

**MARCH MADNESS:** Purdue's success a team effort **Page 48**

**GAMES:** Metroid Prime gets an upgrade **Page 18**

**MOVIES:** 'Shazam!' sequel more, but not better **Page 16**

EUROPE  
& PACIFIC  
**WEEKEND**  
EDITION



**MUSIC**  
U2 revisits,  
reinvents its songs  
**Page 28**

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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## Analysts: With US gone, Iran influencing Iraq politics

By J.P. LAWRENCE  
*Stars and Stripes*

Iraqis enjoyed a little dark humor during last year's World Cup match in Qatar between the Iranian and U.S. teams, representing two of the geopolitical rivals that now hold sway in their country.

"The joke was this is the first time Iran and America are playing outside Iraq," recalled Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, a journalist from Baghdad who has reported extensively on his homeland since the U.S. invasion 20 years ago.

Iran, which had fought a protracted and bloody war against Iraq, is now deeply enmeshed in its neighbor's politics and economy, analysts and Iraqi journalists said, in the days leading up to the 20th anniversary of the U.S. invasion that toppled Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Saddam's ouster in 2003 removed a brutal dictator but also provided an opening for Iran's leaders.

"It's fair to say that Iran is in many ways in control of the Iraqi politics," Omar Mohammed, a historian from Mosul, said at the recent 2023 Global Security Forum

SEE IRAN ON PAGE 6



Stars and Stripes

**Marines stand at the gate of a suspected terrorist training camp near Baghdad with a mural of Saddam Hussein in 2003.**



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE/AP

**A Russian Su-27 approaches the back of an American MQ-9 drone and begins to release fuel during an incident over the Black Sea, in an image taken from video released by the Pentagon.**

## A dangerous encounter

## Video shows Russian jet colliding with US drone

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — Video footage released Thursday by U.S. European Command shows a Russian fighter jet buzzing past a U.S. Reaper drone above the Black Sea multiple times, before colliding with the aircraft.

The 42-second video depicts a Russian Su-27 aircraft trailing an unmanned MQ-9 aircraft that was operating within international airspace. The incident, which occurred Tuesday morning, involved two Russian Su-27s, one of which struck the propeller of the MQ-9, causing U.S. forces to bring the drone down in international waters.

The video was recorded by a camera angled at the rear of the surveillance aircraft, which captured the incoming Russian fighters dumping fuel on the drone as it passed on two occasions. The video then goes grainy after the sec-

**"We take any potential for escalation very seriously."**

Lloyd Austin  
Defense Secretary

ond pass, indicating some kind of collision.

While intercepts between U.S. and Russian military aircraft have happened repeatedly in recent years, the incident marked the first known collision. It set off a diplomatic firestorm between two countries already deeply at odds over Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Following the crash of the MQ-9, the U.S. summoned Russia's ambassador in Washington. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin also spoke

with Russia's defense chief, Sergei Shoigu, about the issue.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters that the downed drone was likely unrecoverable. But he didn't rule out trying to get the wreckage back.

"It's probably about maybe 4,000 or 5,000 feet of water, something like that. So any recovery operation is very difficult at that depth by anyone," Milley said.

Still, Milley said steps were taken to ensure that any sensitive intelligence aboard the aircraft was "no longer of value" should the Russians recover it.

Austin called the encounter that involved two Russian jets "dangerous" and "reckless," and Milley labeled the actions of the Russians

SEE VIDEO ON PAGE 7

# BUSINESS/WEATHER

## EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	Azores	..	..	\$4.555	..
Germany	\$3.838	\$4.352	\$4.666	\$4.629	Change in price	..	..	+4.5 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$4.463	\$4.728	\$4.740	Turkey	..	..	\$4.354	\$4.735*
U.K.	..	\$4.288	\$4.602	\$4.565	Change in price	..	..	+4.5 cents	No change

Fuel prices are changed daily. These prices are effective March 17. The change in prices is from March 10.

## PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	\$3.529	..	\$4.359	\$4.319
Japan	..	\$4.329	..	\$4.299	Change in price	+7.0 cents	..	+5.0 cents	-4.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.499	..	..	\$4.299	Guam	\$3.519	\$4.029	\$4.339	..
Change in price	+6.0 cents	..	..	-3.0 cents	Change in price	+7.0 cents	+4.0 cents	+4.0 cents	..

\*DieselEFD \*\*Midgrade  
Pacific prices for the week of March 17-23

## EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Switzerland (Franc)	0.9280
Euro costs (March 17)	\$1.04	Thailand (Baht)	34.38
British pound (March 17)	\$1.18	Turkey (NewLira)	19.0004
Japanese yen (March 17)	132.00	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
South Korean won (March 17)	1275.00	INTEREST RATES	
Commercial rates		Prime rate	7.75
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770	Interest Rates Discount rate	5.25
Britain (Pound)	1.2084	Federal funds market rate	4.55
Canada (Dollar)	1.3758	3-month bill	4.72
China (Yuan)	6.8981	30-year bond	3.65
Denmark (Krone)	7.0245		
Egypt (Pound)	30.8985		
Euro	0.9433		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8490		
Hungary (Forint)	375.30		
Israel (Shekel)	3.6619		
Japan (Yen)	133.46		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3069		
Norway (Krone)	10.8081		
Philippines (Peso)	54.91		
Poland (Zloty)	4.43		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7564		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3473		
South Korea (Won)	1311.48		

## 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.

## TODAY IN STRIPES

- Classified ..... 36
- Comics ..... 34,38-39
- Crossword ..... 34,38-39
- Opinion ..... 40
- Sports ..... 41-48

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## MILITARY

# N. Korea fires missile before Yoon's Japan visit

By DAVID CHOI

Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — North Korea fired a long-range ballistic missile off its eastern coast Thursday morning, its third such launch this week, and just ahead of a rare summit between the South Korean and Japanese leaders, according to the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Joint Chiefs detected a long-range ballistic missile launched at a high angle from Pyongyang's Sunan area at 7:10 a.m., they said in a message to news agencies. The missile was said to have landed in the East Sea, or Sea of Japan, after flying more than 620 miles.

