeant major] with a straight face and he says, 'It's because everything I do is golden, SgtMaj,'" Antorbeza wrote. "I sat there proud to be his [sergeant] ... proud to see my Marine exude such confidence, and the best part was that he was right. Everything he did was golden."

He was "hard working, respectful, driven, and focused," Antorbeza said, and those who served with him would mourn his loss.

At the time of his death, Goldyn was serving with the Naval Amphibious Force, Task Force 51/5th MEB in Bahrain, the service said.

The Manama-based unit is charged with coordinating crisis and contingency response, security cooperation, and command and control of forces at sea and ashore within U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility.

The Defense Department was coordinating the return of Goldyn's remains to the U.S., the Marine Corps said.

"The command continues to work closely with the family during this difficult time," Coppola said.

garland.chad@stripes.com
Twitter: @chadgarland

Selective: Rand study offers no suggested changes

FROM FRONT PAGE

The Marine career track is "highly prescriptive and performance-based, and common experiences serve to reinforce the Marine Corps' egalitarian culture and create a highly cohesive Marine Corps (general officer) corps," the study said. Its archetypical general might "equate effective leadership with understanding how to also be a good, disciplined follower — of rules, and of other leaders," "value discipline over risk-taking," and "be averse to questioning assumptions underlying existing processes, strategies, and orders."

The Navy's career development processes tend to emphasize self-reliance, technical expertise and "Darwinian" competition, the study said.

As a result, its flag officers are often "less risk-averse in operational decisions" than in other services, without being careless — though that may be "more true" of archetypes with surface warfare and undersea backgrounds, the study said.

Admirals are more likely to "offer fresh perspective and strategic advice" but also "prioritize maintaining good relations," which might mean hesitancy to provide contrarian advice.

The Air Force identifies talent early and emphasizes early promotions. It also puts more importance on education and joint experience than other services, the study said.

The archetype is a pilot and most frequently a fighter pilot, the Rand report found. They might be less comfortable with "outside-the-box" ideas and in leadership positions "that require decisions without the benefit of clear order and procedure." They're also more likely to rely less on hierarchy in planning and operations, Rand said.

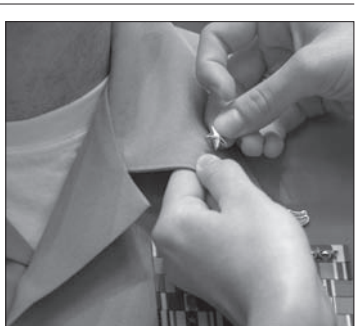
The study was designed to help the Pentagon assess whether military leadership should change to better serve national security objectives.

It was based on interviews with military officers and subject-matter experts, analysis of available officer biographies and personnel data from the Defense Manpower Data Center, among other factors.

The study did not make recommendations on changes. But it concluded that any adjustments could take "a generation or more" to take effect, in part because of the decades it normally takes to move up to flag and general level.

"Institutional traditions and cultures of each service are strong and entrenched, and therefore will evolve slowly," it said.

montgomery.nancy@stripes.com
Twitter: @montgomerynance


William Sykes/U.S. Navy

A rear admiral gets his star pinned to his uniform. A Rand Corp. study said the different armed services train and promote their flag officers in different ways.

VIRUS OUTBREAK

30K in pre-training, deployment quarantine

By Caitlin M. Kenney
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Tens of thousands of service members are in quarantine to prevent the spread of the coronavirus ahead of their training or deployment, a senior military official said Wednesday.

"Today we have over 30,000 members of the military in a quarantine environment, because they're getting ready to deploy, they're getting ready to go on a ship, they're getting ready to go into basic training," said Air Force Gen. John Hyten, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "They're getting ready to go into an environment where, in order to stay safe and make sure we don't infect large numbers, we put them in quarantine."

Hyten spoke Wednesday during a discussion at the Hudson Institute think tank in Washington.

His remarks were the first time a senior military official has quantified the personnel impact of the Pentagon's effort to keep the force safe from the coronavirus ahead of training or deployment. He did not discuss how many people are in quarantine because of a positive test result for the virus.

"That's like an entire Army Corps in quarantine for two weeks. That's huge," Hyten said.

Each service has instituted quarantine for recruits attending basic training and advanced schooling. The Army is also requiring coronavirus testing and self-quarantine for soldiers and their families before overseas travel. Over 1,000 U.S. Marines in Darwin, Australia, have gone through two weeks of quarantine ahead of their training mission in the country, with the last group of Marines finishing this week.

The Navy has a policy to establish a clean "bubble" around a ship while it operates at sea, forcing sailors to quarantine and receive a negative test before being allowed to board their ship. The Navy has had sailors assigned to ships in port become infected, and two serious outbreaks occurred on ships while they were at sea, including the USS Theodore Roosevelt, which had over 1,100 sailors infected.

The additional weeks for quarantine are more of a strain on the families of the service members, according to Hyten.

"If you're deploying, you're going to be gone for six months, nine months, 12 months. Well then you add two weeks on the front of that and maybe two weeks on the back of that, that adds again to those capabilities," he said.

Hyten added that while there is stress on the force, the morale "is still positive."

As of Wednesday, the military has had 32,299 cases of the coronavirus, 520 hospitalizations and four deaths, according to the Pentagon's cumulative total case chart. The Army has had 11,140 cases, the highest of any service. The Navy has had 7,568 cases and the Air Force has had 5,073 cases as of Wednesday. The National Guard, which is assisting states with pandemic response, has had 4,223 cases, and the Marine Corps has had 3,991.

kenney.caitlin@stripes.com
Twitter: @caitlinmkenney

In Taiwan, Azar blasts China's pandemic response

By Seth Robson
Stars and Stripes

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, the most senior U.S. official to visit Taiwan since 1979, blasted China's handling of the coronavirus pandemic during a media teleconference this week.

The communist country's lack of transparency and failure to contain the virus within its borders contrasts with the way the United States and Taiwan are handling the disease, he told reporters Wednesday.

In an open society, Azar said, public health authorities would have shared information on the coronavirus with the public and medical professionals. China has been accused of censoring whistleblowers like Li Wenliang, a physician who sought to raise the alarm after noticing the virus in a Wuhan hospital in mid-December, according to the BBC. The government eventually locked down the city and other parts of Hubei province for two months to slow the disease's spread.

The U.S. government was also criticized for lack of transparency after transferring the collection of hospital virus data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to a private technology firm in July.

The U.S. has so far confirmed more than 5 million coronavirus cases and 162,000 deaths due to the coronavirus, according to the CDC. Taiwan, home to nearly 24 million people, has had 480 cases and seven deaths. China has reported just over 89,000 infections and almost 5,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University.

Taiwan, which had experience dealing with the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in 2003, started screening arrivals from mainland China early in the pandemic, set up a national command center to handle its response and has regularly disseminated information about the virus to the public, CNN reported last month.

Taiwan has been a model of compliance on information sharing, Azar told reporters Wednesday.

"My message and visit are focused on the deep partnership and friendship between the U.S. and Taiwan," he said. "It's a vibrant, democratic, transparent and open society [and] a model of health care transparency."

That contrasts with the conduct of China's Communist Party, Azar said.

"China could have and should have disclosed more information more transparently and more cooperatively regarding COVID-19," he said. "They should have disclosed the rapid human-to-human transmission of the disease that they knew about. They should have disclosed the asymptomatic carriage and transmission of the disease."

China's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Lijian Zhao, told reporters Wednesday that the U.S. is making China a scapegoat for its own failure in handling the pandemic.

"Secretary Azar, I'm afraid, is directly responsible for the unchecked spreading of the epidemic in the U.S.," Zhao said, according to a transcript of his remarks. "We wonder why he is so blatant to even speak ill of China's anti-epidemic efforts. If he entered a world competition of 'who performed the worst in managing this epidemic,' he will almost surely come out on top."

Azar said Taiwan's example could serve in the World Health Organization, but China's Communist Party has bullied and blocked Taiwan from having observer status there.

The Trump administration, critical of the WHO's handling of the pandemic, formally notified the United Nations on July 6 of its withdrawal from the organization, although the move won't happen until next year, The Associated Press reported July 8.

"Back in April, Taiwan donated face masks and protective equipment to the United States," Azar said. "They did so even at a time when they were asking their own people to limit their use of face coverings because of the shortage of supply. It was quite touching that Taiwan would have been so generous to the United States and others in the world."

Azar's visit, which included a meeting Monday with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, is likely to rile China, which regards Taiwan as its territory. The U.S. under its One China policy recognizes Beijing's sovereignty over Taiwan but regards its future as unsettled.

Asked Wednesday about Azar's visit, Zhao said China opposes official exchanges between the U.S. and Taiwan under any pretext. He warned Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party that a "dead end will meet them" if they behave as "self-important puppets with strings in foreign hands."

robson.seth@stripes.com
Twitter: @SethRobson1

Michael Baltz/U.S. Army

Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar said Wednesday in Taiwan that the island has been a model of compliance on information sharing with regard to the coronavirus pandemic.

It's good to know your options.

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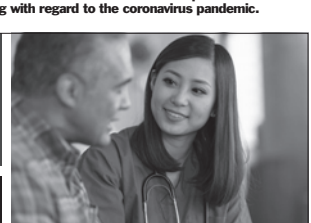

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

‘Samaritan shoppers’ help those in quarantine

By Caitlin Doornbos
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Single sailors and families stuck on 14-day quarantines after coming to Japan need not subsist on vending machine snacks in Yokosuka, thanks to a volunteer program run by the base’s Chapel of Hope and commissary.

U.S. Forces Japan since March has required all personnel and families arriving in Japan from another country to quarantine as a precaution against spreading the coronavirus. For most, that means their first two weeks in Japan are spent in a hotel room with no opportunity to leave, even for a trip to the commissary.

That’s where volunteers from Yokosuka’s Samaritan Shopper Program step in. They take grocery lists from the quarantined folks, shop for and deliver the groceries to their doorsteps, organizer Mia Duhon said. The only thing the recipient is responsible for is providing credit card information to cashiers at checkout.

“Asking for help is very difficult, and these people have reached out to us,” said Duhon, who also works as the chapel’s Catholic religious education director. “I want to just hug them when they’re struggling.”

Sailors’ commands are tasked with providing for most needs, but Duhon said the shopper program, which has filled more than 160 shopping requests since its start in May, helps fill in the gaps.

Caitlin Doornbos/Stars and Stripes

Samaritan Shopper Program volunteer Kim McCann checks a grocery list provided by a family in quarantine at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, on Aug. 4.

The name of the program comes from the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, a man who stopped to help a beaten outcast whom others had passed along a roadside. But while the program is co-run through the chapel, there is no religious requirement to participating.

“I would not consider myself a religious person at all, actually,” said the program’s assistant coordinator, Megan Pyle McMechan. “I just believe in doing the right thing for our community and those around us.”

The help is appreciated, said Navy spouse Jeremy Cazares. His family of six requested two shopping trips while staying in a base hotel room for two weeks last month.

“We try to eat fairly healthy, so having the Samaritans deliver food really provided an opportunity to eat healthy as opposed to ordering delivery for every meal with the only options being fast food,” he said.

“What the Samaritans provide is nothing short of mental health services, as being in ROM — especially with kids — can be very stressful,” Cazares said, referring to the period the U.S. military calls “restriction of movement.”

Stuck in hotel rooms often without a kitchenette, the items requested are typically things one can heat up in a microwave, Pyle McMechan said. The average Samaritan grocery trip takes about an hour, she said.

Through the experience, McMechan said she’s developed a bond with some of the people she’s helped.

“I think these young sailors would survive on beef jerky and ramen if I didn’t browbeat them into some fruit,” Pyle McMechan said jokingly. “As my husband says, I would mother them to death if they would let me.”

Now that his family has completed their quarantine, Cazares said he hopes to help others in similar situations, a phenomenon Duhon said she’s seen several times.

“What I found that was really cool is after they use the program, they come back to pay it forward,” Duhon said. “They stay in the group and they help the next set of people.”

Pyle McMechan said the program also offers volunteers a chance to get out of the house and meet new people, something made more difficult amid a worldwide pandemic. Base commander Capt. Rich Jarrett on Sunday restricted those attached to the base from participating in nonessential activities off base after seeing an uptick in coronavirus cases.

The Samaritan Shopper Program is unique to Yokosuka, Duhon said. Anyone with base access and commissary privileges at Yokosuka can get involved by joining the Facebook group, “Samaritan Shopper Program.”

“I was so excited to find something to do with my time that made me feel productive and helpful,” Pyle McMechan said. “During this bizarre time in our shared experience, it is super nice to be able to help people in such a welcoming way.”

doornbos.caitlin@stripes.com
Twitter: @CaitlinDoornbos

US Forces Korea reports eight more cases of coronavirus

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Seven U.S. troops and a civilian contractor tested positive for the coronavirus after traveling to South Korea from the United States, the military said Thursday.

The announcement raised to 152 the total number of cases affiliated with U.S. Forces Korea since February.

Four of the infected service members and the Defense Department contractor arrived at Incheon International Airport on commercial flights on July 29, July 30, Aug. 8 and Aug. 9, USFK said in a press release.

The other three troops landed Monday at Osan Air Base on a government-chartered flight known as the Patriot Express, it said.

Following the South Korean government’s lead, USFK has implemented a strict testing and two-week quarantine program aimed at preventing the spread of the virus from other countries.

All but 24 of the USFK cases have been caught in that process, with the command reporting its last local transmission in mid-April.

Six of the latest patients tested positive in their first test after arriving. The other two tested positive on the second test required to exit quarantine, according to the press release.

All were transferred to isolation facilities designated for coronavirus patients on Camp Humphreys or Osan Air Base, the military said.

USFK health professionals determined the need for contact tracing was limited since all arrivals to South Korea are quarantined and the patients had no contact with anybody on-base or in the local communities, it added.

All transportation assets and occupied quarantine rooms they had occupied also were thoroughly cleaned, it said.

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Tokyo sees surge amid long Obon weekend; US military reports 4 cases

By Joseph Ditzler
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO – The U.S. military in Japan reported four new coronavirus cases Thursday while the nation’s capital continued to experience a surge in infections.

Tokyo reported 206 new cases in the city on Thursday, the second consecutive day of more than 200 infections, according to public broadcaster NHK, citing the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Thursday was the first day of Obon, a traditional Buddhist holiday that typically involves traveling to one’s hometown.

However, the Tokyo government asked metro residents to refrain from going outside the prefecture during the four-day weekend, NHK reported.

U.S. military installations in the country announced four new cases. Two were identified as U.S. Army Japan “community members” stationed in western Japan, and the others are at Misawa Air Base in northern Japan and Camp Courtney on Okinawa.

One of the U.S. Army Japan patients has been quarantined since July 29, after a family member tested positive, according to a statement issued by the command Thursday evening. The other has been in isolation since July 27 due to contact tracing from another case.

The new patient at Misawa Air Base is a person who has been in quarantine since arriving in Japan on a government-chartered flight, according to a Facebook post by the air base. The U.S. military requires a two-week stay in isolation for new arrivals or travelers returning to Japan. They also must test negative before leaving isolation.

The case reported Thursday had no contact with anyone in the local community or on the base, according the Facebook post. Misawa has two active cases.

On Okinawa, the Marines reported another new case Thursday stemming from a cluster outbreak at Camp Courtney, Marine Corps Installations Pacific announced on its Facebook page.

The new case arose while the individual was quarantined as a close contact of another infected person, according to the post.

The U.S. military in Japan typically does not identify the new cases as service members, civilian employees, contractors or family members.

Okinawa prefecture, also experiencing a second wave of coronavirus infections, reported 97 new cases on Thursday, Gov. Denny Tamaki said during a press conference. That’s the highest since 159 cases were reported Sunday. The number of new cases during the week ranged from 52 to 65 per day. A state of emergency Tamaki declared on July 31 has been extended until Aug. 29. The infection rate on Okinawa is the highest per capita in the country, he said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Aya Ichihashi contributed to this report.
ditzler.joseph@stripes.com
Twitter: @JosephDitzler

VIRUS OUTBREAK

Jobless: Labor Department says 28.2M receiving benefits

FROM FRONT PAGE

"Another larger-than-expected decline in jobless claims suggests that the jobs recovery is regaining some momentum, but ... much labor market progress remains to be done," said Lydia Boussour, senior economist at Oxford Economics.

Thursday's figures, Boussour added, underscore "the painfully slow recovery in the labor market."

Applications for unemployment aid declined last week in 44 states; several others reported small increases. Nevada said that jobless claims in that state rose 6,900 to more than 20,000. Kansas reported an increase of 2,400 to more than 11,000.

For months, on top of their state benefit, the unemployed had also been receiving the $600 a week in federal jobless aid. But the federal payment has expired, and negotiations in Congress to extend that benefit, likely at a lower level of payment, have collapsed in rancor.

The supplemental federal aid had enabled many jobless Americans to afford rent, food and utilities, and its expiration threatens to weaken consumer spending and further slow the economy. Unemployment benefits have accounted for roughly 5% of national income since April, a larger share than even Social Security. The loss of the $600 has shrunk benefits for the average recipient by one-half to three-quarters.

Michelle Meyer, an economist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, says that the loss of the additional aid will reduce Americans' incomes by $18 billion a week.

"That's a big hit to purchasing power," she said.

Last week, President Donald Trump issued an executive order that would provide $300 a week in federal aid to the jobless to replace the expired $600-a-week benefit. But experts say it would take weeks for the states to implement that payment.

In addition to people who applied last week for state benefits, nearly 489,000 others sought jobless aid under a new program that has made self-employed and gig workers eligible for the first time. That figure isn't adjusted for seasonal trends, so it's reported separately. But including the gig and self-employed recipients, the Labor Department says 28.2 million people — roughly 18% of the U.S. workforce — are now receiving some form of unemployment benefits.

For states to set up systems to distribute a new $300 federal jobless benefit, their labor departments would need more guidance from the federal government, noted Michele Evermore, a senior researcher at the National Employment Law Project. The money, which is supposed to come from a federal disaster relief fund, would likely require states to hire more people and possibly contract with software vendors to establish a system to process the payments, Evermore said.

"I can't imagine that this goes up in less than a month anywhere," she said.

The disaster relief fund contains just $44 billion, which is only enough to provide benefits for five to six weeks, analysts say. So far, only Ohio, South Carolina, and West Virginia have said they will implement the program. Most other states have said they need further guidance from the Labor Department to determine their next steps, Evermore said.

After the pandemic hit, Congress approved a $2 trillion aid package. Among other things, it provided the $600-a-week benefit and made self-employed and gig workers newly eligible for unemployment aid.

Both programs required the states to create new processing systems while handling a crush of benefit applications. That influx resulted in huge backlogs and left millions of the unemployed frustrated by their inability to access benefits. Washington state, for one, eventually called in National Guard troops to help process applications.

In the meantime, with confirmed virus cases still high, it's not clear when business owners will be able to reopen or will have enough customers to rehire.

Grace Della is one of them. She opened her food tour business in Miami a decade ago with $300 from her mother. On weekends, she led the tours herself and eventually built up a business with 13 tour guides, averaging 10 tours a day through culinary hot spots in South Beach and Little Havana.

Yet with the risk of infection still high and with scant customer demand, it's been more than four months since Miami Culinary Tours has taken out guests, and Della, 46, says she doesn't expect to recall her employees anytime soon.

She hopes to reopen later this month but isn't sure she can, given the state's high level of confirmed infections.

RICK BOWMER/AP

A Utah Food Bank volunteer delivers food to people waiting in cars at the food bank's mobile food pantry Wednesday, in Salt Lake City.

Guam's lieutenant governor joins governor among infected

Stars and Stripes

Guam's lieutenant governor tested positive for the coronavirus Wednesday, just days after the U.S. territory's leader, Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, announced her infection.

After receiving a negative result earlier in the week, Lt. Gov. Josh Tenorio said in a statement late Wednesday that he had continued to monitor himself for symptoms, practice social distancing and wear a face mask. However, that afternoon he "began to exhibit mild symptoms, including a slight fever, chills, and a cough, and felt it was necessary to test again."

He received the positive result Wednesday evening.

Guerrero announced Monday that she and her husband were quarantined at home after receiving positive results on Saturday.

Guerrero said she learned last week that she had come into contact with a close relative who had become infected with COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused the virus.

She and her husband tested negative at the time but immediately limited travel to essential functions only, a statement said. She began to exhibit symptoms Saturday and received a positive test result that evening.

Tenorio

"I have been in home quarantine since this weekend and will be isolated pending my recovery," she added.

Both Guerrero and Tenorio said they "remain in good health."

The island has had 477 confirmed cases and five deaths as of Thursday, according to the Guam Department of Health and Social Services. Fifty-one U.S. service members have tested positive.

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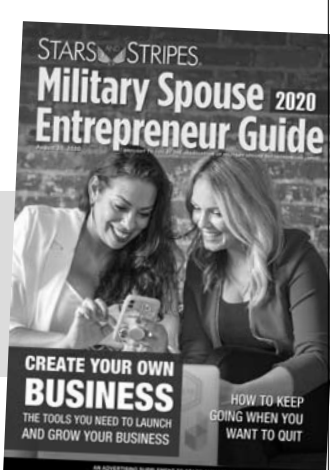

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VIRUS OUTBREAK ROUNDUP

Governor: New data shows Calif. is 'turning the corner'

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — California is showing improvement in its fight against the coronavirus pandemic, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Wednesday, citing a significantly lower number of confirmed new cases as the state begins to clear backlogged cases from a data failure.

The Democratic governor said he also was encouraged by a downward trend in the state's hospitalization rates which he noted are down 21%, and ICU admissions, down 15% over the past 14 days. The number of newly confirmed cases Wednesday, 5,433, was "another indication that we're turning the corner on this pandemic," he said.

The latest figures represent a significant drop from the record 12,807 new daily cases reported statewide during the spike in infections last month.

More than 10,600 people statewide have died, including 180 reported Wednesday, with the great majority in Los Angeles County.

Dr. Roger Lewis, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, said there's been "a clear decline" in hospitalizations, meaning the rates of transmission began to slow two to three weeks ago. Daily said cases are back to where they were in May.

"The consistent downtrend in new cases requiring hospitalization and the slight decrease in transmission rate is good news," he said. "This is what progress looks like when we work together."

State officials are still working to process the nearly 300,000 coronavirus test results lost because of a data error. The state relies on timely statistics to determine whether schools and businesses can reopen. Newsom said it will take a few more days before officials can assess the overall infection rate.

While the virus' spread appeared to be slowing, the economic effects are still raging. The state has processed more than 9.7 million claims for unemployment insurance since the pandemic began.

The state halted eviction and foreclosure proceedings in April because of the pandemic. But the Judicial Council of California will vote Thursday to resume those proceedings starting Sept. 1. Newsom said Wednesday the timing gives lawmakers a chance to pass a law that would continue eviction protections into 2021.

Kansas

HUTCHINSON — A Kansas prison has been locked down due to a coronavirus outbreak affecting nearly 100 inmates and staff at the facility, the government announced Wednesday.

Kansas Department of Corrections Secretary Jeff Zmuda said none of the 84 inmates and 10 staff members at the Hutchinson Correctional Facility who tested positive this week are showing symptoms. Fifteen inmates and seven staff members previously tested positive at the prison, which houses about 1,880 men.

Some inmates will remain locked in their cells because of the new outbreak, while others will be relocated to the prison in Lansing, where a medical unit has been set up to handle COVID-19 cases. Lansing was the site of an earlier outbreak in which more than 900 people became infected.

The announcement came one day after the Sedgwick County Detention Facility confirmed 112 inmates and 11 staff members had tested positive. The jail in the state's largest city of Wichita, which has about 1,510 inmates, is conducting widespread testing this week.

Kentucky

FRANKFORT — Gov. Andy Beshear said Wednesday he wants to spare Kentucky from the risks of reopening schools too soon, defending his call for districts to delay the resumption of in-person classes and gain more time to get the coronavirus under control.

To make his point, the Democratic governor pointed to a Georgia school district that quarantined more than 900 students and staff members because of possible exposure to the coronavirus.

"I don't believe that we gamble or experiment with our kids," Beshear told reporters. "And while we are all desperate to get our kids back (in school), I also want it to work."

Beshear urged patience as Kentucky posted a record high number of COVID-19 cases, though the report was inflated by cases from previous days that were compiled after a recent computer glitch. But he acknowledged that the coronavirus "is as hot as a firecracker in Kentucky."

On Monday, Beshear recommended that schools wait until Sept. 28 to resume in-person classes. Beshear, the father of two children, has called it a tough but necessary step.

Even before his recommended delay for in-person classes, many Kentucky districts had already announced they would start the new academic year with virtual instruction only.

But not all schools are planning to follow the governor's guidance.

Montana

HELENA — Montana's governor announced additional coronavirus relief money for state businesses as the pandemic stretches into its fifth month, a mask mandate for schools in nearly half of the state's counties and said the state will begin paying the extra $400 in weekly unemployment benefits that President Donald Trump announced over the weekend.

KRISTOPHER RADDER, THE BRATTLEBORO (VT.) REFORMER/AP

Katie Silegy gets her meal from the Taste of Thai food truck located at Mobil Station, in Brattleboro, Vt., on Wednesday.

New cases of COVID-19 are leveling off in Montana, but are not going down, and Gov. Steve Bullock urged residents to continue to wear masks and follow public health directives to help prevent the spread of the respiratory virus.

"The way that we learn to live with this virus in our presence is living in a way where we recognize and acknowledge that significant risk is present, yet collectively we're acting to mitigate this risk," Bullock said, and not by "ignoring or denying or thinking that it'll somehow just magically disappear one day."

Businesses that already received grants under the business stabilization program are eligible for up to another $10,000, Bullock said Wednesday. Those who haven't already applied are eligible for up to $20,000.

Nevada

LAS VEGAS — Nevada is reaching somber coronavirus milestones, topping 58,000 confirmed cases since the pandemic began and approaching 1,000 deaths, state health officials acknowledged Wednesday.

Washoe County's health district officer in Reno also warned against complacency in the face of recent reductions in the spread of the virus.

"We are in a precarious moment right now," Kevin Dick told reporters Wednesday. "It's important to remember this is a long-term effort. It's not really going to be over until we see a vaccination."

The confirmed cases reported day-to-day by the state Department of Health and Human Services brought the number to 58,048, with at least 996 deaths.

In Las Vegas, the Southern Nevada Health District has tallied 50,081 confirmed cases and 842 deaths, or nearly 85% of the state's fatalities.

"Those numbers are telling and they're sobering as we look back at these last four months," said Caleb Cage, the state's COVID-19 response chief.

South Carolina

COLUMBIA — South Carolina's top medical official overseeing the response to the coronavirus pandemic says new data shows mask ordinances are helping stem the spread of the illness.

"We will be in a much better position in four to six weeks if South Carolinians practice physical distancing and use a mask," Dr. Linda Bell, South Carolina's state epidemiologist, said in a statement Wednesday.

"Together, we can completely reverse our fortunes and create safe environments for our business recovery, for our lifestyle recovery, and particularly for our students returning to school in a few short weeks, but we must act more aggressively, and now," she continued.

For months, Bell has advocated the wearing of face coverings to cut down on the transmission of the coronavirus, which as of Wednesday had infected more than 102,000 people in the state, according to data released by the state Department of Health and Environmental Control. There also have been 2,057 total deaths linked to the virus, according to the agency.

Gov. Henry McMaster has stopped short of ordering a statewide mask mandate, saying a patchwork of municipal ordinances covers many South Carolinians and that a statewide policy would be unenforceable.

According to health officials, nearly 40% of South Carolina residents, or about 2 million people, live in areas with local mask requirements, pointing toward emergency management officials' online tool showing areas covered under such policies.

Vermont

WINOOSKI — The Vermont Health Department says an outbreak of COVID-19 that began in the city of Winooski is over.

Health Commissioner Dr. Mark Levine said Wednesday the outbreak is considered over because 28 days have passed since any new infections connected to it have been reported.

"Now keep in mind this isn't really a celebration," Levine said during an online briefing with local officials. "The pandemic is far from over."

The outbreak was first identified in June, primarily in the immigrant community in the densely packed city of Winooski.

The outbreak included 117 infections, 77 in Winooski, 22 in Burlington and 18 in other towns in Chittenden and Grand Isle counties. Two people were hospitalized, but there were no deaths.

Washington

SEATTLE — The Seattle school board on Wednesday unanimously voted to begin the academic year remotely.

The plan for the state's largest school district passed with a wide-ranging amendment that directs the superintendent to explore creating outdoor classes, and also reinforces teaching of Black studies and curricula developed by tribes, The Seattle Times reported.

Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Denise Juneau had previously recommended a fully remote learning model for the start of the school year, which was endorsed by the principals labor union and teachers union.

However, the district's specific plans are far from set because Seattle Public Schools is still bargaining with the teachers union, the Seattle Education Association. Those discussions will set the parameters for how teachers spend their time, and for the support, the district will provide to teachers and families in an online learning environment.

The negotiations will also play a key role in setting student schedules and the school calendar, which has a current start date of Sept. 2.

NATION

Court says male-only draft is constitutional

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — A federal appeals court in New Orleans upheld the constitutionality of the all-male military draft system Thursday, citing a 1981 U.S. Supreme Court decision.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans said "only the Supreme Court may revise its precedent."

The case was argued in March and was the result of a lawsuit by the National Coalition for Men and two men challenging the male-only draft. Their arguments had been that the 1981 case was decided at a time when women were largely absent from combat.

There was no dissent in Thursday's ruling from a three-judge panel.

Plaintiffs in the case could seek a rehearing before the full court or go to the Supreme Court.

The U.S. government stopped drafting young men into the military in 1973. But every male must still register for the draft when he turns 18.

Earlier this year — after the arguments before the 5th Circuit — a federal commission recommended including women in the military draft system.

"The Commission concluded that the time is right to extend Selective Service System registration to include men and women, between the ages of 18 and 26. This is a necessary and fair step, making it possible to draw on the talent of a unified Nation in a time of national emergency," a summary to the commission's final report said.

Ringo H.W. Chiu/AP

A firefighter works against the Lake Hughes fire in Angeles National Forest on Wednesday north of Santa Clarita, Calif.

Crews battle massive fire north of Los Angeles

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Light winds and scattered thundershowers early Thursday helped calm the flames of a huge wildfire that prompted evacuations north of Los Angeles, and firefighters hoped to rein in the blaze before temperatures spike later in the day.

An enormous plume of smoke was visible across much of Southern California after the fire broke out Wednesday afternoon in dense forest land.

The blaze exploded in size within hours on brushy ridges, including some areas that had not burned since 1968, fire officials said. By Thursday morning, the flames had consumed nearly 16.5 square miles of timber and chaparral shrubland. There was no containment of the fire.

About 100 rural homes were evacuated in the Lake Hughes area of the Angeles National Forest, some 60 miles north of downtown Los Angeles.

Preliminary damage assessments found that at least three structures burned. It wasn't immediately clear if they were houses.

The fire was being fed by tinder-dry brush in steep terrain, but its ferocity on Wednesday approached that of wind-driven blazes that usually erupt when gusty Santa Ana winds arrive later in the year, said county Deputy Fire Chief David Richardson.

Officials were preparing for the possibility of extremely dangerous fires on Thursday as heat increases and humidity levels drop, fire officials said in a statement. The area was expected to have temperatures in the mid-90s or higher through the weekend.

Evacuation centers were designated for residents and animals, but because of COVID-19 concerns, people were told to stay in their cars in the parking lots of the centers.

Portland protest clashes re-emerge

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Protesters and police clashed in downtown Portland in a demonstration that lasted into the predawn hours of Thursday, with some in the crowd setting a fire and exploding commercial grade fireworks outside a federal courthouse that's been a target in months of conflict for Oregon's largest city.

Officers used tear gas to break up the crowd of several hundred people who gathered near the Mark O. Hatfield U.S. Courthouse, the neighboring Multnomah County Justice Center and a nearby police precinct station.

Protests have been held nightly in the city since the police killing of George Floyd in May, who died after a white officer pressed a knee to his neck in Minneapolis.

Protesters hurled rocks, bottles and paint at officers during the demonstration that started Wednesday night and went into Thursday morning, Portland police said in a statement. One officer suffered a hand wound described as serious, several other officers suffered non-specified injuries and several people were detained, with one arrested on suspicion of vandalizing a police vehicle, the statement said.

The protests in Portland reached their apex last month outside the federal courthouse, with demonstrators clashing nightly with federal agents dispatched to the city to protect the courthouse. The demonstrations had dwindled after a drawdown of the agents, who were replaced by Oregon state troopers.

US seizes digital currency accounts used by militant groups abroad

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department has seized millions of dollars from cryptocurrency accounts that militant organizations abroad, including al-Qaida and Islamic State, relied on to raise money for their operations, officials announced Thursday.

The Trump administration said the groups used the accounts to solicit donations for their causes, including through a bogus scam that officials say purported to sell protective gear for the coronavirus pandemic.

Officials described it as the largest-ever seizure of digital currency funds related to terrorism.

Cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin are favored for illicit transactions because they are perceived as hard to trace, and one of the groups explicitly encouraged donations by telling potential contributors that the money trail would be difficult for law enforcement to untangle, the department said.

The legal action, including a forfeiture complaint filed in Washington's federal court, is meant to deprive the organizations of fund needed to buy weapons and equipment and develop fighters and plots, said Assistant Attorney General John Demers, the department's top national security official.

The department said it has seized about $2 million and is seeking for more, in addition to more than 300 cryptocurrency accounts and four websites. The money seized is expected to be given to a fund for victims of terrorist attacks.

NATION

Biden and Harris attack Trump at debut of VP pick

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — Joe Biden and Kamala Harris pushed past their one-time political rivalry to deliver an aggressive attack on the character and performance of President Donald Trump in their historic first appearance as running mates.

The physical debut of the Democratic ticket on Wednesday was without parallel in recent political annals. The coronavirus prevented Biden and Harris from appearing before the large, adoring crowd that typically greets a presidential nominee and his or her running mate. Instead, they spoke in a mostly empty high school gym where reporters nearly outnumbered campaign aides and the candidates' family members.

While the pandemic made a traditional campaign rollout impossible, it gave Biden and Harris a setting to emphasize their criticism of Trump as unable to contend with the most severe public health crisis in a century. Harris was particularly sharp in her condemnation of the administration.

"The case against Donald Trump and Mike Pence is open and shut," Harris said. "This virus has impacted almost every country. But there's a reason it has hit America worse than any other advanced nation. It's because of Trump's failure to take it seriously from the start."

She added: "This is what happens when we elect a guy who just isn't up for the job."

Harris is the first Black woman on a major party's presidential ticket, and she and Biden noted the historical significance.

"This morning, all across the nation, little girls woke up — especially little Black and brown girls, who so often feel overlooked and undervalued in their communities. But today, today, just maybe, they're seeing themselves for the first time in a new way," Biden said.

CAROLYN KASTER/AP

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and his running mate Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., arrive to speak at a news conference in Wilmington, Del., on Wednesday.

Harris, who is also of South Asian descent, noted the "heroic and ambitious women before me, whose sacrifice, determination and resilience make my presence here today even possible."

For his part, Trump has struggled to land on a coherent message about the Biden-Harris ticket, casting the Democrats as simultaneously too liberal for America and yet not progressive enough for their party's base. Trump has resorted to sexist and racist criticism, referring to Harris as "nasty."

Biden bets that, on balance, Harris has broad appeal that will shore up any weaknesses with Black women, an anchor of the Democratic Party, and other voters of color, while juicing turnout among white liberals and coaxing support from independents and Republican-leaning white voters who have soured on Trump.

JIM SLOSIAREK, THE (CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA) GAZETTE/AP

Iowa Department of Transportation workers help with tree debris removal as grain bins from the Archer Daniels Midland facility are seen severely damaged in Keystone, Iowa, on Wednesday.

Iowa farmers assess losses after wind storm flattened cornfields

BY DAVID PITT
Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Farmers across a wide swath of Iowa are dealing with the heartbreaking aftermath of a rare wind storm that turned what was looking like a record corn crop into deep losses for many.

The storm, known as a derecho, slammed the Midwest with straight-line winds of up to 100 miles per hour on Monday, gaining strength as it plowed through Iowa farm fields, flattening corn and bursting grain bins still filled with tens of millions of bushels of last year's harvest.

"It's a problem of two years of crops here. You're still dealing with what you grew last fall and you're trying to figure out how to prepare for what you're growing this fall," said Iowa State University agriculture economist Chad Hart.

Farms in Illinois and Indiana also reported crop and property damage, but not to the extent seen in Iowa.

Before the storm hit, the U.S. Department of Agriculture had been expecting a record national corn crop this year of 15.3 billion bushels harvested from about 84 million acres. Iowa was to provide about 18% of that production. Iowa's crop was valued at about $9.81 billion in 2019.

The Iowa Corn Growers Association said it is too soon to accurately describe how much of this year's crop was lost. Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig said Tuesday that tens of millions of bushels of grain stored at farm cooperatives and privately on farms were damaged or destroyed.

Western Iowa has been declared an extreme drought zone and corn plants there were already weakened due to a lack of moisture. Those fields are likely a loss, Hart said.

According to a USDA report dated Aug. 1, farmers in much of central and eastern Iowa had been expecting near-record yields with healthy plants that could bounce back. For now, much depends on whether the plants snapped off or were just bent over by wind.

"There's a lot more breakage or pinching of stalks than I thought there was now that I've been out and looked at more of it. That, of course, essentially has killed the plant," said Meaghan Anderson, an Iowa State University extension agronomist who works with farmers in nine central Iowa counties.

Corn is flat on the ground in numerous fields in the region, Anderson said. The corn stalks had grown to full height and were in the final stages of producing ears and filling them out with kernels. Modern corn varieties can grow up to 8 feet tall making them vulnerable to powerful straight-line winds.

For plants that were bent, and stalks not broken, there's some hope, with a significantly reduced yield. But it will be difficult to harvest. If the stalks snapped, the plant will die. Those fields will be chopped and used as livestock feed.

Iowa Corn Growers Association CEO Craig Floss surveyed the storm damage on his father's farm east of Des Moines on Wednesday. He found two machine sheds destroyed and grain bins significantly damaged. The corn was flattened and the family home in need of repair.

USPS funding threatened in effort to stop mail-in ballots

BY DEB RIECHMANN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Thursday that he opposes additional funding for the U.S. Postal Service, acknowledging that his position would starve the agency of money Democrats say it needs to process an anticipated surge in mail-in ballots during the coronavirus pandemic.

Trump also falsely stated that Democrats were pushing for universal mail-in voting and made the unfounded claim that mail-in voting would lead to massive voter fraud in the November election. Polls indicate Trump is in for a tough reelection fight against Democrat Joe Biden.

The Republican president said on Fox Business Network that among the sticking points over a new virus relief package were Democrats' demand for billions of dollars to assist states in protecting the election and to help postal workers process mail-in ballots.

"They need that money in order to have the post office work so it can take all of these millions and millions of ballots," Trump said on "Mornings with Maria," adding, "If they don't get those two items, that means you can't have universal mail-in voting because they're not equipped to have it."

Biden's campaign jumped on Trump's comments, likening the president's actions to sabotage.

"The President of the United States is sabotaging a basic service that hundreds of millions of people rely upon, cutting a critical lifeline for rural economies and for delivery of medicines, because he wants to deprive Americans of their fundamental right to vote safely during the most catastrophic public health crisis in over 100 years," Biden spokesperson Andrew Bates said in a statement.

Negotiations over a new virus relief package have all but ended, with the White House and congressional leaders far apart on the size, scope and approach for shoring up households, reopening schools and launching a national strategy to contain the coronavirus.

While there is some common ground over $100 billion for schools and new funds for virus testing, Democrats also want other emergency funds that Trump rejects, including to shore up the U.S. Postal Service and election security ahead of the November election.

"They want $3.5 billion for something that will turn out to be fraudulent. That's election money, basically," Trump said during Thursday's call-in interview.

WORLD

Trump says UAE to open diplomatic ties with Israel

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — President Donald Trump said Thursday that the United Arab Emirates and Israel have agreed to establish full diplomatic ties as part of a deal to halt the annexation of occupied land sought by the Palestinians for their future state.

The announcement makes the UAE the first Gulf Arab state to do so and only the third Arab nation to have active diplomatic ties to Israel.

Trump tweeted a statement from the countries, acknowledging the deal. He then told reporters in the Oval Office that it was "a truly historic moment."

"Now that the ice has been broken I expect more Arab and Muslim countries will follow the United Arab Emirates," he said.

The recognition grants a rare diplomatic win to Trump ahead of the November election as his efforts to see an end to the war in Afghanistan have yet to come to fruition while efforts to bring peace between Israel and the Palestinians have made no headway. Israel and the UAE also have been among Trump's closest foreign allies.

For Israel, the announcement comes after years of boasting by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that his government enjoys closer ties to Arab nations than publicly acknowledged. Netanyahu has sought to build settlements on lands sought by the Palestinians and embraced a Trump proposal that would allow him to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank while granting Palestinians limited autonomy in other areas.

For the UAE, home to skyscraper-studded Dubai and the rolling, oil-rich sand dunes of Abu Dhabi, it further burnishes its international campaign to be seen as a beacon of tolerance in the Middle East despite being governed by autocratic rulers. It also puts the UAE out first in a regional recognition race among neighboring Gulf Arab states.

And for the Palestinians, who long have relied on Arab backing in their struggle for independence, the announcement marked both a win and setback. While Thursday's deal halts Israeli annexation plans, the Palestinians have repeatedly urged Arab governments not to normalize relations with Israel until a peace agreement establishing an independent Palestinian state is reached.

"Israel got rewarded for not declaring openly what it's been doing to Palestine illegally & persistently since the beginning of the occupation," senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi wrote on Twitter. She also said the UAE has come forward with its "secret dealings/normalization with Israel."

"Please don't do us a favor. We are nobody's fig leaf!" she wrote. The official Palestinian broadcaster Palestine TV reported that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called an urgent meeting of his top leadership to discuss the agreement and determine a position on it.

The militant group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, called the deal by the Emiratis "a stabbing in the back of our people."

The joint statement from the U.S., the UAE and Israel said delegations would meet in the coming weeks to sign deals on direct flights, security, telecommunications, energy, tourism and health care. The two countries also will partner on fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

Among Arab nations, only Egypt and Jordan have active diplomatic ties with Israel. Egypt made a peace deal with Israel in 1979, followed by Jordan in 1994.

The UAE is a U.S.-allied federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula. Formed in 1971, the country like other Arab nations at the time did not recognize Israel over its occupation of land home to the Palestinians.

FBI to join investigation of explosion in Beirut

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Visiting U.S. Under Secretary for Political Affairs David Hale said the Federal Bureau of Investigation will be joining Lebanese and other international investigators in the probe into the Beirut port blast that killed and wounded thousands.

Hale said during a visit to one of the impacted neighborhoods in Beirut on Thursday that the FBI will take part at the invitation of Lebanese authorities.

He said the participation in the probe is one of the ways the United States is helping Lebanon in dealing with the aftermath of the drastic explosion. Hale arrived in Lebanon on Thursday and is due to meet with Lebanese officials for the next two days.

Lebanon's Parliament on Thursday approved a state of emergency in Beirut in its first session since the catastrophic Aug. 4 explosion, granting the military sweeping powers amid rising popular anger at official corruption and mismanagement and political uncertainty.

The government resigned after the blast that killed more than 170 people, injured at least 6,000 and wrecked the capital's port and caused widespread damage across the capital.

The disaster has raised popular fury toward Lebanon's leaders to a new level as the country reels from an unprecedented economic and financial crisis, along with the coronavirus pandemic.

Before it resigned, the government declared the state of emergency that gave the military the power to declare curfews, prevent public gatherings and censor the media, as well as refer civilians to military tribunals for alleged security breaches. The action required approval by lawmakers, which they granted Thursday.

The move has been criticized by rights groups and others who have said the civilian government was already operating with increased powers because of the coronavirus outbreak. Some pointed to the military crackdown on protesters last week, fearing the extended powers could lead to silencing dissent.

Parliament met outside its regular location to observe social distancing amid a surge of coronavirus cases and because of nearby ongoing protests by those who want the entire political class to step down.

The session opened with a moment of silence for those killed in the blast. It then moved to discuss the resignation of nearly a dozen lawmakers last week to protest the government's handling of the blast. A major Christian party bloc is boycotting the session.

It still was not known what caused the fire that ignited nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate that were stored for years in Beirut's port. But documents have emerged that show the country's top leadership and security officials were aware of the stockpile.

It was not immediately clear if Parliament had technically extended the government decision on the state of emergency for 15 days or simply imposed it to take effect starting Thursday, said rights lawyer Nizar Saghieh.

"There is incredible chaos," Saghieh said. He said the state of emergency's only justification is to extend the power of the state and security agencies and "control the opposition."

"We were waiting for the army to help in reconstruction, not be an extension of power," he said.

Lawmaker Simon Abi Ramieh protested that Parliament was convened to vote on the state of emergency while it was already in effect and called instead for forming a parliamentary committee to investigate the explosion.

"We are living in a state of institutional blunder," he said. "We are in a place and the Lebanese people are somewhere else … The public wants to know the

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WORLD

SERGEI GRITS/AP

Belarusian women carry flowers on a rally in solidarity with protesters injured in the latest rallies against the results of the country's presidential election in Minsk, Belarus, on Thursday.

Thousands in Belarus form 'lines of solidarity' in protest

BY YURAS KARMANAU
Associated Press

MINSK, Belarus — Thousands of people swarmed the streets of Belarus' capital and other cities Thursday to keep up their protests of election results that extended the 26-year rule of authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko and a subsequent police crackdown on peaceful demonstrations.

In several areas of Minsk, hundreds of women formed long "lines of solidarity." Many of them were dressed in white and carried flowers and portraits of loved ones who have been detained during protests that began shortly after Sunday's vote that they said was rigged.

The human chains grew quickly, and by early afternoon filled the main central squares and avenues. Motorists honked in support.

In Minsk and other cities, hundreds of workers at industrial plants also rallied against the police violence, raising the prospect of massive strikes in a new challenge to the government.

Nearly 7,000 people have been detained and hundreds injured in a harsh clampdown by police on demonstrators protesting the official results that said Lukashenko won 80% of the vote and his top opposition challenger got only 10%. Police have broken up protests with stun grenades, tear gas, rubber bullets and severe beatings.

One protester died Monday in Minsk, and hundreds of others were injured across the country. The authorities confirmed that a detainee also died in the southeastern city of Gomel, but the circumstances of his death weren't immediately clear.

The brutality and scope of the police crackdown was remarkable even for Lukashenko's iron-fisted rule. The 65-year-old former state farm director has been in power since 1994 and was nicknamed "Europe's last dictator" by the West for his suppression of dissent.

The Interior Ministry reported 700 new detentions late Wednesday and overnight, bring the total number of detainees to 6,700 since Sunday. Belarus' Investigative Committee launched a criminal probe into the organization of mass rioting — a charge that could carry prison terms of up to 15 years for those found guilty.

The ministry said 103 police officers have been injured since Sunday and 28 of them were hospitalized. In Minsk and Baranovichi, unidentified suspects ran over traffic police with their vehicles on Wednesday before being detained.

The brutal suppression of protests drew harsh criticism in the West. European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the 27-nation bloc would review its relations with Belarus and consider "measures against those responsible for the observed violence, unjustified arrests and falsification of election results."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the election wasn't free or fair and urged the government to refrain from violence against peaceful protesters.

"I'm confident that that EU and the United States fully share the same concerns about what has taken place and what is taking place in Belarus and I'm very hopeful that we can collectively work in a way that gets a better outcome for the people of Belarus," Pompeo said Thursday on a visit to Slovenia.

Police appeared to scale back their response on Wednesday. In many parts of Minsk, the all-female "lines of solidarity" stood unchallenged for some time before police dispersed some of them without violence.

In Slovenia visit, Pompeo pushes safe 5G, energy

Associated Press

BLED, Slovenia — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Slovenia on Thursday to make the case for high-speed wireless networks that bar Chinese companies like Huawei.

On the second leg of a four-nation tour of central and eastern Europe, Pompeo met with Slovenian officials in the mountain lake town of Bled and signed a joint declaration on "5G Clean Network Security" that aims to keep untrusted telecommunications vendors out of Slovenia.

"Free nations must work together to confront authoritarian threats," he said. "It is absolutely critical that every nation makes a good sovereign decision about how the private information of its citizens is going to be handled."

Pompeo has led a U.S. campaign across Europe and elsewhere against Huawei and other Chinese companies that the Trump administration accuses of sharing sensitive data and personal information with China's security apparatus.

"Protecting communications networks from disruption or manipulation, and ensuring the privacy and individual liberties of the citizens of the United States and Slovenia are vital to ensuring that our people are able to take advantage of the tremendous economic opportunities 5G will enable," the declaration says.

Slovenia last month rolled out a nationwide commercial 5G network with Swedish telecom giant Ericsson, which U.S. officials frequently mention as a "trusted" alternative to Huawei.

"The tide is turning against the Chinese Communist Party and its efforts to control information," Pompeo said.

Besides the 5G declaration, Pompeo discussed energy security with Slovenia's president and prime minister. The U.S. is keen to wean Europe from its dependence on Russian oil and gas and has launched numerous initiatives throughout the continent to diversify European energy sources. It has offered to sell U.S. fuel to Europe and has been promoting nuclear energy.

> **'The tide is turning against the Chinese Communist Party and its efforts to control information.'**
>
> **Mike Pompeo**
> U.S. secretary of state

Pompeo arrived in Slovenia from the Czech Republic, where he called upon the young democracies in the region to embrace hard-won freedoms and counter threats from Russia and particularly China, which he said is in many ways more dangerous than the former Soviet Union.

"The CCP is already enmeshed in our economies, in our politics, in our societies in ways the Soviet Union never was," he told Czech lawmakers, referring to the Chinese Communist Party.

Pompeo, however, said that "even more of a threat is the Chinese Communist Party and its campaigns of coercion and control."

"In your country alone," he said, "we see influence campaigns against your politicians and security forces, the theft of industrial data that you have created through your innovation and creativity, and we've seen the use of economic leverage to stifle freedom itself."

Pompeo said they should continue to resist Chinese attempts to assert economic and political leverage over them. He noted several recent developments in which China has threatened Czech officials with retaliation for showing support for Taiwan, Tibet and Hong Kong.

China has accused the United States of "oppressing Chinese companies" through its declarations about telecom equipment suppliers Huawei and ZTE being national security threats.

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PACIFIC

1M Japanese dead still missing from WWII

By Mari Yamaguchi
Associated Press

TOKYO — Seventy-five years after the end of World War II, more than 1 million Japanese war dead are scattered throughout Asia, where the legacy of Japanese aggression still hampers recovery efforts.

The missing Japanese make up about half of the 2.4 million soldiers who died overseas during Japan's military rampage across Asia in the early 20th century.

They are on remote islands in the South Pacific. They are in northern China and Mongolia. They are in Russia.

As the anniversary for the end of the Pacific War arrives Saturday, there is little hope these remains will ever be recovered, let alone identified and returned to grieving family members.

Only about half a million are considered retrievable. The rest are lost in the sea or buried in areas that can't be reached because of fighting or security or political reasons, according to Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, which is in charge of support measures for bereaved families.

Locating, identifying and finding places to store the decades-old remains have been complicated as memories fade, artifacts and documents get lost and families and relatives age.

In 2016, Japan's parliament passed a law launching an eight-year remains recovery initiative through 2024. It promotes more DNA matching and cooperation with the U.S. Department of Defense in case remains are found at U.S. military facilities on islands in the southern Pacific that were former battlegrounds.

It was not until 2003 that the Japanese government started DNA matching, but only at the request of possible families. In July, Japan set up a comprehensive remains information center at the ministry that would provide DNA testing.

Kyodo News/AP

People gather for the cremation ceremony for Japanese war dead in World War II, in Papua province, Indonesia, in March, 2013.

After Japan's disastrous retreats in the Pacific in 1943, the military started sending back empty boxes with stones to bereaved families, without providing details about the deaths. Japan insisted all war dead would be honored as gods at Yasukuni Shrine.

Similar practices were continued by postwar governments, which didn't put an emphasis on identifying individual remains to return to families, experts say.

Japan sent its first overseas remains collection mission in 1952 after a seven-year U.S. occupation ended. The efforts were unwelcome in many Asian countries that had suffered under Japanese wartime aggression.

The government in the 1950s dispatched missions to major former battlegrounds for the "token" collection of random remains; most were unidentified and never returned to families. After collecting the remains of about 10,000 war dead, the welfare ministry in 1962 tried to end the project but was forced to continue the effort following repeated requests by veterans and bereaved families.

The government mission has so far recovered just 340,000 remains; most are kept at Tokyo's Chidorigafuchi national cemetery of unknown soldiers.

They were never DNA tested or identified, and almost certainly include a "significant number" of the remains of non-Japanese nationals, including Koreans and Taiwanese soldiers drafted and sent overseas to fight for the Japanese Imperial Army, said Kazufumi Hamai, a Teikyo University historian and expert on the remains issue.

More than 240,000 Koreans fought for Japan during the country's 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula, including 20,000 believed to have died outside of mainland Japan. Some of their remains were most likely brought back, unidentified and mixed with the Japanese collected during past missions before being placed in Chidorigafuchi.

Japan's delayed and insufficient remains collection underscored the government's failure to face up to its wartime past, Hamai said.

"The government lacked respect for individual remains and their dignity," he said. "Their remains collection program was sloppy and carried out reluctantly at the request of veterans' families, while completely neglecting the Koreans and Taiwanese."

About 700 remains of Koreans have been separately stored at a Tokyo Buddhist temple, Yutenji. Health and welfare ministry officials say they are the only remains of the former Korean soldiers that they are aware of. More than half of the 700 are from North Korea.

Japan gained access to Russia and Mongolia only starting in 1991 when Japan was given a list of tens of thousands of imprisoned Japanese soldiers and maps of the mass graves where they were buried. About 600,000 were sent to former Soviet prisons, where 55,000 died.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man who broke into home shot with own gun

NE OMAHA — An Omaha man who allegedly broke into a home and tried to steal two dogs at gunpoint was shot with his own gun during a struggle over it.

Omaha Police said the 29-year-old man was shot by a resident of a home in northeast Omaha shortly before midnight Tuesday as the resident took the gun away from the suspect.

The man was found a short time later when he went to a hospital for treatment of the gunshot wound, and he was arrested after he was treated for the injury.

Court records show that the wounded man is already awaiting trial on charges of robbery and criminal impersonation in two separate felony cases.

Police: Man robbed of cash by his online date

MA BOSTON — Police say a rendezvous arranged on an online dating app ended poorly for a man in Boston after his date pulled a stun gun and robbed him.

Authorities say the man met the woman at a local hotel Tuesday morning. He told officers the two spoke for about half an hour before his date took out a Taser stun gun. The woman then went through the man's pockets, stealing about $100 in cash.

The man notified hotel security after escaping the hotel room. Police say that when officers arrived, the woman initially denied having met the victim. A pink Taser was located on the woman's luggage and she was arrested.

Police identified the woman as Selena Rivera-Apodaca, 24, of Kent, Wash. She is expected to be arraigned on a charge of armed robbery.

Prison for man who claimed to be FBI agent

AZ PRESCOTT — A Cottonwood man has been sentenced to 1½ years in an Arizona prison after pleading guilty to two counts of impersonating a peace officer.

Prosecutors said David Michael Getzen, 59, called the Yavapai County jail last October claiming to be an FBI agent. In the call, Getzen said the detention facility needed to "surrender" two sheriff's deputies, authorities said.

Getzen also was accused of threatening to shoot two county Superior Court judges plus the sheriff and county attorney if the jail didn't release the individuals.

In another call, authorities said Getzen claimed he had a warrant for the arrest of a deputy county sheriff. Detectives identified Getzen as the caller and he was arrested the next day.

Wayward emu captured running through city

NJ PATERSON — An emu was taken to an animal shelter after it was captured while running through the streets of a northern New Jersey city.

A woman spotted the long-legged bird Tuesday morning in a residential neighborhood near Paterson's border with Totowa.

Animal control officers snared the emu, which is about 4-feet tall. The emu was placed in a large animal cart and was taken to a shelter, where officials arranged for the emu to be examined by a veterinarian. Officials were not sure whether the bird had escaped from a farm or was just running out in the wild.

Chief Animal Control Officer John DeCando told NJ.com the emu appeared healthy. He could not determine its age or sex, "but I can tell you it needs a bath," DeCando said.

Auction for former missile site falls short

ND BISMARCK — An auction for a former missile site in northeastern North Dakota fell short of the hoped-for price Tuesday.

Over 70 bidders were registered online to bid on the 50-acre, double-fenced, Cold War-era site near Fairdale. Leslie Volochenko, of Mandan, bought the property in 2012 and put it up for sale since he hopes to move to Texas.

Dave Keller of Pifer's Auction & Realty conducted the auction but said the highest bidder fell short of the nearly half-million-dollar price Volochenko hoped to get.

Keller said they are negotiating with the highest bidder, who is a man from North Dakota, and hope to have things figured out by the end of the week.

The Bismarck Tribune reported the site includes a command bunker and 14 missile launch tubes.

ERIC GAY/AP

Getting cleaned up for dinner

A worker wearing a mask to combat the threat of COVID-19 cleans an outside dining area at San Antonio's River Walk on Wednesday.

THE CENSUS

$2.25M The amount of money Nevada state officials gave final approval Tuesday to paying to a Las Vegas man who spent more than 22 years in state prison for a 1994 murder before he was determined to be innocent and released in 2017. DeMarlo Berry, 45, is the first person to receive a certificate of innocence and damages for wrongful imprisonment under a new state law passed last year. His conviction in the killing of Las Vegas fast-food restaurant manager Charles Burkes was dismissed after a man already serving a life sentence for a separate murder confessed to killing Burkes.

City considers ban on feeding feral cats

WY CASPER — A Wyoming city is considering a ban on feeding feral cats, a proposal supported by animal control officers and wildlife advocates but opposed by others.

The Casper City Council plans a final vote on the proposed ban in the weeks ahead.

The animal shelter in Casper took in over 1,500 cats and euthanized nearly 500 in 2019, the Casper Star-Tribune reported.

An estimated 25% of the cats taken in were feral, which can't be adopted and usually are killed.

"Feral cats plague our community, defecating and urinating on private property, killing protected songbirds and spreading disease," Metro Animal Services' 2019 annual report reads. "They cannot safely be placed with a family, and generally must be euthanized."

Proponents of the feeding ban include the local Wyoming Game and Fish Department office and Audubon Society. Others joined by the national advocacy group Alley Cat Allies oppose the idea.

Feeding bans are hard to enforce and don't stop feral cats from reproducing, said Becky Robinson, founder of Alley Cat Allies. The group has worked with municipalities to implement trap-neuter-release programs focused on stopping feral cats from reproducing, Robinson said.

Man killed in parking tiff; neighbor charged

MO ST. LOUIS — A St. Louis man has been charged, accused of fatally shooting a neighbor during an argument over street parking, then of trying to kill the victim's wife.

Troy Jackson Jr., 28, was charged Monday with first-degree murder, assault and other counts for the June 16 killing of Jermane Hicks, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

Police said Jackson shot Hicks as the two argued over street parking on the block where both men lived. Hicks' wife was inside their home at the time and saw Jackson shoot her husband, investigators said, and went outside to confront Jackson. Police said Jackson then fled, but later returned to the house. He is accused of barging through the front door and firing shots at Hicks' wife inside the home. Police said he missed and exhausted all of the rounds in his gun before fleeing.

Jackson is being held without bail.

Family rescues dog nearly 4 miles offshore

MI FRANKFORT — A dog treading water nearly four miles offshore in Lake Michigan has been rescued by a family out on a boating trip.

The family was boating from Grand Haven to Frankfort in northwestern Michigan on Friday when Jeannie Wilcox said she saw a "red animal in the lake" and started screaming, 'dog in the water!'" They got the dog onto the boat's swim platform and dried her off, Wilcox told WOOD-TV.

The family had the dog scanned for a microchip. The owners later were located and reunited with their dog.

"I just hope that if this was my dog, somebody would do the same for me," Wilcox said.

From wire reports

WEEKEND

Luke Bryan loves to tinker

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ENTERTAINMENT

LOVE

An examination of 20 years of reality dating shows reveals a deep impact on our culture — and not for the better

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iStock

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Lowering expectations for higher education this fall

Many students unhappy with colleges' move to online classes

BY MAYA TRIBBITT
Bloomberg

Colleges are rolling out new technology for a mostly online semester that begins in August, but these efforts are unlikely to impress students paying tens of thousands of dollars for in-person instruction.

The University of Michigan will provide stronger Wi-Fi and new cloud storage accounts to help students learn on campus while maintaining social distance. The University of Southern California plans virtual 3-D labs for some science courses, while the University of California at Berkeley is giving laptops, webcams and headphones to thousands of students in need.

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages across the U.S., many schools are making permanent plans to conduct classes virtually this fall. Administrators heeded complaints about lockdown learning during the previous semester and are tapping technology to try to improve the experience. Students doubt e-learning will pass what is shaping up to be the industry's toughest test yet.

"Online classes kinda suck, and there's no technology that can fix that," said Annie Tsan, a sophomore at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Without technological updates that make the online classroom more accessible and enjoyable, there's no guarantee students will stay at their institutions. Some are considering a gap semester or two, withholding tuition payments or transferring. This risks another blow to a higher eduction sector that was already struggling financially before the pandemic.

"70% of our revenue comes from tuition, room and board," said Zach Messitte, president of Ripon College in Wisconsin. "If 30% of our students decide not to come back, that's just an enormous revenue hit. This will impact the revenue of schools across the country."

The University of Michigan's new Wi-Fi shows the potential and the pitfalls of this technology push by colleges. There will be more bandwidth and the Wi-Fi signal will be extended through additional routers, so even without in-person classes, Michigan hopes students will come to the campus. One proposal even encourages students to park at the college and turn their cars into makeshift study halls.

"I don't think it's going to be as impactful as they think," said Nicholas Silk, a senior at Michigan. "Most people who live on or off campus already have Wi-Fi in their residences. Plus, I don't even have a car. I won't be sitting outside of a building just to use campus Wi-Fi."

Michigan is also partnering with Zoom Video Communications Inc. and Canvas, a learning-management system from Instructure Inc., to enable automated transcription during video conferencing classes. This will help students follow lectures more easily in real time and let them refer back to material after the class ends.

Schools are also using technology to keep less wealthy students connected. The University of California at Berkeley set aside more than $4 million to provide about 3,300 laptops, 800 Wi-Fi hotspots, webcams and headphones in August to those who qualify for a new Student Technology Equity Program.

The University of California at Irvine has sent almost 300 students laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots. Almost 40% of those who attend the college qualify for Federal Pell grants that are given to low-income candidates. Tom Andriola, chief information officer for the University of California System, hopes the effort brings "equity in terms of the ability to access the internet and to watch a livestream lecture, or be able to access systems."

However, schools are often chosen based on physical resources, such as residence halls, research labs and media-production studios. For students counting on these assets, faster Wi-Fi, a free laptop and virtual reality may not be enough. Although some universities, like Princeton and Harvard, have provided tuition discounts, many schools still expect students to pay the full amount. Some schools, like USC, even announced tuition increases before they released plans to go online.

A number of students are still deciding if it is worth it to attend classes at all this fall. "If I do not have access to the resources that make USC, USC, there is no reason as to why I should be paying full price to essentially now attend school in my living room," said Casey Gardner, a senior studying theater at the school.

iStock

Many colleges are switching to fully online teaching, offering access to a number of online teaching tools, expanded online storage and, in some cases, providing laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots and webcams.

GADGET WATCH

ANKER/TNS

Anker's Soundcore Rave Neo offers great sound and a ring of LED mood lights on the front.

Little speaker pumps out big sound

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Anker's new Soundcore Rave Neo isn't your typical pocket-sized Bluetooth 5.0 speaker.

The sound is delivered by a 4-inch woofer and 2-inch tweeter behind a black grill and didn't disappoint in its debut right out of the box. The sound is what I'd call big time with a perfect bass, with the speaker's BassUp mode turned on and high volume levels (but not enough to annoy my neighbors.)

With the Soundcore app and the Custom EQ, choose between three presets and a fully customizable EQ profile for perfect music to your ears.

The Rave Neo has a ring of LED mood lights on the front, creating a nice visual experience and added fun in darker settings. They flash to the sound of the music and if you have synced multiple speakers, the LEDs will also sync. The light modes can also be controlled with the app.

More than 100 of the speakers can be linked with the built-in PartyCast Technology to sync the music. The first speaker connected becomes the primary and controls the others.

Anker's Flare 2 is also PartyCast compatible, enabling it to be paired with the Rave Neo.

When you do have two paired and in True Wireless Stereo mode, they give you stereo sound with music in the left and right channels.

The top panel has the controls for the sound, including one for the BassUp mode. After hearing the added bass, I just left it on. It also lets you choose outdoor and indoor sound modes.

Other controls are for your basic needs including music, Bluetooth pairing, hands-free calls, light mode and the PartyCast mode. Two mobile devices can be paired to a single speaker, but music can only be played from one at a time.

USB-C and standard connections for power, charging external USB devices, adding a USB storage device with content and a 3.5 mm auxiliary port are on the back. These ports have a cover, but when they are exposed, keep the unit away from water.

You'll get about 18 hours of playtime from the internal battery (varies on volume level), and it charges back up in six hours.

Online: soundcore.com; $99.99

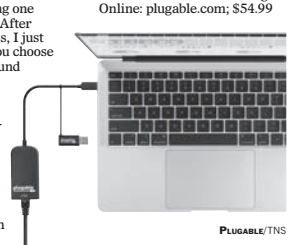
As laptops get smaller, one thing that's commonly eliminated is the ethernet port along with switching to USB-C/Thunderbolt 3 connections from standard USB-A. With the Plugable's 2.5Gbps ethernet adapter, connectivity to either is no problem.

Going wireless is not always desired, especially when wired connection speeds can be faster. One end has an ethernet port and the other has a USB connection cable with both USB-C and a standard USB 3.0 with an attached adapter. The standard USB-A adapter slips over the USB-C when needed and remains attached when using a USB-C connection.

The adapter is backward compatible with compatibility listed with Windows 10, 8.x, and 7, macOS 10.7 and above, and Linux Kernel 3.2 and above. It works plug-and-play on most of today's computers; a driver may be needed with older operating systems.

The pocket-sized adapter supports speeds up to 2.5 times faster than the 1Gbps standard when used with Cat 5e cabling.

Online: plugable.com; $54.99



PLUGABLE/TNS

Plugable's ethernet adapter

WEEKEND: MOVIES

ECHOES OF 2020

These films aim to entertain, but end up invoking the same kind of existential dread as the coronavirus

Amy (Kate Lyn Sheil) can't shake the belief that the next day will be her last in "She Dies Tomorrow," currently available to stream.

Neon

By Julie Hinds
Detroit Free Press

Fear and uncertainty are as familiar in 2020 as Zoom meetings and social distancing. Still, you have to stay positive, establish a healthy routine and find ways to cope with what can feel like existential dread.

That's what makes an early scene from **"She Dies Tomorrow,"** available on streaming platforms and video on demand, so scary. During a phone call, a friend offers some advice to a young woman who's feeling a sense of claustrophobic doom: "Go for a walk, or why don't you try watching a movie?"

Both are common stress relievers for life in the COVID-19 pandemic. But be aware that watching **"She Dies Tomorrow"** won't distract you from what's happening. The gripping indie is about facing your dread when fearfulness itself becomes contagious.

For at least six months now, movies have been providing coronavirus catharsis. Early this year, **"Contagion" (2011)**, a taut drama starring Matt Damon, Kate Winslet and Laurence Fishburne, reached the hot zone of rental popularity with its fact-based vision of what would happen if a virus spread across the world and claimed millions of lives.

Just recently, **"Host"** arrived on the streaming site Shudder. The horror film, shot entirely on Zoom, takes place as a bunch of friends in lockdown gather online for a seance that unleashes some serious nastiness. The concept plays off of quarantine tensions and brings new meaning to experiencing a virtual meeting from hell.

"She Dies Tomorrow," written and directed by Amy Seimetz, explores timeless themes that just happen to correspond to the constant worry that has become 2020's mood board.

The story centers on Amy (Kate Lyn Sheil), who guzzles white wine after becoming convinced that she will die tomorrow.

Netflix

Sandra Bullock plays a woman trying to guide two small children (Julian Edwards, left, and Vivien Lyra Blair, right) to safety in the post-apocalyptic thriller "Bird Box."

Amy's fear doesn't appear to be an offshoot of depression. She caught it from another person, and she spreads it to anyone she physically encounters.

Super creepy and superbly unresolved, Seimetz's new movie is a meditation on facing mortality that contains surprising splashes of dark humor.

For instance, when Amy keeps lifting the needle of her record player to listen to Mozart's gloomy "Requiem" over and over, it's a pretty clear example of how not to wallow in misery. If time is running short, why not put on some vintage Go-Go's or Prince's "1999"?

"She Dies Tomorrow" is a moody, intense portrait of trapped characters — including a solitary scientist played by wonderful Jane Adams (HBO's "Hung") — who must wrestle with what it means to be approaching their final day.

Should they drop the limits of polite behavior and start saying and doing things they otherwise would self-censor? Is that a good choice? It's certainly an honest one.

With the real-life pandemic continuing to surge and no imminent end to it in sight, no wonder life is paralleling scary movies.

In **"Bird Box" (2018),** wearing a mask (in this case, a blindfold) is the only weapon against mysterious creatures that provoke lethal madness with a single glimpse. There's even a relevant plot point over whether masks are necessary or just a response to a mass hysteria. But rest assured that Sandra Bullock's character stays masked and serves as the Dr. Fauci of the "Bird Box" universe.

There also are echoes of 2020 in **"Children of Men" (2006)**, a classic dystopian film from director Alfonso Cuaron that sends a strong told-you-so message about the costs of climate change and systemic inequality.

Its scenario of an infertility pandemic, coupled with huge migrations of refugees, is a nightmarish take on a future with worsening income inequality, health care disparities and brutalization of asylum seekers.

Even the formidable Clive Owen has a tough time shouldering this many problems at once.

"World War Z" (2013) is the best recent spin on a zombie disaster. Its premise is that humans gain incredible speed once they're infected with a zombie bug, making any effort to socially distance from their biting range extremely difficult.

Yet "World War Z" is an oddly comforting action thriller, maybe because it offers Brad Pitt racing to the rescue (and he actually played Fauci on "Saturday Night Live").

Pitt doesn't survey the global crisis and say, "It is what it is." He's relentless in the search for a vaccine, brushing off a plane crash as if it were a flat tire.

For the ultimate in pandemic-fueled pandemonium, **"Invasion of the Body Snatchers"** (both the 1956 original and a 1978 remake) reveals the hazards of trying to stay safe while others are downplaying a crisis.

An allegory for the 1950s Red Scare, it imagines a plague of seed pods arriving from outer space. The pods grow exact copies of humans, only these doubles lack free will and emotions.

When one man (Kevin McCarthy in the '56 version, Donald Sutherland in '78) tries to expose the truth of what's happening, he's essentially deemed fake news.

Scary movies have always been a place to work out some of our deepest fears — even for filmmakers. In the production notes for "She Dies Tomorrow," Seimetz describes the origin of the story:

"I was dealing with my own personal anxiety and found I was spreading my panic to other people by talking about it perhaps too excessively — while simultaneously watching a ton of news and watching mass anxiety spreading on the right and left politically," she said. "All this while remembering losing my father and many friends, that we all die at some point. We don't know what to do but keep living, realizing the absurdity and tragedy that with life comes death."

Seimetz notes that the characters in her latest film keep saying that everyone is going to die because they no longer can avoid that fact: "It's just most of the time, you can push that truth aside and be as shallow or oblivious as you want to be."

Terrifying stuff, right? Or maybe a timeless reminder that time is precious. If "She Dies Tomorrow" feels like 2020 condensed into one script, well, there are worse ways to spend 90 minutes than with a smart, thought-provoking movie.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Dual personalities

Rogen relished playing two roles in 'An American Pickle'

HBO MAX/AP

Seth Rogen stars as Herschel Greenbaum — and his great-grandson — in "An American Pickle."

> **'It was very complicated, but I was up for the challenge. I knew what I was getting into ... so I understood how complicated and technical it could be.'**
> **Seth Rogen**

By Peter Sblendorio
New York Daily News

Seth Rogen thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of playing the two main characters in his latest movie, "An American Pickle."

The funnyman stars in the new comedy as both Herschel Greenbaum — a Jewish immigrant from Eastern Europe who wakes up 100 years after being preserved in a pickle vat — and Ben Greenbaum, his Brooklyn-based great-grandson who struggles to teach his ancestor about modern times.

"It was very complicated, but I was up for the challenge," Rogen said of his dual roles. "I knew what I was getting into. I'd directed things where people play two characters before, so I understood how complicated and technical it could be.

"I longed for it in some ways. Some of the movies we make are so loose that this idea of making something that was pretty regimented and had a pretty specific blueprint it had to follow was actually appealing to me."

To make the movie, now available on the subscription streaming service HBO Max, Rogen and the filmmakers shot all of the scenes featuring the bearded Herschel first, with a stand-in sometimes filling in to give the actor someone to interact with.

Rogen, 38, then shaved, and they went back and shot all of Ben's scenes.

"When I'm acting, I'm generally trying to serve the bigger picture," Rogen explained. "That is how I approach it. I'm used to having more than one job on a movie, so it was not that weird, honestly. I very much felt like I was just serving the story as best I could as both characters."

The film follows Herschel and his wife in 1919 as they're driven out of the fictional country of Shlupsk by militant Cossacks and into a new life in New York City. Herschel takes a job at a pickle factory, but isn't heard from for a century after he becomes submerged in a tank full of pickle brine in a freak accident.

Once he resurfaces at the same age, Herschel unites with his only living relative, Ben, a socially conscious app designer. Herschel's offensive, outdated viewpoints cause nothing but trouble for his great-grandson.

The film, which is based on a 2013 written serialization by Simon Rich that ran in the New Yorker, featured themes that Rogen was eager to dive into.

"This idea of what would our ancestors think of us? Would they be proud of us? ... My grandparents saw me become someone who starred in films, and they were not that impressed by it," Rogen said. "They were very impressed by the fact that I could afford a lot of napkins and paper towels, so it just shows how this Depression-era mentality never left them. Like, being a movie star was not an accomplishment, but never having to worry about running out of napkins really was."

Rogen, whose other comedy credits include "Pineapple Express" and "Superbad," said there were multiple aspects of the new movie that he related to.

"My family's from Eastern Europe," Rogen said. "They were driven out by people trying to kill Jewish people. The first 20 minutes of the movie probably very closely reflect some elements of my own history. Ultimately, the themes of legacy and tradition and the progressive side of our instincts versus the conservative side of our instincts, and how family plays into that, all that was just stuff that I was very interested in exploring."

'An American Pickle' is a quick, satisfying bite

By Katie Walsh
Tribune News Service

The new Seth Rogen vehicle, "An American Pickle," is a lot like the foodstuff for which it's named: a quick, tart, satisfying bite, and of course, kosher. The film heralds a return of sorts, or at least a nod to, classic American Jewish cinema (there's a nod to "Yentl"), the likes of which hasn't been seen, it seems, in some time.

The film is the solo feature directorial debut of Brandon Trost, a prominent cinematographer who has worked on many Rogen vehicles like "This Is the End," "Neighbors" and "The Interview." It's written by Simon Rich, who adapted the screenplay from his four-part humor series "Sell Out," which ran in The New Yorker in 2013. But this is a Rogen film through and through, offering the actor the chance to inhabit two very different roles, playing against himself.

Rogen is Herschel Greenbaum, a ditch-digger from an Eastern European hovel called Shlupsk, who immigrates to Brooklyn at the turn of the 20th century with his wife, Sarah (Sarah Snook), with dreams of buying their own gravestones and one day trying seltzer. Herschel goes to work in a pickle factory killing rats, where he falls into the pickle vat and is sealed inside. A century later, a drone disturbs the vat and Herschel emerges, fully preserved, alive and sentient (just go with it). The doctors find his only living relative, great-grandson Ben Greenbaum (also Rogen), a "freelance mobile app developer," and wacky, time-traveling mishaps and misunderstandings ensue.

Rich's series "Sell Out" is a bit more barbed. In the script for "An American Pickle," Rich extends a bit more charity to Ben, who is more hapless than feckless. He leads a comfortable if unexamined life, filling his days with modern comforts, making an app called Boop Bop to tell you if your kale chips are ethical. It's all to distract from the deep sorrow of losing both his parents in a car accident, something his great-grandfather wants to dive right into, details and all.

For Herschel, family, memory and legacy is everything. On a quest to buy back the land where Sarah is buried, in the shadow of a Russian vodka billboard, he starts the hottest new artisanal pickle venture in Williamsburg, with his all-natural brine and reusable jars. Everything old is new again, after all. Stubborn, loyal

HBO MAX/AP

Seth Rogen says it "was not that weird" to play both Ben Greenbaum, left, and Herschel Greenbaum in "An American Pickle."

Herschel is overbearing and out of touch, while the jealous and competitive Ben is eaten up by envy. Their interpersonal feud escalates in a series of increasingly outlandish (yet plausible) events. Anchoring this is a rather deft performance by Rogen, who creates two distinct characters. His Ben may not be that far off his usual, but with bouncing off his Herschel, and with almost no other significant supporting actors, it's an impressive turn from Rogen, especially his facility with Herschel's accent.

"An American Pickle" is swift and rather pat, and even earnest despite its wacky premise and the issues it skirts. With an 88-minute run time, there's just no time to treat the twists and turns with any level of depth, and it avoids fully probing the topics like cancel culture and free speech with which it toys, avoiding the thornier areas. It gestures toward controversial ideas, but it always swerves back to its simple but profound message of togetherness and family, and the personal importance of honoring tradition and memory.

Running time: 1 hour, 28 minutes. Rated PG-13 for some language and rude humor.
Now available on streaming service HBO Max.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

Father-son drama 'Made in Italy' lacks bite

By Michael Ordona
Los Angeles Times

With a gorgeous location, pretty people and familiar story, "Made in Italy" is too gentle to make an impression.

Jack (Micheal Richardson) is an English 20-something faced with losing his connection to an art gallery through divorce. He enlists his somewhat-famous painter father Robert (Liam Neeson) to renovate a grand house they own in Tuscany. Selling it should give Jack the means to buy the gallery. But Jack and Robert are, if not estranged, not close, and the house is full of memories of Jack's mother, Robert's wife, who died when Jack was 7.

Richardson is Neeson's real-life son, and, like the family in the film, the two actors suffered the loss of Richardson's mother and Neeson's wife (actress Natasha Richardson) in a tragic accident years ago. That might lead one to expect a cinematic catharsis, but "Made in Italy" hesitates to go there.

It's full of missed opportunities and lacking in telling details. It's a father-son drama, but perhaps its closest comp would be "Doc Hollywood" because it's also a lite, l-i-t-e, romantic comedy. As in that Michael J. Fox starrer, the cynical city guy on a mission finds himself stuck in a beautiful small town where a beautiful local gal makes him see the beauty of the world. Unlike that 1991 charmer, we don't get enough of the local flavor for the taste to be distinctive. There are detours into Tuscan cuisine that aren't exactly mouth-watering. The lushness of the environs is presented, literally, as a painter's composition rather than experienced by the characters. The filmmaking isn't visceral.

IFC FILMS/AP

Liam Neeson, left, and Micheal Richardson play a father and son dealing with the loss of their wife and mother in "Made in Italy." Neeson's wife and Richardson's mother, Natasha Richardson, died in 2009 in a skiing accident.

There's little plot. The portraits aren't drawn finely enough for the film to be an actual character study; more like a collection of rough sketches. Jack has a wash of indistinct malaise. It's hard to see why scrappy single mom Natalia (Valeria Bilello) is drawn to him. Neeson is, of course, a fine actor, but there aren't enough colors on the palette he has been given. The wonderful Lindsay Duncan likewise has little to work with as a hard-edged local real estate agent.