The missile is a "serious provocation that undermines peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, as well as the international community," the message said.

North Korea last fired two short-range ballistic missiles on Tuesday. It also launched two cruise missiles from a submarine on Sunday, according to the regime's state-run Korean Central News Agency.

The North has fired eight ballistic missiles so far this year. The U.N. Security Council in 2006 barred North Korea from conducting ballistic missile tests.

Thursday's launch comes the same day



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

**South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol arrives at Haneda International Airport in Tokyo on Thursday.**

as South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's trip to Tokyo, where he met with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to discuss issues ranging from North Korean threats to economic supply chains.

At the meeting, Japan and South Korea agreed to resume regular visits between

their leaders and take steps to resolve a trade dispute, The Associated Press reported.

In his opening remarks, Kishida said the countries had agreed to resume defense dialogue and vice-ministerial strategic talks, while also restarting a process of tri-

lateral communication among Japan, South Korea and China.

Yoon said Thursday's meeting "has special significance as it shows the people of both countries that South Korea-Japan relations are off to a new beginning after being plagued by various issues."

The two leaders agreed to increase cooperation in areas such as security, economy, and people to people exchanges, Yoon said.

Yoon's visit marks the first time in 12 years a South Korean president has visited Japan for a bilateral meeting. Then-President Lee Myung-bak traveled to Tokyo in 2011 for a summit with then-Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda.

North Korea still views Japan as a colonial-era enemy and has repeatedly threatened the country in statements carried by KCNA.

The launches also come as the United States and South Korea conduct their largest joint military drills in five years. The allies kicked off the 11-day Freedom Shield exercise on Monday, which Seoul has described as a defensive drill.

North Korea has frequently described the joint military drills as a declaration of war and a rehearsal of an invasion of its country.

## Pentagon seeks funding for recruitment ads

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department wants to spend \$40 million to promote military service to young people as lawmakers warn the Army, Navy and Air Force are on track to miss their enlistment goals this year amid persistent recruitment struggles.

Pentagon officials pitched the investment to members of a Senate Armed Services Committee subpanel on Wednesday as a pivotal tool for reversing enlistment shortfalls and selling a positive image of the military to a young population with little inclination to serve.

"We need to do a better job of telling our story, the benefits of military service and what it can provide," said Gilbert Cisneros, the undersecretary of defense of personnel and readiness.

The funding request for the Defense Department's joint military advertising, market research and studies program is included in the department's budget request for fiscal 2024, which begins Oct. 1. The individual services have their own additional budgets for marketing, Cisneros said.

Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., cautioned Wednesday that the Army, Navy and Air Force will likely miss their recruiting goals by tens of thousands of recruits this year if current trends hold. He urged the military to make "effective use of marketing" a priority.

The Army, which fell short of its recruiting goal last year by 15,000 recruits, debuted a \$117 million advertisement campaign last week with two new commercials inspired by the 1980s-era Army slogan, "Be All You Can Be." The clips feature actor Jonathan Majors, who starred in "Creed III" and "Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania" and is the son and grandson of veterans.

The Navy launched a "Forged by the Sea" ad campaign on its 247th birthday in October targeting Generation Z on social media. The service only met its active-duty enlistment goal



U.S. Army

**The Army will launch a new marketing campaign next year built around the old slogan, "Be all you can be."**

last year by heavily dipping into its delayed entry pool, according to the Navy. It failed to reach the desired recruitment for active duty and Reserve officers.

The Air Force is expected this year to miss its active-duty enlistment target for the first time since 1999, said Alex Wagner, the assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and reserve affairs. He named several factors contributing to the military's recruitment woes, including historically low unemployment and a lack of recruiter access to schools that limited campus visits during the coronavirus pandemic.

But the largest problem is propensity to serve, Wagner said. A mere 9% of Americans aged 17 to 24 who are eligible to serve show an interest in serving in the military, the lowest since the height of the Iraq War in 2007, according to the Pentagon. Only about 23% of young Americans meet the physical and academic standards required for service.

Wagner linked low interest to the growing lack of familiarity with the military. In 1995, 40% of Americans had a parent who served compared to less than 13% of Americans today, he said. An inflection point in the widening divide between civilians and service members came after 9/11, when military installations became more hardened and secure and closed

themselves off from the communities around them, Wagner said.

"That lack of familiarity has been filled in by a public narrative that emphasizes the risks of service while missing the benefits," he said.

Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, said the military must work to counter a steady drumbeat of negative depictions in the news media.

"If you tell everybody every day in The Washington Post and The New York Times that the military is full of extremists, which it is not, you're going to have people say, 'Oh jeez, I don't want to send my son or daughter there,'" he said. "We should appeal to the patriotism and desire, that's been in this country for 200-plus years, to deploy and fight for their country."

Pentagon officials said they intend to devote more resources to making the public more aware of military service and specifically reaching "influencers" such as teachers, parents, grandparents and other adults who young people might admire and respect.

"The additional funding request... is focused on building the brand and making sure that when the time for a decision comes, they're at least aware that military service, or public service even, is an option to them," said Thomas Constable, the acting assistant secretary of defense for manpower and reserve affairs.

Increased funding for the military's joint advertising program will also provide a "baseline" for each of the services to develop their own marketing campaigns, he said. The program aims to appeal to a more diverse group of potential recruits than ever before, he said.

"We don't like leaving any money on the table or any population unchecked, especially with all the skills that they bring us or the opportunity to better reflect the American public," Constable said. "You should expect to see more marketing, more advertising geared towards a broader population."

shkolnikova.svetlana@stripes.com Twitter: @svetashko

## Army Golden Knight killed in parachute training jump

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

A member of the Army's Golden Knights parachute demonstration team was killed during a training jump at Homestead Air Reserve Base in Florida on Monday, Army officials said Wednesday.



Sgt. 1st Class Michael "Ty" Kettenhofen

Sgt. 1st Class Michael "Ty" Kettenhofen, who had served with the elite parachute team since 2020, died of injuries sustained during the routine jump, the U.S. Army Recruiting Command said in a statement. It was unclear what went wrong, and officials said the incident remained under investigation and declined to provide further details. Kettenhofen was a highly experienced parachutist with more than 1,000 career jumps with the Army, and he was a graduate of the Army's Jumpmaster School. An infantryman, he enlisted in the Army in 2006 and served multiple combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lt. Col. Andy Moffitt, the Golden Knights' commander, described Kettenhofen as "loved, admired and respected" among his Army peers, who valued his "sense of humor, joy of life."

## PACIFIC

# Planning key for Japanese hospital access

BY HANA KUSUMOTO  
AND ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — Civilian Defense Department workers seeking medical treatment in Japan may find Japanese hospitals easy to navigate with some planning, according to professionals at a Tokyo facility.

Since Jan. 1, the Defense Health Agency has limited DOD civilians to space-available appointments at base hospitals in the Indo-Pacific after higher priority patients, including service members, their families and some retirees, are scheduled.

The number of appointment slots available on short notice each morning varies. For example, Naval Hospital Yokosuka had 45 open on March 7 across several clinics, but none the following day.

DHA's Indo-Pacific director, Army Maj. Gen. Joseph Heck, told DOD civilians in Japan to look for care in their Japanese communities. But health care advocates say obstacles in the Japanese system complicate the picture for Americans, including language barriers, time constraints, upfront payment and even denial of care in an emergency.

U.S. civilians who prepare for those obstacles will have an easier time navigating the Japanese system, staff from Tokyo Metropolitan Hiroo Hospital in Shibuya recently told Stars and Stripes.

Language barriers are the most obvious concern, said Takahiro

Hatano, head of Hiroo's medical professional section.

"Staff at our hospital generally don't correspond in English; they mainly speak Japanese," he said at the hospital on Feb. 21. "So, in that sense, we feel that there is a big language barrier."

Some staff, however, do speak English, and the hospital employs full-time English and Chinese translators. Staff members also have interpreting tools such as a handheld translator and, during certain hours, an online translation service.

## Planning ahead

Patients seeking care at a hospital or clinic in Japan are generally required to make an appointment for non-emergency treatment and to plan "plenty of time" for their visit, Hatano said.

"We see patients on a reservation basis, but there are times when other patients' exam times take longer and keep others waiting," he said.

Hiroo, like many hospitals in Japan, provides specialized medical care, so patients are advised to visit a local clinic first for a referral, according to Hatano.

Japanese hospitals and clinics prescribe medicine, but patients are generally required to visit a pharmacy. Prescriptions in Japan aren't filed electronically, unlike in the United States, and patients have up to four days before their prescription is void, said Sonoyo Shioji, head of Hiroo's pharma-



PHOTOS BY AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

**American patients should be aware that certain medications are not commonly prescribed, or are sometimes prohibited, in Japan, including common drugs like Adderall and Xanax.**

ceutical section.

Hiroo offers a list of nearby pharmacies with staff who speak English, he added.

American patients should be aware that certain medications are not commonly prescribed, or are sometimes prohibited, including drugs common in the U.S. such as Adderall or Xanax.

"Basically, the medicines that can't be used are those that are prohibited to import, such as stimulants or cannabis," Shioji said.

However, hospitals typically have a committee that may help DOD civilians obtain prohibited medications if the medicine is necessary or no substitute is available.

## Denied care

A stark difference between the U.S. and Japanese health care systems is that Japanese hospitals can deny care, even in an emergency.

In 2020, 12,998 patients picked up by ambulances were refused admission to at least three hospi-

tals, according to Japan's Fire and Disaster Management Agency. Of those, 379 were turned away from more than 10 facilities; one patient was turned away from 116 hospitals.

"This is a difficult problem, but this may be an issue not just for one hospital like us, but rather an issue for the medical system as a whole," Hatano said. "We have organized a system to accept patients transported by ambulance as much as possible."

Some COVID-19 restrictions still in place bar emergency patients from certain areas inside hospitals, and a lack of staff or beds also detract from care.

"There are times when we are asked to accept emergency patients when we are already dealing with another, or when we don't have necessary beds or when there are no specialized doctors," Hatano said.