"Made in Italy" lacks bite and the bitter taste of the medicine needed to cure real ills. Even the confrontations are genteel. Precisely when the film should get its hands dirty, it all feels too clean.

It's the writing and directing debut of veteran British actor James D'Arcy (probably best known to American audiences as Jarvis, the only character in the Marvel Cinematic Universe to originate on television, in "Agent Carter," and move to the big screen, in "Avengers: Endgame"). Having gotten his feet wet, one hopes he'll wade in deeper in his next excursion.

"Made in Italy" is rated R for brief strong language. Running time: 94 minutes.

Foxx leads high-octane thriller 'Project Power'

By Ed Symkus
For The Patriot Ledger (Quincy, Mass.)

You don't have to wait very long for things to get cooking in "Project Power," an engaging thriller from "Nerve" directors Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman. The movie is about an illicit drug that can bring out the innate superpower in each of us ... and how easy it would be to use that drug or those powers for all the wrong purposes.

It starts with a late-night business meeting in New Orleans, presided over by a slick fellow talking to a group of young "entrepreneurs" who will distribute a new product, which he calls Power. Then he holds up a small glowing vial.

Six weeks later, it's being distributed on dark streets, and it's a hit — an expensive one: A $500 pill will unleash the power within you for five minutes. Every pill is the same, but everyone's power is different, and you won't know what it is till you pop that pill. You could become really fast or really strong. You could become invisible. You could — watch out! — burst into flames.

An undercover cop named Frank (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) is on the streets, trying to halt sales of the drug. A young girl named Robin (Dominique Fishback) is pushing it to make some cash, but also has a working relationship with Frank. A mysterious fellow who calls himself The Major (Jamie Foxx) is on a mission to find the source of the drug, but doesn't let on why.

It takes a while, but with a setup like that in the script, it's not going to surprise anybody that these three folks are somehow going to come together. Frank will do so with a streak of severity as well as a twinkle in his eye. The Major will go about it with an air of grim determination. Robin may appear to be in over her head, but there's every reason to believe that she'll work things out. There will be others around this trio of protagonists, some of them helping, most of them getting in the way.

Case in point is when the film cuts to an armed robbery in progress, where Frank shows up to discover that there are already plenty of cops there, but they've been ordered to stand down. So, he takes things into his own hands, by swallowing one of those pills.

The first question viewers will have: What's Frank's special power? A more important one: What's the power of the criminal he's going after, who has also downed a pill? Neither will be revealed here, but the answers result in some crazy visual moments on the screen.

Then, after five minutes, everyone returns to normal. But all the while, the plot is thickening. The Major believes he's closing in on a source. Frank's police captain boss (Courtney B. Vance) demands Frank's gun and badge when he finds that Frank has been using the pills on duty — even though it helped him get his man. Nameless men in dark suits are responsible for keeping cops away from criminals. Robin is proving to be more perceptive to what's happening around her than anyone gave her credit for.

OK, so, the good guys are being hindered by the men in suits, the bad guys are building up forces of more bad guys — one of whom is "connected to every cartel in South America" — and word has gone out that whoever controls this drug can topple governments.

That makes up part of the film's serious side. But what makes it a lot of fun is that it features some really appealing characters. Frank is using whatever methods are necessary to do his job (and his power is certainly an interesting one); in due time the Major makes it clear that his desperation to get to the center of things is for a very good reason; Robin is a young girl who's growing up very quickly, and is enjoying the process. There's also a plentiful supply of humor, some of it used to buffer the mystery of those men in suits. And screenwriter Mattson Tomlin also wisely provides moments where characters get to just talk with each other about life's challenges.

NETFLIX/AP

An ex-soldier (Jamie Foxx, right), a teen (Dominique Fishback) and a cop (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) collide in New Orleans as they hunt for the source behind a dangerous new pill that grants users temporary superpowers in "Project Power."

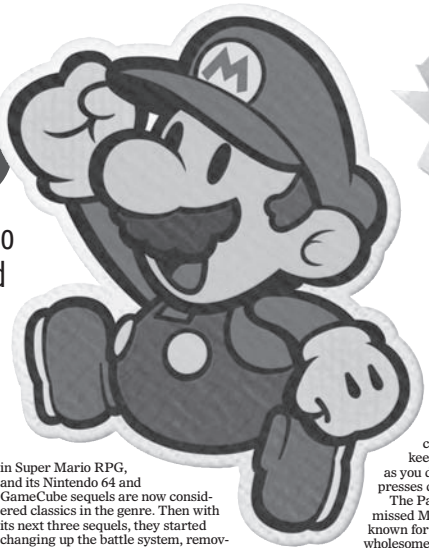
On top of all of that, along with the requisite explosive climax, there are even a couple of funny verbal nods to Clint Eastwood, courtesy of Gordon-Levitt. Now, that's a bonus.

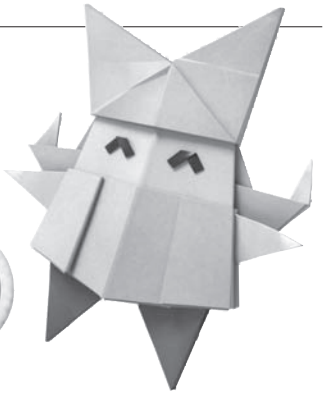
"Project Power" is rated R for violence, bloody images, drug content and some language. Running time: 111 minutes.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Let the fun UNFOLD

With Origami King, Paper Mario series leaves RPG fans behind





BY GENE PARK
The Washington Post

Let's get this out of the way first. The latest Paper Mario isn't a role-playing game. It's a puzzle adventure game.

It's not a game where you gain experience points and gather loot for new gear. It doesn't resemble Final Fantasy. It's a Toad joke book.

Seriously, the best part of Paper Mario: The Origami King for Nintendo Switch is finding hundreds of mushroom-headed Toad folk around the map. Once you unearth them, they're always ready with a quip or pun about their current situation or the immediate environment, or just a fun non sequitur dreamed up by the talented English translators at Nintendo.

The worst part? Well it really depends on whether you wanted a Mario RPG adventure. If you did, that's the worst part, and old-school Paper Mario fans are begrudgingly used to it. I am one of them.

Mario has a long role-playing history. It started with the seminal Super Nintendo release Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars, made by Final Fantasy designers back in 1996. It was one of the first times those developers experimented with traditional role-playing battle mechanics. It was focused on more engaged action (with timed button presses) and an easier difficulty to ease in players new to the genre.

Super Mario RPG never returned. Instead, it turned into the Paper Mario series by Nintendo studio Intelligent Systems. It was modeled off the traditional foundations in Super Mario RPG, and its Nintendo 64 and GameCube sequels are now considered classics in the genre. Then with its next three sequels, they started changing up the battle system, removing experience points and levels, and messing with form. This departure is intentional, Nintendo told Video Games Chronicle in a recent interview. The idea, as with almost all of Nintendo's titles, is to introduce the series to new audiences.

So in 2020 we have The Origami King. Its newest battle innovation comes in the form of a spinning board. Each battle has you trying to align enemies in a straight line or grouped together to attack with a stomp or a hammer. That's as far as the regular battles go for the entire game. There's no leveling system or improving anything besides learning a few of the similar "spin" combinations to always ensure a win. Every enemy encounter pulls you out of the story and drops you into an arena that looks like a mix between a board game and a roulette wheel.

The only real metric for success is the amount of coins you have, which can go toward better shoes or hammers (that eventually break), or to help you win fights faster. Coins flow in this game like they did in Luigi's Mansion 3 or New Super Mario Bros. 2. There's a ton of money, and little use for it.

I can appreciate what this game is doing. Every fight feels like a little brain teaser in between the set pieces for the joke-per-minute comedy. It's always engaging. You're always keeping an eye on enemy placement, and just as you did in the Super Nintendo era, timing button presses during your attacks for higher damage.

The Paper Mario games (as well as the very-much-missed Mario and Luigi RPG series) were always known for incredibly earnest humor, told with wide-eyed wholesomeness. Olivia, the sister of the Origami King antagonist, embodies this spirit. She's your spirit guide through the adventure, and a player surrogate, commenting on every strange little nuance of Paper Mario's two-dimensional existence.

The aforementioned hidden Toad people aren't the only ones that will give you the giggles. Everyone plays off Mario's trademark silence, and Luigi plays the more competent yet hapless brother. There's even a Koopa cult, all capitalized on by an entrepreneurial Toad charging them to worship a false idol. Bowser, Mario's archnemesis, is always a delight once the roles are reversed and he becomes the forlorn victim.

And the Paper universe has never looked better. While Nintendo isn't as interested in snazzy graphics as other console makers, its developers have a keen eye for detail. The paper materials, from Mario to the creepy origami enemies, have raised textures, giving them a handcrafted feel. You might want to push through just to explore the larger worlds — navigating between islands and across a purple-hazed desert in vehicles.

I say might, because Paper Mario: The Origami King didn't motivate me. Despite the delights in between battles, like many other reviewers, I opted to try to skip every single one I could. They're hard to avoid too, and many fights might just pop out of nowhere, resembling the "random battle" systems of older RPG titles.

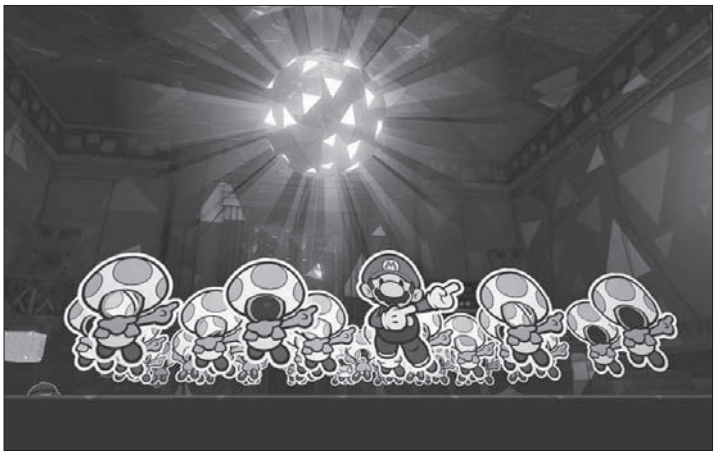
If I'm trying to purposefully avoid engaging in a game's central mechanic, that's a sign that something failed. For me, the small clicks in my brain every time I finished a spinning puzzle just weren't enough to feel rewarding or pleasurable. Combat felt like a chore.

This is especially evident when Mario has to fight papier-mache enemies in real time, attacking with the hammer in the in-universe game world. In contrast with the rest of the game, these fights are a small taste of the real-time action of Super Paper Mario. In these moments, I stay immersed in the pretty world, rather than being pulled onto a board game arena every few seconds.

Your mileage may vary. The game can be very relaxing, and for you, that relaxation might not morph into monotony like it did for me. I highly recommend watching YouTube videos of the gameplay. See if it clicks for you, because the story, as usual, is probably worth exploring.

In the meantime, people looking for a role-playing experience, like myself, will have to follow a different paper trail.

Platform: Nintendo Switch
Online: papermario.nintendo.com



Paper Mario: The Origami King delivers a comedy-filled journey packed with puzzles, strategic ring-based battles, quirky characters and stunning visuals.

Nintendo photos

PHOTOS BY NANCY MONTGOMERY/Stars and Stripes

Local painter Francesco Maffei in 1655 painted this highly symbolic work of one of the city's podestas, or chief magistrates, during Vicenza's golden age and it is part of a new exhibition at Palazzo Chiericati in Vicenza. The female figures represent faith, virtue and abundance. The cherub represents Vicenza.

Chatty paintings at the Chiericati

Reopened Vicenza museum's works tell stories of local history, citizens

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

Every picture tells a story, and in Vicenza's civic museum, they're not all pretty. Little girls are fated to an arranged marriage or the nunnery. A young man is shot with arrows then clubbed to death. Another is turned into a stag and killed by his own hounds.

But there's sweetness, too, in the Palazzo Chiericati's current collection of paintings, which explores the history of art, the city and its local artists through the medieval and early modern centuries.

The holy family looks happy when they're young. And if you've ever considered what the ideal guardian angel might be like, look no further than "The Guardian Angel," painted in 1629. He's your big, handsome best friend and he's probably taking you to a baseball game.

It had been more than a year since I visited the museum, which was then exhibiting 18th-century Venetian art and a huge collection of tiny tin soldiers. It closed for months during the coronavirus lockdown and reopened with paintings and new rules in place. No more than 40 people can enter the huge palazzo at the same time. The hot summer day I went, I encountered only four other people in the cool, quiet galleries, not including the guards, who strictly enforce the mask mandate. A temperature check is also mandatory.

In the current exhibition, alongside the museum's more famous works by Tiepolo, Piazzetta, Ricci and Pittoni, are those by local painters such as Francesco Maffei, who was born in Vicenza and died of the plague in Padova in 1660.

One gallery is dedicated to paintings celebrating Vicenza's various podestas, or chief magistrates, during the city's golden century of "maximum splendor," according to the museum, which provides English translations for all its explanatory signs.

The golden era began after Vicenza was annexed to the Venetian Republic in 1404, the signs say, providing security and wealth and art leading to the glories of Palladio's grand buildings, such as the palazzo itself, built beginning in 1550.

The paintings are also chatty if you understand the language. Podesta Alvise Fosarini, in a 1655 painting by Maffei, is sharing the space with not just any young women but with Faith, Obedience, Virtue and Abundance.

When you've had your fill of religious, mythological and civic notables of centuries past, you can head up to the attic and to the swinging '60s. That's where the collection of international jetsetter, art patron and Vicenza native Giuseppe Roi's books, engravings and sketches by the likes of Picasso and John Singer Sargent is housed. A marquis, Roi palled around with people like Princess Margaret and Anthony Snowden, and there are photos to prove it.

montgomery.nancy@stripes.com
Twitter:@montgomerynance

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Palazzo Chiericati, Piazza Giacomo Matteotti, 37/39, 36100 Vicenza

TIMES

10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Sundays through Saturdays; closed Mondays

COSTS

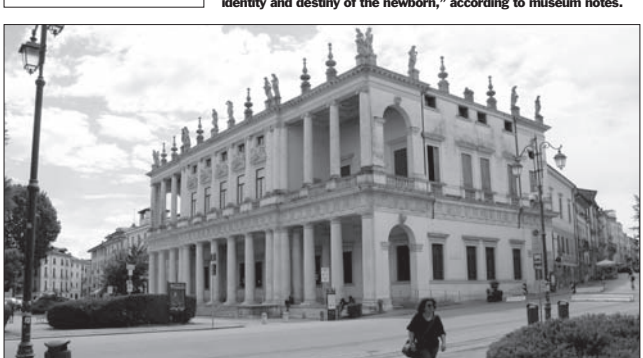
Museum entry is 7 euros for adults, 5 euros for children older than 6. Free with military ID the first Sunday of the month.

INFORMATION

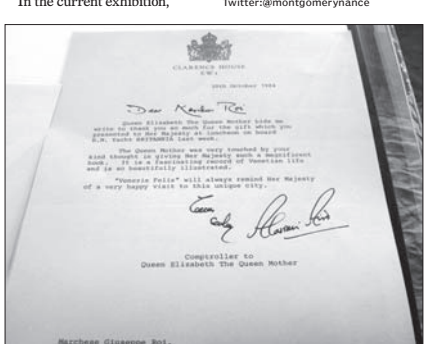
Phone: +39 0444222811
Website: museicivicivicenza.it/en/mcp/index.php

— Nancy Montgomery

Prospero Fontana is thought to have painted this image of Mary and a merry baby Jesus on display at the Palazzo Chiericati in Vicenza in about 1539. The older gentleman is Joseph while the older lady is Saint Elizabeth, mother of a very young John the Baptist. "Only Saint John, with his hands joined, kneeling in adoration, is aware of the identity and destiny of the newborn," according to museum notes.



The Palazzo Chiericati serves as Vicenza's municipal art museum, with several floors of paintings and sculptures from the early Middle Ages to the Baroque period. The palazzo was designed by Andreas Palladio, the famous Renaissance architect and its construction began in 1550.



CLARENCE HOUSE
S.W.1.

Dear Marchese Roi

Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother bids me write to thank you so much for the gift which you presented to Her Majesty at luncheon on board H.M. Yacht BRITANNIA last week.

The Queen Mother was very touched by your kind thought in giving Her Majesty such a magnificent book. It is a fascinating record of Venetian life and is so beautifully illustrated.

"Venezia Felix" will always remind Her Majesty of a very happy visit to this unique city.

Yours ever

Comptroller to
Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

Marchese Giuseppe Roi.

The Palazzo Chiericati in Vicenza on its top floor houses the donated books, engravings and sketches of Giuseppe Roi, a wealthy Vicenzan and art patron. Included in the collection is this 1984 note from the Queen Mother Elizabeth, thanking Roi for a book.

Nimes a treasure of ancient Roman relics

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

Most travelers to southern France's Provence region will visit Arles and Avignon, but ignore nearby Nimes. While those two towns have name recognition and greater touristic appeal, Nimes (pronounced "neem") feels richer and more authentic. A visit to this thriving town rewards you with impressive Roman monuments and peaceful, pedestrian-polished streets that feel like a secret between its well-heeled residents.

Born a Celtic city around 500 B.C., Nimes joined the Roman Empire in the first century B.C. Emperor Augustus made it a regional capital whose importance merited fine architecture, one of the longest protective walls in the Roman world and a 30-mile-long aqueduct to bring water to its growing population.

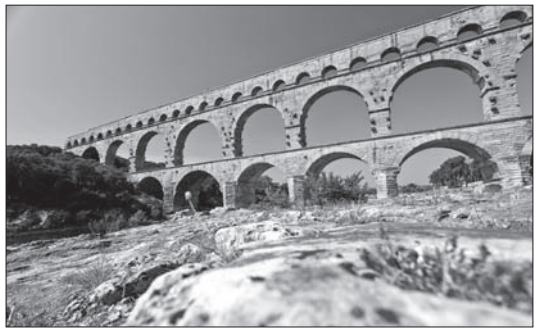
The core of Roman Nimes was a temple called Maison Carree ("Square House," named before they had a word for rectangle). The temple rivals Rome's Pantheon as the most complete and splendid building that survives from the Roman Empire. Maison Carree survived in part because it's been in constant use for the past thousand years — from a temple to a church, to a city hall, to a people's art gallery after the Revolution, and finally as the monument travelers see today.

Nimes also had an impressive amphitheater for entertaining residents. Today, this arena — one of the best-preserved of the Roman world — is a superb example of Roman engineering, with its perfectly symmetrical oval shape, seating for 24,000 spectators, 60 passageways to prevent bottlenecks, and system of underground rooms and a lift used to hoist animals up to the floor for gladiator games. Touring the place provides an interesting history lesson, and climbing to the top offers the rare opportunity to enjoy city views from the nosebleed seats of a Roman arena.

Rick Steves

Facing the arena is the Roman World Museum (Musee de la Romanite), with its high-tech interactive stations that help show off 5,000 artifacts from Roman Nimes (plus a few from pre-Roman and medieval times). A highlight is its rich collection of Latin-inscribed stones and mosaics — some of which were discovered when digging the garage for the site.

As one of ancient Europe's privileged cities, Nimes needed a reliable water supply. So in about 19 B.C., the Romans built a 30-mile-long aqueduct. While most of the aqueduct is on or below ground, one stretch is especially impressive: the Pont du Gard. About 30 minutes northeast of Nimes, this bridge stretches over the Gardon River and is one of the most remarkable surviving Roman ruins anywhere.



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI/Ricksteves.com

The magnificent Pont du Gard aqueduct was built around 19 B.C. to provide a reliable water supply to the city of Nimes, which was then part of the Roman Empire.

Throughout the ancient world, aqueducts heralded the greatness of Rome. Each time I visit, I'm impressed anew by the skill of ancient Roman engineers. This structure, built with perfectly cut stones fitted together without mortar, was designed to slope ever so slightly — less than an inch every hundred yards — to let water flow effortlessly into Nimes.

Exhibits at the Pont du Gard museum show the immensity of the undertaking. Summers are a great time to visit, as you can enjoy a picnic by the water, swim or canoe in the river and stay into the evening, when a light show is projected on the monument.

While Nimes is most notable for its Roman sights, the city offers other things to enjoy, such as the carefully preserved old center and thriving market hall.

Another fine activity is strolling the Jardin de la Fontaine, a lavish park filled with Baroque sculptures and an ornate network of canals and paths. Finished just 50 years after the construction of Versailles, the Jardin de la Fontaine has special significance to the French, as these were the first grand gardens not meant for a king, but for the public.

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.

Continent's cabbage creations exalt the humble vegetable

Staple foods might not be particularly glamorous, but they are the fuel that keep us going. And one veg that's been powering European endeavors for millennia is the humble cabbage. Easy to grow even in cooler climates, packed with vitamins and minerals, rich in fiber and highly versatile, its appearance in cuisine through the ages and throughout the continent is hardly surprising. It is known that early, non-headed varieties were domesticated by the Celts of central and Eastern Europe. The ancient Greeks and Romans wrote about cabbage in their texts and touted its medicinal properties.

Karen Bradbury

Tourist itineraries based on good eating are nothing new, and nowadays, there's an understanding that sampling foods from street stalls, everyday cafes and even student canteens is just as valid a part of the travel experience as dining in the finest of establishments. An exploration of Europe based on everyday meals that incorporate cabbage, whether pickled, stewed, steamed or sauteed, could keep a traveler occupied for months. Here we serve up five simple but delicious dishes starring the ever-tasty cabbage to tempt your palate.

Bubble and Squeak: This oh-so-British dish of potatoes, cabbage and other veg is commonly eaten for breakfast. Typically made out of the leftovers from a Sunday roast dinner, the dish takes its name from the sounds it makes during the frying process, not those your body makes post-consumption.

Although it should be available at most greasy-spoon cafes worth their salt, Taste Atlas recommends trying it at Maria's Market Cafe, a traditional cafe at London's Borough Market. Owner and manager Maria Moruzzi's hearty breakfasts and strong tea are particularly soothing to those who've overindulged the night before. Find her at The Market Porter, 9 Stoney St, London SE1 9AA. Online: tinyurl.com/y6nq85xc

Wirsing: Savoy cabbage is a specialty of Upper Franconia, in the German state of Bavaria. Head to beer-mad Bamberg and its environs to experience the pointy-headed Spitzwirsing variety, revered for its tenderness of leaf and slightly spicy aroma. Here, it's traditionally prepared in a thick roux, lending it an almost porridge-like consistency. Roast pork or goose are traditional main dishes served alongside this tasty side.

iStock

Bigos, Poland's version of hunter's stew, combines chopped meats, sauerkraut and shredded cabbage.

Many of Bamberg's legendary brew-restaurants serve their own variations of Wirsing, but a solid option would always be the more than 475-year-old Brauereigaststaette Spezial, whose delights include the city's trademark smoke beer. For a taste of a true Franconian classic, opt for a Schweineschaufela, or roasted pork shoulder, served alongside potato dumplings and savoy cabbage. The restaurant is located at Obere Koenigstrasse 10, 96052 Bamberg, Germany. Online: brauereispezial.de

Bigos: This hearty stew of Poland, translated to hunter's stew in English, is a mix of chopped meats, sauerkraut and shredded fresh cabbage. Virtually any kind of meat or cold cuts from chicken to kiełbasa may be used in its preparation, and the more types of meats in a single batch, the better. Other ingredients widely used in the preparation of Bigos include onion and dried mushrooms, and its spice profile contains allspice, juniper berries, mustard seeds, nutmeg and thyme. Its rustic image is enhanced when it's served from a bowl of hollowed-out bread. For an added touch of authenticity, pair it with a glass of chilled Zubrowka, bison grass-flavored vodka.

Frommer's travel guides suggest sampling this authentic dish at one of the three Krakow locations of Chlopskie Jadlo. This chain restaurant specializing in Polish peasant cuisine, known for its rustic decor, generous portions and reasonable prices, is popular with locals and tourists. Three branches of this restaurant can be found in Warsaw, too. Online: chlopskiejadlo.pl

Choucroute garni: Informally referred to as the national dish of the French region of Alsace, the cabbage here is a first cousin to German sauerkraut. This fermented cabbage cooked in wine and seasoned with peppercorns, juniper berries and caraway is served piping hot alongside boiled potatoes and various meats. And don't forget the mustard! One traditional recipe calls for the incorporation of three varieties of sausage: the Morteau, Strasbourg and Frankfurt. The dish goes down well in winter, and scarfing a portion before it grows cold is a tasty topper to a visit to a Christmas market.

For a hearty meal and half-timbered charm, make way to the Maison des Tanneurs in Strasbourg. Where tanners once labored over their stinky trade, the tantalizing scent of choucroute now fills the air. This traditional restaurant on the banks of the river serves choucroute alongside sausages, guineau fowl or fish. Online: maison-des-tanneurs.com

Golubtsi: These stuffed cabbage rolls stuffed with a mixture of minced beef, pork and rice are a beloved treat in several countries, including Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and beyond. Their name, which translates to little pigeons, reflects the dish's migration from French haute cuisine to a true people's dish. The main difference across regions is the type of sauce in which they're served. Sour cream and tomato are popular variations. Buckwheat groats or millet may also stand in for the rice.

Let someone else do the cooking

Tuck in for the rare treat of a hearty breakfast at ZeitLos in Rodenbach

By Jennifer H. Svan
Stars and Stripes

ZeitLos cafe and bistro in the small village of Rodenbach near Ramstein Air Base may very well be the "perfect little hideaway," to quote a phrase from one of the restaurant's Facebook reviews.

The cafe is tucked away in a cozy stone courtyard with a working fountain next to a pharmacy, just off the village's main street. If you know where the Italian pizza and gelato shop is, the cafe is only a few steps away across the street.

Another bonus: The restaurant serves breakfast, a rarity in these parts if you're looking for something other than fast food or doughy bakery shop staples.

I enjoyed sitting in the shade under a wide umbrella in the morning, excited by the prospect of eating breakfast cooked by someone else.

The omelet I ordered with tomatoes, cheese and bell peppers did not disappoint. Though I would have preferred the bell pepper cooked more, the omelet was hearty with just the right amount of cheese. The large roll that accompanied it was fresh and soft, made even better with a slathering of butter.

The other omelet choice was ham and cheese. Other breakfast options were the typical German smorgasbord of a meat and cheese platter, served with bread and a hardboiled egg.

AFTER HOURS GERMANY

For those with a sweet tooth, the cafe has a rotating selection of cakes. I chose a slice with coconut cream and chocolate topping over the cheesecake and mandarin cream cakes.

The only disappointment was the cappuccino, which didn't live up to the rich coffee drinks I recently enjoyed in the Netherlands. Perhaps a regular cup of coffee would have been just fine.

Lunch options vary weekly. During the week I was there, they included a salad with turkey; an omelet with vegetables and a salad; a sausage salad with bread; and cream schnitzel with French fries, among other choices. The special for dessert that week was vanilla ice cream with raspberries. Previous specials have included cheese spaetzle and flammkuchen. The weekly specials are posted on the cafe's Facebook page.

Paninis and snacks such as a soft pretzel with butter are regular, non-breakfast menu items.

The cafe also has some indoor seating. Service seems to be friendly and quick. The cafe also welcomes pets.

svan.jennifer@stripes.com
Twitter: @stripesktown

ZEITLOS

Location: Fuchsstrasse 1, 67688 Rodenbach
Hours: Tuesday to Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; on Sundays, the restaurant opens at 2 p.m. for cake and coffee after group events; closed Monday and Saturday. Reservations not required.
Dress: Casual
English menu: No, just German
Prices: Different lunch specials every week; breakfast served from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Breakfast and most lunch entrees under 10 euros per person.
Information: Phone: (+49) (0) 6374 92 80 914; web: facebook.com/ZeitLos-Rodenbach

— Jennifer H. Svan

Clockwise from top: Omelets are a hearty breakfast choice at ZeitLos Cafe and Bistro in Rodenbach, Germany.

The restaurant offers breakfast, lunch, coffee drinks and a variety of homemade cakes.

Outdoor seating is in a cozy courtyard away from the village's main street. Umbrellas over the tables provide ample shade from the sun.

This coconut cream cake with chocolate topping is one example of the various selections of homemade cakes.

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Draguignan days

There's more to this city in Provence than the American military cemetery

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

The Tour de l'Horloge, Draguignan's medieval clock tower, sits on top of a hill in a pleasant park in the Var department of southern France.

BY MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes

The town of Draguignan in southeastern France is a little off the beaten track.

While it is in the Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region — think St. Tropez and other popular Riviera destinations — hordes of tourists don't make their way there.

What brings most Americans to Draguignan is the Rhone American Cemetery, the final resting place for 861 service members, most of whom lost their lives in Operation Dragoon, the 1944 invasion of southern France.

The cemetery is a peaceful spot of green covered with rows and rows of Latin crosses and Stars of David, marking the graves. Like other cemeteries administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission, it features a chapel, a Wall of the Missing with the names of 294 service members who were not found engraved on it, and a map of military operations that took place in the town.

A giant angel of peace holding a small boy adorns the facade of the chapel, overlooking the neat rows of graves.

The cemetery and last year's 75th anniversary of the World War II operation were what brought me to Draguignan, but being there for a couple of days, I seized the opportunity to explore the rest of the town with its distinct Provencal feel — blue skies, warm weather, olive trees, old stone buildings and, of course, nearby vineyards.

Strolling through the old town, with its warren of pedestrian lanes lined with shops, bars and cafes, I stumbled across the colorful Rue de Trans, where around 90 residents painted the pavement in 2018.

From there, I followed signs and headed for the Tour de l'Horloge, Draguignan's old clock tower. It sits in a peaceful park among the olive trees, at the top of a hill, offering a good view of the town below. The Saint-Sauveur chapel, built in the 12th and 13th centuries, is nearby.

The next day, I headed out to see something much older than the chapel or the clock tower, which was rebuilt in the 1660s.

One of the largest megalithic tombs in Provence, the Pierre de la Fee dolmen, or single-chamber tomb hewn out of local sandstone, sits on the outskirts of town. It dates back to about 2,500 B.C.

The walk to the dolmen didn't look far on paper, and although I had water, I wilted in the Provencal sun before I found the ancient edifice. The Pierre de la Fee consists of three supporting stones, on top of which there's a ceiling slab that's said to weigh about 20 tons.

As hot as I was, it was worth the walk. How often do you stand face to face with something that old, that's such a feat of engineering?

While Draguignan doesn't have a lot of other tourist attractions, there is also the Municipal Art and History Museum (newly reopened after renovations) and an artillery museum.

Worth mentioning also — because of the shade — is the Jardin Angles, a leafy park on the edge of the old town.

But one of the nicest things about Draguignan is that you can end your day there with a nice glass of wine and a delicious French meal.

abrams.mike@stripes.com
Twitter: @stripes_photog

Old colorful buildings found throughout Draguignan add to the town's charm.

Around 90 Draguignan residents painted the Rue de Trans, shown in 2018.

A visitor pays respect to some of the 861 troops interred at the Rhone American Cemetery.

IF YOU GO

DIRECTIONS

Draguignan is in southeastern France, north of the Riviera off the A8 autoroute. From Germany, head toward Lyon, then Marseille, and then take the A8 toward Nice, exiting at Le Muy. From Italy, head to Genoa, then take E80 to the French border and the A8 to Le Muy.

There are signs in Draguignan for the Rhone American Cemetery. Its GPS coordinates are N43 32.1683 E6 28.3783

FOOD

There are plenty of restaurants in Draguignan, covering all price ranges. It is a good place to try French, and especially Provencal, cuisine. Two places I liked were Les 1000 Colonnes on the Place aux Herbes and La Table de Martine on the Place du Marche.

INFORMATION

For info on the cemetery, go to www.abmc.gov. The town's website (in French only) is ville-draguignan.fr, but it has very little tourist information.

— Michael Abrams

More images of Draguignan — from an ancient megalithic tomb to quirky murals to a cat — are online at **stripes.com/go/draguignan**

When the road calls

Vacation-ready families are teaming up, traveling in pods

By Danielle Braff
Special to The Washington Post

Roshni Ricchetti's family of five was going stir-crazy inside their River Forest, Ill., home, where they had sheltered in place since March.

They were ready for a vacation, and the children were desperate to socialize. So the Ricchettis found another family that had similarly-aged children who were interested in renting a home together on Lake Michigan.

"We had been friends with them, but honestly we weren't super close beforehand," Ricchetti said. "We just figured we got along, shared a similar risk tolerance for COVID, and our kids would get along."

Forget intergenerational travel or big family reunions this summer. Because of the pandemic, families are traveling with their pods: the same people they've chosen to isolate with for the past few months. Don't have a pod? Many families — such as the Ricchettis — are forming them specifically for travel.

This was the case for the Wells family, who live and work full-time in their RV.

"We were in isolation and going stir-crazy," said Rebekah Wells, who posts about her travels on Instagram. During the quarantine she met other RV residents through Xscapers, a group for working-age RVers. She and her husband formed a "quaranteam" with three other couples in their 30s and 40s whom she now describes as her "family."

They've traveled together in their own RVs, staying in Arizona, Idaho, Utah and Wyoming. The members of her quaranteam were all in isolation for several weeks before they began traveling together, so they didn't feel the need to get tested. They also camp far from other people, so they were pretty isolated ... within their pod.

"We believe this is one of the safest ways to travel and to get to experience the outdoors, while still being connected to a community of friends," said Wells, who is in West Glacier, Mont.

While travel pods are fashionable in theory, they aren't widespread, said Alex Miller, founder and chief executive of Upgraded Points, a travel site that provides analysis, data, reviews and guides to travelers. That's because it's difficult to make a travel pod work.

"The premise involves only traveling with people you've quarantined with, but, by this point, most people have broken a stay-at-home quarantine, and have interacted with other people in some fashion," Miller said. "The concept sounds great on paper, but there's a number of areas where you'd interact with others and the general public, making the pod concept not as sterile as one would think it would be."

> **'We were in isolation and going stir-crazy.'**
> Rebekah Wells

Ideally, Miller said, those forming travel pods would have been strictly quarantining with those in their pod, and they would head to a home rental for their travel pod vacation, followed by camping and RVs, in that order. The challenge with RVs is that because they're constantly on the go, there's the potential for a lot of interaction with fuel stations, grocery stores, etc.

"By renting a home, it's one of the least exposed options, since you can essentially make one trip to stock up and last for however long a supply you buy," Miller said.

Also key is deciding whom you'll travel with, and ensuring that everyone quarantines on their own for the two weeks leading up to the trip to prevent anyone from spreading the virus. Getting tested is certainly a worthwhile item on the checklist as well, Miller said.

The fewer people in the vacation pod, the better, said Zoe McLaren, a health policy researcher at the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland. Make sure the people you choose have already been observing similar social distancing rules, as habits are hard to change.

"If families are adopting new behaviors just for the vacation, they may be less likely to be able to follow them," McLaren said. Every additional person adds risk and increases the amount of communication needed to set guidelines for the pod — and if one person in the vacation pod becomes infected, the virus could spread to all the pod members easily.

Roshni Ricchetti

Members of the Ricchetti family pose with friends in front of the Joy of Music statue in Holland, Mich.

Communication is important because everyone's risk level and outside engagement can change, McLaren said. For example, if a 14-day quarantine was planned but someone accidentally had close contact with someone else during that period, then the vacation pod may need to be canceled or may need to take further precautions such as using masks, she said.

Planning is key: Everyone has a different comfort level of how much interaction they will want, so it's best to poll all group members and go with the most conservative — that is, the most isolated or sanitary — so everyone feels protected, Miller said.

Valerie Smith, a senior manager of software engineering, followed those rules when forming her travel pod. She selected a family of three to join her family because they were practicing a similar level of social distancing. They all wear masks and order groceries online, and have not had contact with many people.

Two weeks before the beach trip they planned, Smith said, they ceased contact with everyone else to be extra safe. They chose to vacation at the Outer Banks in North Carolina, where it's easy to maintain distance. People can remain 50 feet away from others at all times if they want, Smith said.

"My advice would be to make sure everyone is on the same page with respect to expectations and level of risk," Smith said. "As long as that's in place, it's smooth sailing."

Until the vacation ends, at least. When they returned home, the Ricchetti family extended their pod behavior and allowed their children to continue to be bubbled together, following the same quarantine rules.

But because the kids are in different school grades, their bubble will end once school starts.

"We are trying to plan one more last-hurrah August trip before then, though," Ricchetti said.

Cruising toward a strange new era

Industry changes likely to include delays, no buffets

BY BRAD JAPHE
Special to The Washington Post

iStock

Once upon a time the American cruise industry was projected to rake in $31.5 billion worth of revenue in 2020 — more than double what it netted a decade ago. Indeed, the period between 2010 and 2019 must have felt like a fairy tale for commercial seafaring: an era of unprecedented growth. Then came the pandemic.

On March 14, the CDC issued its first industry-wide no-sail order. It barred any new passengers from boarding ships in U.S. waters and has since been extended through the end of September. If you've made any maritime plans immediately thereafter, prepare to chart a new course. It will almost certainly be further prolonged. The cruise industry itself has canceled U.S. cruises past the order's date, until at least Oct. 31.

Yet at some point in the future, cruising will probably become popular again — even if it won't exist exactly as travelers remember. Like so many other aspects of life, it will fall under that ominous umbrella of "the new normal."

Here's how to navigate the uncertain waters ahead, with insight from the experts.

Embarkation tests, delays

Lines reopening throughout Europe are providing some indication to new protocols. Later this month, MSC Cruises is planning a limited restart of its Mediterranean itineraries. In a recent news conference, chief executive Gianni Onorato detailed a staggered approach to passenger boarding.

"We have equipped all the cruise terminals where there is embarkation of guests with medical stations," he says. "Guests will be swab-tested through these medical stations. Once they've completed the swab, they can proceed for check-in."

The entire process could take up to 90 minutes as passengers wait to receive results. Though, as testing capabilities become more advanced, there is hope the delay could be reduced by the time the American no-sail order is lifted.

Nonetheless, you'll have to allow significantly more time for embarkation — even as most ships probably will be capping their manifest to 70% of capacity. Social distancing guidelines will elongate queues, as will mandatory temperature checks along the way.

"Cruise lines already have a health questionnaire that all guests fill out prior to boarding," explains Colleen McDaniel, editor in chief of Cruise Critic, the top-trafficked review site for the industry. "But it's safe to assume that process will be far more extensive than we've seen in the past."

Travelers can also expect to be equipped with an electronic wristband. This is nothing new for regulars, as the gadget has been widely used in the industry for years to enable room entry and facilitate on-board purchases. Now it will be retrofitted to serve the vital function of contact tracing in the event of an infection.

No buffets, more entertainment

The days of self-service dining are over, at least for now. In its place, a contactless commissary empowered by smartphone technology. QR codes on tables can be scanned to pull up digital du jour menus on a personal device, according to McDaniel. You will make your selections and savor your meal in a room that is kept well below capacity, as will be standard operating procedure in all communal gathering spaces. Mask usage will probably be enforced in most indoor environments, except within your cabin and while you are eating or drinking.

And when you're in the mood for a show, expect more options on offer throughout the day. Costa Cruises, an Italian brand owned by Carnival Corp., issued a press statement outlining its path back to sea. In it are details for modified entertainment programming "to allow more shows during the day for smaller groups of people."

Tightly controlled tours

Traditionally, whenever a cruise liner comes to shore along its journey, it's an open invitation for tourists to freely explore the port of call. But you can now anticipate such excursions to be far more restrictive and regimented.

MSC, for its part, is tightly controlling these tours. They're allowing tours only in designated groups, face masks mandated, led by local guides in full personal protective equipment. Independent sightseeing will be strictly forbidden, mitigating the risk of disease transmission between ship and shore.

Still, despite the physical constraints, the jaunt won't feel too foreign to travelers at this point.

"Many of the policies and protocols we're [already used to] seeing will be implemented onboard and ashore," McDaniel says. "Things like social distancing, occupancy limits, increased sanitizing, etc."