## Upfront payment

Japanese health care facilities generally expect DOD civilians to

pay up front for medical care. Those without Japanese health insurance are billed according to an open-ended point system. However, costs may vary between hospitals and U.S. patients may be met by large bills.

Hiroo expects patients to pay up front, though some may be exempt from paying the full amount, depending on their insurance providers.

Patients may call ahead and ask the hospital for an estimate of its fees, Hatano said, emphasizing that the estimate may not reflect the final bill.

For questions about importing medicines, patients can visit <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/policy/health-medical/pharmaceuticals/01.html>.

For a complete list of controlled or prohibited substances, visit [https://www.ncd.mhlw.go.jp/dl\\_data/keitai/list.pdf](https://www.ncd.mhlw.go.jp/dl_data/keitai/list.pdf).

kusumoto.hana@stripes.com  
Twitter: @HanaKusumoto  
wilson.alex@stripes.com  
Twitter: @AlexMNWilson



**A patient waits to be seen by doctors at Tokyo Metropolitan Hiroo Hospital last month.**

# Man charged with murder in death of Army National Guard specialist

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Hawaii prosecutors on Wednesday charged a 25-year-old man with second-degree murder in the death earlier this week of a specialist in the Hawaii Army National Guard, according to court documents.

Samuel Jones was also charged with first-degree arson. His bail has been set at \$1 million, the documents say.

The body of Spc. Laau Laulusa, 21, was discovered in Mililani, a town in central Oahu adjacent to Schofield Barracks, by firefighters responding to a vehicle fire early Monday, the Hawaii De-

partment of Defense said in a news release Wednesday.

The car was parked at Mililani High School, where witnesses told police they saw a man opening and closing the vehicle's doors just before the fire began, according to a Wednesday report by KITV-4.

Police arrested Jones about a

mile from the car, the news report said.

Laulusa joined the Hawaii Army National Guard in 2019 and was a supply specialist for the 227th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, the Hawaii Department of Defense said.

"This is a tragic loss for the en-

tire Hawai'i Army National Guard," Brig. Gen. Stephen Logan, the Hawaii Guard commander, said in the news release. "We are cooperating with authorities during the ongoing investigation."

olson.wyatt@stripes.com  
Twitter: @WyattWilson

## PACIFIC

# Expert: Japan should join US-UK-Australia pact

By **SETH ROBSON**

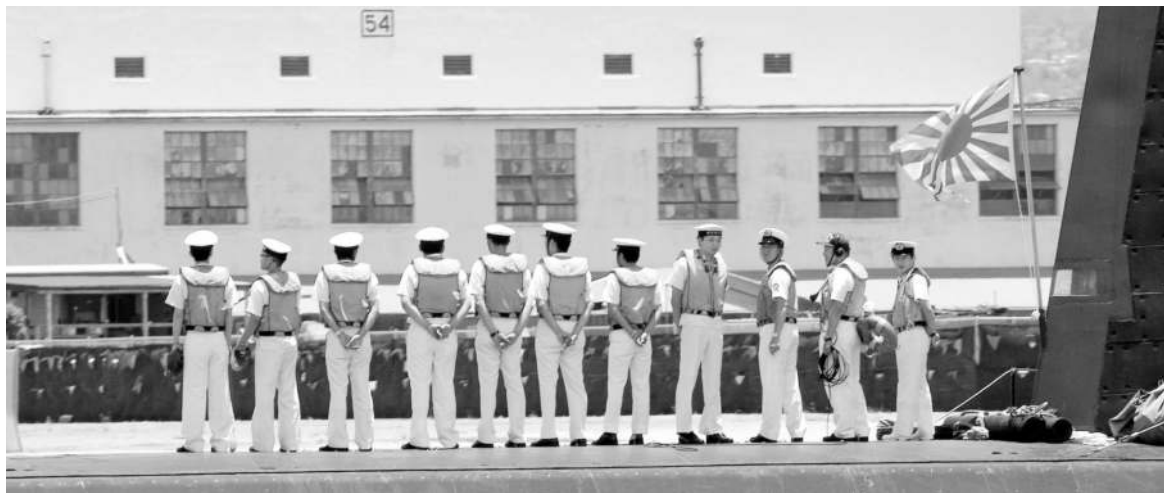
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force wants to be part of a nuclear submarine program announced this week by the United States, United Kingdom and Australia, according to an academic who spoke at a recent Indo-Pacific defense forum in Tokyo.

The leaders of the AUKUS allies — President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak — unveiled the submarine deal Monday, part of an effort to counter Chinese expansionism in the Indo-Pacific.

Under the deal, Australia aims to launch its own nuclear-powered subs in the 2030s. A rotational force of U.S. and British subs will operate from Western Australia starting in 2027.

"Japan's navy would like to be part of these relationships and access this technology," Tosh Minohara, a professor of U.S.-Japan relations and diplomatic history at Kobe University, said during Building a Free and Open Indo-Pacific: A Debate before the G-7 Summit in Hiroshima.



PAUL HONNICK/U.S. Navy

**The JS Narushio, a Japan Maritime Self Defense Force submarine, arrives in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for Rim of the Pacific drills in 2008.**

The forum, held March 10 at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo, included diplomats, military officers and journalists.

"Nuclear subs can travel long and fast," he said. "It will be interesting to see if AUKUS eventually expands to include Japan."

The U.S. Navy's Submarine Group 7 is headquartered at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, al-

though its submarines are homeported on Guam.