Nevertheless, undeterred fans

Even given the inherent risks, and the unsettling headlines, the most recent survey of Cruise Critic readers — conducted during the last week of July and the first five days of August — reveals that 73% are willing to book a future cruise. Nearly a third of them are actively looking. Joan Blum is one of them. Over the past eight years, she and her husband have reached 43 countries by ship.

"Planning cruise trips is a great joy in my life," she admits, undeterred by the harrowing circumstances of their last journey. Aboard the ill-fated MS Zaandam, they ended up quarantined off the coast of Florida. "The cruise line did a wonderful job in taking care of their passengers under extremely difficult conditions. There were many very sick passengers and crew." Ultimately four passengers died of the disease. It fueled nightmarish international headlines.

But rather than reconsidering cruise vacations altogether, Blum is merely shifting how she cruises, eschewing the open ocean in favor of river rides. She has one in the works with Viking River Cruise next September through the French countryside. "The ships are small — approximately 100 passengers — and sailing on a river is comforting, being you can always see land and villages along the shore," she points out. "I really don't know what the cruise lines are going to do in the future, but I think they might have to reconsider 'Bigger, bigger and even bigger!' That is just not going to work."

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Tips for packing during the pandemic

Coronavirus precautions add new rules, considerations to flight preparation

By Natalie B. Compton
The Washington Post

Before the pandemic, packing for a flight had a lot to do with your travel style and destination. A carry-on bag for a beach vacation might include a sun hat and a beach read. You could count on business travelers to wear noise-canceling headphones and pull out laptops right after takeoff.

Now, packing considerations should start with coronavirus precautions.

With the number of coronavirus cases continuing to climb, public health experts and the State Department are discouraging nonessential travel.

"I would really encourage people to think about whether or not they need to be flying right now," says Brian Garibaldi, medical director of the Johns Hopkins Biocontainment Unit. "There are very few states in the country right now where infections are low enough that I feel comfortable getting on a plane."

But Americans are on the move. The number of people passing through airport security checkpoints has been rising steadily since April, and the Transportation Security Administration reported daily figures exceeding 700,000 many times throughout July.

If you are traveling in the near future, here are some things to keep in mind while you pack.

Opt for carrying on a bag

Health experts recommend using carry-on luggage instead of checking a bag during the pandemic.

Garibaldi says risks are highest for contracting or spreading the coronavirus when you're in enclosed spaces with other people. One perk of carrying on a bag is that you can avoid lingering around a potentially crowded luggage carousel when you land.

"If you have your bag with you, you're going to minimize the amount of time you have to spend waiting for your bag on the other end," he said.

Norman Beatty, assistant professor of medicine in the University of Florida division of infectious disease and global medicine, says a traveler's decision should be made based on whether they need to check a bag, however, "it would theoretically be safer to carry on your luggage; that way it would be less direct contact with others who may be infected."

Nahid Bhadelia, the medical director of the Special Pathogens Unit at the Boston University School of Medicine, echoed the advice in an email.

"If you carry the bag, you have a better sense of where it's been and who has touched it, so one could say that's slightly safer," she says.

While they recommend carry-on bags, health experts aren't strongly warning against checking luggage at this time.

"In general, as the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] suggests, it looks like it's harder to get this disease from surfaces than from face-to-face interactions, so luggage handling is probably a lower-risk aspect of travel," Bhadelia says.

Her recommendation to travelers checking a bag is to wipe down hard-case luggage with disinfecting wipes after picking it up in baggage claim.

Carry PPE and disinfectants

Bhadelia says what's more important than your luggage situation is to wear your mask, avoid full flights and maintain good hand hygiene. Those precautions can be made possible with smart packing.

You don't have to go as far as wearing a hazmat suit on a plane — in fact, experts warn against the practice — but you do need to wear a mask now that major airlines and some airports are mandating the procedure. And while masks are mandatory, face shields are optional on most airlines. For some travelers, particularly those that are high-risk, Beatty says it's not an unreasonable precaution.

And while once considered extreme before the pandemic, cleaning your airplane seat area is strongly recommended by health experts, so stock your carry-on bag with the right personal protective equipment and disinfectants.

"Wipe down the headrest, the tray [table] in front of you, possibly even some of the reading material," Beatty says. "You could also utilize those wipes to clean the buttons on the entertainment equipment."

Pack your own refreshments

Airlines have been changing their food and drink policies throughout the pandemic, so pack your own refreshments in case they're not available onboard. But because you need to pull your mask down to eat or drink, Garibaldi says to limit your in-flight intake.

"I would do my very best to try to avoid eating or drinking on the plane unless I actually have to," he says.

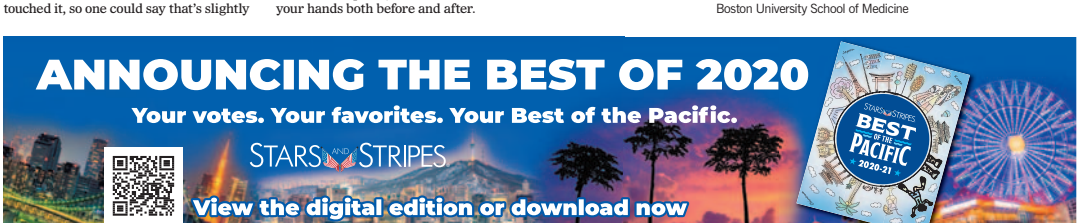
Garibaldi acknowledges there are exceptions to that advice, such as diabetic travelers who need to eat periodically or someone who needs to stay hydrated because of medication, "but I wouldn't be planning on a three-course meal during a flight."

And Beatty says that if you do eat or drink on the plane, make sure to sanitize your hands both before and after.

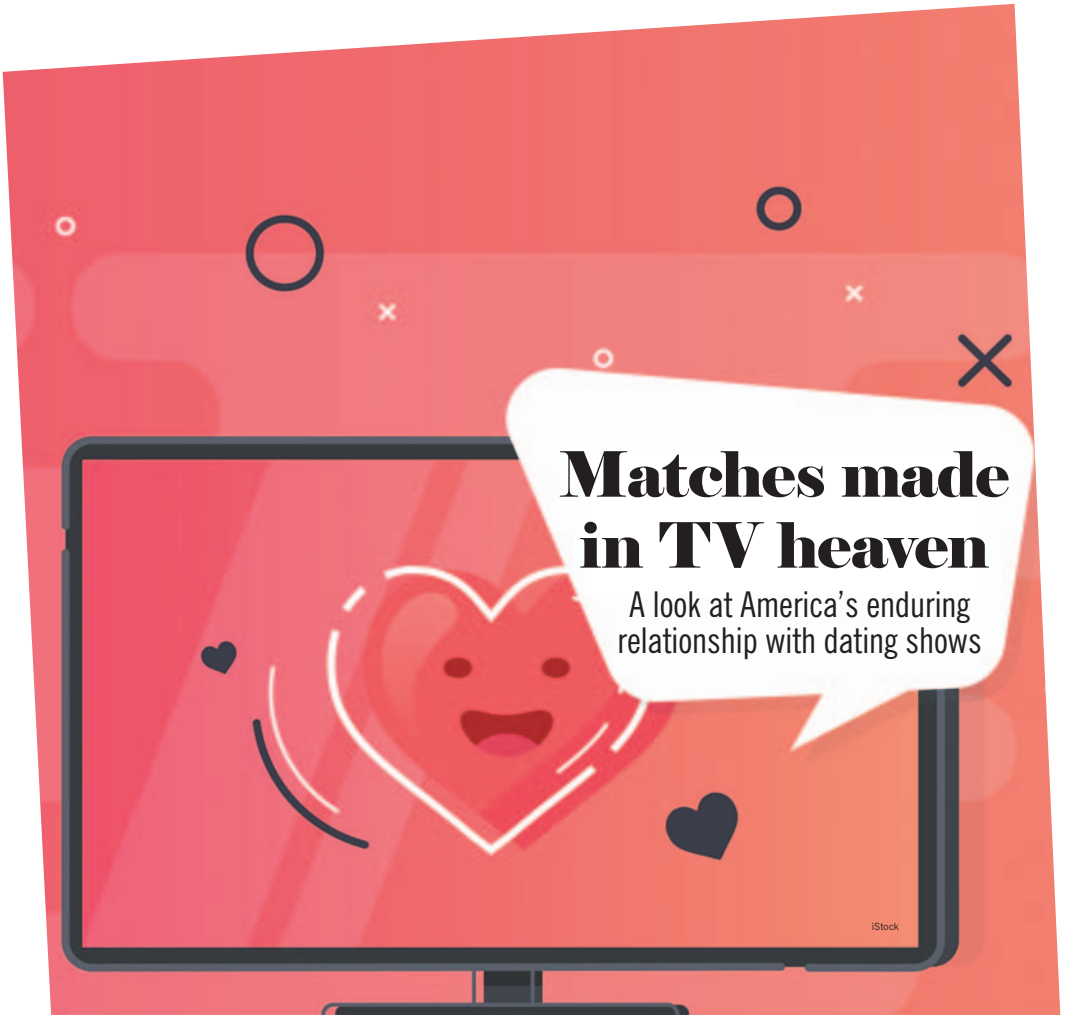
iStock

Present-day pandemic packing preparations include personal protective equipment.

> **'If you carry the bag, you have a better sense of where it's been and who has touched it, so one could say that's slightly safer.'**
>
> **Nahid Bhadelia**
> Boston University School of Medicine



WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Matches made in TV heaven

A look at America's enduring relationship with dating shows

By Emily Yahr
The Washington Post

If you are looking for the exact moment when American culture went off the rails that it has never managed to climb back on, may we offer a singular scene on television from Feb. 15, 2000: a man in a tuxedo, bent down on one knee, proposing to a total stranger in a wedding gown. She tearfully accepts while four other women, also wearing wedding dresses, shuffle off the stage.

The nearly 23 million viewers who tuned into "Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?" were simultaneously riveted and horrified. But most importantly, there were 23 million of them. This would not be a one-time phenomenon, but rather the origin story for a new genre, the "reality dating show."

Since then, millions upon millions of people have spent many hours of their lives enraptured by these shows, which continue to proliferate with no sign of slowing down, like an invasive species that has become part of our natural environment. How did this happen? And what has 20 years of watching these spectacles — singles hooking up, couples breaking up and aspiring Instagram influencers melting down, all in the name of finding "love" — done to us?

To find out, we chose one reality dating show that debuted every year from 2000 through 2020 — shows that were particularly popular, controversial, influential or taught us something unexpected. We talked to dozens of people: Contestants who loved the experience and those who regret everything. Producers who are proud of the content they made and others who could never stomach to work in the genre again. Reality TV experts who appreciate the escapism and entertainment value, but also lament the negative influence of these shows, from perpetuating damaging stereotypes to fueling the lack of representation on our screens.

Sometimes, these series are surprisingly hopeful. But mostly, they are disturbing. Deeply disturbing. But no matter how many people decry that the shows are fake and/or feel like the downfall of society, the impact has been extremely real.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

2000 'Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?' (Fox)

As the legend goes, the idea for "Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?" originated at a wedding attended by TV producer Mike Darnell, who was thinking about how to replicate the success of rival network ABC's "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" game show. He realized he could zero in on two of America's biggest anxieties: love and money.

"I kept thinking: Why is this show working? Because winning money is a huge American dream," Darnell said, according to TV reporter Bill Carter's book "Desperate Networks." "And I'm sitting here watching another huge American dream, which is getting married. What's bigger than that? Getting married to a wealthy man."

The unapologetically misogynistic concept enraged critics, who likened the spectacle to prostitution. That outrage, according to multiple accounts, was pretty much the reaction producers — which included future "Bachelor" creator Mike Fleiss — hoped for. (Darnell declined to comment.) The special was a massive hit. The groom, real estate developer Rick Rockwell, and the bride, emergency room nurse Darva Conger, set sail on a Caribbean honeymoon. Producers started plotting follow-up specials.

Then everything imploded. The Smoking Gun revealed that nine years prior, Rockwell had a restraining order filed against him by an ex-girlfriend, who alleged physical abuse. (Rockwell denied this.) Conger told media outlets she realized when she "won" that going on the show was a huge mistake, and cried herself to sleep every night. The marriage was annulled and producers launched an investigation into the negligent background check. Behind the scenes, Carter reported, Fox executives were mortified and furious, and the president declared his network was done with such exploitative trash.

However, the seeds were planted: People really would sign up to humiliate themselves on a national platform to try to find their soul mate. Viewers, apparently, would watch. Weeks into the controversy, the press couldn't stop talking about it.

2001 'Temptation Island' (Fox)

When Mandy Lauderdale was a 22-year-old model and agreed to participate in a "dating documentary" with her boyfriend, she was unaware of the show's true premise, even when they were required to undergo all manner of doctor visits.

"We should have known with the STD tests that something was up," she said.

In fact, none of the participating couples knew they would be flown to Belize to an island full of hot single people who — thanks to psychological background checks — producers knew would be especially alluring to each person. The couples were split up and offered these "temptations." On top of shock value, the show was also billed as a, um, helpful way to test if partners were meant to be together. (Contestants Kaya Wittenburg and Valerie Penso-Cuculich, who were together on the show, said people earnestly told them afterward that watching them successfully get through "Temptation Island" inspired them to save their own relationships. They broke up three years later.)

Unexpectedly, the series, another one from Darnell, was a cynical, teachable moment about what audiences want. Carter reported that Fox executives, scarred from "Millionaire," found out during filming that one couple, Taheed Watson and Ytossie Patterson, had a child, which was against the rules of casting. But this time, Carter wrote, they realized if they simply incorporated the controversy, it could work for them, so they filmed a producer informing the unhappy couple they were kicked off the show. If there was any doubt about leaning into drama, it was cleared up when that episode was a ratings bonanza.

2002 'The Bachelor' (ABC)

Matt James

If watching "The Bachelor" makes you feel ill, that's fitting: Creator Mike Fleiss told Vanity Fair that a vision for the show appeared in his head when he had a 104-degree temperature. Yet no matter how degrading it is to watch dozens of adults fight to marry a person they have known for approximately two months, this 18-year franchise remains unstoppable. It's one of the few shows that still command a live TV viewing audience, and has launched a cottage industry of Instagram influencers.

More than any other dating show, experts say, the longevity of "The Bachelor" explains why this genre persists: It expertly taps into the very real need for love and how to find it. Even if you know that producers edit any kind of drama they want, and contestants only are there to (shudder) "build their brand," viewers subconsciously soak in lessons about relationships.

"We would be lying if we didn't tell ourselves that watching these shows ... affects us in how we think about dating," said Natasha Scott, co-host of the podcast "2 Black Girls, 1 Rose." She pointed to "Bachelorette" star Hannah Brown being "gaslit" by manipulative suitor Luke Parker, a story that "resonated with a lot of young women across America."

This makes the embarrassing record of diversity on the franchise — which only recently cast Matt James as the first Black "Bachelor" after fan pressure — even more disappointing.

2003 'Joe Millionaire' (Fox)

Marriott

The age of misinformation got a head start in 2003 when 20 women were told they were competing for the love of Evan Marriott, heir to a $50 million fortune — who was actually a construction worker making $19,000 a year. Around 40 million people tuned into the finale, eager to see Marriott reveal the truth and if a woman would run away screaming from a poor person.

In the end, it was basically fine (Marriott and winner Zora Andrich were awarded a $1 million check to split for their troubles and broke up shortly after), but the premise set a precedent for TV creators: People would believe what you told them to believe, leading to other bleak attempts such as "I Wanna Marry Harry."

2004 'Playing It Straight' (Fox)

Describing this show in 2020 will only result in one reaction: shock that it aired on TV. Five straight men and nine gay men pretending to be straight competed for one woman's affection. In the end, if the woman chose a straight man to date, they would each receive $500,000. If she chose a gay man, he would win $1 million and she would win nothing.

The series originated in the U.K. before it was sold to Fox, and executive producer Adam Wood said they envisioned it as a "slightly absurd" twist on "The Bachelor." Obviously, it did not go over well in America and was canceled after three episodes.

2005 'Next' (MTV)

"'Next' was literally Tinder before Tinder. But instead of swiping left, you got kicked off a bus."

That explanation from D Renard Young, president and executive producer at That Rockz! content studio, makes perfect sense to any millennial who came home from school and watched people reject each other on MTV. A guy or girl would go on individual dates with a group of suitors sitting on a bus. At any point, if they didn't like how the date was going, they could yell "NEXT!" and the next person would walk out of the bus and take their shot.

While it featured a diverse group of daters (and was one of the first dating shows to cast LGBTQ contestants), Young also called it "popcorn voyeurism at its best." People were instantly "next-ed" for a variety of reasons: too boring, not tall enough, hideous shirt. It was a haunting preview of life on dating apps and normalized the idea of nixing a potential partner instantaneously.

2006 'Flavor of Love' (VH1)

Relaxing in a limo with his signature giant clock hanging around his neck, Public Enemy rapper Flavor Flav explained why he agreed to star on a reality dating show. "I've got fame and fortune, I've got real valuable works of art, I've got a mad domestic staff, I've got a nice big mansion," he told the cameras during the premiere. "But none of these things mean nothing without a woman to spend it with."

As "Flavor of Love" skyrocketed in the ratings, and was one of the rare shows that didn't have a majority-white cast, many slammed it for trafficking in stereotypes about Black women. Contestants were shown screaming, fighting and performing demeaning challenges. Some said the series positioned Flav and the cast's antics as a modern-day minstrel show.

Nicole "Hoopz" Alexander, who won the first season, said in an interview that she didn't listen to the criticism. And although filming the show was surreal ("When you're inside something, going through the experience, you don't understand it"), it changed her life. She was glad to see a dating show that finally had a diverse cast.

2007 'A Shot at Love With Tila Tequila' (MTV)

Years before Tila Tequila was kicked off "Celebrity Big Brother" for writing a blog post that sympathized with Adolf Hitler, and before she revealed herself as a born-again Christian whose old self was "dead," the model and singer was deemed "the Madonna of Myspace" with 2 million online friends. Thus, she was the perfect fit as MTV's "bisexual bachelorette" on a show in which 16 straight men and 16 lesbians competed to date her. (She later said she was never actually bisexual and just "gay for pay.")

Tequila

Sherri Williams, an assistant professor of race, media and communication at American University, remembers that instead of the show offering visibility for bisexual people, it "just ended up showing more about the patriarchy than anything else." The male contestants were hypermasculine, she recalls, making it seem like those qualities could override any desire that Tila Tequila might have for a woman.

The danger of this type of programming, she said, is that many people want to write off reality dating shows as garbage, when in fact "all of these shows show where we are as a society — what we value and what we believe."

2008 'Farmer Wants a Wife' (CW)

Just like "The Simple Life" before it, producers figured they could get mileage out of throwing "big city" women into small-town life. (Contestant Josie Goldberg said she was told she was cast in the "Jewish American Princess" role.) Female participants competed in various obstacles — milking a goat, corralling chickens — and tried to win over a hunky single farmer.

The concept seemed bizarre to contestant Krista Krogman, but after she was approached by a casting director at a Miami nightclub, she figured she would give it a shot. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime thing; let's just see what happens," she said she thought at the time. "It's fun, exciting; something different." In the end, not many people watched, though it didn't stop other attempts outside New York or Los Angeles, from "Sweet Home Alabama" to "Alaskan Women Looking for Love."

2009 'Megan Wants a Millionaire' (VH1)

In one of the darkest reality TV stories, this VH1 series was pulled off the air after three episodes when one of the contestants, Ryan Jenkins, was named the suspect in the murder of his ex-wife; days later, he was found dead by apparent suicide.

VH1 quickly canceled the show and one of its spinoffs, "I Love Money 3," which featured Jenkins. It turned out Jenkins had a prior record of domestic violence, which the production company missed in its background check. The situation was "the worst thing to ever happen to me in my career," executive producer Mark Cronin told Entertainment Weekly in a deep dive about the horrifying situation. The whole genre got a serious wake-up call about the critical importance of properly vetting contestants.

Megan Hauserman, the star of the show and a Playboy model who also starred in VH1 shows including "Rock of Love With Bret Michaels" and "Rock of Love: Charm School," was cast as the lead of her own find-a-husband show when she told producers that she didn't want a job but rather yearned to be a trophy wife. After the show was scrapped, she said, her TV career disappeared — no one wanted to touch anyone remotely associated with Jenkins.

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WEEKEND: TELEVISION

FROM PAGE 31

2010 'Donald J. Trump Presents: The Ultimate Merger' (TV One)

It wasn't just an "Apprentice" reunion when Omarosa Manigault Newman joined President Donald Trump's administration in 2017. Back in the day, they extended their lucrative partnership to "The Ultimate Merger," featuring 12 men vying for Omarosa. "I'd love to have you meet some guy. Is there anybody that can tame you?" Trump, an executive producer, asked in the premiere as she laughed.

Executive producer D Renard Young said that though he figured people would tune in because Omarosa was so polarizing, he was surprised by the high ratings. He knew her earlier persona as the villain on "The Apprentice" was criticized as perpetuating the "angry Black woman" stereotype, which they worked hard to avoid.

"We didn't manipulate situations in the edit to portray stereotypes that continue to plague Black women," he said. "We allowed Omarosa the space to express her full range of emotions."

2011 'Love in the Wild' (NBC)

You know how you can get a glimpse of someone's true personality by how they react when they get lost while driving? That was the basic idea behind "Love in the Wild," except instead of a wrong turn on the highway, producers matched up random single people, sent them to navigate a Costa Rican jungle, and had them forge through quicksand or brave crocodile-infested rivers.

"We wanted to see, if people had to work together, would it bring them close together quickly?" said executive producer Tom Shelly, who also worked on "Survivor." "We were really hoping to get real relationships out of it."

Turns out when you base the premise on that type of psychology, it actually works? Five out of the 20 couples over two seasons wound up married — an impressive batting average for a genre that has a low success rate.

2012 'The Choice' (Fox)

"The Choice" was like "The Voice" except for dating instead of singing: A group of celebrities, for some reason, signed up to sit on swivel chairs and listen to men or women describe themselves. If they liked what they heard in these "blind auditions," they turned around. The show was truly as ridiculous as it sounded, and shocked us because it showed that famous folks who had many other means of dating — including Joe Jonas, Carmen Electra and Mike "The Situation" Sorrentino — still turned to TV. The "dating show" remained a powerful platform.

Of course, no one took it too seriously. At the beginning of each episode, producers aired a recap of what happened when a celebrity went on a date with the person of their choosing. Results varied from "texting ever since" to "better off as friends" to "promised to keep in touch" (we know what that means).

2013 'Ready for Love' (NBC)

Ben Patton knew the drill; he had even once declined a chance to be considered for "The Bachelor." But a producer for "Ready for Love" made an intriguing sales pitch: Patton would be one of three bachelors, with zero pressure to get engaged, and women would be chosen by professional matchmakers. Patton considered this. He had been out of the dating world while working abroad. So, he thought, why not?

"Ready for Love" only lasted a few episodes, and drew unfavorable "Hunger Games" comparisons as women were "presented" to the men onstage with a live audience. Patton said even though he didn't find his future wife (he and the woman he chose broke up), it gave him a new understanding of why people reveal so much of themselves on TV.

2014 'Married at First Sight' (FYI/Lifetime)

When "Married at First Sight" started casting, producers weren't sure anyone would sign up. After all, you had to agree to be set up with a stranger by a panel of experts and then instantly marry whomever they chose. Buyers were hugely skeptical, but eventually it landed on the FYI cable channel. The debut sparked even more stunned reactions and mockery as viewers tried to process what they were seeing.

Yet, once again — you may be sensing a theme here — everyone underestimated people's desire to find a partner, especially when 14 years of reality dating shows had desensitized them. Fast forward, and the series — a bona fide hit which has since moved to Lifetime and is about to launch its 11th season — has produced nine married couples. "It's a show that celebrates love, at its core, and people who are willing to do one of the craziest things you can imagine doing, legally, in hopes of finding love," said Chris Coelen, chief executive of production company Kinetic Content.

2015 'Everlasting' via 'UnREAL' (Lifetime)

Yes, obviously "UnREAL" was a scripted drama that went behind the scenes of a fictional dating show, "Everlasting." Yet it was jarring to see "Everlasting" producers pull out every sick, dirty trick to manipulate cast members into having mental breakdowns — especially when you consider that co-creator Sarah Gertrude Shapiro worked for three years on "The Bachelor," so she was drawing real-life inspiration from somewhere. (Shapiro told the New Yorker that her "Bachelor" bosses would order her to make contestants cry on camera or she would be fired.)

The drama series took a nosedive after the first season, partially due to a much-criticized police brutality storyline in which a white producer called the cops on the show's first Black star. And plenty of people were unnerved by what they saw with an apparent peek behind the curtain.

2016 'Catching Kelce' (E!)

Maya Benberry didn't pack too many clothes when she was cast on a mysterious athlete's dating show. "I just really honestly went into it like, 'I'm a Black girl, this is probably a white guy, and I'm probably only going to be there like a week or two,'" she told The Washington Post.

The series wound up starring sometimes controversial NFL star Travis Kelce, whose goofy nature off the field made him a natural for this kind of role. Benberry couldn't believe it when she and Kelce clicked and he chose her at the end. However, when filming was over, Benberry said Kelce told her the producers wanted to redo the storyline to make her the villain, because they liked the idea of the villain winning the show.

The result was a nightmare: She was portrayed in a "negative, villainous, angry Black woman type of way," she said, and received racist comments and death threats online — an issue that remains a disturbingly common experience for reality contestants of color. She and Kelce broke up; she didn't feel like he, the network or producers supported her. (Kelce and the producers did not respond to a request for comment; no one who worked at E! when the show aired could be reached for comment.)

In editing her as the villain, Benberry said, they also didn't show Kelce expressing how much he liked her. That way "the audience would think that I wasn't going to win, and that I was just some evil, bitter girl, when in reality I wasn't. So that was unfortunate. I felt like it kind of made the experience, for me, not as fun."

2017 'Relation-Shipped' (Facebook Watch)

Is there anything more dystopian than clicking on a button and controlling the fate of another person? Probably not, and it was clearly only a matter of time before dating shows tried this out. BuzzFeed made the attempt with "RelationShipped" on the Facebook Watch platform, where viewers could choose the star of the show and future contestants — so basically not too different from fans voicing opinions on celebrity relationships in comments sections, but with actual consequences. Producer Shelly said that contestants "didn't take it too seriously" since the viewers made a lot of decisions but that it created a social experiment — not even so much with drama, but more so with how everyday humans would react to an incredibly surreal situation being foisted upon them.

2018 'The Proposal' (ABC)

While "The Bachelor" and "Bachelorette" remain a mainstay, as well as spinoffs such as "Bachelor in Paradise" and "The Bachelor Summer Games," one flop showed that fans wouldn't watch everything from creator Mike Fleiss. (He declined to comment for this story.) "The Proposal" was essentially a pageant similar to "Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?," which didn't grab this decade's audience. Plus, it was yet another lesson in faulty background checks: The network had to pull an episode when one of the contestants was accused of past sexual assault as the show started airing.

2019 'Love Island' (CBS)

The U.K. viewing audience went bananas over this controversial show — producers sequestered hot singles in a Mallorca villa and let chaos ensue — after it debuted in 2015. Naturally, America wanted a piece. Set in Fiji, the CBS version didn't garner anywhere close to the amount of attention it did in the U.K., but it pleased the network enough that it ordered another season, presumably to capture young viewers.

Kate Casey, host of the "Reality Life With Kate Casey" podcast, said a major reason these shows catch on is because of the communal viewing experience, especially on a series like "Love Island" that airs daily. "I think you can't forget that it's also just a supremely satisfying television-watching experience," she said. "You can chat with your friends and make fun of [contestants] or root for them. It's a fantastic escape from our crazy world."

2020 'Love Is Blind' (Netflix)

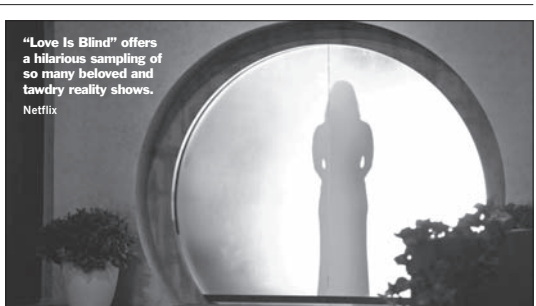
After years of drilling unattainable beauty norms into our heads, Hollywood has occasionally tried to backtrack and teach us that attraction can be more than a physical connection.

Netflix's hit "Love Is Blind" starts out with people dating in pods where they can't see each other, focusing on emotional connection before the physical.

Creator Chris Coelen said he saw criticism along the lines of "this show is the final nail in the final coffin of humanity." A review from the Guardian said as much, adding it was "absurd, revolting, endearing, toxic and wholesome by turns — and addictive as hell throughout." "Sure, I guess you can look at it that way," Coelen said. "But to me, that's not why I created it or why it resonated. I think it resonated because it's relatable. We all want to feel like, hey, we should be loved for who we are."

Williams, the American University professor, said she sees the "Love Is Blind" popularity as a sign that while audiences will never tire of these shows, they will get oversaturated with endless "Bachelor" variations that showcase women seeking fairy-tale fantasies that do not exist. But she sees potential with series such as MTV's "Are You the One?," which featured a sexually fluid cast; or "Labor of Love," which starred a woman in her 40s who wanted to have a baby, with or without a husband.

"As we see this genre aging more, people are running out of ideas," she said. "But the ones that are more real and more inclusive are starting to germinate and really rise to the top."



"Love Is Blind" offers a hilarious sampling of so many beloved and tawdry reality shows.

Netflix

NEW ON DVD

"Sometimes Always Never": Emotionally distant but idiosyncratic Alan (Bill Nighy) embarks on an awkward, long car ride with his son Peter (Sam Riley).

When they arrive at their accommodations, Alan makes a bet with a fellow guest (Tim McInnerny) over a game of Scrabble.

After walloping the irate guest, the guest's wife (Jenny Agutter) reveals they're both on edge, only staying there to visit the morgue the following morning to see if a recently found body is that of their missing son.

And as it turns out, Alan and Peter are there for the same reason. Alan's missing son, Michael, left in anger during a game of Scrabble, and Peter resents being the son who stayed behind.

Nighy and Riley keep their grieving characters restrained, but with pain visible just beyond the surface. Alan's quirks are endearing, though the film's quirky editing and overall aesthetic doesn't quite fit the tone or the weight. Still, the film succeeds in showing the family's love language: Words stick in their throats, maybe, but they flow out onto the board game.

Also available on DVD:

"Batwoman: The Complete First Season": Kate Kane (Ruby Rose) takes over Gotham's vigilante duties years after Batman's disappearance in this CW series.

"Blue Bloods: The Tenth Season": The CBS series stars Tom Selleck as the patriarch of a family of police officers.

"Cursed Films": The documentary series goes behind the scenes of the tragedies of iconic horror movies including "The Exorcist," "The Crow" and more.

"Deathstroke: Knights & Dragons": This animated web series follows Deathstroke's (Michael Chiklis) quest for atonement and to take down the evil Jackal (Chris Jai Alex). Other vocal talents include Sasha Alexander and Asher Bishop.

"Emperor": An enslaved man on the run, Shields "Emperor" Green (Dayo Okeniyi), raids Harpers Ferry, W.Va., with the help of abolitionist John Brown (James Cromwell).

"Military Wives": A group of women married to troops in Afghanistan start a choir on their base. Stars Kristin Scott Thomas, Sharon Horgan and Emma Lowndes.

"Open 24 Hours": A woman recovering from a relationship with a serial killer (Vanessa Grasse) faces terrors at her new gas station convenience store job.

"Prevenge": A pregnant woman (Alice Lowe) suspects her baby is leading her on a homicidal rampage to avenge her husband's death.

"S.W.A.T.": Shemar Moore stars in the CBS series centering on a Los Angeles lieutenant who struggles with the conflicts between his job and his roots.

"The Terror: Infamy: The Complete Second Season": The AMC horror anthology series takes place in a Japanese internment camp. Stars include Derek Mio, Kiki Sukezane and George Takei.

— Katie Foran-McHale/TNS

Cloak-and-dagger craft

Actress discusses Audible Original role, real-life parallels

By Jami Ganz
New York Daily News

In the 1970s, hackers really had to work at their cloak-and-dagger craft.

Though a 17-year-old in July allegedly managed to "mastermind" a Twitter takeover, affecting the accounts of the most powerful people in the world, back in the day, the only option was good old-fashioned Watergate-style wiretapping.

And that freaked out actress Carrie Coon.

The "Leftovers" actress stars in the Audible Original "Phreaks," which is out now and centers on a blind teenager, Emma Gable, played by Bree Klauser, and her cohort of wiretappers who hack a phone system in the 1970s to find a sense of community.

"I was really struck by the material because I had never heard of this before. I didn't realize that it was possible to hack into the phone system," the 39-year-old, who plays Emma's mother Dorothea, told the Daily News in a phone interview.

The isolation Emma and her fellow blind hackers contend with on a daily basis leaves them "reaching for community and trying to figure out how to connect with people when sort of your immediate life isn't as satisfying," the Emmy nominee said — something she finds particularly relatable in today's pandemic-stricken world.

It isn't just seclusion that rings true, but the technology at the heart of the story.

"It's just incredible to relate to right now," Coon said, pointing to debates over TikTok and internet activism. "This is not new, though. The way every time a new technology comes along, there's someone to exploit it, use it in a new way, change it, change it and manipulate it. And it's just interesting to examine that through history.

"I think I was already a little spooked because of real-world examples about how people, especially public figures, can be compromised through their technology," Coon said of her views prior to the project. "My husband (Pulitzer Prize winner Tracy Letts) and I are not targets of the paparazzi. No one's particularly interested in what we're doing because we're very boring, but I have to say, now that I'm on Twitter and I have a social media presence, I'm absolutely thinking about that. It just never occurred to me that they were thinking about that in the 1970s."

Both Dorothea and her husband Cal (Christian Slater) find themselves at odds with each other and, in terms of Emma, "are not really there for emotional support. And Emma's generation is expected to toughen up."

To create the effect of heavy, laborious breathing that afflicts Dorothea, burdened with festering health problems, the "Fargo" star said she got creative and used some "unconventional" methods.

"Not only can I be cast against type, but I can also do whatever I need to do in the room to sound like I need to sound," the "Sinner" star said. "And that means I can do pushups, and at one point I was picking up and slinging this coffee table around to get the feeling of effort and heavy breathing."

She added that she needed to focus on how to play an older woman, and acknowledged with a laugh, "I wouldn't be cast as Dorothea in television."

Despite recording the role alone in New York last September, months before the pandemic struck, the actors were all able to establish a convincing rapport, thanks to Matt Derby's script.

As for Dorothea and Emma's relationship, the former "feels that it is her responsibility to make sure her daughter can go out into the world and stay alive," explained Coon, noting Dorothea feels society was "not set up for her daughter."

A mother herself, Coon says it's dramatic irony that Dorothea "doesn't realize some of the things she has given her daughter."

"Any parent would be concerned about making sure their child has the capacity to (live in the world), not because their child is damaged or flawed, but because the world is not set up to appreciate the child as the whole person that the mother sees," she said.

'It's just incredible to relate to right now. This is not new, though. The way every time a new technology comes along, there's someone to exploit it, use it in a new way, change it, change it and manipulate it. And it's just interesting to examine that through history.'

Carrie Coon
actress

Youngrae Kim, Chicago Tribune/TNS

Carrie Coon poses for a photo at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago. Coon stars in the Audible Original "Phreaks" as Dorothea Gable, whose blind daughter Emma finds community and belonging among a group of hackers who wiretap a phone system in the 1970s.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Q&A: LUKE BRYAN

‘There’ll always be people who say I ruined country music’

By Mikael Wood
Los Angeles Times

This wasn’t Luke Bryan’s first rodeo.

“Am I too backlit? Hold on,” the country star said as he picked up a video call at his home in Nashville. Dressed in a golf shirt and ball cap, sunglasses dangling from a cord around his neck, he stood and moved to a different part of the window-lined room.

“The problem is, if I do it this way, some of my awards get in the frame,” he said, gesturing to a wall hung with gold and platinum plaques. “And I don’t want you to think I’m so ... egotistical that I have to do Zoom calls with awards in ’em.”

Bryan, 44, got accustomed to the finer points of remote technology while shooting the latest season of “American Idol,” which suddenly became an at-home production in April thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now the Leesburg, Ga., native is putting his knowledge to use again as he talks up his seventh studio album, “Born Here Live Here Die Here,” his first since he joined “Idol” as a judge (alongside Katy Perry and Lionel Richie) in 2018.

His latest, “Born Here Live Here Die Here,” lives up to its title with down-home tunes about small-town Southern life. But in songs like “What She Wants Tonight,” which rides a sleek R&B groove, the album also continues the sly expansion of country music that Bryan — perhaps the smiliest avatar of the party-hearty bro-country movement of the early 2010s — helped set into motion nearly a decade ago with “Country Girl (Shake It for Me),” his hip-hop-inflected 2011 smash.

“Thirty years ago, when you listened to Randy Travis and all that, everybody was walking down the same street. Now the street is a lot wider,” he said, with room for the adventurous likes of Sam Hunt and Lil Nas X. And despite all those accolades — he’s scored more than two dozen No. 1 singles, including the new album’s blithely unburdened “One Margarita,” and been named the Country Music Association’s entertainer of the year twice — Bryan insists he’s still interested in change.

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Red Light Management

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

Lori McKenna

The Balladeer
(CN Records/Thirty Tigers)

On "When You're My Age," one of the best cuts from her fine new album "The Balladeer," singer-songwriter Lori McKenna readily concedes that these are challenging times.

"When you're my age," she writes, "I hope the world is kinder than it seems to be right now / And I hope the front page isn't just a reminder, of how we keep letting each other down."

That's about as political as the two-time Grammy winner is likely to get. It also might be the one element that sets this album firmly in 2020.

McKenna, who lives in her native Massachusetts but plies her trade in Nashville, is wiser and more firmly established in who she is. But the consistent level of high-quality songcraft she's established over three consecutive albums now is remarkable.

It doesn't hurt that she's working again with Nashville's current go-to producer of award-winning work, Dave Cobb. He helps elevate her journey through familiar themes — life advice, vivid memories, connections to people she loves — on an acoustic foundation that's elegant but never overcooked.

McKenna's songwriting, though, is clearly the featured attraction.

— Scott Stroud
Associated Press

Alanis Morissette

Such Pretty Forks in the Road
(Epiphany Music)

The piano is back. The voice is back. The angst is back.

A genre onto herself, Alanis Morissette comes out in force with her ninth studio album "Such Pretty Forks In the Road," where she untangles some of the thornier moments of her life since we've last heard from her in 2012. Postpartum depression, check. Management embezzlement, check. Music industry fatigue, check. Joy of motherhood, check.

Morissette's creative companion, the piano, takes us on a journey that's sometimes dramatic, sometimes somber, sometimes playful, sometimes wistful. But it's the electric guitar riffs that add a sheen of nostalgia; "Ablaze" and "Sandbox Love" have that sound that perfectly encapsulates a CW show from the mid-aughts.

"Smiling" puts the rictus on the church organ and pulls off a ballad with a twist of register that rocks your rocks off. "Reasons I Drink" has that Billy Joel lilt but more acerbic lyrics about surviving in the music industry for so long, while the harried and troubled piano on "Reckoning" channels empowering anger. "Diagnosis" hits a nerve with its raw lyrics about struggling with postnatal depression.

Despite its unassuming musicality, the 11-track "Such Pretty Forks in the Road" dazzles with its simple comfort charms.

— Cristina Jaleru
Associated Press

The Psychedelic Furs

Made of Rain (Cooking Vinyl)

Twenty-nine years is a long time between drinks, and yet it seems as if no time, tide or trend has passed between the last Psychedelic Furs album, 1991's "World Outside," and their dreamy new "Made of Rain."

The tense charm that made the Furs great then — in hits such as "Pretty in Pink," "Heaven" and "Love My Way"— is still with them, even during the heaviest moments of "Rain."

As they have since their start, just after British punk's first gleaming, brothers Richard and Tim Butler and crew craft a spidery, Bowie-like web filled with raspy vocals, hypnotic saxophones, rangy guitars and Richard Butler's drearily romantic lyrics. Sometimes the effect is acidic and psychedelic ("Come All Ye Faithful"), sometimes it's icily epic ("Ash Wednesday") and sometimes gracefully folksy ("Wrong Train").