Japan has wanted to be part of AUKUS since the pact was established in September 2021, according to Brad Glosserman, deputy director and visiting professor at the Center for Rule-Making Strategies at Tama University in Tokyo.

Japan recently lifted a self-imposed ban on overseas military sales after it lost to France on a

deal to build conventional submarines for Australia. Australia canceled the French deal in favor of nuclear-powered boats built by AUKUS powers.

Including Japan in AUKUS makes sense, Glosserman wrote in an email Thursday.

"Think of it as a tech agreement, not just subs, and the pieces fit together," he said, noting that Japan is already developing new fighter jets with the United

Kingdom and Italy.

Japan's membership in AUKUS would change the defense pact's Anglo-sphere image, Glosserman added.

"However, and as always, the sticking point is information security in Japan," he said.

The AUKUS powers already have their hands full with the goal of providing nuclear-powered subs to Australia, said James Brown, an international affairs expert at Temple University's Japan campus.

"I don't think there is the capacity to make further commitments," he wrote in an email Thursday.

Australia, the UK, and the U.S., along with Canada and New Zealand, are partners in the Five Eyes intelligence alliance and have a high level of trust that does not extend to Japan, Brown said.

"To take just one example, the AUKUS three have well-established systems of security clearance, while Japan has work to do in this area," he said.

robson.seth@stripes.com  
Twitter: @SethRobson1

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## MILITARY

# Aquilino: US will defend freedoms in Indo-Pacific

Associated Press

SINGAPORE — U.S. Indo-Pacific Command chief Adm. John Aquilino said Thursday that Washington does not seek to contain China, nor seek conflicts in the region, but it would take action to support the region against coercion and bullying by authoritarian regimes.

Speaking at a lecture in Singapore, Aquilino said the era of globalization has evolved into one of “renewed great power competition” where the security environment influences economics, trade and investment.

“My concern is that this foundation of this rules-based international order ... is under direct assault by authoritarian regi-

mes,” he said, without naming any nations, though he noted recent actions by China to “grab a foothold” in the Solomon Islands.



Aquilino

A security alliance between China and the Solomon Islands a year ago sent shudders throughout the South Pacific, with many worried it could set off a large-scale military buildup.

Aquilino also addressed China's protests over U.S. vessels and aircraft in the Taiwan Strait, where Beijing has renewed its threats against Taiwan, which

China claims as its own territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary.

While the U.S. is neither seeking conflicts nor supporting Taiwan's independence, he said the military will continue to “fly, sail and operate” in the region to uphold the navigational rights and freedom of all nations.

“Revisionist powers seek to disrupt and displace the current system in ways that benefit themselves, and at the expense of all others. They use coercion, intimidation to achieve their objectives and they justify their action under a theory of ‘might equals right,’” he said.

“They make illegal excessive territorial claims not based on

anything other than revisionist history. They empower law enforcement entities to harass nations operating legally within their own exclusive economic zones. They break formal commitments. They ignore international legal rulings. They avoid requirements delivered under the U.N. Charter,” he said, in a reference to aggressive Chinese actions in the South China Sea and rising Chinese incursions into Taiwanese air defense zones.

Aquilino said China has a role to play in the world if it adheres to the rules-based order, especially in regards to North Korea.

In 2022 alone, Pyongyang launched 70 missiles, which Aquilino called the most provoc-

ative action in history. He noted that earlier Thursday, North Korea launched an intercontinental ballistic missile hours before the leaders of South Korea and Japan were to meet at a Tokyo summit.

Pyongyang's actions have threatened South Korea and Japan and it has “developed the capabilities to threaten the United States as well,” he said.

“It is destabilizing, it's unpredictable, it's continuing, it's not slowing down. The potential for the People's Republic of China to help to dissuade the DPRK from executing these events would be helpful,” Aquilino added, using the official names of China and North Korea.

## Iran: Analysts cite instances where Tehran capitalized on US mistakes

FROM PAGE 1

in Doha, Qatar.

More than a dozen Iraqi political parties and paramilitary groups are tied to Iran, some of which pledge allegiance to Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a 2022 brief by the Council on Foreign Relations said.

Iran's political sway is such that the democratic system the U.S. imposed resulted in a vote in 2020 to expel American soldiers. An agreement in 2021 following that nonbinding resolution ended the formal U.S. combat mission but kept 2,500 troops in Iraq.

Mistakes and policy flip-flopping by the U.S. over the past 20 years have led many Iraqi leaders to decide that turning to their meddling neighbor is a more reliable option, said Jonathan Lord, senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, a Washington-based think tank.

However, many Iraqis have protested their leaders' ties to Iran.

“The Iraqi people are wise to Iran's meddling,” Lord said.

In 2019, angry demonstrators denounced foreign interference with slogans such as “no to America, no to Iran” during widespread anti-government unrest, according to an Al Jazeera report from the time.

Other analysts pointed to moments when Tehran capitalized on Washington's mistakes.

The U.S. lacked a clear plan for the days after the invasion and Iran swiftly took advantage of it, Joseph Votel, a retired general who helmed U.S. Central Command from 2016 to 2019, said in a recent interview.

American policies disproportionately removed Iraqi Sunnis, who represented much of Saddam's Baath party, from the government and the military. Iraq be-



Stars and Stripes

**U.S. soldiers cheer for each other as the last military convoy to exit Iraq heads across the Kuwait border on Dec. 18, 2011. About 2,500 U.S. troops are in Iraq today to help prevent a resurgence of ISIS.**

came dominated by political and religious leaders from its Shiite majority.