For all the familiarity, there's invention here, too, in "Rain's" opening cut, "The Boy Who Invented Rock & Roll." It's an oddly hacking cough filled with wonky sax, distorted guitars and singer-songwriter Richard Butler at his most vexingly poetic.

— A.D. Amorosi
The Philadelphia Inquirer

FROM PAGE 34

"I remember being in college and alumni coming and going, 'Y'all don't party like we used to party,'" he said. "I was like, 'God, man, you sound like a ding-dong.'"

Like countless other musicians, Bryan was supposed to take his latest work on the road in 2020, hitting arenas and amphitheaters as well as the open-air spaces he's played for years on what he calls his Farm Tour. With those plans called off because of the pandemic, he recently used his tour bus for a fly-fishing trip with his two sons and his nephew, whom Bryan and his wife began raising after the deaths of the singer's sister and brother-in-law.

"We had a big time," he said of the trip, still looking a little sunburned, as he sipped a beer. Another silver lining of an age with no shows: "I've gotten to sleep next to my wife a hell of a lot this year — though I'm not sure my wife is enjoying that."

Do you think of yourself as someone who shaped modern country music?

Let me paint the picture: I'm a small-town kid, and somehow I listened to Alan Jackson, N.W.A, the Beastie Boys, Garth Brooks and Heavy D & the Boyz. I think my generation, as far as being a country kid, was one of the first to have these forms of music really start integrating.

So the evolution was inevitable. But somebody still had to make the music.

And "Country Girl (Shake It for Me)" was born strictly for that reason. I would go play college bars, honky-tonks — a thousand people dancing, partying their ass off, spraying beer. And the second I got offstage, the DJ would play the biggest hip-hop songs in the world, and everybody wearing cowboy hats and cowboy boots and Wranglers with dip rings, they were all out there grinding and humping one another. And nobody ever had a problem with it. So "Country Girl (Shake It for Me)" kind of does all that. So does "That's My Kind of Night." It's almost like a touch of a hip-hop song with a guy with a real country voice singing it.

Which now is practically unavoidable.

But I didn't know I was gonna open up another avenue. And you know what? There'll always be people who say I ruined country music. But I was driving home from downtown Nashville yesterday and I heard Kane Brown on pop radio with Swae Lee and Khalid. I'm like, "That's interesting."

What would be unexpected from Luke Bryan now?

I'm really into (the TV Western series) "Yellowstone," and the music in "Yellowstone," it's Texas music, cowboy music. I'm obviously not a cowboy, but it makes me wonder how I could do a really retro-sounding cowboy song that isn't just drums, bass, guitar and steel guitar. Or when I listen to the Weeknd, that sounds like Duran Duran to me — totally an '80s synthesizer. I'm always wondering, "What's a fun little sound people haven't heard me do?"

Ideologically, the country audience can be perceived by outsiders as a monolith. Do you see more diversity of thought than is often recognized?

Here's what I know about the country audience: When you lay the right song on them, they all get it the same way. But the stereotype where everybody's like, "Oh, write a song about guns and America and the troops and veterans, and it'll be a hit" — I don't view the country audience like that.

Do you feel free to speak your mind about contentious issues?

I'm always gonna walk a smart line, but I'm not scared. Look at "Most People Are Good," a song I had a couple years ago. It touched on "Love who you love," and that can be taken a lot of ways. I had a lot of people ask me, "Well, does that mean you want to plant a flag and support the gay and lesbian community?" I'm like, "I'm not saying I'm gonna go fly that flag — but I'm not saying I'm not, either."

That sounds pretty diplomatic.

As you get a higher profile, you do watch your words carefully. And that's frustrating too. You oughta be able to say a lot of stuff, and if one thing is misconstrued, you oughta be able to say, "I didn't mean it that way," apologize and move on.

Because of the way you grew up, you've naturally brought elements of Black music into country. But has country gotten better at allowing in actual Black voices?

I do see it getting better. I watched Darius (Rucker)'s interview (with the "Today" show) on race, and I have sat up at night after hearing from African American audience members who say they've felt uncomfortable at my shows through the years. It's a delicate conversation, and do I think we may take a little longer in country to have it? Probably. But it's the conversation we're having more and more.

Chris Janson and Chase Rice both faced widespread criticism recently after they played concerts with little apparent concern for social distancing. But an act on your level has to think more rigorously about how to return to the road.

You don't want to be the sacrificial lamb. If I've made decisions on not doing shows, it's because let's see what we're truly dealing with. We're still learning what this virus is every day.

Have you heard good ideas about how it might be done?

It's all out of whack. I've got these Farm Tour shows, where say you got a 10-by-10-square-mile field, and you put a huge stage in it and you tell everybody to stay 6 feet apart and wear a mask. I'm like, "We could make this happen where if somebody called bull — on us, we could technically go spray-paint 6-foot circumferences." But I can't imagine that germs aren't getting spread.

Has doing "American Idol" changed the way you think about your music?

When these kids come in and they're singing Billie Eilish and Bishop Briggs, I'll get home and go do some research. But because I've been on "American Idol," should I have this whole eclectic, artistic view and try to go beyond...? Maybe there's a song out there that'll do that one of these days. And I have some material on this album that has more of an artistic approach to it. Some people might not think that. I mean, "One Margarita" is as simple as you can get. But I knew the second I heard it that a lot of people were really gonna have fun and dance because that's what it made me want to do.

"One Margarita" obviously has its fans. But there's a view that now is not the time for a song so frivolous.

Listen, I've been doing this a long time, and you just gotta go with your gut. I don't second-guess the timing. I chose to just put out a fun song, and I look forward to when I can perform it live. If you're a fan of mine and you don't like the song, don't write me off for the rest of your life. Wait around till I put something out that's more what you want to hear from me. That's what I used to do with all my heroes. When George Strait put out a song that I didn't care for, I didn't have a platform to tell the world. I just chose not to freak out about that particular song.

What's going through your mind when you sing "Build Me a Daddy," which is about a little kid whose father was a soldier who died?

It's heavy. Through the years I've met several Navy SEAL buddies, and I just happened to be around one of these buddies when I got the mix of that song in. Navy SEALS, these guys are programmed to not show emotion. And I played him this song and it truly broke him up. I think about that.

Your nephew lost his dad. Do you connect the song to events in your own life?

Oh, totally. Loss is loss. You know, "Build Me a Daddy," I didn't go in there and do 25 vocal takes on it. I think I did four, and there were even some that my engineer was like, "Man, we really can use 95% of this vocal." That tells me I've connected emotionally with the song; I'm really just channeling it.

In "Born Here Live Here Die Here," you're clearly singing about people you've known, people you grew up around —

But I'm the one that left.

Right. What's your point of view in that song?

If you really want to break it down, I guess I could be called a hypocrite. But I think about all my friends back home; I watch them living their life, enjoying the rivers and the lake and the woods. They ask me, "What's Manhattan like? What's LA like?" But they don't want any part of that — they just want to hear about it from me. Whether they want to call me out for leaving, I'm not really worried about that. I'm more concerned with them going, "That song is who I am."

WEEKEND: HEALTH AND FITNESS

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Threatened by a different kind of bug

You can avoid COVID-19 in the woods, but ticks, mosquitoes carry serious diseases too

MARLENE CIMONS
Special to The Washington Post

Pandemic-weary Americans have begun walking and hiking in recent months to get out of the house while avoiding infection with the novel coronavirus. At the same time, resource-strapped local health departments have been forced to divert money and people to coronavirus-related activities, unwillingly creating openings for outside exercisers to get sick in other ways.

Although woods and trails provide some distance from people, they are home to other dangers — such as ticks that carry bacteria-causing Lyme disease or mosquitoes that transmit West Nile virus — especially now, when bugs are proliferating. These and other insects can pass along potentially serious diseases with a single bite.

Health departments have been spending their budgets and deploying personnel on coronavirus efforts, which hurts their ability to focus on programs that control mosquitoes and ticks, says Chelsea Gridley-Smith, director of environmental health for the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

"Many of the impacted local programs are having staff pulled away to focus on COVID-19," she says, referring to the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. "For example, these include training people as contact tracers and doing lab testing for COVID-19 instead of for arboviruses," which are those carried by mosquitoes and ticks.

As a result, existing services are strained or on hold, she says. In Georgia, for example, the vector surveillance program is scheduled to end this month because of a lack of funding, and its full-time epidemiologist will move from vector control to the coronavirus.

In Ohio, laboratories have been "completely devoted to COVID-19 since the first week of March," she says. Cutbacks have hurt surveillance — tracking the bugs and testing them for infectious organisms — as well as control activities, such as using pesticides.

Michael Yabsley, a professor in the University of Georgia's College of Veterinary Medicine who studies vector-borne pathogens and infectious wildlife diseases, has launched an online public survey to determine whether the pandemic has driven more people outside, affecting their exposure to ticks and tick-borne diseases. He hopes to eventually publish his findings in several open-access journals.

"The survey actually grew out of some neighborhood chat, which was pretty cool, and my observation that so many folks were using our neighborhood trails for the first time," he says. "Many of them were not really 'outdoor folks,' and had limited — or no — knowledge about ticks. And when I asked them about why they were now finding the trails and natural areas, it was related to a need to escape the confines of their home."

He also realized that he had removed more ticks than usual from his three children during the initial weeks after the shutdown. He believes it is because he sent them out into the woods to play once home schooling was finished for the day — and because he and his wife needed time to get their own work done.

"This made me think it may be something happening in other places," he says.

The survey is ongoing, but he says the responses so far suggest that there is an increase in people using natural spaces, especially among children.

"We will have to see how that correlates with increased tick exposure, but it seems to be the trend, he says.

The usual protection advice is just as important today as it has always been — perhaps even more so — which is to cover up, use repellent, eliminate any standing water where mosquitoes breed and be sure to keep up with pets' preventive medications, experts say.

"People are living in a smaller radius than before and tired of being stuck at home," says Sadie Jane Ryan, associate professor of medical geography at the University of Florida. "More of them are going outdoors and getting exposure that they ordinarily wouldn't get. When they leave their house, they aren't thinking long sleeves, long pants, 'tip and toss' [flipping containers of standing water] or bug spray. They are thinking: 'Do I have my mask?' 'When did I last wash my hands?' It's a different checklist."

Also, people are more reluctant to go to the doctor or hospital these days, fearful of becoming infected with the coronavirus.

But if they don't seek early treatment for insect-related ailments, they could suffer chronic, irreversible health consequences.

"If you let it go too long, there is a much greater chance of getting long-term chronic effects of Lyme, and that's a big issue," says Erika Machtinger, assistant professor of veterinary entomology at Pennsylvania State University. "Also, keep in mind that some COVID symptoms mimic Lyme — such as feeling tired, headaches, body aches, nonspecific malaise, fever — so if you are feeling sick, you really need to go to the doctor."

Ticks and mosquitoes are more than a nuisance.

Tick-borne diseases hit a record high in the United States in 2017 with nearly 60,000 reported cases, including 42,743 cases of Lyme disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cases decreased in 2018, but are still much higher than they were in the early 2000s, the CDC says.

Lyme disease, first identified in the 1970s in Old Lyme, Conn. — hence the name — is caused by a bacterium, Borrelia burgdorferi, which is transmitted to humans by blacklegged ticks. The disease can cause unrelenting misery if not treated promptly with antibiotics. Symptoms start with fever, headache, fatigue and a characteristic bull's eye rash. Untreated, Lyme disease can spread to the joints, the heart and nervous system, producing long-lasting, debilitating symptoms.

Mosquitoes are among the most lethal animals in the world, causing millions of deaths every year from such infectious diseases as malaria, dengue, Zika, chikungunya, yellow fever and at least a dozen more. Climate change is enabling them to survive through warmer winters and flourish. In the United States, West Nile virus is the leading cause of mosquito-borne disease, according to the CDC.

WEEKEND: FAMILY

Home-school daze

Experts offer tips for parents adopting their own curricula

By Jennifer Day
Chicago Tribune

Families will be getting yet another taste of home schooling this fall, as many school districts opt for some degree of remote learning due to risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

But others are thinking about untethering from traditional schools altogether, adopting their own, more flexible curricula that can be better adapted to their schedules and their children's needs.

Indeed, interest in home schooling — which first gained traction among religious families over the past few decades — has spiked since the pandemic began. Taking responsibility for your children's education, however, can seem daunting. We spoke with some experts for their tips on how to home-school this fall.

Mentally prepare yourself. Even before you start digging into the logistics of setting up your home school, pause to consider your goals. Every parent is going to have a different philosophy about what a child should learn, but avoid setting rigid expectations.

It's better to focus on helping children develop strong learning habits and practices than specific content, said Nichole Pinkard, associate professor of learning sciences at Northwestern University.

"Make sure learning becomes fun; learning becomes part of the lifestyle," Pinkard said. "Make it a family thing."

Find an online community for support. Home-schooling groups have proliferated on Facebook — often organized around geographic location, religion or identity. Find one that aligns with your family's goals and values to access advice, resources and encouragement. Pinkard recommended Surviving Homeschool, which was launched in March to help families thrust into home schooling as a result of the pandemic.

Recognize that your home is not a school — and play to its strengths. Don't get hung up on converting your dining room into a Pinterest-worthy schoolroom. Jennifer Knick, author of The Organized Homeschooler blog, said her family had a dedicated room one year out of the 10 they've been home schooling, but they never ended up using it.

Surviving Homeschool founder DeLise Bernard agreed, adding that it's key to be organized, so you're not scrambling every day or constantly fielding questions from your kids about where to find supplies.

Another tip: Use the comforts of home to enhance your child's educational experience, said Julie Bogart, author of "The Brave Learner: Finding Everyday Magic in Homeschool, Learning and Life." It could be as simple as giving a kid a clipboard so he can write an assignment while petting the cat, or offering a snack to fuel a child through the last few pages of her book. Bogart recalled one mom whose children were resisting math, so she set up a cozy tea party during their workbook time, and she found they didn't want to leave the table at the end of the lesson.

iStock

Home schooling for the first time can seem daunting, especially for working parents, but there are plenty of online resources that can help.

Establish a routine — one that's much shorter than the average school day. You don't have to supervise 20 to 30 children the way a schoolteacher does, so your home schooling shouldn't take as many hours of the day. Even for older children, who may need more rigorous instruction, Knick said much of the work is self-directed. For her two children, who are now in the 7th and 10th grades, she lays out the week's assignments on Sunday evening with a 4 p.m. Friday deadline, allowing them to set their own pace for the week.

For working parents, Bogart said she advises they set aside mornings for instruction, if possible, and save some of their own work for the times when their children are asleep. Start the day by asking your children to identify one immersive activity they really want to do — whether that's a self-directed art project or maybe a computer game — and schedule that to coincide with any time you need to block off for your own work.

If you have older children, enlist them in helping the younger ones while you're working, Bernard said. That could mean having the older ones read with younger children or make them a sandwich. It helps to build agency.

Whatever your schedule, plan breaks throughout the day and remain flexible, said Terri Sabol, Northwestern University assistant professor of human development and social policy.

"Be kind to yourself," she said. "That's what good teachers do, right? Good teachers can read the room and switch things up."

Indulge your children's curiosity as you plan your curriculum. Consider this an opportunity to tailor your children's education to their interests, and use it to inspire them to develop a love of learning. Particularly for history and science assignments, Bogart said, identify an area of curiosity and plan a project around it. Allow your child to choose books appropriate to their grade level, but aligned with their passions.

As a practical measure, if you're teaching more than one child, get them to agree on topics, and teach history and science as a group as much as possible. For skill-driven subjects, such as math and writing, choose the same textbook style for all children and purchase curricula based on their appropriate grade levels.

Seek out creative and affordable options for curricula. A substantial market exists for selling home-school supplies and curricula, but Bernard suggests parents tap into their local public library and other free or affordable resources, such as local cultural institutions, park districts and websites such as Starfall.com. Also call on extended family and friends to help.

Develop a plan for socialization. How do you maintain safety during the pandemic while allowing your children to develop meaningful social relationships? This is something each family will need to determine for itself, but it's important to consider this upfront and plan for some level of interaction, whether that's developing learning pods with like-minded families in your area who are taking similar preventative measures; participating in remote learning, either through a school district or other online educational providers; Zoom playdates; or allowing more screen time for older kids to text.

"Parents should be out in front of this and thinking about socialization," Sabol said. "We all know education is more than learning ABCs."

Also consider: Learning pods can offer parents educational and emotional support, allowing them to divvy up instruction based on their own areas of expertise or scheduling availability.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari

This Little Piggy needs a hot shower

I've been preparing to be a grandmother since my own children were babies. I didn't sell their outgrown baby things at garage sales. I squirreled everything away "for our grandchildren, someday." During multiple military PCS moves, our poor moving crews lugged boxes of blankets, books, bonnets and booties from house to house, only to be stored in the attic.

I just can't help myself. I envision bouncing a grandbaby on my lap, blowing raspberries on his or her perfect little feet. Adorable!

Admittedly, I have a starry-eyed vision of my perfect future grandchildren, but I wasn't always enamored with my own children's lower extremities. Our three kids' formerly kissable baby tootsies eventually became purely functional body parts, requiring good personal hygiene to ward off potent foot odor, locker room fungus, plantar warts and a most foul substance known as "toe jam."

That repulsive combination of sock fuzz, sweat and dead skin cells brings to mind one summer, when our family packed into our mid-sized SUV for a 12-hour car trip from Florida to Maryland.

"What's that smell?" I asked about a half hour into the trip. My keen olfactory nerves were picking up a repugnant aroma that might only be re-created by locking a bowl of beet pickled eggs in the back seat of a 1974 Galaxie 500 over a long hot weekend in August.

The smell grew in strength, and soon our daughters, Anna and Lilly, were pinching their noses shut. We pulled over to locate the source of the odor. We searched for a carton of curdled milk in the trunk. We looked for a rancid tuna sub under the seats. We opened the glove box half expecting to find a dirty diaper. We looked to see if a stowaway squirrel was decomposing under the hood.

Finally, our noses guided us to the third row of seats, where our then-teenage son, Hayden, sat obliviously listening to his iPod, his huge flip-flopped feet tapping to the beat of the music.

Hovering my nostrils carefully over his hairy toe knuckles, I took a big sniff.

"Found it!" I yelled, and stumbled faintly back to the trunk to find a fresh pair of socks and some emergency talcum powder so we could survive the rest of the trip.

Now that our kids are all in their twenties, we have become experts at "sniff and tell" during family holidays and movie nights. The culprit of phantom foot odor knows what to do — freshen up lest you ruin the family fun.

What I'm too afraid to tell our children is that foot odor and toe jam are child's play. The real trouble happens about two decades after raging teenage hormones quiet down. Middle-aged feet are a veritable three-ring circus, featuring cracked and callused heels, curled and thickened nails, burgeoning bunions and their dwarfed sidekicks, "bunionettes." Add a painful corn or two, and you've got a real freak show.

How does one go from playing "This Little Piggy" with smooth, perfect baby toes, to middle age, when the Five Piggies are old, knobbed and hardened? After 40 or 50 years of going to Market, big toe Piggy decided to take a detour and is pointing in the wrong direction. The Piggies Who Stayed Home and Ate Roast Beef fared relatively well in their snug sedentary routine, but the Piggy Who Had None collapsed from severe starvation. The Little Piggy on the end isn't crying "Wee! Wee! Wee!" anymore. Years of being last in line left him curled in a fetal position, hiding under the adjacent toes.

We middle-aged folks make a vain attempt to stave off the aging of our feet, investing hundreds of dollars annually in pedicures, polish and exfoliating devices such as "The Pedi Egg" (which, by the way, doubles as a nifty parmesan cheese grater).

Unfortunately, nature dictates that our feet get kind of ugly no matter what we do. So while I dream of the perfect padded soles of my future grandbabies, I will keep my tootsies clean and trimmed without getting too carried away.

After all, there's no sense in putting lipstick on your Piggies.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

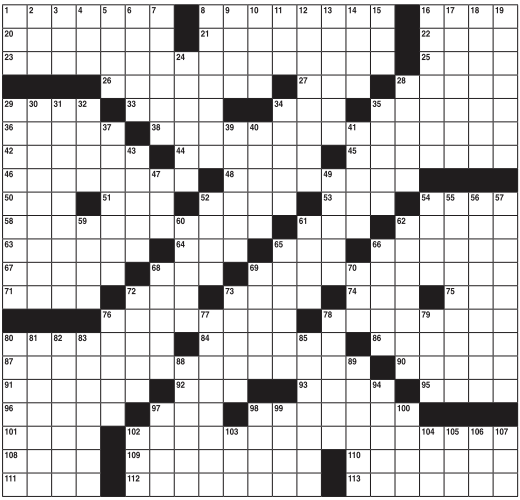
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

PUZZLIN'

BY DAVID LEVINSON WILK / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

David Levinson Wilk, of Brooklyn, works for television game shows. For the past year he was the head writer of ABC's ''The $100,000 Pyramid'' and Bravo's ''Cash Cab.'' For nine years he was a staff writer for ''Who Wants to Be a Millionaire.'' He creates original puzzles for The San Diego Reader and other weekly newspapers across the country. David sold his first crossword to The Times in 1996, when he was a sophomore in college, and he has been making puzzles ever since. — W.S.



ACROSS

1 What can fall off a shelf
8 Host of MSNBC's ''PoliticsNation'' beginning in 2011
16 Be profane
20 Something never seen at night
21 Beckoning words
22 For ____ amount of time
23 Nobody but the guy gettin' married on his feet?
25 Put up with
26 Captures
27 House vote
28 Gettysburg general George
29 Like screwball comedies
33 Pig food
34 Gish ____, novelist of ''The Resisters'' and ''Typical American''
35 Sickly-looking
36 Olympic equipment weighing less than 770 grams each
38 Winter item you'll be wearin' for years?
42 Statistic tracked at census.gov/popclock
44 ''Mixed Marriage'' playwright St. John Greer ____
45 Reduced in rank
46 Receiver of an all-points bulletin
48 Longtime Yankees first baseman Mark
50 Simile's center
51 Row
52 God who becomes a goddess when an ''r'' is removed
53 Spam sender
54 James of ''The Godfather''
58 Danger when walkin' in a silo?
61 One who delivers
62 Mansfield of old Hollywood
63 ''Er, uh, that is …''
64 Dada pioneer
65 ____ Paulo
66 Rock singers?
67 Hedge fund titan nicknamed ''The Palindrome''
68 ''Sorry, am ____ your way?''
69 Drivin' around the lot with pop-pop?
71 Overhead expenses?
72 Private Twitter transmissions, for short
73 ''Absofruitalicious'' cereal, in ads
74 Sponge alternative
75 Slangy possessive
76 What a pro bono lawyer provides
78 Very observant person
80 Shoulder blade
84 Pickup truck capacity, maybe
86 Detects
87 Sayin' ''Look, here's the thing about dry land …''?
90 To-dos
91 Batting ninth
92 The Children's Defense Fund, e.g., in brief
93 Medical breakthrough
95 ''Ish''
96 Boiling mad
97 West Bank grp.
98 Realize
101 Kind
102 What was causin' the doctor to check for joint pain?
108 Very consequential
109 The North Pole vis-à-vis the South Pole, e.g.
110 Go as low as
111 French/Belgian river
112 Apollo and others
113 ''Understood''

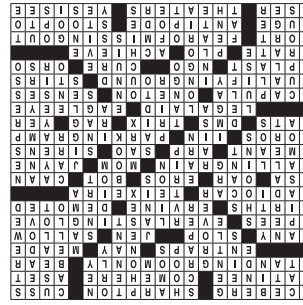
DOWN

1 Online exchange, in brief
2 Animal feared by an ailurophobe
3 ''What's your ____?'' (question to a guest en route)
4 Recycling container
5 Michael who wrote ''The Neverending Story''
6 Restricts, with ''in''
7 Washing machine setting
8 Windshield clearer
9 Certain earring
10 Singer Tori
11 ''What's the Frequency, Kenneth?'' band
12 Call of the wild?
13 One trading dollars for quarters
14 Paris suburb
15 French marshal in the Napoleonic Wars
16 Camila with the 2018 No. 1 hit ''Havana''
17 Employ with regularity
18 Bird also known as a little auk
19 Scattered (about)
24 Blue Muppet with a pink nose
28 Obsidian, once
29 Aquarium creature with black-and-white stripes
30 Capital in the South Pacific
31 Teasing words when someone starts listing the digits of pi, say
32 Mythical creature seen on old Bhutanese stamps
34 Rock's Joplin
35 Hägar the Horrible's dog
37 Sure winners
39 Cross-country camping expedition, maybe
40 Treat as a bed
41 Hit the nail on the head, e.g.
43 Meager
47 Pope Francis' homeland: Abbr.
49 Modern library borrowing
52 Bring in
54 Longtime media columnist David
55 Mate's reply
56 Basketball Hall-of-Famer who was the first woman to sign an N.B.A. contract
57 Single-serving coffee brand
59 Landlocked Asian country
60 ____ Gorbachev, former first lady of the Soviet Union
61 His tombstone reads ''Workers of all lands unite''
62 Moves like Jell-O
65 Told
66 Hiccups
68 Coming-out announcement
69 Buttinsky
70 Certain nest egg, for short
72 Blue-and-white earthenware pottery
73 Dramatic ballroom dance
76 Two-time Best Actress winner Rainer
77 Eva of ''Desperate Housewives''
78 Ho-hum feelings
79 Opposite of exo-
80 Soft and wet
81 ____ oxide (red compound)
82 Egg-carton spec
83 Special dinner order
85 Boo-boos
88 Home past curfew
89 Like the Met Gala
94 Online notice for a party
97 Phnom ____, Cambodia
98 ''____ to tyrants, and my country's friend'' (words of Cato in ''Julius Caesar'')
99 Naval officer: Abbr.
100 Grandson of Eve
102 Budgetary excess
103 Make a decision
104 ''There but for the grace of God ____''
105 Intel missions
106 Western native
107 About one inch of a foot

GUNSTON STREET

"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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Mickey Guyton tells her story in "Bridges," a six-song EP set to be released Sept. 11.

Casting aside self-doubt

Mickey Guyton speaks her truth, claims space in country music

BY KRISTIN M. HALL
Associated Press

Mickey Guyton is turning a mirror on country music by speaking her truth and reclaiming both her career and identity.

Delivering a one-two punch of important songs this year leading up to her first new EP in five years, Guyton is not holding back her powerful voice any longer. Guyton has re-introduced herself after years of internal doubt and feeling unable to be herself as a Black woman in a genre dominated by white men.

"I was trying to write everybody else's song and everybody else's story when I had a unique story of my own," said Guyton, 37.

The six-song EP called "Bridges," coming out on Sept. 11, contains "What Are You Gonna Tell Her," a pointed critique of the barriers that women face, and "Black Like Me," revealing her own early experiences with racism. Other songs like "Heaven Down Here" and "Bridges" show her attempting to bridge the cultural and ideological divide.

Her musical career plans this year were thrown off course due to the coronavirus pandemic, but she kept marching forward anyway. Parts of the album were recorded or written from her home in Los Angeles, where she's been isolating with her husband, with remote help from her producer Karen Kosowski in Nashville. Guyton set up a DIY vocal studio and started learning audio recording software.

"We worked out a flow where she can just sit back and sing and I can produce her over Zoom as if she was in the vocal booth next to me," said Kosowski, who also co-wrote two of the songs on the EP with Guyton.

Guyton's impressive vocals don't need much adornment, but Guyton pushed herself on the title track, "Bridges," a gospel influenced song about finding common ground instead of divisiveness.

"When she sang the vocal on 'Bridges,' her husband, Grant, ran into the room from the other room, going, 'What is happening in here? That's sounds amazing!'" said Kosowski.

Although she stands on the shoulders of other Black female country artists like Linda Martell, The Pointer Sisters and Rissi Palmer, Guyton has had to chart her own path in country music. The Texas-born singer fell in love with country music from an early age and learned about Dolly Parton from her grandmother. But after being signed to Capitol Record Nashville in 2011, she's had to constantly stand up to questions about her authenticity.

"That was such a frustrating thing for me to have to deal with, because if I were white with blonde hair and green or blue or brown eyes, it wouldn't even be a question," said Guyton.

Guyton was lauded in 2015 for her debut single, "Better Than You Left Me," which country radio seemed eager to adopt at the onset but peaked only at No. 34. Like many women in country music, her songs lingered on the low end of the country radio charts even as bro country lookalikes zoomed to the top.

After a couple of years of struggle, Guyton wanted to walk away. But supporters like Cindy Mabe, president of Universal Music Group Nashville, wouldn't let her.

"Her truth has come over time because she figured out who she was," said Mabe. "I don't know of a more fearless artist than Mickey Guyton."

Mabe asked her to sing "What Are You Gonna Tell Her?" at the label's annual showcase for country radio programmers in February. Her pointed questions about the inequalities that women face was not lost on the room full of radio gatekeepers whose stations keep women's voices to a bare minimum.

"When I got up and they said my name to walk on the stage, I said, 'Oh, curse word. This could be the end of my career,'" Guyton said with a laugh.

Instead, the entire audience gave her a standing ovation as Guyton fought back tears.

Guyton wrote "Black Like Me" before the deaths this year of George Floyd, Ahmaud Aubrey and Breonna Taylor that sparked worldwide protests against racism. When she released it on Black Out Tuesday, she braced for the impact.

"In the country music industry, we're about peace, love and harmony, and we don't want to ruffle any feathers. We want everybody to feel comfortable," Guyton said. "I've been in a lot of rooms where everybody else is comfortable and I'm very uncomfortable."

She recalled being at post-Grammy Awards label party and meeting a high-powered male executive from a streaming service. She was hoping for streaming support for "Black Like Me," and instinctively tried to put her best foot forward.

"I perked up, batted my eyelashes, and did the thing to get my opportunity and I walked away completely disgusted with myself," Guyton recalled. "And I was like, 'What am I doing? Why do I need to perk up and bat my eyelashes to get a song called 'Black Like Me' played?'"

Guyton has already seen the effect that "Black Like Me" has had on social media, watching people all over the world sing along with and identify with the lyrics "If you think we live in the land of the free/You should try to be black like me."

"Country music is three chords and the truth. This is my truth," said Guyton.

Broadway musical 'Diana' creates version for Netflix

Associated Press

The Broadway musical "Diana" isn't waiting for theaters to reopen in New York to offer its show to a live audience — it's going to Netflix.

In an unconventional step, the cast and crew will reunite in an empty theater to perform the musical for cameras and put the finished product on the digital platform for broadcast next year, before the show welcomes a live audience again.

"We speak for the entire company when we say that we couldn't be more excited to finally be able to share our show with theater lovers everywhere. Though there is no substitute for the live theater, we are honored to be a part of the quality entertainment that Netflix provides its subscribers worldwide," the show's producers said in a statement Wednesday.

Producers have worked out safety protocols with Actors' Equity Association, the labor union representing actors and stage managers. The provisions include initial and recurring testing for Equity members, an isolation plan for the actors and stage managers, and changes to ensure ventilation in the back of the theater, among other requirements.

Netflix has several live-capture Broadway shows in its library — like Bruce Springsteen's one-man musical and Kerry Washington's "American Son" — but the cameras usually came in to film at the end of the live show's run, or the release was made after the show's conclusion.

"Diana," which tells the story of the late Diana Spencer, started previews on Broadway in early March but never officially opened at the Longacre Theatre before the pandemic wiped out all live theater. Producers said Wednesday that the show's new opening night will be May 25, 2021.

Data has indicated that instead of cannibalizing fans, broadcasts of theatrical shows actually may whet an audience's appetite. A recent survey by ticketing app TodayTix found that more than a third of respondents who hadn't seen "Hamilton" live were more likely to buy a ticket after seeing the recent broadcast on Disney+.

"Diana" is the tragic and yet inspiring story of a young woman learning to break free of the confines of the British royal family. It has songs by Bon Jovi keyboardist David Bryan and a story by playwright Joe DiPietro. Jeanna De Waal plays the title role.

AMC to offer 15-cent movie tickets

AMC Theatres, the nation's largest movie theater chain, will reopen in the U.S. on Aug. 20 with retro ticket prices of 15 cents per movie.

AMC Entertainment, which owns the chain, said Thursday that it expects to open the doors to more than 100 cinemas — or about a sixth of its nationwide locations — on Aug. 20 with throwback pricing for a day.

AMC theaters have reopened in numerous international countries but have remained shuttered in the U.S. since March. The chain touted the reopening as "Movies in 2020 at 1920 Prices."

During its opening-day promotion, AMC will show catalog films, including "Ghostbusters," "Black Panther," "Back to the Future" and "Grease." Those older films will continue to play afterward for $5.

AMC and other chains have said they will operate at reduced capacity to facilitate social distancing, along with increased theater cleaning and required mask wearing.

Parton, Bieber among virtual TV festival stars

Dolly Parton, Cate Blanchett and Justin Bieber are part of the virtual edition of the Paley Center's annual festival celebrating TV programs and their makers.

PaleyFest LA, responding to pandemic restrictions, taped socially distanced discussions with stars and producers that began streaming free this week on the Paley Center's YouTube channel.

The showcased series includes "Dolly Parton's Heartstrings," "Justin Bieber: Seasons," "Late Night with Seth Meyers," "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," "Mrs. America," "One Day at a Time," "Outlander," "Ozark" and "Queer Eye."

Neil Young disconnects from Facebook, Google

In the midst of his battle against President Trump, Neil Young has decided to take on a couple of other sizable entities — Facebook and Google.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, who lived in the Bay Area for decades before departing for Southern California a few years back, has announced he'll be spending thousands of dollars to disconnect his popular Neil Young Archives music site from the two online giants.

Young's beef with Facebook has been going on for quite some time, with the rocker working on trying to "disengage (the archives) from the corrupt social platform" for several months, according to an email sent out from Young's Archives.

It's unclear exactly why Young now also wants to disassociate from the Google platform and thus eliminate both Google (and Facebook) logins from his website.

Other news

■ **Sarah Cooper**, whose lip-sync parodies of President Donald Trump are an online sensation, is coming to Netflix with a variety special. "Everything's Fine" will debut this fall.

Compiled from wire reports

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Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Europe commander
Lt. Col. Richard McClintic, Pacific commander
Caroline E. Miller, Europe Business Operations
Joshua M. Lashbrook, Pacific Chief of Staff

EDITORIAL

Terry Leonard, Editor
leonard.terry@stripes.com
Robert H. Reid, Senior Managing Editor
reid.robert@stripes.com
Tina Croley, Managing Editor for Content
croley.tina@stripes.com
Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation
moores.sean@stripes.com
Joe Gromelski, Managing Editor for Digital
gromelski.joe@stripes.com

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast
Erik Slavin, Europe & Mideast Bureau Chief
slavin.erik@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9350; DSN (314)583.9350

Pacific
Aaron Kidd, Pacific Bureau Chief
kidd.aaron@stripes.com
+81.42.552.2511 ext. 88380; DSN (315)227.7380

Washington
Joseph Cacchioli, Washington Bureau Chief
cacchioli.joseph@stripes.com
(+1)(202)886-0033
Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News
bowers.brian@stripes.com

CIRCULATION

Mideast
Robert Reismann, Mideast Circulation Manager
robert.w.reismann.naf@mail.mil
xsscirculation@stripes.com
DSN (314)583-9111

Europe
Karen Lewis, Community Engagement Manager
lewis.karen@stripes.com
memberservices@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9090; DSN (314)583.9090

Pacific
Mari Mori, customerhelp@stripes.com
+81-6 6385.3171; DSN (315)227.7333

CONTACT US

Washington
tel: (+1)202.886.0003
633 3rd St. NW, Suite 116, Washington, DC 20001-3050

Reader letters
letters@stripes.com

Additional contacts
stripes.com/contactus

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OPINION

Harris is a party-friendly pick, perfect for Biden

By David Byler
The Washington Post

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden is an intensely risk-averse politician. In his nearly 50 years in public life, he has always positioned himself in the middle of the Democratic Party — not too far right or too far left. He spent roughly a decade and a half in the Senate, making connections and deepening his understanding of politics, before trying to run for president for the first time. And in the 2020 primary, he refused to advocate for Medicare-for-all, support reparations for slavery or take other stances that could damage him in the general election.

In his vice-presidential search, Biden again took the safe route. Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif. — his newly announced running mate — is a historic choice as a Black and Asian American woman, but she's also a small-c conservative pick. Harris isn't apt to cause any problems for Biden on the campaign trail, and her presence on the ticket will pre-emptively smooth over demographic concerns, bringing both relative youth and diversity important to a party increasingly reliant on people of color. Harris might not add many voters to the campaign, but she'll help Biden run out the clock — and that's exactly what he needs to do.

Right now, Biden is running the campaign equivalent of a "prevent defense" strategy in football. He's not dominating the news cycle, and he doesn't need to — every day that President Donald Trump wastes on a bizarre tweet or a bad news conference is one that Biden wins. Harris is a good pick because she won't disrupt that pattern. The national media already knows who she is and vetted her during the 2020 presidential primary. She has shown that she's a talented speaker, and she'll likely perform well on the campaign trail and in her debate with Vice President Mike Pence.

She's not the most moderate pick available to Biden, but the inevitable "socialist" attack line won't work quite as well as it would with someone like Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass. Trump tried this approach after the announcement Tuesday, labeling Harris "just about the most liberal person in the U.S. Senate," and observing, "I would have thought that Biden would have tried to stay away from that a little bit." But it's going to be hard to make that stick. Harris is far less liberal than Warren or Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.

In short, there's no reason to think Harris would spoil Biden's eight-point lead over Trump — and that's a big point in her favor.

Harris also helps Biden pre-emptively solve some of his demographic problems.

Biden is 77, and if he wins the election he'll be the oldest president to take office. If he had picked a running mate also in her 70s, as is Warren, he would have spent much of the campaign — and his early days in office — fending off questions about the collective ticket's age and any health problems they might develop. But Harris is squarely in her 50s, which is, according to the plurality of Democrats, the ideal age for a president. She's in a sweet spot where she's old enough to have sufficient experience and young enough to allay health concerns.

Just as importantly, Harris brings racial diversity. Democrats want to be the party of racial equality: Ever since Michael Brown was shot in Ferguson, Mo., in 2014, Democratic voters have been moving left on race and are more willing than ever to attribute racial inequities to systemic discrimination. This summer, Democrats largely embraced the nationwide protests against racism and police brutality. By picking Harris, Biden has acknowledged the importance of those movements, and of his own reliance on Black voters. If he had picked a different candidate, he might have alienated his allies and stirred up dissension only weeks before early voting begins.

At the same time, there's no clear regional or swing-state advantage from picking Harris. Democrats already have California firmly in the bag. Harris doesn't help Biden bring back a wayward element of the party: The vast majority of voters passed on her during the primary, and Biden seems to have already unified the backers of his former opponents.

But Harris doesn't need to add voters to the Democratic coalition. Biden already has enough support to win. He just needed to find a partner who could help him hold onto that lead and govern well if he wins.

David Byler is a data analyst and political columnist focusing on elections, polling, demographics and statistics.

Military readiness' future is personalized, high-tech

By Dr. Phil Wagner and Malcolm B. Frost
Special to Stars and Stripes

According to the Congressional Research Service, 2020 marks a full decade that the year-over-year number of combat deaths suffered by the U.S. military has declined. The combination of fewer overseas combat operations and technological advances (and perhaps COVID-19 in 2020) had led to a period of relative safety and health for the American warfighter. Unfortunately, there remains a serious hidden threat to the physical well-being of American service members: noncombat musculoskeletal injuries (MSKIs).

Due to the visible scars associated with the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, most Americans believe that combat is the chief source of injuries for service members. However, according to a March 2020 study in Military Medicine, MSKIs "may account for nearly 60% of soldiers' limited duty days and 65% of soldiers who cannot deploy for medical reasons." Another report shows that 70% of these MSKIs were caused simply by military-related training and overuse.

Any individual injury is a cause for concern. When tallied across the entire armed forces, chronic noncombat injuries create incredible challenges to long-term readiness. The Department of Defense has said that on any given day, around 14% of the total force is nondeployable. One of the most common reasons is due to training injuries. Considered alongside the rising numbers of Americans that are unable to serve due to obesity, legal issues or other disqualifiers, it is imperative that we keep service members fit to serve.

In addition to the human cost involved, there is also a tremendous financial cost to the military and to the taxpayer. The military spends about $3.7 billion annually as a result of soldiers experiencing MSKIs. Left untreated, MSKIs often become chronic or even disabling. Indeed, osteoarthritis (a common overuse injury) typically develops in only 20% of civilians, but is present in 33% of servicemembers and veterans. This results in the government providing medical care to many servicemembers long after their term of service ends, through the Department of Veterans Affairs, further extending the duration of care and increasing long-term costs.

Fortunately, military leaders are aware of these troubling statistics and have taken critical steps to reverse these trends. Several branches, including the Marines, have begun working with physical therapists, strength coaches and athletic trainers to improve fitness and prevent injuries within individual units. The Army is in the process of rolling out a similar Holistic Health and Fitness program. To immediately change the culture of fitness, the Army also just instituted a new fitness test for the first time in four decades. The new Army Combat Fitness Test better reflects the physical demands of service and is forcing long overdue cultural change that will result in increased health and fitness levels. Though these efforts have been criticized by some for their start-up cost, the long-term increase in readiness and fiscal savings will dwarf initial investment costs.

Changes this significant require utilizing the latest technology to accelerate gains, track progress, and measure success. This summer the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed their own versions of the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act. Part of the legislation requires DOD to conduct a study on the effectiveness of utilizing force plate machine learning technology to measurably track biomechanics. This will allow the military to predict injuries, tailor individual fitness programs, and facilitate rehabilitation — thus resulting in cumulative improvement in individual fitness levels and overall military readiness.

Our company, Sparta Science, is an industry leader in using Force Plate Machine Learning technology to improve military health outcomes. Thanks to our initial success working with partners across different branches of the U.S. military, we believe this year's NDAA can be a game-changer for this military fitness revolution.

Using this technology, service members perform a 5-minute scan assessment and are immediately shown their risk level for developing MSKIs. Commanders and leaders — with the advice of assigned fitness and medical professionals — would develop customized training programs to strengthen trouble areas while minimizing the chances for injury while on duty. Rather than the current annual physical fitness tests, service members can be scanned weekly or monthly, giving leaders the ability to hold individuals accountable for progress and a clearer, up-to-date appraisal of overall fitness levels.

A recent study by Penn Medicine showed that Division I athletes who used this technology experienced a 19% reduction in total injuries when compared to a control group. We foresee a drastic reduction in the number and severity of injuries — not to mention medical costs — for service members taking advantage of this technology, as well.

We applaud Congress for passing this forward-thinking legislation on behalf of our nation's service members. With the president's forthcoming signature of the bill, we are confident the U.S. armed forces will be better postured for this new era of fitness, resulting in long-term force protection and increased readiness.

Dr. Phil Wagner is the founder and CEO of Sparta Science. Malcolm B. Frost, a retired U.S. Army major general, is a strategic adviser to Sparta.

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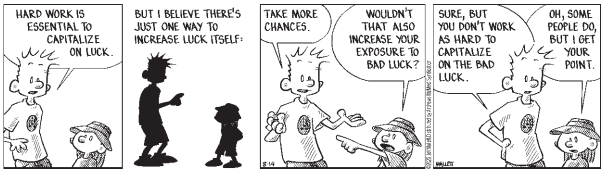

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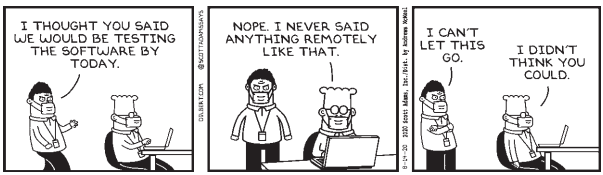

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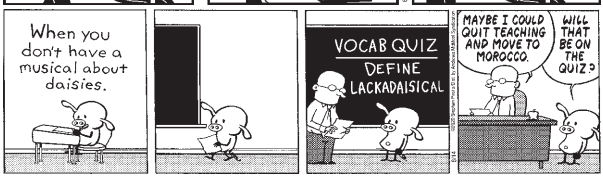
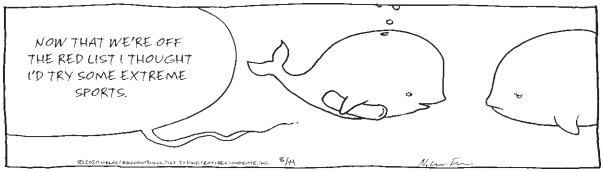


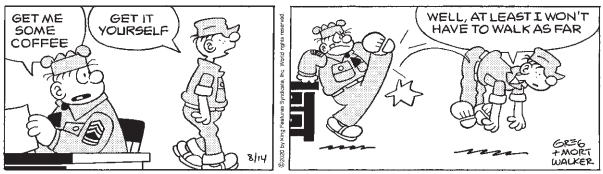
Non Sequitur

Candorville

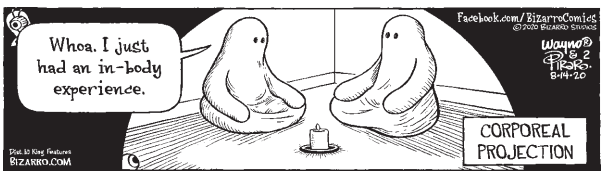
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



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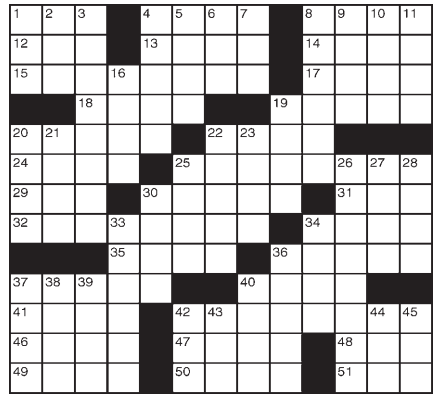


ACROSS

1 Pickle holder
4 Balkan native
8 Fill fully
12 Japanese sash
13 Composer Porter
14 Secondhand
15 Morning wear
17 Cherry type
18 Speed
19 Persnickety
20 Enjoyed Vail
22 Slope transport
24 Low digits
25 Frigid tub session
29 Gore and Pacino
30 Varieties
31 Parched
32 Toweling-off spots
34 Eager
35 Morays
36 Investigate
37 "Hogwash!"
40 Avocado dip, for short
41 Stir up
42 Backyard splashing place
46 Vogue rival
47 Beatnik's assent
48 Bar bill
49 Indigent
50 Big name in cosmetics
51 Conceit

DOWN

1 Task
2 Lawyers' gp.
3 Most luxurious
4 Seafood selection
5 Weaver's machine
6 Cleric's tunic
7 Geese formation
8 Outlying area
9 Unrepaired
10 Till bills
11 Jittery
16 Tackles weeds
19 Crazes
20 Wild guess
21 Caffeine-rich nut
22 Civil wrongs
23 Diner orders
25 Furnace fuel
26 Supporter of a cause
27 Chicago paper, for short
28 Jekyll's bad side
30 Diving duck
33 Shaman, for one
34 Speedy steed
36 Roly-poly
37 Get ready, briefly
38 Alone
39 Hawaiian city
40 Sand
42 Pen name
43 Altar affirmative
44 Price point?
45 "Big Little Lies" airer

Answer to Previous Puzzle

I	N	N	S		S	E	T		S	C	A	M
B	E	E	T		A	P	R		W	H	I	R
M	A	R	E		T	A	I		O	A	R	S
S	T	O	P	B	Y		B	A	R	N		
			H	O	R	S	E	S	E	N	S	E
F	A	C	E	D		A	C	H		E	U	R
I	S	O	N		M	B	A		M	L	I	I
R	T	E		S	A	L		P	A	S	T	E
S	I	X	T	H	S	E	N	S	E			
		I	O	U	S		E	I	S	N	E	R
S	O	S	O		I	S	P		T	Y	R	O
P	U	T	T		V	I	A		R	E	A	M
F	I	S	H		E	S	L		O	T	T	O

8-14 CRYPTOQUIP

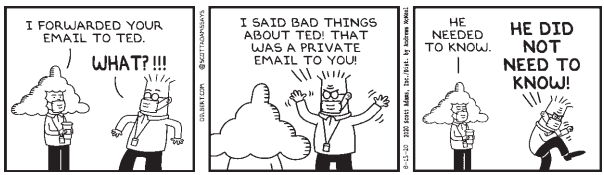
C M Q Z R J W K I J D U R Q K K Q C U A - Y J J Z U I A B V I R Q Z R M B D T Q A V B U Y T K B P L O U J Y O J P U Z M B D T ? L U U H B D T I W R H.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: TWO NOTABLE MIMICKING BIRDS THAT WOULD SPEAK THE POEM "ODE ON A GRECIAN URN": PAIR-O'-KEATS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: W equals U

Frazz

Dilbert



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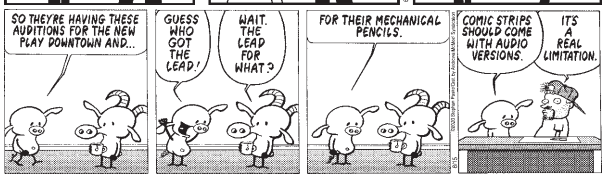

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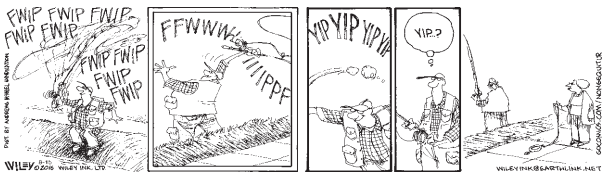

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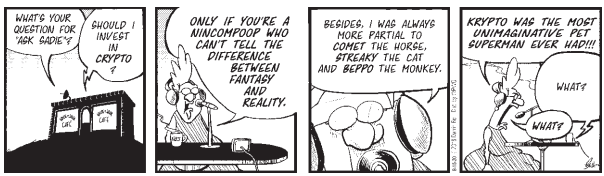

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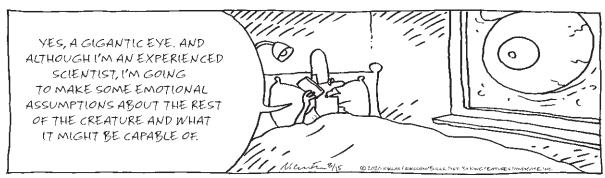

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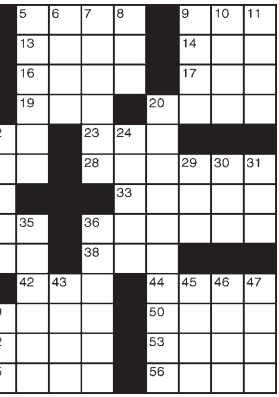

ACROSS

1 Tiger Woods' game
5 Fed. workplace monitor
9 "Where — you?"
12 Black-and-white cookie
13 Autobahn auto
14 Proof letters
15 Cicatrix
16 Nutmeg spice
17 Half of bi-
18 "Funny!"
19 Calif. clock setting
20 Lose color
21 Salonga of "Miss Saigon"
23 Judge Lance
25 Affluence
28 Awful
32 Soil
33 Knight wear
34 Obligations
36 Two-footed creatures
37 Hosp. scan
38 Yucatan year
39 Green gem
42 Great weight
44 Easy targets
48 Sch. URL ender
49 Chat
50 Verifiable
51 Bro's kin
52 Desire
53 Exile isle
54 Potent stick
55 Russian ruler
56 Colonial seamstress

DOWN

1 "Holy cow!"
2 Killer whale
3 Wife of Jacob
4 Eternally
5 Tuba sound
6 Hot tubs
7 Frenzied
8 Pub order
9 Water color?
10 Tear
11 Actress Falco
20 Type of bed
22 Old anesthetic
24 Commuter's choice
25 Marry
26 — Claire, Wisc.
27 Curator's concern
29 Montmartre Mrs.
30 Chic, to Austin Powers
31 Decade parts (Abbr.)
35 Indian instruments
36 Monopoly job
39 Witticism
40 Tennis score
41 Attic buildup
43 Gymnast Korbut
45 Woody Guthrie's son
46 Taverns
47 Salty septet
49 Boy king

Answer to Previous Puzzle

J	A	R		S	L	A	V		S	A	T	E
O	B	I		C	O	L	E		U	S	E	D
B	A	T	H	R	O	B	E		B	I	N	G
		Z	O	O	M			F	U	S	S	Y
S	K	I	E	D		T	B	A	R			
T	O	E	S		C	O	L	D	B	A	T	H
A	L	S		S	O	R	T	S		D	R	Y
B	A	T	H	M	A	T	S		A	V	I	D
			E	E	L	S		P	R	O	B	E
P	S	H	A	W			G	U	A	C		
R	O	I	L		B	I	R	D	B	A	T	H
E	L	L	E		I	D	I	G		T	A	B
P	O	O	R		C	O	T	Y		E	G	O

8-15 CRYPTOQUIP

Z B W H Q K B G ' O B K S I Q W J H T Q T C H G F X P I J B I X G S E H Z B T S Y B M , G R G M E S C I P W Y H G R " G J T B B F H O P Y Q T S B B I ! "

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT COULD ONE CALL A WEB-FOOTED BIRD CATCHING A BRIEF GLIMPSE OF SOMETHING? PEEKING DUCK.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals K

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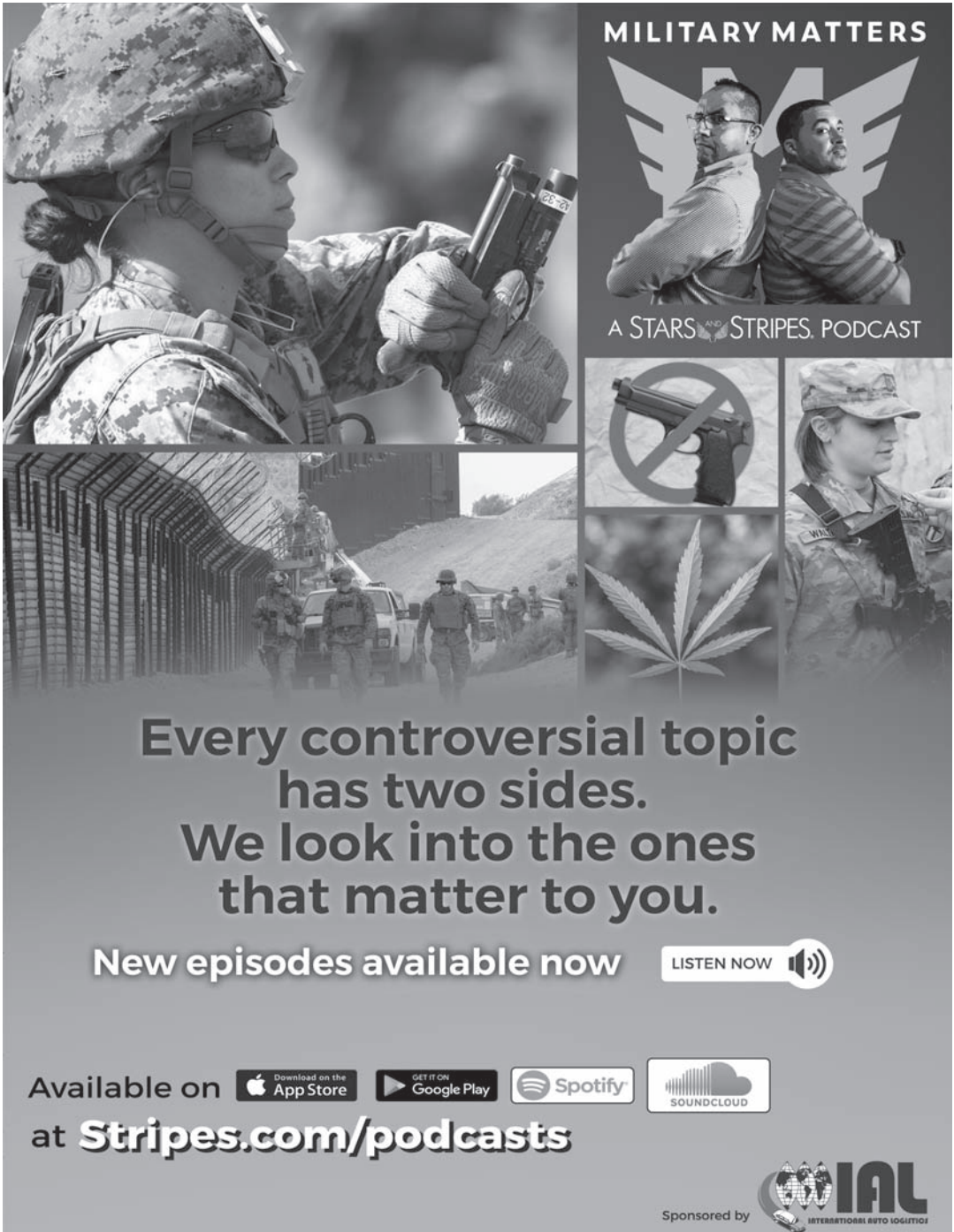
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Pro soccer

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Columbus	4	0	1	13	9	1
Toronto FC	2	0	3	9	9	7
Orlando City	2	1	2	8	7	5
Philadelphia	2	1	2	8	7	7
Montreal	2	2	1	7	8	8
New York	2	2	1	7	5	7
Atlanta	2	3	0	6	4	5
New England	1	1	3	6	4	4
Cincinnati	2	3	0	6	6	9
D.C. United	1	2	2	5	6	7
Chicago	1	3	1	4	4	8
Nashville SC	1	2	0	3	2	3
New York City FC	1	4	0	3	2	6
Inter Miami CF	0	5	0	0	3	8

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Sporting Kc	4	1	0	12	13	5
Minnesota United	3	0	2	11	12	6
Portland	3	1	1	10	8	7
Los Angeles FC	2	0	3	9	15	10
Seattle	2	1	2	8	7	4
San Jose	1	2	2	8	10	10
Colorado	2	2	1	7	8	9
Vancouver	2	3	0	6	7	10
Real Salt Lake	1	1	3	6	3	3
FC Dallas	1	1	1	4	4	3
Houston	0	2	3	3	6	11
LA Galaxy	0	3	2	2	5	11

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

MLS is Back tournament
Semifinals
Wednesday, Aug. 5
Portland 2, Philadelphia 1
Thursday, Aug. 6
Orlando City 3, Minnesota 1
Final
Tuesday, Aug. 11
Portland 2, Orlando City 1
Regular season
Wednesday's game
Nashville 1, FC Dallas 0
Sunday's game
Nashville at FC Dallas
Thursday, Aug. 20
New York City FC at New York
Chicago at Columbus
Friday, Aug. 21
D.C. United at Cincinnati
Sporting Kansas City at Minnesota
FC Dallas at Houston
Philadelphia at New England
Saturday, Aug. 22
LA Galaxy at Los Angeles FC
Nashville at Atlanta
Orlando City at Miami
Real Salt Lake at Colorado
Sunday, Aug. 23
Seattle at Portland
Monday, Aug. 24
Columbus at New York City FC

Tennis

Prague Open

Thursday
At TK Sparta Praha
Prague
Purse: $225,500
Surface: Red clay
Women's Singles
Round of 16

Eugenie Bouchard, Canada, def. Tamara Zidansek, Slovenia, 7-6 (2), 6-7 (2), 6-2.

Sara Sorribes Tormo, Spain, def. Laura Siegemund, Germany, 6-2, 6-3.

Magdalena Frech, Poland, def. Arantxa Rus, Netherlands, 6-3, 2-6, 6-4.

Women's Doubles
Quarterfinals

Lucie Hradecka and Kristyna Pliskova, Czech Republic, def. Renata Voracova, Czech Republic, and Cornelia Lister, Sweden, 6-3, 6-4.

Raluca-Ioana Olaru and Monica Niculescu (4), Romania, def. Lidziya Marozava, Belarus, and Yana Sizikova, Russia, 6-2, 6-1.

AP sportlight

Aug. 14

1903 — Jim Jeffries knocks out Jim Corbett in the 10th round to retain his world heavyweight title in San Francisco.

1977 — Lanny Wadkins beats Gene Littler on the third hole of sudden death to take the PGA championship.

1977 — The New York Cosmos, led by Pele, play before a record crowd of 77,961 at the Meadowlands in East Rutherford, N.J., the most to see a soccer game in the United States. The Cosmos beat the Fort Lauderdale Strikers 8-3 in a NASL quarterfinal playoff game.

1994 — Nick Price wins the PGA Championship in record fashion. Price finished at 11-under 269 for 72 holes, six strokes ahead of Corey Pavin. It is the lowest stroke total in an American major championship.

Deals

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
American League

BOSTON RED SOX — Placed OF Andrew Benintendi on the 10-day IL. Recalled RHP Ryan Weber from alternate training site.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Recalled RHP Aaron Siegers from alternate training site. Placed RHP Andrew Kittridge on the 60-day IL. Invited C Kevan Smith to spring training then sent outright to alternate training site.

TEXAS RANGERS — Recalled RHP Jimmy Herget from alternate training site. Invited RHPs Cole Winn and Ricky Vanasco to spring training at alternate training site. Placed RHP Nick Goody on IL.

National League

ATLANTA BRAVES — Traded 1B Yonder Alonso to the San Diego Padres for cash considerations.

CINCINNATI REDS — Activated LHP Wade Miley from the 10-day IL. Optioned RHP Joel Kuhnel to alternate training site.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Recalled RHP Tony Gonsolin from alternate training site. Optioned LHP Adam Kolarek to alternate training site.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Recalled RHP Trevor Cahill and RHP Dereck Rodriguez from alternate training site. Optioned RHP Rico Garcia and LGP Conner Menez to alternate training site and added to taxi squad. Designated RHP Andrew Triggs for assignment.

BASKETBALL

NBA — Suspended Milwaukee F Giannis Antetokounmpo one game without pay for headbutting an opponent in an Aug. 11 game against Washington.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

ATLANTA FALCONS — Waived OT Hunter Atkinson.

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Signed RB Kenjon Barner.

BUFFALO BILLS — Signed HC Sean McDermott to a multi-year contract extension. Activated WR Cole Beasley from the non-football injury list.

CHICAGO BEARS — Signed DB Marqui Christian.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Signed DT Mike Daniels to a one-year contract. Waived DT Tyler Clark and DT Jeffery Whatley.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Signed DE Geoge Obinna. Waived DT Jeffery Whatley.

DENVER BRONCOS — Signed OT Demar Dotson.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed WR Malik Turner. Waived S Frankie Griffin.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Activated WR T.Y. Hilton from the nonfootball injury list. Waived WR Malik Henry.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Activated TE James from the PUP list. Signed DE Josh Mauro. Waived WR C.J. Board.

LOS ANGELES RAMS — Waived CB Levonta Taylor.

MIAMI DOLPHINS — Signed DT Brandin Bryant. Claimed QB Breon Borders off waivers from Pittsburgh.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Signed OL Tyler Gauthier.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Waived LB Mark McLaurin and TE Kyle Markaway.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Signed OT William Sweet.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Waived CB Kemah Siverand.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Waived WR Travis Jonsen.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Placed OLB Reggie Gilbert on the injured/reserve list.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

NHL — Announced that Rod Brind'Amour has been find $25,000 for comments made following the game against the Boston Bruins.

SOCCER
National Women's Soccer League

ORLANDO PRIDE — Loaned M Camila Martins Pereira to SE Palmeiras.

Pro basketball

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	6	3	.667	—
Indiana	3	5	.375	2½
Washington	3	5	.375	2½
Connecticut	3	6	.333	3
Atlanta	2	7	.222	4
New York	1	7	.125	4½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	8	1	.889	—
Las Vegas	6	2	.750	1½
Minnesota	6	2	.750	1½
Los Angeles	5	3	.625	2½
Phoenix	5	4	.556	3
Dallas	3	6	.333	5

Tuesday's games
Las Vegas 98, Indiana 79
Minnesota 98, Washington 48
Los Angeles 93, New York 78
Wednesday's games
Connecticut 70, Dallas 66
Chicago 89, Phoenix 71
Seattle 100, Atlanta 63
Thursday's games
Indiana at New York
Los Angeles at Washington
Minnesota at Las Vegas
Friday's games
Connecticut at Chicago
Seattle at Dallas
Atlanta at Phoenix
Saturday's games
Washington at Las Vegas
Los Angeles at Indiana
New York at Minnesota

Big 12 to have fall sports

By Dave Skretta
Associated Press

Orlin Wagner/AP

Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby says it's uncertain whether the College Football Playoff will still take place this year, with two of the Power Five conferences opting to shoot for a spring season.

Baylor coach Dave Aranda could see a weight being lifted off the shoulders of his players during a meeting Tuesday night, when word began to filter out that the Big 12 Conference would attempt to play football this fall.

"You could just see the joy," Aranda said. "Everyone was smiling. Guys were cracking jokes, were excited."

Months of uncertainty had finally given the Bears and their conference rivals the slightest bit of clarity. If all goes according to plan, they will take the field for a nonconference game next month, then begin a round-robin league schedule on Sept. 26 with the intention of crowning a Big 12 champion on Dec. 12 near Dallas.

That doesn't mean they will be competing for a national title, though. The Atlantic Coast and Southeastern conferences have so far joined the Big 12 in playing this fall, but the Big Ten, Pac-12 and many smaller conferences are trying for the spring.

So will there be two national champions, like there sometimes were when poll voters declared who was best? Will an autumn champion play a spring champion? Will this year, like so many things around the world, simply be one to forget?

Those are among the questions that still must be answered.

"We have a College Football Playoff call next week and we'll obviously talk about this. It's going to be a while into the season before all that is resolved," Big 12 commissioner Bob Bowlsby said Wednesday. "There probably isn't any obvious reason why it couldn't work to continue to try to play a postseason, but you're looking at a December-January time frame right in the heart of the virus season. I just think it's too early. We're going to have to be patient."

Patience is something the league has been preaching since March, when the coronavirus pandemic began shutting down sports in the U.S. as it turned the world upside down.

The Big 12's board of directors have been speaking on an almost-daily basis with infectious disease experts, scientists and physicians while getting the input of coaches, administrators and athletes. It came up with a plan it believes will work.

Fall sports will begin after Sept. 1 with football playing a schedule in which each team can play one nonconference game before league play begins a few weeks later.

The schools will all play each other to give them 10 total games.

All athletes will be subject to three tests per week — likely Sunday, Wednesday and Friday — in "high contact" sports such as football, volleyball and soccer. Should an athlete test positive, they would be subject to echocardiograms, a cardiac MRI, blood tests and other examinations before they are cleared to return.

Nonconference opponents also must adhere to Big 12 standards the week before competition.

MLS players booed for kneeling

By Anne M. Peterson
Associated Press

Smiley N. Pool, The Dallas Morning News/AP

FC Dallas, left, and Nashville SC players kneel during the national anthem Wednesday at Toyota Stadium in Frisco, Texas.

There was a smattering of boos when players from FC Dallas and Nashville SC collectively took a knee during the national anthem before their MLS game on Wednesday night in Frisco, Texas.

Dallas defender Reggie Cannon said he was disgusted by the boos at Toyota Stadium when players and officials knelt to call attention to racial injustice. He said teammate Ryan Hollingshead turned to him afterward and said he was sorry.

"You can't even have support from your own fans in your own stadium. It's baffling to me," Cannon said. "As a team we try to give the best possible product on the field and these last six months have been absolute hell for us. Absolute hell."

Dallas and Nashville had not played a game since the season was suspended on March 12 because of the coronavirus. While Major League Soccer's other teams played in the MLS is Back tournament in Florida over the past month, Dallas and Nashville were forced to withdraw before the start because of positive COVID-19 tests among players from both teams.

The teams met as MLS restarts the regular season in local markets. Some of the games will include fans if local jurisdictions allow it. Just over 5,000 were allowed to attend the match at Toyota Stadium, although the crowd that showed up appeared smaller.

Nashville won the game, 1-0. The two teams meet again on Sunday.

INDY 500

‘Greatest spectacle’ goes on amid virus

INDIANAPOLIS

There was always going to be an Indianapolis 500 this year — with full attendance, limited attendance or, where Indianapolis Motor Speedway finally landed, with no fans at all.

The race is simply too important to become yet another 2020 cancellation, even if it means closing the gates for the first time in 104 years.

The garages opened Wednesday for the “Greatest Spectacle in Racing,” an event long woven into the nation’s fabric as a Memorial Day weekend celebration. There have been only two pauses in race history, during World War I in 1917 and 1918, then from 1942-45 during World War II.

In the Pits

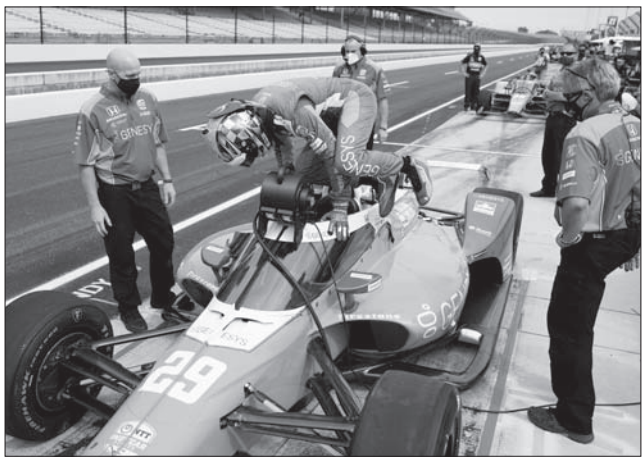
by JENNA FRYER • AP

The pandemic pushed the race off its traditional date to Aug. 23, and new owner Roger Penske and the speedway staff will do their very best to honor the tradition of the treasured event.

Penske earlier said he would pull the plug on the race if fans could not attend, and he tried, all the way until last week, to open the gates to his new showplace. There was an 88-page plan along with confidence the Indy 500 could safely socially distance 25% attendance at the sprawling speedway with more than 250,000 seats.

Ultimately, the coronavirus was deemed too dangerous for Penske to expose himself, the speedway or the community that has supported the Indy 500 since 1911.

The race itself? It is critical to the survival of IndyCar beyond being a a source of pride for the state of Indiana.



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Canada’s James Hinchcliffe climbs into his car Wednesday during practice for the Indianapolis 500.

“There was no way we were not going to run the race. That was never going to be an option,” Penske said.

When he said he wouldn’t hold the race without spectators, the pandemic looked different in Indiana and surrounding Marion County.

“The numbers started to go the wrong way,” Penske said. “I think the world has changed, the state has changed, the city has changed, Marion County has changed from when I said that. Typically you make your best decision on the information you have.”

The financial numbers have got to be horrific for Penske, who in January bought IMS from the Hulman-George family that had owned the national landmark since 1945. Penske’s businesses are private companies, so whatever losses he’s taken are not public. It’s believed he paid about $300 million for the speedway, the IndyCar Series and the Indy 500, and he’s spent another $15 million on capital improvements.

He’s cut the purse in half for the Indy 500, a reversal from February when he pledged an additional $2 million to make a $15 million pot. Penske is undoubtedly bleeding money from the purchase, which makes him responsible for both the race and with helping IndyCar team owners survive.

The Indy 500 is certain to be a massive money loser for Penske, who remains pragmatic about the losses.

“This isn’t a 2020 investment and then we are getting out. Our family can own this for the next 75 years,“ Penske said. “The financial impact is what it is. I’ve worked hard to build a company that’s got a solid base and that’s why we bought the track. There are always speed bumps you deal with in business and this is one that is unexpected, but all four wheels are still on the car.”

Plans call for as normal an Indy 500 as possible. Both the national anthem and “Back Home Again in Indiana” will be live, and a flyover is in the works.

Penske hasn’t said who will give the command to start the engines, an honor traditionallly held by either the late Tony Hulman or “the family” since 1946, the first Indy 500 held after Hulman rescued a speedway abandoned during the war.

There are 33 driver confirmations so at this point no “Bump Day” dramatics are expected. There isn’t cash during a pandemic for teams to field additional entries and drivers on the open market can’t find the funding to buy a ride.

Fernando Alonso, the two-time Formula One champion who missed the race last year in a botched effort by McLaren, completed his deal to try again before the pandemic. Same with three-time Indy 500 winner Helio Castroneves, who has a deal with Penske, and former winner Tony Kanaan, who isn’t racing full-time this year and is hopeful the Indy 500 will remain on his schedule in 2021 as he moves toward semi-retirement.

Had those drivers not closed deals to race this year before the pandemic, three of the biggest names in the Indy 500 could have been sidelined by funding issues. Pippa Mann couldn’t secure financing and the Indy 500 won’t have a female driver in the field for the first time since 1999.

At least there will be a race.

Drivers get on track at empty speedway

BY JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Graham Rahal walked through Gasoline Alley tapping away on his phone, no fear of bumping into anyone as he took a break during the first day of Indianapolis 500 practice.

Indianapolis Motor Speedway is a ghost town. The coronavirus pandemic forced the speedway to proceed with “The Greatest Spectacle in Racing” without spectators and their absence was clearly noticed.

Students on field trips weren’t roaming freely through Pagoda Plaza. No souvenirs for sale through the midway. Bronze Badge Holders couldn’t even come to the track, let alone wait for their favorite drivers outside the garage stalls. The grandstands sat empty. And, Chuckie Lynn, the longtime IMS fixture who sells the Indianapolis Star while riding a bicycle through the paddock, was nowhere to be found.

The show is going on at Indianapolis, but it certainly isn’t the same.

“It’s just weird to be able to walk literally through here and not get stopped 100 times and sign a bunch of autographs,” said Rahal. “You can literally just stroll through here. This thing can still be just as exciting and wonderful as it always is, but the vibe is just different.”

The daily buildup to the Indy 500 — stopped only twice before, for World War I and World War II — has always been part of the allure of the event. Indiana residents come from all over the state from the opening day of practice and the crowd continues to swell until race day, when at least 300,000 pour into the venue.

The parties have been canceled and the drivers are adjusting to the 2020 version of normal.

For Scott Dixon, it meant he didn’t need to make sure his pocket was full of Sharpies to sign autographs as he made the walk to pit lane. Tony Kanaan did not hear a roar from the crowd as the popular Brazilian typically does as he climbs into his car. Will Power walked around the facility without any interruptions.

“It’s a real pity, man. Just shows you how much the fans mean to this place,” Power said. “They make the atmosphere and without them, it’s just kind of dead. It’s easier to focus, but you would much rather have fans here. It’s part of the Indy 500 experience.”

Ryan Hunter-Reay said it felt more like a test day at a race track, when teams are typically in an empty venue learning as much as they can about a car without distractions. The Indy 500 has never been this way — fans came even during the Great Depression — and Hunter-Reay found the feeling “very strange.”

“This is a race without spectators, because we’re going to have our fans watching the race, but without spectators, without energy, it’s just completely different,” Hunter-Reay said. “I guess we all have to look at the big picture and swallow that pill right now.”

As the pristine IMS grounds sat empty, the cars sailed around the oval for the first time since Roger Penske purchased the speedway in January. Penske made his way up and down pit lane early in the day greeting teams and surveying the scene and Honda drivers set the pace in the first full practice session.

James Hinchcliffe and Marco Andretti were atop the leaderboard for Andretti Autosport, followed by Scott Dixon of Chip Ganassi Racing and then Hunter-Reay, another Andretti driver.

Fernando Alonso, making his third attempt to close out motorsports’ version of the Triple Crown, was the fastest driver in a Chevrolet at fifth.

DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Graham Rahal talks on his phone during Wednesday’s practice session for the Indianapolis 500 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indianapolis.

NHL

Scoreboard

Stanley Cup playoffs

FIRST ROUND
Best-of-seven; x-if necessary
EASTERN CONFERENCE
At Toronto

(1) Philadelphia 1, (8) Montreal 0
Wednesday: Philadelphia 2, Montreal 1
Friday: Game 2 (AFN-Sports, 9 p.m. Friday CET; 4 a.m. Saturday JKT)
Sunday: Game 3
Tuesday, Aug. 18: Game 4
x-Wednesday, Aug. 19: Game 5
x-Friday, Aug. 21: Game 6
x-Sunday, Aug. 23: Game 7

(2) Tampa Bay 1, (7) Columbus 0
Tuesday: Tampa Bay 3, Columbus 2, 5OT
Thursday: Game 2
Saturday: Game 3
Monday: Game 4 (AFN-Sports2, 9 p.m. Monday CET; 4 a.m. Tuesday JKT)
x-Wednesday, Aug. 19: Game 5
x-Friday, Aug. 21: Game 6
x-Saturday, Aug. 22: Game 7

(6) N.Y. Islanders 1, (3) Washington 0
Wednesday: N.Y. Islanders 4, Washington 2
Friday: Game 2 (AFN-Sports2, 2 a.m. Saturday CET; 9 a.m. Saturday JKT)
Sunday: Game 3
Tuesday, Aug. 18: Game 4
x-Thursday, Aug. 20: Game 5
x-Saturday, Aug. 22: Game 6
x-Sunday, Aug. 23: Game 7

(4) Boston 1, (5) Carolina 0
Wednesday: Boston 4, Carolina 3 (2OT)
Thursday: Game 2
Saturday: Game 3 (AFN-Sports2, 6 p.m. Saturday CET; 1 a.m. Sunday JKT)
Monday: Game 4
x-Wednesday, Aug. 19: Game 5
x-Thursday, Aug. 20: Game 6
x-Sunday, Aug. 23: Game 7

WESTERN CONFERENCE
At Edmonton, Alberta

(1) Vegas 1, (8) Chicago 0
Tuesday: Vegas 4, Chicago 1
Thursday: Game 2
Saturday: Game 3 (AFN-Atlantic, 2 a.m. Sunday CET; 9 a.m. Sunday JKT)
Sunday: Game 4
x-Tuesday, Aug. 18: Game 5
x-Thursday, Aug. 20: Game 6
x-Saturday, Aug. 22: Game 7

(2) Colorado 1, (7) Arizona 0
Wednesday: Colorado 3, Arizona 0
Friday: Game 2 (AFN-Sports, 8 p.m. Friday CET; 3 a.m. Saturday JKT)
Saturday: Game 3
Monday: Game 4
x-Wednesday, Aug. 19: Game 5
x-Friday, Aug. 21: Game 6
x-Sunday, Aug. 23: Game 7

(6) Calgary 1, (3) Dallas 0
Tuesday: Calgary 3, Dallas 2
Thursday: Game 2
Friday: Game 3
Sunday: Game 4 (AFN-Sports2, 8 p.m. Sunday CET; 3 a.m. Monday JKT)
x-Tuesday, Aug. 18: Game 5
x-Thursday, Aug. 20: Game 6
x-Saturday, Aug. 22: Game 7

(5) Vancouver 1, (4) St. Louis 0
Wednesday: Vancouver 5, St. Louis 2
Friday: Game 2 (AFN-Sports2, 12:30 a.m. Saturday CET; 7:30 a.m. Saturday JKT)
Sunday: Game 3
Monday: Game 4
x-Wednesday, Aug. 19: Game 5
x-Friday, Aug. 21: Game 6
x-Sunday, Aug. 23: Game 7

Wednesday
Avalanche 3, Coyotes 0

Arizona	0	0	0	**0**
Colorado	0	0	3	**3**

Third Period—1, Colorado, Kadri 2 (Makar, MacKinnon), 13:05 (pp). 2, Colorado, Compher 2 (Donskoi, Johnson), 13:15. 3, Colorado, Rantanen 1, 14:28.

Shots on Goal—Arizona 3-4-7—14. Colorado 13-15-12—40.
Power-play opportunities—Arizona 0 of 2; Colorado 2 of 2.
Goalies—Arizona, Kuemper 3-2-0 (40 shots-37 saves). Colorado, Grubauer 2-0-1 (14-14).