“The introduction of a (Shiite)-led government in the wake of Saddam's Sunni government clearly provided opportunities for Iran, which they have exploited,” Votel said.

When Iraqis launched an insurgency against occupying American troops, Iran began supplying weapons to militant groups, said Farzin Nadimi, an associate fellow at the Washington Institute and an Iran analyst.

“Iran had simple goals in Iraq: to create and maintain a foothold in Iraq by supporting friendly Shiite elements in and out of the government, and to undermine the U.S. presence in Iraq in any way possible,” Nadimi said.

Some 603 U.S. troops in Iraq are believed to have been killed by Iranian-backed militias, about a

sixth of total casualties, the Pentagon said in 2019.

With the American public weary of the war, the U.S. committed to leaving Iraq by 2011, prompting Baghdad to drift closer to Tehran, said Katherine Zimmerman, a fellow at the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute.

“The unwillingness of the U.S. to remain invested in Iraq's future after the end of the Iraq War helped tip the scales in Tehran's favor as Iranian-backed actors' influence grew,” Zimmerman said.

American troops left behind a weak and corrupt Iraqi military, which melted in the face of an Islamic State offensive that swept the country in 2014.

ISIS conquered about half of Syria and 40% of Iraq but eventually lost its territorial acquisitions following battles against a broad U.S.-backed coalition.

Shiite militias formed to fight



DEREK MUSTARD/U.S. Army

**A U.S. airman examines damage caused by Iranian missile attacks at al Asad Air Base, Iraq, in January 2020. Iran's influence in Iraq has become entrenched since the U.S. helped topple Saddam Hussein.**

ISIS and have continued to hold sway in Iraq ever since. Many Iraqis attribute the victory against Islamic State to Iran and its militias, analysts said.

Despite the formal end of the U.S. combat mission in Iraq in 2021, about 2,500 U.S. service members remain to prevent an ISIS resurgence, Central Command said in an email Wednesday.

Iraqi troops trained by these American forces have conducted their own raids against ISIS, according to CENTCOM.

But U.S. troops still in Iraq face another danger: rocket fire and drone attacks from Iranian-backed militias.

One such attack in 2021 killed a civilian contractor and injured a U.S. service member, leading to retaliatory American airstrikes.

Iran directly attacked the American military contingent at

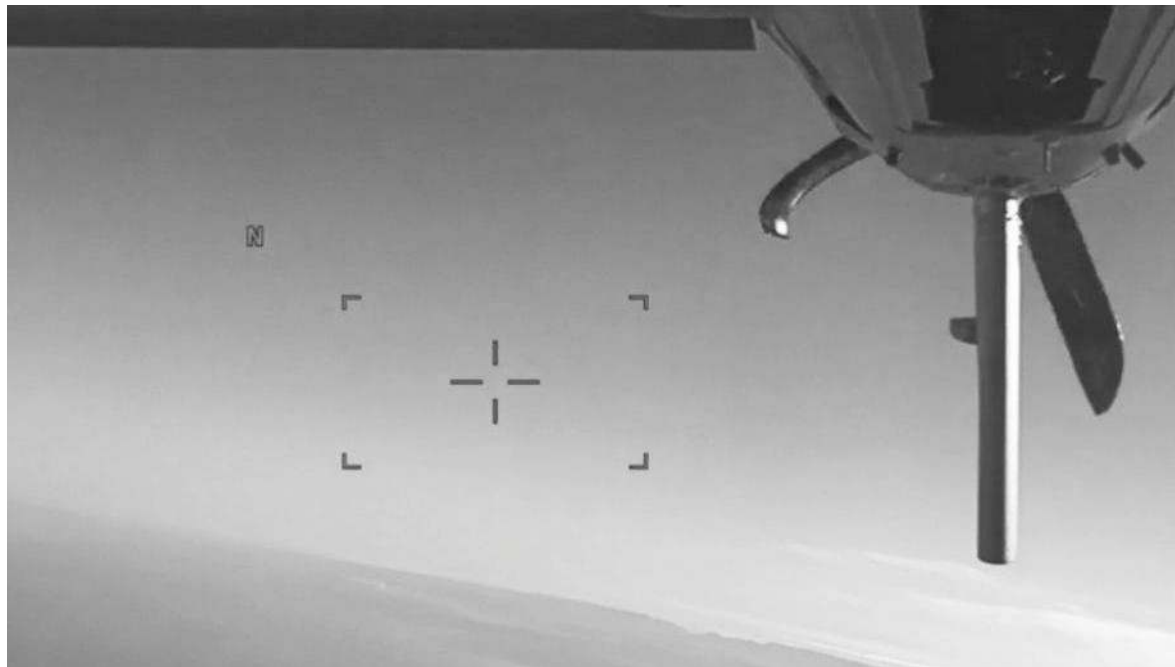
al Asad Air Base in 2020 after a U.S. drone strike killed Qassem Soleimani, an Iranian general operating in Baghdad. The ballistic missile attack by Tehran injured 100 U.S. service members.

If tensions rise between Iran and the U.S. and its allies in the Middle East, troops in Iraq will be at risk, said Barbara Slavin, a distinguished fellow at the Stimson Center in Washington.

Her assessment of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the subsequent war mirrors the Army's own history of the conflict, a voluminous report released in 2019 that declared Iran the only winner.

“It was supposed to solve our problems in the Middle East, and it didn't,” Slavin said. “By getting rid of one bad actor, we emboldened another bad actor: Iran.”