Bruins 4, Hurricanes 3 (2OT)

Carolina	1	1	1	**3**
Boston	1	1	1	**4**

First Period—1, Carolina, Edmundson 1 (Aho, Teravainen), 13:02. 2, Boston, Pastrnak 1 (Bergeron, Marchand), 17:45.
Second Period—3, Boston, Coyle 1, 4:38. 4, Carolina, McGinn 1, 4:59 (sh).
Third Period—5, Boston, Krejci 1 (Kase, McAvoy), 0:59. 6, Carolina, Fleury 1 (Trocheck), 9:49.
Second Overtime—7, Boston, Bergeron 1 (Marchand, Pastrnak), 1:13.
Shots on Goal—Carolina 4-5-12-6-1—28. Boston 9-12-7-11-1—40.
Power-play opportunities—Carolina 0 of 3; Boston 0 of 4.
Goalies—Carolina, Mrazek 2-0-1 (40 shots-36 saves). Boston, Rask 1-2-0 (28-25).

Islanders 4, Capitals 2

N.Y. Islanders	0	1	3	**4**
Washington	0	2	0	**2**

Second Period—1, Washington, Oshie 2 (Kuznetsov, Carlson), 5:27 (pp). 2, Washington, Oshie 3 (Wilson, Carlson), 11:18 (pp). 3, N.Y. Islanders, Eberle 3 (Barzal), 18:57.
Third Period—4, N.Y. Islanders, Lee 1 (Pulock, Nelson), 0:51. 5, N.Y. Islanders, Bailey 1 (Nelson), 6:52 (sh). 6, N.Y. Islanders, Beauvillier 4 (Bailey, Barzal), 11:55.
Shots on Goal—N.Y. Islanders 2-11-14—27. Washington 7-9-10—26.
Power-play opportunities—N.Y. Islanders 0 of 4; Washington 2 of 7.
Goalies—N.Y. Islanders, Varlamov 3-1-0 (26 shots-24 saves). Washington, Holtby 1-1-1 (27-23).

Flyers 2, Canadiens 1

Montreal	0	1	0	**1**
Philadelphia	1	1	0	**2**

First Period—1, Philadelphia, Provorov 1 (Konecny, Giroux), 8:54 (pp).
Second Period—2, Montreal, Weber 3 (Drouin, Gallagher), 14:38 (pp). 3, Philadelphia, Farabee 2 (Sanheim), 14:54.
Shots on Goal—Montreal 5-17-6—28. Philadelphia 11-7-13—31.
Power-play opportunities—Montreal 1 of 1; Philadelphia 1 of 3.
Goalies—Montreal, Price 3-2-0 (31 shots-29 saves). Philadelphia, Hart 3-0-0 (28-27).

Canucks 5, Blues 2

Vancouver	1	1	3	**5**
St. Louis	1	1	0	**2**

First Period—1, Vancouver, Horvat 3 (Hughes, Miller), 4:29 (pp). 2, St. Louis, Perron 3 (Schenn, Pietrangelo), 16:37 (pp).
Second Period—3, Vancouver, Pettersson 2, 8:37 (pp). 4, St. Louis, Schwartz 1, 9:49.
Third Period—5, Vancouver, Stecher 1 (Pearson, Boeser), 5:37. 6, Vancouver, Horvat 4 (Pearson), 8:01. 7, Vancouver, Miller 2 (Tanev, Boeser), 19:20 (pp).
Shots on Goal—Vancouver 9-8-5—22. St. Louis 12-10-9—31.
Power-play opportunities—Vancouver 3 of 6; St. Louis 1 of 3.
Goalies—Vancouver, Markstrom 4-1-0 (31 shots-29 saves). St. Louis, Binnington 0-3-0 (22-17).

Bergeron lifts Bruins over Hurricanes in 2OT

Associated Press

TORONTO — After being told to come back the next morning because another game lasted five overtimes, the Boston Bruins didn't want to repeat history so quickly.

"We talked about trying to end this before the fifth overtime," Patrice Bergeron said.

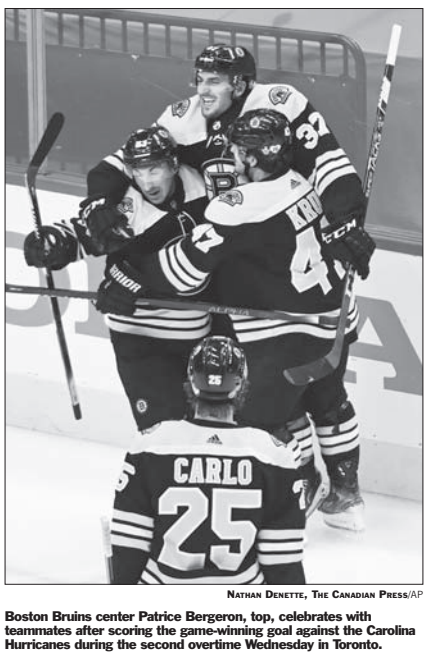
Bergeron accomplished that by scoring early in double overtime, and the Bruins beat the Carolina Hurricanes 4-3 Wednesday in Game 1 of their first-round series that was postponed 15 hours to a rare late-morning start.

The game scheduled for 8 p.m. Tuesday night began the next morning at 11 after the Columbus Blue Jackets-Tampa Bay Lightning series opener became the fourth-longest playoff game in NHL history. Playing all Eastern Conference games at Toronto's Scotiabank Arena had this potential for games going long messing with the schedule.

"We knew it was a possibility," said Bergeron, whose four playoff OT goals are the second-most behind Patrick Kane among active players. "You didn't expect five overtimes, but that being said, we knew it's part of having a tournament like this in one rink and be ready for the unexpected."

Much has changed since these teams met in the 2019 Eastern Conference finals, but Boston continued its dominance more than a year after sweeping Carolina. The Bruins showed quick recovery from losing all three of their round-robin seeding games and handed the Hurricanes their first loss since hockey returned.

"As a group, we didn't love our effort. and we didn't do some of the things we're known for and what makes us a great team," Carolina captain Jordan Staal said. "I thought there was some shifts here and there. They played a good game. We have to be better, obviously, if we want to beat the best."



NATHAN DENETTE, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Boston Bruins center Patrice Bergeron, top, celebrates with teammates after scoring the game-winning goal against the Carolina Hurricanes during the second overtime Wednesday in Toronto.

JASON FRANSON, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

The Vancouver Canucks' Brock Boeser, front, and the St. Louis Blues' Marco Scandella vie for the puck during the first period Wednesday in Edmonton, Alberta.

Roundup

Canucks roll past Blues in series opener

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Bo Horvat scored twice and the Vancouver Canucks beat the defending Stanley Cup champion St. Louis Blues 5-2 on Wednesday in the opening game of their best-of-seven first-round series.

J.T. Miller, Elias Pettersson and Troy Stecher also scored for Vancouver.

David Perron and Jaden Schwartz scored for St. Louis.

Game 2 is set for Friday night.

Horvat has four goals in return-to-play action while rookie teammate Quinn Hughes logged an assist to reach seven points (one goal, six helpers) in five games.

Horvat said the Canucks were ready to match the Blues' intensity.

"They won the Cup for a reason, so we were ready for it," Horvat said. "I thought we showed some good things tonight, some push-back and obviously scoring those big goals late was a huge clutch for us.

"And I couldn't be happier for Troy to get that one. I think I can speak for everybody (on that)."

Islanders 4, Capitals 2: At Toronto, Josh Bailey scored a short-handed goal 6:52 into the third period and New York overcame a two-goal deficit to beat Washington in a hard-hitting opener to the first-round playoff series.

Jordan Eberle and Anders Lee scored 1:54 apart spanning the second intermission. Semyon Varlamov stopped 24 shots and Anthony Beauvillier sealed it by scoring with 8:05 remaining in a game the Islanders overcame their own lack of discipline in allowing the Capitals seven power-play opportunities.

T.J. Oshie scored on consecutive power-play opportunities five minutes apart in the second period for Washington.

Flyers 2, Canadiens 1: At Toronto, Carter Hart made 27 saves, Joel Farabee scored 16 seconds after Montreal tied it, and Philadelphia won Game 1 of their first-round playoff series.

Ivan Provorov also scored for the Flyers. Shea Weber scored for the Canadiens, and Carey Price stopped 29 shots.

Montreal, the final club in the NHL's 24-team restart, stunned the Pittsburgh Penguins — who had the NHL's seventh-best record when the schedule was halted because of the COVID-19 pandemic — 3-1 in the best-of-five qualifying round to book a place in the 16-slot playoff bracket.

Avalanche 3, Coyotes 0: At Edmonton, Alberta, Nazem Kadri and J.T. Compher scored 10 seconds apart in the third period, Philipp Grubauer stopped 14 shots and Colorado opened the playoffs with a victory over Arizona.

The Avalanche dominated the Coyotes through the first two periods, outshooting them 29-7, yet couldn't get anything past goalie Darcy Kuemper.

MLB SCOREBOARD

American League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	12	6	.667	—
Tampa Bay	11	8	.579	1½
Baltimore	9	7	.563	2
Toronto	6	9	.400	4½
Boston	6	12	.333	6
Central Division				
Minnesota	12	7	.632	—
Detroit	9	7	.563	1½
Chicago	10	9	.526	2
Cleveland	10	9	.526	2
Kansas City	8	11	.421	4
West Division				
Oakland	13	6	.684	—
Texas	8	9	.471	4
Houston	8	10	.444	4½
Los Angeles	7	12	.368	6
Seattle	7	13	.350	6½

National League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	8	4	.667	—
Atlanta	11	9	.550	1
Washington	6	8	.429	3
New York	8	11	.421	3½
Philadelphia	5	8	.385	3½
Central Division				
Chicago	12	3	.800	—
St. Louis	2	3	.400	5
Cincinnati	8	10	.444	5½
Milwaukee	7	9	.438	5½
Pittsburgh	3	13	.188	9½
West Division				
Colorado	12	6	.667	—
Los Angeles	12	7	.632	½
San Diego	11	8	.579	1½
Arizona	8	11	.421	4½
San Francisco	8	12	.400	5

Wednesday's games

Chicago White Sox 7, Detroit 5
Oakland 8, L.A. Angels 4
Chicago Cubs 7, Cleveland 2
Minnesota 12, Milwaukee 2
Kansas City 5, Cincinnati 4
Tampa Bay 9, Boston 5
Baltimore 5, Philadelphia 4
Houston 5, San Francisco 1
N.Y. Yankees 6, Atlanta 3
Miami 14, Toronto 11, 10 innings
Texas 7, Seattle 4
Arizona 13, Colorado 7
N.Y. Mets 11, Washington 6
L.A. Dodgers 6, San Diego 0
Pittsburgh at St. Louis, ppd.

Thursday's games

St. Louis at Detroit 2, ppd.
Baltimore at Philadelphia
Tampa Bay at Boston
Washington at N.Y. Mets
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati
Milwaukee at Chicago Cubs
San Diego at L.A. Dodgers

Friday's games

Baltimore (Wojciechowski 0-2) at Washington (Strasburg 0-0)
Washington (TBD) at Baltimore (TBD)
Tampa Bay (TBD) at Toronto (Roark 1-1)
Boston (Eovaldi 1-1) at N.Y. Yankees (Cole 3-0)
Cleveland (Civale 1-2) at Detroit (Nova 1-0)
Kansas City (Junis 0-0) at Minnesota (Odorizzi 0-0)
St. Louis (Wainwright 1-0) at Chicago White Sox (TBD)
Texas (Lynn 2-0) at Colorado (Castellani 0-0)
Seattle (Kikuchi 0-1) at Houston (Valdez 0-2)
L.A. Dodgers (Kershaw 1-1) at L.A. Angels (Sandoval 0-1)
Oakland (Montas 2-1) at San Francisco (Cueto 1-0)
N.Y. Mets (deGrom 2-0) at Philadelphia (Velasquez 0-0)
Atlanta (Wright 0-2) at Miami (Lopez 1-1)
Pittsburgh (Kuhl 0-0) at Cincinnati (Gray 3-1)
Milwaukee (Woodruff 1-1) at Chicago Cubs (Chatwood 2-1)
San Diego (Lamet 2-0) at Arizona (Kelly 2-1)

Wednesday
Dodgers 6, Padres 0

San Diego	ab	r	h	bi
Tatis Jr. ss	4	0	0	0
Grisham cf	4	0	2	0
Machado 3b	4	0	1	0
Pham lf	4	0	1	0
Crnnwrth 1b	3	0	0	0
France ph	0	0	0	0
Myers rf	2	0	1	0
Garcia dh	3	0	0	0
Olivares ph	1	0	0	0
Mejia c	2	0	0	0
Hosmer ph	1	0	0	0
Hedges c	1	0	0	0
Profar 2b	3	0	1	0
Totals	32	0	6	0

Los Angeles	ab	r	h	bi
Pederson lf	4	0	0	0
Betts rf	4	1	1	0
Bellinger dh	4	1	1	1
Turner 3b	4	1	2	3
Mncy 2b-1b	4	0	0	0
Pollock cf	2	1	0	0
Taylor ss	3	1	1	0
Rios 1b	3	0	2	1
Herndz 2b	0	0	0	0
Smith c	1	0	0	0
Barnes c	2	1	1	1
Totals	31	6	8	6

San Diego 000 000 000—0
Los Angeles 000 020 04x—6

E—Profar (1). DP—San Diego 2, Los Angeles 1. LOB—San Diego 9, Los Angeles 3. 2B—Grisham (3), Bellinger (2). HR—Turner (2).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
San Diego						
Davies L,2-2	7	4	2	2	2	5
Stammen	1	4	4	4	0	1
Los Angeles						
Gonsolin	4⅔	3	0	0	1	8
Treinen W,1-1	1⅓	0	0	0	0	3
Baez H,3	1	0	0	0	2	0
Graterol H,3	1	1	0	0	0	1
Alexander	0	2	0	0	1	0
Jansen	1	0	0	0	0	2

Baez pitched to 1 batter in the 8th, Alexander pitched to 3 batters in the 9th. T—2:52.

Astros 5, Giants 1

San Francisco	ab	r	h	bi
Ystrzmski cf	4	1	3	0
Dickerson lf	3	0	1	1
Ruf ph-lf	1	0	0	0
Flores dh	4	0	0	0
Belt 1b	4	0	1	0
Longoria 3b	4	0	0	0
Pence rf	4	0	0	0
Crawford ss	4	0	1	0
Heineman c	3	0	1	0
Dubon 2b	3	0	0	0
Totals	34	1	7	1

Houston	ab	r	h	bi
Springer dh	4	1	1	0
Reddick rf	3	0	1	0
Bregman 3b	3	0	2	1
Gurriel 1b	4	0	0	0
Correa ss	3	1	1	0
Tucker lf	4	1	1	0
Toro 2b	3	1	1	0
Maldnado c	4	1	1	3
Straw cf	3	0	1	0
Totals	31	5	9	4

San Francisco 100 000 000—1
Houston 000 014 00x—5

DP—San Francisco 1, Houston 0. LOB—San Francisco 7, Houston 8. 3B—Yastrzemski (2). HR—Maldonado (2).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
San Francisco						
Cahill	1⅔	0	0	0	4	2
S.Anderson	⅓	0	0	0	0	0
Rodriguez BS,0-1	2⅓	3	1	1	2	1
Baragar L,2-1	⅔	4	4	4	0	0
Selman	1	2	0	0	0	1
Garcia	1	0	0	0	0	1
Peralta	1	0	0	0	0	2
Houston						
Greinke W,1-0	6⅓	7	1	1	1	7
Raley H,1	1⅔	0	0	0	0	2
Taylor	1	0	0	0	0	0

WP—Baragar, Greinke(2). T—3:25.

Rays 9, Red Sox 5

Tampa Bay	ab	r	h	bi
Meadows dh	4	3	2	1
Lowe rf-2b	5	3	3	2
Diaz 3b	5	0	3	1
Margot pr-lf	0	0	0	0
Choi 1b	4	1	1	0
Wndle 2b-3b	5	0	1	1
Tsutsugo lf	4	1	1	2
Renfroe rf	0	0	0	0
Adames ss	4	1	1	1
Kiermaier cf	4	0	3	0
Perez c	4	0	0	0
Totals	39	9	15	8

Boston	ab	r	h	bi
Pillar rf	5	1	4	0
Devers 3b	3	0	0	0
Arauz 3b	2	1	1	1
Mrtinez dh	4	1	1	4
Bgaerts ss	2	0	1	0
Lin ss	2	0	1	0
Vazquez c	4	0	0	0
Chavis 1b	4	0	1	0
Verdugo lf	4	0	1	0
Brdley Jr. cf	4	1	1	0
Peraza 2b	4	1	1	0
Totals	38	5	12	5

Tampa Bay 132 200 001—9
Boston 000 000 050—5

DP—Tampa Bay 1, Boston 3. LOB—Tampa Bay 5, Boston 6. 2B—Choi (5), Lowe (6). HR—Adames (1), Lowe (4), Tsutsugo (2), Meadows (1), Martinez (1). SB—Chavis (1).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Tampa Bay						
Snell, W, 1-0	5	4	0	0	0	6
Slegers	2	7	5	5	0	1
Anderson, H, 2	1	1	0	0	0	2
Fairbanks	1	0	0	0	0	1
Boston						
Godley, L, 0-2	3	10	8	8	2	3
Weber	6	5	1	1	0	4

Slegers pitched to 6 batters in the 8th, Godley pitched to 3 batters in the 4th. WP—Snell. T—2:58.

White Sox 7, Tigers 5

Chicago	ab	r	h	bi
Anderson ss	5	3	4	1
E.Jimenez lf	5	1	2	1
Engel pr-lf	0	0	0	0
Abreu 1b	4	1	0	1
Encrncion dh	5	1	0	0
McCann c	3	0	2	0
Robert cf	5	1	1	3
Mazara rf	3	0	1	1
Mendick 2b	4	0	0	0
Goins 3b	4	0	0	0
Totals	38	7	10	7

Detroit	ab	r	h	bi
Goodrum ss	5	0	0	0
Schoop 2b	4	1	2	1
Cabrera dh	4	0	1	0
Stewart lf	3	0	0	0
Dmrtte pr-rf	0	0	0	0
Cndlario 1b	4	1	1	0
Reyes rf-lf	4	1	0	0
H.Castro cf	4	0	1	0
Greiner c	3	1	1	2
Jones ph	1	0	0	0
W.Castro 3b	4	1	3	2
Totals	36	5	9	5

Chicago 201 040 000—7
Detroit 100 400 000—5

DP—Chicago 1, Detroit 0. LOB—Chicago 8, Detroit 5. 2B—Robert (5), Mazara (2), H.Castro (1), Candelario (2), Greiner (1). 3B—Anderson (1). HR—Anderson (2), E.Jimenez (5), Schoop (4), W.Castro (1). SB—Reyes (4).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Chicago						
Cease, W, 3-1	6	7	5	1	0	5
Cordero, H, 3	⅔	2	0	0	0	1
Marshall, H, 4	1⅓	0	0	0	1	2
Colome, S, 5-5	1	0	0	0	0	1
Detroit						
Boyd, L, 0-2	4⅔	7	7	7	3	5
Schreiber	1⅓	1	0	0	0	2
Garcia	1	1	0	0	0	1
Cisnero	1	0	0	0	0	2
Soto	1	1	0	0	1	3

WP—Cease. T—3:12.

Twins 12, Brewers 2

Minnesota	ab	r	h	bi
Garver c	6	2	3	0
Polanco ss	4	2	1	1
Adrianza ss	1	0	0	0
Cruz dh	3	0	1	2
Avila ph-dh	1	0	0	0
Rosario lf	5	1	1	1
Gonzalez 3b	4	0	2	2
Sano 1b	3	2	1	1
Cave rf	5	1	1	1
Buxton cf	5	2	3	2
Arraez 2b	4	2	2	1
Totals	41	12	15	11

Milwaukee	ab	r	h	bi
Sogrd ss-3b	4	1	1	0
Hiura 2b	4	1	1	0
Yelich lf	2	0	1	0
Urias ss	2	0	2	2
Garcia cf	2	0	0	0
Arcia cf	2	0	0	0
Smoak 1b	4	0	2	0
Braun dh	4	0	0	0
Gamel rf	4	0	0	0
Narvaez c	3	0	0	0
Holt 3b-lf	3	0	0	0
Totals	34	2	7	2

Minnesota 051 141 000—12
Milwaukee 000 002 000— 2

LOB—Minnesota 10, Milwaukee 6. 2B—Cave (1), Gonzalez (1), Hiura (1), Smoak (2). HR—Sano (4), Buxton 2 (5). SF—Gonzalez (1).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Minnesota						
Maeda, W, 3-0	6⅔	5	2	2	1	5
Thielbar	⅓	0	0	0	0	1
Thorpe	2	2	0	0	0	2
Milwaukee						
Lauer, L, 0-1	3⅔	9	7	7	2	2
Grimm	⅔	3	4	4	3	0
Yardley	1⅔	1	1	1	1	1
Knebel	1	1	0	0	0	2
Suter	1	0	0	0	0	1
Gyorko	1	1	0	0	0	0

HBP—Lauer (Cruz). WP—Lauer. T—3:08.

Cubs 7, Cleveland 2

Chicago	ab	r	h	bi
Hendricks p	0	0	0	0
Bryant lf	5	1	1	1
Almora Jr. cf	0	0	0	0
Rizzo 1b	4	2	2	1
Baez ss	4	1	1	0
Contreras c	3	0	0	0
Souza Jr. ph	1	0	0	0
Winkler p	0	0	0	0
Wick p	0	0	0	0
Schwrber ph	1	0	0	0
Jeffress p	0	0	0	0
Happ cf-lf	3	2	0	0
Heyward rf	2	1	1	2
Bote 3b	4	0	1	2
Caratini dh-c	3	0	1	0
Kipnis 2b	3	0	1	1
Totals	33	7	8	7

Cleveland	ab	r	h	bi
Hrnandz 2b	5	1	1	0
Ramirez 3b	2	0	1	1
Lindor ss	4	0	1	1
C.Santna 1b	4	0	0	0
Reyes dh	4	0	3	0
Freeman lf	4	0	0	0
Naquin rf	4	1	1	0
Leon c	2	0	1	0
D.Santna ph	1	0	0	0
Zimmer cf	3	0	0	0
Totals	33	2	8	2

Chicago 001 031 011—7
Cleveland 000 010 100—2

DP—Chicago 1, Cleveland 0. LOB—Chicago 9, Cleveland 8. 2B—Kipnis (3), Heyward (1), Ramirez (3). HR—Rizzo (4), Bryant (2). SB—Baez (1), Heyward (1). SF—Heyward (1), Ramirez (1).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Chicago						
Hendricks W,3-1	6	7	1	1	0	5
Winkler	⅔	0	1	1	2	1
Wick H,1	1⅓	1	0	0	0	3
Jeffress	1	0	0	0	0	1
Cleveland						
Carrasco L,2-2	4⅓	4	3	3	5	7
Perez	1⅓	1	1	1	1	0
Cimber	1	1	1	1	0	0
Karinchak	1⅓	1	1	1	2	4
Wittgren	1	1	1	1	1	2

Cimber pitched to 2 batters in the 7th. HBP—Jeffress (Zimmer). WP—Carrasco. T—3:32.

Marlins 14, Blue Jays 11 (10)

Miami	ab	r	h	bi
Villar ss	4	0	2	1
Aguilar 1b	6	0	3	4
Dickerson dh	5	2	1	0
Joyce lf	4	2	2	0
Brinson ph-lf	1	0	0	0
B.Andrsn 3b	6	1	1	3
Cervelli c	3	2	1	0
Harrison pr	0	0	0	0
Lavarnway c	0	0	0	0
Alvarez 2b	4	3	1	1
Berti rf	5	2	2	0
Sierra cf	5	2	1	2
Totals	43	14	14	11

Toronto	ab	r	h	bi
Biggio 2b	5	0	0	0
Bichette ss	5	3	5	1
Shaw 3b-1b	5	2	2	3
Hrnandez rf	6	1	1	2
Gurriel Jr. lf	6	0	1	0
Guerrero 1b	5	1	2	1
Alford pr	0	0	0	0
Drury 3b	0	0	0	0
Grichuk cf	4	1	2	0
Tellez dh	5	2	3	2
Jansen c	5	1	2	2
Totals	46	11	18	11

Miami 305 030 000 3—14
Toronto 002 222 120 0—11

E—Guerrero Jr. 2 (2), Dolis (1). DP—Miami 2, Toronto 0. LOB—Miami 7, Toronto 10. 2B—Tellez 2 (3). HR—B.Anderson (4), Hernandez (5), Tellez (2), Shaw 2 (2), Jansen (2), Guerrero Jr. (2), Bichette (4). SB—Bichette 2 (4), Villar (3), Biggio (3), Cervelli (1), Berti (3). S—Villar (1).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Miami						
Yamamoto	3⅓	7	4	4	2	5
Vincent	1⅔	2	2	2	0	0
Morin	⅓	0	0	0	0	0
Moran	⅓	3	2	2	1	1
Hoyt, H, 3	⅔	2	1	1	0	1
Tarpley, H, 1	⅔	1	0	0	0	1
Boxberger, BS, 0-1	⅔	2	2	2	0	1
Kintzler, W, 1-0	1⅓	1	0	0	0	1
Smith, S, 1-1	1	0	0	0	1	2
Toronto						
Pearson	2⅓	5	7	4	4	1
Waguespack	2⅓	5	4	2	1	3
Yamaguchi	2⅓	0	0	0	0	4
Borucki	1	0	0	0	0	2
Romano	1	1	0	0	0	2
Dolis, L, 0-1	⅔	3	3	2	1	0
Font	⅓	0	0	0	0	1

T—4:20.

Royals 5, Reds 4

Kansas City	ab	r	h	bi
Merrifield cf	3	1	1	1
Soler dh	5	0	0	0
Perez c	5	2	3	3
Dozier rf	2	0	0	0
McBroom lf	3	0	1	0
Phillips lf	0	0	0	0
Gordon ph-lf	1	0	0	0
Franco 3b	3	0	0	0
O'Hearn 1b	3	0	0	1
Mondesi ss	3	1	0	0
Lopez 2b	2	1	0	0
Totals	30	5	5	5

Cincinnati	ab	r	h	bi
Akiyama lf	3	0	1	0
Castllnos rf	4	0	0	0
Votto 1b	2	0	0	0
Jankwski pr	0	0	0	0
Colon 2b	1	0	0	0
Suarez 3b	4	0	0	0
Winker dh	3	1	2	1
Senzel cf	3	1	0	0
Galvis ss	4	1	2	2
Farmer 2b	1	0	0	0
VnMtr 2b-1b	1	1	1	1
Lorenzen pr	0	0	0	0
Barnhart c	4	0	0	0
3-Ervin pr	0	0	0	0
Totals	30	4	6	4

Kansas City 101 111 000—5
Cincinnati 000 000 400—4

DP—Kansas City 3, Cincinnati 1. LOB—Kansas City 9, Cincinnati 8. 2B—Merrifield (4), Perez (6). HR—Perez (4), Winker (3), Galvis (3), VanMeter (1). SB—Winker (1). SF—Merrifield (1), O'Hearn (1).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Kansas City						
Keller, W, 2-0	6	2	0	0	3	3
Kennedy	0	2	3	3	1	0
Barlow, H, 2	1	1	1	1	0	2
Staumont, H, 3	1	1	0	0	1	3
Rosenthal, S, 4-4	1	0	0	0	3	0
Cincinnati						
Miley, L, 0-2	1⅔	2	1	1	2	2
Mahle	3⅓	2	3	3	3	6
Antone	2	1	1	1	1	4
Garrett	1	0	0	0	1	0
Jones	1	0	0	0	1	1

Kennedy pitched to 3 batters in the 7th. HBP—Mahle (Mondesi), Keller (Farmer). WP—Mahle(2). T—3:40.

Yankees 6, Braves 3

Atlanta	ab	r	h	bi
Swanson ss	5	1	3	0
d'Arnaud c	5	0	1	1
Freeman 1b	3	0	0	0
Ozuna dh	4	0	0	0
Duvall lf	5	0	1	0
Markakis rf	4	1	2	0
Camargo 2b	4	1	2	2
Riley 3b	4	0	1	0
Inciarte cf	4	0	1	0
Totals	38	3	11	3

New York	ab	r	h	bi
LeMahieu 2b	5	2	4	1
Voit 1b	5	0	2	1
Hicks cf	3	1	1	1
Urshela 3b	3	0	0	0
Torres ss	3	0	1	1
Ford dh	5	0	0	0
Sanchez c	5	1	1	1
Frazier rf	4	2	3	1
Tauchmn rf	0	0	0	0
Gardner lf	3	0	0	0
Totals	36	6	12	6

Atlanta 020 000 001—3
New York 020 220 00x—6

E—Inciarte (1). LOB—Atlanta 11, New York 13. 2B—Markakis (2), Swanson (5), Voit (1), Hicks (4), Frazier (1). 3B—LeMahieu (1). HR—Camargo (3), Sanchez (2), Frazier (1). SB—LeMahieu (1).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Atlanta						
Ynoa	1	4	2	2	3	0
Matzek L,2-1	2⅓	3	2	2	1	2
Tomlin	1⅓	4	2	2	1	3
O'Day	⅓	0	0	0	0	1
Smith	1	0	0	0	0	0
Minter	1	1	0	0	0	2
Greene	1	0	0	0	1	0
New York						
Tanaka	4	5	2	2	2	3
Loaisiga W,2-0	2	3	0	0	0	3
Green H,4	1	0	0	0	0	1
Avilan	⅔	1	0	0	0	0
Ottavino	⅓	0	0	0	0	1
Holder	⅓	2	1	1	0	0
Britton S,7-7	⅔	0	0	0	1	0

Ynoa pitched to 4 batters in the 2nd, Loaisiga pitched to 2 batters in the 7th. HBP—Greene (Urshela). T—3:40.

Mets 11, Nationals 6

Washington	ab	r	h	bi
Turner ss	5	1	1	0
Eaton rf	3	1	1	0
Castro 2b	4	1	2	1
Soto lf	4	2	3	4
Kendrick dh	4	0	2	0
Cabrera 3b	4	0	0	0
Thames 1b	4	0	0	0
Suzuki c	4	1	1	1
Robles cf	1	0	0	0
Taylor ph-cf	2	0	0	0
Totals	35	6	10	6

New York	ab	r	h	bi
Nimmo cf	5	2	3	1
Hamilton cf	0	0	0	0
Davis 3b	5	0	0	0
McNeil lf	5	0	0	0
Conforto rf	3	3	2	2
Alonso 1b	4	3	3	3
D.Smith dh	4	2	2	3
Gimenez ss	5	0	1	1
Ramos c	4	0	1	1
Guillrme 2b	2	1	1	0
Totals	37	11	13	11

Washington 300 001 011— 6
New York 401 005 01x—11

DP—Washington 0, New York 2. LOB—Washington 4, New York 8. 2B—Turner (3), Alonso 2 (3), Do.Smith (4), Conforto (4). HR—Soto 2 (4), Castro (2), Suzuki (1), Nimmo (3), Alonso (3), Do.Smith (3). SB—Gimenez (4), Guillorme (1).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Washington						
Sanchez L,0-3	2⅔	6	5	5	2	2
Freeman	⅔	0	0	0	1	0
Finnegan	1⅔	0	0	0	1	2
Harper	1	4	5	5	1	2
Fedde	2	3	1	1	0	1
New York						
Gsellman	2	4	3	3	0	1
Shreve	1	1	0	0	0	0
Familia W,1-0	2	1	0	0	1	4
Wilson H,5	1	1	1	1	0	1
Betances	1	0	0	0	0	3
Dr.Smith	1	2	1	1	0	1
Brach	1	1	1	1	0	1

HBP—Sanchez (Conforto), Familia (Robles). T—3:19.

Orioles 5, Phillies 4

Baltimore	ab	r	h	bi
Alberto 2b	4	0	1	0
Santander rf	5	1	2	1
Iglesias ss	5	0	1	0
Ruiz 3b	5	1	1	1
Nunez dh	4	1	1	0
Smith Jr. lf	3	1	2	0
Velazqz pr-lf	0	0	0	0
Hays cf	4	0	0	0
C.Davis 1b	4	0	1	0
Sisco c	4	1	2	3
Totals	38	5	11	5

Philadelphia	ab	r	h	bi
McCtchen lf	4	0	2	0
Walker 2b	0	0	0	0
Hoskins 1b	4	1	0	0
Harper rf	4	1	2	0
Realmuto dh	5	0	1	1
Segura 3b	3	1	1	0
Grgorius ss	2	1	1	1
Gosselin 2b	3	0	0	0
Bruce ph-lf	1	0	0	0
Knapp c	4	0	3	2
Quinn cf	4	0	0	0
Totals	34	4	10	4

Baltimore 001 210 100—5
Philadelphia 012 000 010—4

E—C.Davis (1), Morgan (0). DP—Baltimore 3, Philadelphia 0. LOB—Baltimore 8, Philadelphia 9. 2B—Santander (5), Nunez (5), Smith Jr. (2), Knapp (1). HR—Santander (3), Ruiz (3), Sisco (1). SB—Quinn (0), Harper (1). SF—Gregorius (1).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Baltimore						
LeBlanc	3⅓	6	3	3	3	2
Armstrong, W, 1-0	1⅔	0	0	0	1	2
Lakins Sr., H, 0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Givens, H, 2	1	1	0	0	1	0
Castro, H, 2	1	3	1	1	0	2
Sulser, S, 3-5	1	0	0	0	0	2
Philadelphia						
Eflin, L, 0-0	6	7	4	4	1	10
Morgan	⅔	3	1	1	0	1
Parker	1⅓	1	0	0	0	3
Rosso	1	0	0	0	1	1

T—3:28.

AL leaders

BATTING—LeMahieu, New York, .431; Bichette, Toronto, .352; Alberto, Baltimore, .342; Lewis, Seattle, .338; Correa, Houston, .333; Cruz, Minnesota, .329; S.Perez, Kansas City, .329; Trout, Los Angeles, .328; Pillar, Boston, .327.

RUNS—Judge, New York, 16; Merrifield, Kansas City, 16; Crawford, Seattle, 15; Nunez, Baltimore, 15; Alberto, Baltimore, 14; LeMahieu, New York, 14; Rosario, Minnesota, 14; 7 tied at 13.

RBI—Judge, New York, 20; Cruz, Minnesota, 18; Seager, Seattle, 18; Rosario, Minnesota, 17; Trout, Los Angeles, 16; Santander, Baltimore, 16; Chapman, Oakland, 15; Olson, Oakland, 14; Lewis, Seattle, 14; 6 tied at 13.

Oakland 8, Angels 4

Oakland	ab	r	h	bi
Semien ss	4	1	1	1
Laureano cf	5	0	1	2
Olson 1b	5	1	1	1
Chapman 3b	5	0	2	1
Canha dh	5	1	1	0
Grossman lf	3	2	1	2
Piscotty rf	3	1	1	1
Kemp 2b	2	0	0	0
Pinder ph-2b	2	1	0	0
Murphy c	2	1	1	0
Totals	36	8	9	8

Los Angeles	ab	r	h	bi
Fletcher ss	4	1	1	0
La Stella 2b	4	0	1	1
Trout cf	2	1	1	2
Rendon 3b	4	1	1	1
Ohtani dh	3	0	0	0
Pujols 1b	4	0	0	0
Castro c	4	0	0	0
Adell rf	3	0	0	0
Goodwin lf	3	1	1	0
Totals	31	4	5	4

Oakland 120 110 030—8
Los Angeles 102 001 000—4

LOB—Oakland 7, Los Angeles 3. 2B—Canha (3), Chapman 2 (5), Semien (2), Goodwin (3). HR—Olson (6), Grossman (3), Piscotty (2), Trout (8), Rendon (4). SB—Grossman (4). SF—Trout (2).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Oakland						
Bassitt, W, 2-0	5⅔	5	4	4	0	4
Diekman, H, 5	⅔	0	0	0	1	2
Petit, H, 5	⅔	0	0	0	0	0
Soria	1	0	0	0	1	1
Hendriks	1	0	0	0	0	2
Los Angeles						
Canning, L, 0-3	4	6	4	4	0	2
Barnes	1	2	1	1	0	1
Buchter	⅔	0	0	0	1	1
Ramirez	⅓	0	0	0	1	0
Pena	1⅓	0	1	1	1	1
Middleton	⅓	0	2	2	2	0
Buttrey	⅓	1	0	0	1	0
Robles	1	0	0	0	0	3

T—3:20.

Diamondbacks 13, Rockies 7

Arizona	ab	r	h	bi
Calhoun rf	6	2	3	1
K.Marte 2b	4	2	2	1
S.Marte cf	5	2	3	4
Peralta lf	5	1	2	3
Walker dh	5	0	3	0
Escobar 3b	5	1	1	1
Vogt c	5	1	1	0
Lamb 1b	5	1	0	0
Ahmed ss	4	3	3	2
Totals	44	13	18	12

Colorado	ab	r	h	bi
Hmpsn cf-2b	6	1	4	0
Story ss	6	1	3	1
Blckmon dh	4	0	0	0
Arenado 3b	5	2	3	3
Dahl lf	4	0	0	0
Owings 2b	1	0	0	0
Hilliard cf	3	1	1	0
Tapia rf	3	1	2	0
McMhon 1b	5	1	2	3
E.Diaz c	5	0	1	0
Totals	42	7	16	7

Arizona 100 130 800—13
Colorado 010 310 020— 7

E—McMahon (3). DP—Arizona 1, Colorado 2. LOB—Arizona 6, Colorado 13. 2B—Vogt (4), Walker (9), Peralta (3), Ahmed (1), Story 2 (2), Arenado (2). 3B—Hampson (2). HR—S.Marte (2), Arenado 2 (6), McMahon (2).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Arizona						
Weaver	3⅓	6	4	4	1	3
Clarke	1⅔	4	1	1	1	1
Crichton	⅔	1	0	0	1	1
Chafin, W, 1-1	1	1	0	0	0	2
Rondon	⅓	2	2	2	0	0
Guerra	1	1	0	0	1	2
Bradley	1	1	0	0	0	1
Colorado						
Senzatela	6	9	5	5	0	4
Kinley, L, 0-1	0	4	5	5	1	0
Almonte	1	3	3	0	0	0
Harvey	1	2	0	0	0	0
Pazos	1	0	0	0	1	0

Chafin pitched to 3 batters in the 7th, Kinley pitched to 5 batters in the 7th. HBP—Guerra (Dahl). WP—Kinley. T—3:56.

Rangers 7, Mariners 4

Seattle	ab	r	h	bi
Crawford ss	4	0	2	0
Moore 1b-lf	3	0	0	0
Lewis cf	4	0	0	1
Seager 3b	4	0	0	0
Nola c	5	1	2	1
Long Jr. 2b	3	1	1	0
Vogelbch dh	3	1	1	2
Lopes lf	3	1	1	0
White 1b	1	0	0	0
Smith rf	4	0	1	0
Totals	34	4	8	4

Texas	ab	r	h	bi
Choo dh	3	1	2	1
Knr-Falfa 3b	3	1	1	0
Calhoun lf	5	0	2	3
Hnmn pr-cf	0	0	0	0
Gallo rf	4	0	0	0
Solak cf-lf	5	0	1	0
Dietrich 2b	3	2	3	0
Andrus ss	4	1	1	0
Refsnder 1b	3	0	0	0
Frzier ph-1b	0	1	0	0
Mathis c	4	1	1	1
Totals	34	7	11	5

Seattle 040 000 000—4
Texas 000 001 15x—7

E—Crawford (2). DP—Seattle 1, Texas 0. LOB—Seattle 10, Texas 10. 2B—Nola (5), Dietrich (1), Andrus (4). HR—Nola (2), Vogelbach (2). SB—Moore (4), Dietrich (1), Choo (2). SF—Lewis (1), Choo (1).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Seattle						
Walker	6	6	1	0	1	5
Gerber, H, 1	⅔	0	1	1	1	0
Misiewicz, H, 3	⅓	1	0	0	0	1
Swnsn, L, 0-1, BS, 0-1	⅔	3	5	5	0	1
Williams	⅓	1	0	0	1	0
Texas						
Lyles	5	6	4	4	4	4
Martin	1	0	0	0	1	0
Gibaut	1	1	0	0	0	0
Hernandez, W, 3-0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Montero, S, 4-4	1	0	0	0	0	1

HBP—Lyles (Moore), Walker (Dietrich), Swanson 2 (Frazier,Kiner-Falefa). WP—Williams. T—3:09.

NL leaders

BATTING—Blackmon, Colorado, .472; Solano, San Francisco, .458; S.Marte, Arizona, .369; D.Murphy, Colorado, .358; B.Harper, Philadelphia, .341; Kendrick, Washington, .341; K.Marte, Arizona, .338.

RUNS—Story, Colorado, 19; Blackmon, Colorado, 18; Yastrzemski, San Francisco, 18; F.Freeman, Atlanta, 16; Tatis Jr., San Diego, 16; Swanson, Atlanta, 15; Castellanos, Cincinnati, 14; Nimmo, New York, 14; Grisham, San Diego, 13; B.Harper, Philadelphia, 13; S.Marte, Arizona, 13.

RBI—Blackmon, Colorado, 20; Tatis Jr., San Diego, 18; Castellanos, Cincinnati, 16; Solano, San Francisco, 15; J.Turner, Los Angeles, 15; D.Peralta, Arizona, 14; Swanson, Atlanta, 14

MLB

Cubs, off to best start in 50 years, down Indians

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Bell bottoms were in style and Nixon was in the White House the last time the Chicago Cubs started a season this hot.

Their rookie manager isn't taking any credit for the fast start.

"I mean, I've got a good team," David Ross said. "That's what it is. We've got good players."

Kyle Hendricks pitched six strong innings in his first appearance against Cleveland since Game 7 of the 2016 World Series and Anthony Rizzo homered, leading the Cubs to a 7-2 win over the Indians on Wednesday night to match their best start in 50 years.

Hendricks (3-1) didn't have much trouble with the slumping Indians, who came in batting a major league-worst .192. He allowed one run and seven hits — threw 18 straight strikes in one juncture — and handled everyone in Cleveland's lineup but Franmil Reyes, who got three hits.

The Cubs are 12-3 in their first season under Ross, matching the club's start after 15 games in 1970.

Since taking over, Ross has preached about being positive and energetic and the constant chatter coming Chicago's dugout is evidence his players are listening.

"There is nothing to complain about because the talent's there, the character's there, the commitment, the focus, the energy, the work," Ross said. "It's not easy, especially in the environment we're dealing with now. I've got really good players, man.

"I just put them in the lineup and I start trying to cheerlead them on. They're really good."

Rizzo homered in the third off Carlos Carrasco (2-2), David Bote drove in two runs and Kris Bryant connected for a 430-foot shot as the Cubs swept the two-game interleague set.

Hendricks hadn't faced the Indians since Nov. 2, 2016, when he started the dramatic finale as the Cubs beat the Indians in extra innings to clinch their first Series title since 1908. The right-hander is as efficient now as he was four years ago.

"I'm just happy that we are where we are right now," he said. "You never know why things click at a certain time. I think we missed baseball so much being out for so long that it just gave us that little breather, and guys are really just excited to be around each other and excited to be playing the game again."

Carrasco was pulled in the fifth after a shaky, seven-walk outing over 4 1/3 innings. The right-hander struggled with his control from the outset, but he was able to work around two, two-walk innings without giving up any runs.

"He was really yanking a lot of fastballs to the lefties and away to the righties," manager Terry Francona said. "Shoot, he was probably in the fourth inning and his strike-to-ball was even. There were a lot of walks. He was pitching out of danger the entire time."

TONY DEJAK/AP

Chicago Cubs starting pitcher Kyle Hendricks allowed one run and seven hits over six innings in a 7-2 win Wednesday in Cleveland. The Cubs are off to a 12-3 start.

By the numbers

12-3

The Cubs' record after 15 games, their best record since they had the same start in 1970.

84-78

The Cubs' overall record in 1970. After a 12-3 start, they went 72-75 the rest of the way to finish second in the NL East that year.

SOURCE: Baseball-reference.com

It's different now that Marlins can go home again

BY STEVEN WINE
Associated Press

MIAMI — Marlins Park will have a new look for its 2020 season debut Friday, thanks to cozier dimensions and a switch to artificial turf.

Also, there will be a first-place team in the home dugout.

And that Marlins' roster looks a lot different than it did when they were last in Miami, before departing for a season-opening three-game trip. That was more than three weeks ago.

"You feel like you've got a quick trip," manager Don Mattingly said. "You pack hardly nothing, and the next thing you know, a month later, you've got to pay rent again."

The Marlins' 23-day road odessey was necessitated by a coronavirus outbreak that infected at least 18 of their players during the opening weekend in Philadelphia. Their season was suspended for a week and the schedule scrambled, including the postponement of eight games at Marlins Park.

With the revised schedule, they've played two "home" games on the road. Three weeks into MLB's 60-game season, Miami will finally play in Miami on Friday against the Atlanta Braves.

"We talked going into the the season about how it was going to be different," Mattingly said, "but I didn't envision this. We've been tested early."

Largely because of the outbreak, the Marlins have made 58 roster moves since the season began July 24. Only 13 players on the opening day roster remain active. Yet Miami is 8-4 for a one-game lead over second-place Atlanta in the NL East.

Mattingly

It's heady stuff for a franchise that before this season had never been in first place after June 30. Now, thanks to a season shortened by the pandemic, the Marlins are in the thick of the playoff race with a shot at their first postseason berth since 2003.

"Every win feels like it's worth three," closer Brandon Kintzler said.

That was especially true in the Marlins' most recent game before an off day Thursday. They blew an 8-0 lead but became the first National League team to allow seven homers and still win, beating the Buffalo Blue Jays 14-11.

"We'll take them any way we can get them — 14-11 or 1-0, it doesn't matter," said Josh A. Smith, who pitched a scoreless 10th inning for the save.

Smith is one of 18 players added when the outbreak hit. The newcomers, mostly journeymen and second-tier prospects, have tried to bond with the holdover players in accelerated fashion, all while everyone observes social distancing and wears a masks.

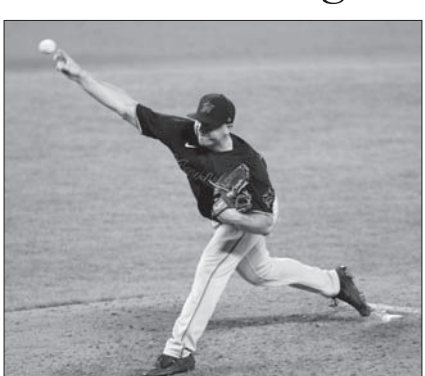
"You see a lot of guys you played with and against along the way," Smith said. "Now we're teammates, and we just roll with it."

Many of the reinforcements are placeholders until the infected Marlins are cleared to return, which could start to happen soon. Miami is especially thin in pitching, with three starters and eight members of the opening-day bullpen on the injured list.

"We did a nice job of surviving to this point," Mattingly said.

Now his makeshift roster can take a bow at Marlins Park, although the stands will be even more empty than usual.

There are other changes, with the pitcher-friendly park slightly less so after an offseason reconfiguration. The distances to the fence have been shortened from 407 to 400 feet in center field and from 399 to 387 in right-center. The Marlins also installed artificial turf.



NICK WASS/AP

Miami Marlins relief pitcher Brandon Kintzler delivers a pitch during the ninth inning of an Aug. 6 game against the Baltimore Orioles, in Baltimore. Marlins Park will have a new look for its season debut.

NBA

Roundup

Clippers defeat Nuggets, wrap up No. 2 seed in West

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Paul George scored 27 points, Kawhi Leonard had 26 and the Los Angeles Clippers wrapped up the second seed in the Western Conference playoffs with a 124-111 victory over the third-seeded Denver Nuggets on Wednesday night.

The Clippers will face seventh-seeded Dallas when the playoffs get going next week.

Los Angeles took control with 13 straight points midway through the third quarter and barely let the Nuggets get back in it.

George and Leonard were big reasons why. George made two three-pointers midway through the period, and Leonard sprinted to midcourt while on defense, picked off a pass at mid-court and glided in for a basket.

The Clippers took the lead for good with 10 minutes left on Lou Williams' jumper and steadily built the advantage to double digits on the way to their second straight win over the Northwest Division champions.

Williams was the third Los Angeles player with 20-plus points, finishing with 23.

Jerami Grant, who missed Denver's last game due to injury, led the Nuggets with 25 points. It was the third time in the past four games Grant, who came in averaging less than 12 points a game, went for 20 or more points.

Pacers 108, Rockets 104: Myles Turner had 18 points, reserve Edmond Sumner added a season-high 17 and Indiana held off a late rally by and James Harden and his teammates to break a five-game losing streak to Houston.

It looked as if the Pacers had locked up the win when they went up 104-90 with 5:05 remaining. That's when Harden got Houston going, cutting it to 106-104 with a driving basket with 27 seconds to go.

KIM KLEMENT/AP

Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard, with ball, is defended by Denver Nuggets forward Paul Millsap, front, and guard Jamal Murray on Wednesday in Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

Harden had 11 of the Rockets' 14 points during the surge. But after Victor Oladipo missed a three-pointer, Turner tipped out the rebound to Justin Holiday with six seconds left. Holiday hit two foul shots to finish off Indiana's first victory over Houston since February 2017.

Raptors 125, 76ers 121: Stanley Johnson scored the tie-breaking basket in the lane with 4.9 seconds remaining, giving Toronto a victory over Philadelphia that made a winner of Adrian Griffin.

Raptors coach Nick Nurse let his assistant coach run the team and they responded with a late run from the bottom of their bench, long after Philadelphia's Joel Embiid had ended his night, to improve to 6-1 in the restart.

Kyle Lowry and Chris Boucher each scored 19 points for the Raptors.

Thunder 115, Heat 115: Mike Muscala made a three-pointer with 5.2 seconds and Oklahoma City overcame a 22-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat Miami.

In a game largely played by reserves in the second half, Muscala hit two three-pointers in the final 35 seconds for his only points of the game.

Darius Bazley scored 21 points and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 18 for the Thunder. They outscored the Heat 34-15 in the fourth quarter.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
z-Milwaukee	56	16	.778	—
y-Toronto	52	19	.732	3½
x-Boston	48	23	.676	7½
y-Miami	44	28	.611	12
x-Indiana	44	28	.611	12
x-Philadelphia	42	30	.583	14
x-Brooklyn	35	36	.493	20½
x-Orlando	32	40	.444	24
Charlotte	23	42	.354	29½
Chicago	22	43	.338	30½
Washington	24	47	.338	31½
New York	21	45	.318	32
Detroit	20	46	.303	33
Atlanta	20	47	.299	33½
Cleveland	19	46	.292	33½

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
z-L.A. Lakers	52	18	.743	—
x-L.A. Clippers	48	23	.676	4½
y-Denver	46	26	.639	7
x-Oklahoma City	44	27	.620	8½
y-Houston	44	27	.620	8½
x-Utah	43	28	.606	9½
x-Dallas	43	31	.581	11
Portland	34	39	.466	19½
Memphis	33	39	.458	20
Phoenix	33	39	.458	20
San Antonio	32	38	.457	20
Sacramento	30	41	.423	22½
New Orleans	30	41	.423	22½
Minnesota	19	45	.297	30
Golden State	15	50	.231	34½

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division
z-clinched conference

Tuesday's games

Brooklyn 108, Orlando 96
San Antonio 123, Houston 105
Phoenix 130, Philadelphia 117
Boston 122, Memphis 107
Portland 134, Dallas 131
Sacramento 112, New Orleans 106
Milwaukee 126, Washington 113

Wednesday's games

Indiana 108, Houston 104
Toronto 125, Philadelphia 121
Oklahoma City 116, Miami 115
L.A. Clippers 124, Denver 111

Thursday's games

Washington at Boston
Sacramento at L.A. Lakers
Dallas at Phoenix
Milwaukee at Memphis
San Antonio at Utah
New Orleans at Orlando
Portland at Brooklyn

Friday's games

Denver at Toronto
Miami at Indiana
Oklahoma City at L.A. Clippers
Philadelphia at Houston

Saturday's games

No games scheduled

Wednesday
Raptors 125, 76ers 121

TORONTO — Powell 5-10 4-5 17, Siakam 5-14 3-7 15, Gasol 4-8 1-1 11, Lowry 6-11 6-9 19, VanVleet 3-11 3-3 10, Hollis-Jefferson 2-3 3-4 8, Watson 1-1 2-2 4, Boucher 7-12 1-2 19, Hernandez 2-3 1-3 6, Johnson 2-4 1-2 5, Miller 0-0 0-0 0, Davis 1-6 2-2 5, Thomas 2-7 0-0 6. Totals 49-90 27-40 125.

PHILADELPHIA — Harris 8-13 5-8 22, Horford 3-6 1-2 9, Embiid 1-4 3-4 5, Milton 2-9 2-2 8, Richardson 3-8 3-3 10, Korkmaz 5-10 6-6 21, Scott 4-5 2-3 12, Shayok 1-3 1-2 3, Thybulle 4-7 0-0 10, Pelle 2-4 0-0 4, Neto 6-15 3-3 17. Totals 39-84 26-33 121.

Toronto	**25**	**30**	**35**	**35—125**
Philadelphia	**32**	**30**	**26**	**33—121**

Three-Point Goals—Toronto 18-43 (Boucher 4-6, Powell 3-6, Gasol 2-4, Thomas 2-5, Siakam 2-6, Hollis-Jefferson 1-2, VanVleet 1-3, Lowry 1-4, Davis 1-5), Philadelphia 17-40 (Korkmaz 5-9, Scott 2-3, Thybulle 2-4, Horford 2-5, Milton 2-6, Neto 2-6, Richardson 1-3, Harris 1-4). Fouled Out—Toronto 1 (Davis), Philadelphia 1 (Pelle). Rebounds—Toronto 47 (Boucher, Siakam 9), Philadelphia 47 (Embiid 9). Assists—Toronto 28 (VanVleet 6), Philadelphia 27 (Harris, Horford, Milton, Neto 5). Total Fouls—Toronto 23, Philadelphia 29.

Clippers 124, Nuggets 111

L.A. CLIPPERS — Leonard 9-16 7-8 26, Morris Sr. 3-10 0-0 7, Zubac 7-9 1-2 15, George 9-20 5-7 27, Jackson 4-8 0-0 10, Coffey 1-1 0-0 3, Mann 0-0 0-0 0, Patterson 3-4 0-0 8, Green 1-2 0-0 3, Noah 0-0 0-0 0, McGruder 1-2 0-0 2, Williams 8-13 5-6 23. Totals 46-85 18-23 124.

DENVER — Millsap 2-6 1-2 5, Porter Jr. 4-10 3-4 11, Jokic 7-11 2-4 17, Craig 4-8 0-1 10, Murray 3-8 2-2 10, Bates-Diop 3-4 0-0 6, Bol 3-4 0-0 7, Dozier 3-10 0-0 6, Grant 9-14 3-4 25, Vonleh 0-0 1-2 1, Plumlee 2-4 0-0 4, Daniels 1-2 0-0 3, Morris 2-6 0-0 6. Totals 43-87 12-19 111.

L.A. Clippers	**26**	**24**	**40**	**34—124**
Denver	**25**	**33**	**34**	**19—111**

Three-Point Goals—L.A. Clippers 14-37 (George 4-9, Patterson 2-3, Jackson 2-6, Williams 2-6, Leonard 1-4, Morris Sr. 1-7), Denver 13-35 (Grant 4-7, Morris 2-3, Craig 2-4, Murray 2-7, Bol 1-2, Daniels 1-2, Jokic 1-4, Porter Jr. 0-4). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—L.A. Clippers 40 (Zubac 12), Denver 42 (Jokic 7). Assists—L.A. Clippers 29 (Williams 7), Denver 33 (Jokic 13). Total Fouls—L.A. Clippers 25, Denver 19.

Thunder 116, Heat 115

MIAMI — Butler 2-3 3-5 7, Crowder 1-4 0-0 3, Adebayo 3-5 0-0 6, Dragic 7-12 1-2 16, Robinson 6-8 2-2 15, Hill 4-10 0-0 10, Silva 3-5 2-2 8, Leonard 0-4 0-0 0, Olynyk 4-6 0-0 9, Iguodala 0-4 0-0 0, Jones Jr. 2-2 0-0 4, Herro 9-16 9-9 30, Vincent 1-7 0-0 3. Totals 42-86 17-20 115.

OKLAHOMA CITY — Gallinari 2-10 10-10 14, Gilgeous-Alexander 6-9 4-4 18, Adams 4-7 0-2 8, Dort 0-1 2-2 2, Paul 4-12 4-4 12, Diallo 4-9 2-4 11, Ferguson 1-5 0-0 3, Nader 5-9 0-0 13, Noel 1-1 0-0 2, Roberson 2-3 0-0 6, Muscala 2-5 0-0 6, Bazley 8-14 0-1 21, Hall 0-4 0-0 0. Totals 39-89 22-27 115.

Miami	**42**	**24**	**34**	**15—115**
Oklahoma City	**29**	**33**	**20**	**34—116**

Three-Point Goals—Miami 14-42 (Robinson 5-7, Herro 3-6, Hill 2-6, Olynyk 1-3, Crowder 1-4, Dragic 1-4, Vincent 1-5, Iguodala 0-2, Leonard 0-4), Oklahoma City 16-42 (Bazley 5-8, Nader 3-6, Gilgeous-Alexander 2-3, Roberson 2-3, Muscala 2-4, Diallo 1-2, Ferguson 1-3, Hall 0-3, Paul 0-3, Gallinari 0-6). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Miami 40 (Herro 6), Oklahoma City 50 (Bazley 9). Assists—Miami 24 (Dragic 6), Oklahoma City 20 (Ferguson 5). Total Fouls—Miami 23, Oklahoma City 19.

Pacers 108, Rockets 104

INDIANA — J.Holiday 6-10 2-2 18, Sampson 3-3 3-3 9, Turner 5-14 8-10 18, A.Holiday 1-11 0-0 2, Oladipo 7-26 0-0 16, Bitadze 2-6 0-0 4, Johnson 1-3 0-0 2, McDermott 6-7 1-1 16, McConnell 3-9 0-0 6, Sumner 6-11 3-6 17. Totals 40-100 17-22 108.

HOUSTON — Gordon 5-15 2-2 13, Tucker 1-6 0-0 3, Covington 3-8 2-2 11, Harden 13-21 12-14 45, McLemore 2-9 1-2 7, Carroll 0-2 3-4 3, Green 5-12 4-4 14, Clemons 1-1 0-0 3, Frazier 1-3 0-0 2, Rivers 1-9 0-0 3. Totals 32-86 24-28 104.

Indiana	**29**	**22**	**28**	**29—108**
Houston	**33**	**17**	**27**	**27—104**

Three-Point Goals—Indiana 11-31 (J.Holiday 4-8, McDermott 3-3, Sumner 2-3, Oladipo 2-12, A.Holiday 0-3), Houston 16-57 (Harden 7-14, Covington 3-8, McLemore 2-8, Tucker 1-4, Rivers 1-5, Gordon 1-9, Carroll 0-2, Frazier 0-2, Green 0-4). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—Indiana 54 (Turner 12), Houston 40 (Harden 17). Assists—Indiana 25 (McConnell 7), Houston 20 (Harden 9). Total Fouls—Indiana 25, Houston 20.

Leaders

	Scoring G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Harden, HOU	61	603	619	2096	34.4
Beal, WAS	57	593	385	1741	30.5
Anttoknmpo, MIL	57	623	361	1690	29.6
Young, ATL	60	546	481	1778	29.6
Lillard, POR	58	531	389	1677	28.9
Doncic, DAL	54	512	369	1549	28.7
Westbrook, HOU	53	568	269	1456	27.5

NBA sees seven of the eight first-round matchups set

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — The NBA playoff bracket is nearly set.

Wednesday's results filled in five of what were the six unknown matchups for Round 1 of the postseason, which starts next week at Walt Disney World.

In the Western Conference: Houston and Oklahoma City will meet in the first round, meaning Rockets guard Russell Westbrook and Thunder guard Chris Paul get the chance to face their former teams.

"It'll be interesting," Paul said. "Two teams that know a lot about each other. We'll prepare, get ready and we'll see what's what."

Other West matchups that got clinched on Wednesday include the second-seeded Los Angeles Clippers against No. 7 Dallas, and No. 3 Denver against No. 6 Utah.

In the East, Miami and Indiana will meet in the first round — after the clubs close the regular season on Friday against one another to decide which team will be seeded No. 4 and which will be No. 5.

Indiana's win over Houston on Wednesday set what had been the last two unknown series in the East bracket. No. 3 Boston will play No. 6 Philadelphia in a meeting between longtime rivals, and the Pacers are now locked into an East opening series against the Heat — with the potential of those teams playing nine times in a span of 10 games.

Miami beat Indiana on Monday. The teams meet again Friday then face off in Game 1 to begin a best-of-seven series early next week. That means, for just the second time since 2011, teams that end the regular season against one another will open the postseason against one another. The last time it happened was 2016, when Cleveland faced Detroit.

"It's good to know that we play them," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "Just need to figure out what uniform we're wearing."

That will be decided Friday, when home-uniform advantage gets decided.

"We've got to match Miami's energy," Indiana's Edmond Sumner said. "That's a team that's going to play hard for 48 minutes."

The other East matchups were known previously: No. 1 Milwaukee plays No. 8 Orlando, and No. 2 Toronto plays No. 7 Brooklyn.

In the West, Houston and Oklahoma City will be in the 4-5 matchup and Utah will be the No. 6 seed. The Jazz were locked into that slot by the Thunder defeating Miami, and Denver became the No. 3 seed when it lost to the Clippers.

The full list of matchups won't be known until at least Saturday, when the West play-in series begins with Portland, Memphis, Phoenix and San Antonio bidding for those two spots. The winner of that series will take on the top-seeded Los Angeles Lakers in the first round, the only matchup that's yet to be determined.

NFL

Break-in workouts could mean breakout year

Rams WRs Woods, Kupp tried clandestine training to help them adjust to new workload

By Greg Beacham
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES

Robert Woods spent his workdays during this bizarre NFL offseason sneaking over fences and through unlocked doors onto the fields and tracks of various Los Angeles-area high schools.

"You might see a gate open, so you hop on the track and get your work in," Woods said. "The next day you may see somebody watching you on the track and they'll say, 'Hey, what are you doing out here?' and then find ways to get you off the track. Next thing you know, you're shooting texts around trying to find another available track."

Woods did some of that sneaky work with Cooper Kupp, his fellow 1,000-yard receiver with the Los Angeles Rams. These COVID-clandestine workouts with Jared Goff and other Rams were both unusual and entertaining.

"The regimen really consisted of getting kicked off just about every field here in Thousand Oaks, which was fun," Kupp said. "If I jumped the fence, I wasn't supposed to be out there, probably. I just feel like as long as I'm not putting anyone in danger, I was going to ... ask for forgiveness instead of permission."

Being star receivers for the Rams didn't help much in the time of coronavirus, not when the team's training complex was off limits and high schools weren't interested in knowingly hosting celebrity workouts.

"It worked for Day One, but it went above to somebody, and they got us kicked off," Woods said with a laugh.

Woods and Kupp are one of the NFL's most prolific and most reliable pass-catching duos of the past three seasons, but the steady receivers are about to get attention that often missed them.

With their crisp route-running, sure hands and consistent play, Woods and Kupp both had at least 90 catches and 1,100 yards receiving last season, relentlessly racking up numbers in coach Sean McVay's offense.

After running back Todd Gurley's release and receiver Brandin Cooks' departure in a trade by the cost-cutting Rams during the offseason, Woods and Kupp are likely to shoulder extra work and responsibility in the fall. They're approaching it with the same workmanlike attitude that got them to where they are.

"I think we're not like the flashiest group of receivers," said Woods, the first Rams receiver to post back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons since Torry Holt in 2007.

"But we're just up there with production — up there with the best, if not the best," Woods added. "That's the biggest goal of our whole receiving corps, not only to do what we did last year, but to be even more dominant in the passing game and the running game, to make bigger plays. You know, we break a few tackles, but we want to break them all."

They also don't have to do an enormous amount of learning this year: The 28-year-old Woods and the 27-year-old Kupp are heading into their fourth seasons in coach Sean McVay's offense, and that familiarity makes everything easier.

"We've got such a good rapport at this point, we're getting to the point where you don't really have to talk to each other," said Goff, who has been McVay's quarterback for all four years. "You kind of just look at each other and you know what each other are thinking."

Woods and Kupp will have help, too. Josh Reynolds is back after three seasons spent largely as the Rams' fourth receiver, although he stepped up when Kupp went down with a season-ending knee injury in 2018, eventually making three catches in the Super Bowl.

The Rams also drafted Florida product Van Jefferson in the second round, proving that this franchise definitely loves a certain type of receiver.

Jefferson's smooth speed, precise route-running and sure hands led to innumerable pre-draft comparisons to none other than Woods and Kupp. General manager Les Snead touted the comparison moments after drafting Jefferson, who had described both veterans as role models for his NFL career even before he knew he would be playing alongside them.

Jefferson showed up early in the Thousand Oaks area and participated in some of those not-so-secret Rams workouts, picking the veteran wideouts' brains for info. McVay is pleased to see Woods and Kupp stepping up to take a new level of responsibility in his offense.

"Watching those two and their communication amongst one another or with Jared, it's really impressive," McVay said. "In some instances, it's good as a coach where you can just step back and let them take that autonomy and ownership, because it's certainly earned."

Jae C. Hong/AP

Los Angeles Rams wide receiver Cooper Kupp, left, celebrates his touchdown with wide receiver Robert Woods during a 2017 game against the Indianapolis Colts in Los Angeles. Kupp and Woods spent the offseason getting kicked off high school football fields while trying some COVID-clandestine workouts.

Chiefs receivers showcase speed with a race

By Dave Skretta
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Mecole Hardman is probably faster than 99% of players in the NFL.

Tyreek Hill happens to be in the 1%.

The two Chiefs wide receivers have traded barbs about their speed since Hardman was chosen in the second round of last year's draft. Hardman and Hill both have world-class speed — that much was never in question — but just who was the fastest man in Kansas City wasn't settled until the two lined up in the team's indoor facility this past week.

Hill won easily. Hardman copped to it on social media with a sad-face emoji.

"Every day we find ways to better ourselves," Hill said in a social media posting. "Really enjoyed the competition level and the way we push each other. It's all love."

The real winners, though, are probably the Super Bowl champs. Throw in veteran Sammy Watkins, rookie running back Clyde Edwards-Helaire and even tight end Travis Kelce, and the Chiefs just might have the fleetest group of skill position players in a league that has grown increasingly dependent on speed.

Doug Benc/AP

Chiefs receivers Mecole Hardman, left, and Tyreek Hill, right, are two of the fastest receivers in the league.

"The Tyreek and Mecole race, I mean, both the guys are super fast. I'm just lucky to have both of them," Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes said during a break from training camp meetings and workouts this week.

"Tyreek got the first one," Mahomes said with a smile, "but I'm going to try to keep them from racing anymore. I'd rather them just run down the sidelines scoring touchdowns during the game week."

All of the Chiefs' wide receivers did plenty of that last year.

Hill caught seven touchdown passes last season. Hardman had six. Another member of the dynamic group, Demarcus Robinson, hauled in four TD catches and Watkins finished with three.

On one of Hardman's touchdown receptions, an 83-yard catch in Week 3, he hit a top speed of 21.74 mph that put the play among the fastest all season, according to NFL Next Gen Stats. Watkins hit 21.33 mph on a 38-yard TD catch in Week 1.

Hill didn't quite reach those speeds last season, mostly because he's often so far ahead of defenders by the end zone that he's able to throttle back a bit. But gaze back at previous seasons and the two-time All-Pro regularly has some of the fastest single plays in the NFL. In fact, he had the two fastest during the 2016 season, at one point hitting 23.24 mph.

It's not just straight-line speed, either. There is a significant difference between being fast and playing fast. And the ability of Hardman and Hill in particular to stop on a dime, change directions and immediately accelerate to full speed is uncanny.

Those also happen to be traits that allowed Edwards-Helaire to become a first-round draft pick.

Most draftniks thought the Chiefs would select a defensive player in the first round, but they instead made the talented running back out of LSU their choice. They were enamored by his blocking in the pass game, his ability to catch passes out of the backfield and, yes, his speed and elusiveness — and it wound up being a decision that carried even more importance when Super Bowl star Damien Williams decided to opt out because of coronavirus concerns.

"It's something that I was born with," Edwards-Helaire said of his unique athletic ability. "I feel like that was a gift I had (and) you always try to make yourself better, find a way to make it elite, as some guys would say. I wanted to work on it, being quicker and faster than the next person is always the name of the game. It's the way I make my game in, being quick and fast in small areas. It's the way I run the ball. It's the way I got to the Kansas City Chiefs."

NFL

Stars out to show there's more in the tank

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo.

Von Miller is determined to show 2019 was an oddity, not an omen. Miller's performance last season was nothing to scoff at considering he had eight sacks and made his eighth Pro Bowl. But his five-year run as an All-Pro first- or second-team selection came to an end and the Denver Broncos' playoff drought persisted.

"I didn't play to the 'Sack Master's' standards," Miller said. "My coaches felt like there was more for me to give. Most of all, I feel like I can give more and I can be more. I don't feel like I'm finished yet."

Neither does Tom Brady nor JuJu Smith-Schuster nor Baker Mayfield, among the other big names looking for big bounce-backs in 2020.

Miller, the biggest NFL star to contract COVID-19, made the most of his home gym after recovering from the virus, hitting the weights hard and sharing videos and photos of his bulging muscles and extreme workouts on social media.

"I didn't take any days off, I didn't go on any vacations and I didn't do anything but work out," Miller said.

It shows.

But it isn't just his buffed body that's turning heads at team headquarters. Coaches and teammates also see a more serious, cerebral Miller.

"I do sense that he's got a hunger to his game and to his attitude that I don't think he's had the last few years," coach Vic Fangio said.

"We do sprints and he's always out front," safety Justin Simmons said.

"He's been the most motivated I've seen," linebacker Bradley Chubb agreed. "He's going to have a monster year."

Miller said he realized he wasn't tapping his full leadership potential when he read "The Mamba Mentality" following Kobe Bryant's death and again when he watched the Michael Jordan documentary "The Last Dance."

"It's never too late to change," Miller said. "I might be 31 years old and in Year 10, but it's never too late to change. I've identified the leader that I was before wasn't getting it done. ... I have to change. I have to be like those guys."

Douglas R. Clifford, Tampa Bay Times/AP

Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady, right, went 4-5 down the stretch last season with the New England Patriots.

Jack Dempsey/AP

Denver Broncos outside linebacker Von Miller is determined to show a so-so 2019 was an oddity, not an omen.

Joining Miller on a comeback campaign in Denver this season is Chubb, Miller's pass-rushing partner who blew out a knee in September.

Chubb expects to be ready to go on opening night Sept. 14.

"I'm easing back into practice and getting my flow back to where it was," Chubb said. "I feel like I'll be good for Week 1, for sure."

Tom Brady (and Rob Gronkowski)

Like Miller, Brady put up decent numbers in 2019, but he sputtered down the stretch along with the rest of the Patriots, who followed their 8-0 start with a 4-5 finish, capped by their home loss to Tennessee in the playoffs. That was Brady's farewell to New England after two decades and six rings. Grownkowski came out of retirement to join Brady in Tampa, where the Bucs are sure they'll end their 12-year playoff drought.

JuJu Smith-Schuster (and Ben Roethlisberger)

Smith-Schuster paid the price after Roesthlisberger suffered a season-ending elbow injury in Week 2. After catching 111 passes for 1,426 yards and seven TDs in 2018, Smith-Schuster had 42 catches for 552 yards and three TDs. Big Ben is back and so is James Washington (16.7 yards per catch). Pittsburgh also drafted Notre Dame's big receiver Chase Claypool. That should open things up for Smith-Schuster underneath to return to his 2018 form.

T.Y. Hilton (and Philip Rivers)

Like Schuster, Hilton was adversely affected by injuries and spotty quarterback play last year when he set career lows with 45 receptions for 501 yards. Now he has Rivers throwing to him. Rivers was intercepted a whopping 20 times last year in L.A. to go with his 23 TD tosses. That followed an effective two-year stretch in which Rivers averaged 30 touchdown throws and 11 interceptions.

Mark Zaleski/AP

Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster, left, had only 42 catches for 552 yards and three touchdowns last season, after having 111 catches for 1,426 yards and seven touchdowns in 2018, when Ben Roethlisberger was healthy.

Odell Beckham Jr. (and Baker Mayfield)

Mayfield followed a 27-TD rookie season with a step back under Freddie Kitchens, and Beckham was never himself as he played through a sports hernia. Beckham is healthy again following offseason surgery and seems a better fit in new coach Kevin Stefanski's play-action system, which also should help settle Mayfield, who had 21 interceptions in 2019 to go with 22 touchdown passes.

Khalil Mack (and the Bears)

The league's highest-paid defender followed his smashing debut season in Chicago with a rather pedestrian 2019 that saw him tally 8½ sacks, his fewest since his rookie season in 2014. Although he had the same number of tackles — 47 — as he did in 2018, Mack's 14 QB hits ranked 46th in the NFL and his eight tackles for loss ranked 61st, numbers not befitting his $141 million contract.

Health: Early results from testing promising

FROM BACK PAGE

of this aggressive virus-proofing around team facilities. NFL Network reported that, of 109,075 coronavirus tests conducted on players, coaches and team employees through Tuesday, the rate of positive tests has been 0.46% overall and 0.81% for players.

Since training camps began three weeks ago, 108 players have been placed on COVID-19 reserve lists by their respective teams — according to an Associated Press review of the league's daily transaction logs — and 81 of those players were subsequently returned to active status on the roster. There are more than 2,600 players currently employed across the 32 clubs.

Landing on the COVID-19 reserve list does not mean a player has the virus. The category was created for a player who either tests positive for COVID-19 or who has been quarantined after having been in close contact with an infected person or persons. By agreement between the NFL and the NFL Players Association, clubs are not permitted to disclose whether a player is positive for COVID-19 or simply in preventative quarantine.

Wearing masks, of course, is a vital part of the equation.

After leaving the testing trailer and entering the building, players and staffers must pass the temperature check. The tablet-like device won't even perform the thermal scan if the person is not wearing a face covering.

"It's an adjustment. You used to check phone, key, wallet. Now it's phone, key, wallet, mask, proximity locator," Vikings linebacker Eric Kendricks said. "But they explained to us the ... reason behind the madness."

Passing the symptom questionnaire and the temperature check, with the nasal swab performed in between, then takes the employee to another level of high-tech: the proximity tracker.

The device, which resembles a smart watch, produces audible and visual warnings to help maximize social distancing and keep employees not required to interact with players apart from those who must. The tracker can also provide instant reports for contact tracing in case of a positive test. The devices are worn during practice but turned in at the end of the work day before employees depart the building.

"It's weird when someone tells you you've been too close for too long," Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes said, "but it's necessary. We're going to try to do our part for the community and make sure we can keep playing the game we love."

As far as the tall task of making it through a full season, well, the fiercely competitive nature of its participants ought to work in pro football's favor.

"It's going to come down to whoever handles the situation the best. That's who's going to be at the top at the end, and I feel like we're taking all the right steps," Green Bay Packers defensive tackle Kenny Clark said. "You walk in here, you get tested, there's sanitizers everywhere. You know, the masks, everything that we're doing, they're serious about getting us ready to be able to play and keeping us healthy."

DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to a questionnaire, nasal swab, and temperature check, players and staff add another level of high-tech protection: smart watch-sized proximity trackers, which produce audible and visual warnings to help maximize distancing and keep employees not required to interact with players apart from those who must. The trackers can also provide instant reports for contact tracing in case of a positive test.

SOURCE: Associated Press

JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

Atlanta Falcons coach Dan Quinn talks to players during training camp Thursday, in Flowery Branch, Ga.

League, union agree to extend daily virus testing

BY JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

The NFL extended daily coronavirus testing for players and staff until further notice even though the positive test rate from the first two weeks of camp has been less than 1 percent.

Under the original agreement between the league and the NFL Players Association, players and staff needed three negative tests in a four-day period before they could report to the facility and then daily testing for the next two weeks.

If the positive rate from that first stretch of daily testing was below 5 percent, the plan had been to shift to testing every other day.

But the league and the union decided Wednesday to extend that period as they use more rapid onsite testing and as contact increases when padded practices start around the league next week.

"I think the bottom line is we're continuing to learn a great deal from our testing results," said Dr. Allen Sills, the league's chief medical officer. "I think that given the protocol changes that we recently made, as well as the use of this additional point of care technology and the recognition that we're about to go into more of team-based activity during training camp, that we and the Players Association together felt it was prudent to extend the daily testing."

Sills reported that there were 53 new positives out of 2,840 tests of players upon arrival, which works out to 1.9%. The rate of new positives for all staff upon arrival was at 1.7%

TED S. WARREN/AP

A Seattle Seahawks staff member wears a mask while loading footballs into a throwing machine Wednesday in Renton, Wash.

Since then, the league has conducted 109,075 tests through Tuesday with 0.46% of all tests coming up as positive and 0.81% of players testing positive.

"I think we were pleasantly surprised at how few positive tests we had," Sills said of the initial results. "I think since that time, that positivity rate that I gave you reflects the fact that our teams have done, and our players, staff and coaches have done, a terrific job of staying uninfected."

Sills said some of those positive tests could be false positives or reflect people who previously had coronavirus and still test positive for it.

While some players have been on the reserve/COVID-19 list for more than two weeks, Sills said he has no reports of any player having serious complications.

Sills said the league is monitoring any heart problems for players who test positive. There have been reports of several college football players contracting myocarditis, inflammation of the heart muscle, after getting coronavirus. The protocols the NFL has with the union already require heart tests for players who have tested positive before they are allowed to return.

"I think they're important and ongoing conversations when players have tested positive about what those screening tests mean and what's the best way to rule out any of those complications," Sills said. "So it is something we'll continue to monitor."

Source: 49ers, Kittle agree on extension

All-Pro tight end George Kittle has reportedly agreed to a five-year, $75 million extension with the San Francisco 49ers that is the richest contract ever at the position.

NFL Network first reported the terms and says the deal includes an $18 million signing bonus.

Locking up Kittle, one of the NFL's biggest bargains after being drafted in the fifth round in 2017, was a high priority this offseason for the Niners.

Kittle has been the most productive tight end in NFL history through his first three seasons with 197 catches for 2,664 yards. But he is almost equally as skilled as a blocker in the run game where he is a key piece in coach Kyle Shanahan's dynamic offense.

Kittle

The Niners averaged 5.0 yards per carry last season with Kittle on the field, compared to 3.5 yards per carry without him, according to NFL NextGen stats.

— Associated Press

SPORTS

Historic beginnings
Cubs top Tribe to match best start in 50 years » **Page 51**

Clockwise from top: Jacksonville Jaguars coach Doug Marrone; Arizona Cardinals coach Cliff Kingsbury; Minnesota Vikings tight end Kyle Rudolph; and Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll.

AP photos

Aggressive approach

NFL deploying wide array of health protocols designed to keep pandemic at bay

By Dave Campbell
Associated Press

The captivation and celebration of the NFL have long stemmed from the speed, strategy, strength and teamwork that make the game go.

Football is just as much a sport of pattern and detail, too, never more than at training camps around the league in the time of COVID-19.

Like the defense stiffening at the goal line late in the fourth quarter, the NFL has implemented a wide array of health protocols designed to keep the virus from wrecking the 2020 season for this cultural institution that was a $16 billion business before the pandemic.

"There are so many steps along the way. You've got to fill out your questionnaire on our app when you wake up in the morning," Minnesota Vikings tight end Kyle Rudolph said. "Then when you come in, you sanitize your hands, do your temperature check, get your COVID tests, put on your lanyard, grab your tracker. So there's just a lot of things that have now been added to your routine."

Daily testing, naturally, is the fulcrum

SEE HEALTH ON PAGE 55

> **"When you come in, you sanitize your hands, do your temperature check, get your COVID tests, put on your lanyard, grab your tracker. So there's just a lot of things that have now been added to your routine."**
>
> **Kyle Rudolph**
> Vikings tight end

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