## EUROPE



Department of Defense

The propeller of a U.S. MQ-9 drone was damaged when it was hit by a Russian Su-27 aircraft over the Black Sea earlier this week.

## Video: Recovery of drone unlikely

as “unprofessional” and “unsafe.”

Austin said he spoke with Russian defense minister Sergei Shoigu on Wednesday about the ordeal and underscored U.S. aircraft will not be deterred from flying over international waters. The Associated Press reported they were the first calls involving the Russian and Americans defense leaders since October.

“It is incumbent upon Russia to operate its military aircraft in a safe and professional manner,” Austin said. “We take any potential for escalation very seriously, and that’s why I believe it’s important to keep the lines of communication [with Russia] open. That will help [avoid] miscalculation

going forward.”

The Russian Defense Ministry said in its report of the call with Austin that Shoigu accused the U.S. of provoking the incident by ignoring flight restrictions the Kremlin had imposed because of its military operations in Ukraine.

The Kremlin argues that by providing weapons to Ukraine and sharing intelligence information with Kyiv, the U.S. and its allies have effectively become engaged in the war.

Russia also blamed “the intensification of intelligence activities against the interests of the Russian Federation,” the Defense Ministry said.

Russia’s Defense Ministry on

Tuesday blamed the incident on the U.S., saying the drone maneuvered sharply and crashed after Russian fighters scrambled to intercept it near Crimea.

But EUCOM, following the collision, said the incident followed a pattern of dangerous actions by Russian pilots in international airspace, including over the Black Sea.

“These aggressive actions by Russian air crew are dangerous and could lead to miscalculation and unintended escalation,” a EUCOM statement said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Doug G. Ware and The Associated Press contributed to this report. vandiver.john@stripes.com  
Twitter: @johnvandiver

# Poland plans to provide Ukraine with fighter jets

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Poland’s president said Thursday that his country plans to give Ukraine around a dozen MiG-29 fighter jets, which would make it the first NATO member to fulfill the Ukrainian government’s increasingly urgent requests for warplanes.

President Andrzej Duda said Poland would hand over four of the Soviet-made warplanes “within the next few days” and that the rest needed servicing and would be supplied later. The Polish word he used to describe their number can mean between 11 and 19.

“They are in the last years of their functioning but they are in good working condition,” Duda said of the aircraft.

Duda did not say whether other countries would be making the same move, although Slovakia has said it would send its disused MiGs to Ukraine.

On Wednesday, Polish government spokesman Piotr Mueller said some other countries with MiGs also had pledged them to Kyiv, but he did not name them.

While Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pleaded for Western supporters to share fighter jets, NATO allies have expressed hesitancy.

Before Russia’s full-scale invasion, Ukraine had several dozen MiG-29s it inherited in the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it’s unclear how many of them remain in service after more than a year of fighting.

The debate over whether to provide non-NATO country Ukraine with fighter jets was initiated over a year ago, but NATO has been wary of making the war escalate.

Duda made the announcement during a joint news conference in Warsaw with the visiting Czech president, Petr Pavel.

Duda said Poland’s air force would replace the planes it gives to Ukraine with South Korea-made FA-50 fighters and American-made F-35s.

Poland was also the first NATO nation to hand German-made Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, last month.

Poland is a crucial ally in the Ukraine crisis. It is hosting thousands of American troops and is taking in more people fleeing the war in Ukraine than any other nation, in the midst of the largest European refugee crisis in decades.

It has suffered invasions and occupations by Russia for centuries and still fears Russia despite being a member of NATO.

## Russian dissident ex-mayor is handed 14-day sentence

Associated Press

MOSCOW — A former mayor of Russia’s fourth-largest city was ordered to spend 14 days in custody on Thursday pending his trial on charges that could entail a longer prison term, part of authorities’ efforts to muzzle dissent.

Yevgeny Roizman, a sharp critic of the Kremlin, is one of the most visible and charismatic opposition figures in Russia. He enjoyed broad popularity while serving as mayor of Yekaterinburg, a city of 1.5 million people in the Ural Mountains.

Last year, Roizman, 60, who was the mayor from 2013 to 2018, faced accusations of discrediting the Russian military and was barred from attending public events, using the internet, telephone or mail and communicating with anyone other than his lawyers and close family pending his trial.

Police arrested Roizman on Thursday on charges of reposting material containing a reference to the organization led by jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny that was banned by authorities. Roizman rejected the accusations, telling a court in Yekaterinburg during a hearing after his detention that he wasn’t even registered on that social network. His lawyer argued that the repost was done by members of one of his numerous support groups.

Despite Roizman’s arguments, the court in Yekaterinburg sentenced him to 14 days in jail. It was unclear what the sentence would mean for his separate trial on charges of discrediting the military that is expected to open later this month.

Courts repeatedly fined Roizman last year on charges of discrediting the military, paving the way for a criminal case that could be opened for repeat offenders.

## UN-backed investigation accuses Russia of war crimes in Ukraine

BY LORI HINNANT  
AND JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

GENEVA — Russian attacks against civilians in Ukraine, including systematic torture and killing in occupied regions, amount to war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity, according to a report from a U.N.-backed inquiry released Thursday.

The sweeping human rights report, released a year to the day after a Russian airstrike on a theater in Mariupol killed hundreds sheltering inside, marked a highly unusual condemnation of a member of the U.N. Security Council.

Among potential crimes against humanity, the report cited repeated attacks targeting Ukrainian infrastructure since the fall that left hundreds of thousands without heat and

electricity during the coldest months, as well as the “systematic and widespread” use of torture across multiple regions under Russian occupation.

A commission of inquiry is the most powerful tool used by the U.N.-backed Human Rights Council to scrutinize abuses and violations around the world. The investigation released Thursday was set up during an urgent debate shortly after Russia’s invasion last year.

The commission’s three members are independent human rights experts, and its staff gets support and funding from the council and the U.N. human rights office.

The report’s authors noted a “small number” of apparent violations by Ukrainian forces, including one they said was under criminal investigation by Ukrainian authorities, but reserved

the vast majority of their report for allegations against Russia.

Russia did not respond to the inquiry’s appeals for information.

Most of the abuses highlighted by the investigation were already well known, but the findings come with the imprimatur of the international community: The experts work under a mandate overwhelmingly created last year by the Human Rights Council, which brings together the governments of 47 U.N. member countries.

Ultimately, the report may add to efforts to boost accountability for crimes committed in the war — whether by the International Criminal Court or by some individual countries that have taken on the right to apply “universal jurisdiction” to prosecute atrocities, wherever they may take place.

## NATION

# Yellen reassures banking system 'remains sound'

By FATIMA HUSSEIN  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A week after the second-largest bank collapse in U.S. history, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told the Senate Finance Committee on Thursday that the nation's banking system "remains sound" and Americans "can feel confident" about their deposits.

Yellen is the first Biden administration official to face lawmakers over the decision to protect uninsured money at two failed regional banks, a move that some Republicans have criticized as a bank "bailout."

"The government took decisive and forceful actions to strengthen public confidence" in the U.S. banking system, Yellen said in testimony before the committee. "I can reassure the members of the Committee that our banking system remains sound, and that Americans can feel confident that their deposits will be there when they need them."

In less than a week, Silicon Valley Bank, based in Santa Clara, Calif., failed after depositors rushed to withdraw money amid anxiety over the bank's health. Then, regulators convened over the weekend and announced that New York-based Signature Bank also failed. They ensured all depositors, including those holding uninsured funds exceeding \$250,000, were protected by federal deposit insurance.

The Justice Department and the Securities and Exchange Commission have since launched investigations into the Silicon Valley Bank collapse.

Thursday's hearing, meant to

address President Joe Biden's budget proposal, comes after the sudden collapse of the nation's 16th-biggest bank and go-to financial institution for tech entrepreneurs. While Yellen prepared to talk about spending proposals, the hearing inevitably turned to the government's decision-making process to intervene in the bank failure.



Yellen

"Nerves are certainly frayed at this moment," said Sen. Ron Wyden, chairman of the committee. "One of the most important steps the Congress can take now is make sure there are no questions about the full faith and credit of the United States," he said, referring to raising the debt ceiling.

Yellen said on CBS' "Face the Nation" last Sunday that a bailout was not on the table, stating, "we're not going to do that again," referring to the U.S. government's response to the 2008 financial crisis, which led to massive government rescue policies to large U.S. banks.

Yellen, a former Federal Reserve chair and past president of the San Francisco Federal Reserve during the 2008 financial crisis, was a leading figure in the resolution this past weekend, which was engineered to prevent a wider systemic problem in the banking sector.

"This week's actions demonstrate our resolute commitment to ensure that depositors' savings remain safe," she said.



DAVID ERICKSON/AP

A women's march group member dons a kangaroo mask and judicial robe, Wednesday, in Amarillo, Texas.

## Texas lawsuit puts long-used abortion pill under threat

Associated Press

AMARILLO, Texas — A federal judge in Texas raised questions Wednesday about a Christian group's effort to overturn the decades-old U.S. approval of a leading abortion drug, in a case that could threaten the country's most common method for ending pregnancies.

Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk heard more than four hours of debate over the Alliance Defending Freedom's request to revoke or suspend the Food and Drug Administration's approval of mifepristone. Such a step would be an unprecedented challenge to the FDA and its authority in deciding which drugs to permit on the market.

Kacsmaryk said he would rule "as soon as possible," without giving any clear indication of how he might decide and leaving open the possibility that the standard regimen for medication abortions might soon be curtailed through-

out the country.

Mifepristone, when combined with a second pill, was approved in 2000 and is used to end pregnancies until their 10th week. It has been increasingly prescribed since last summer's U.S. Supreme Court ruling overturning Roe v. Wade.

The Texas lawsuit has become the latest high-stakes legal battle over access to abortion since the question of its legality was returned to the states.

Kacsmaryk, who was appointed by former President Donald Trump, saved some of his most pointed questions for attorneys representing the conservative group, which filed its lawsuit in Amarillo in anticipation of receiving a favorable ruling.

"Explain to me why this court has that sweeping authority?" Kacsmaryk asked, in reference to the group's request for a preliminary order pulling mifepristone from the market.

The judge also questioned whether the group had the legal standing to obtain a pretrial ruling on the drug, grilling both sides on U.S. Supreme Court cases that set out when such extraordinary relief is allowed.

Still, the judge also posed questions suggesting he was considering how he might draft a preliminary injunction in the plaintiffs' favor, at one point asking the alliance's lawyers if the issue of standing had been addressed by appellate courts. At another point, he told them that their outline for the order of their arguments "tracks the elements for an injunction nicely."

Lawyers representing the FDA argued that pulling mifepristone would upend reproductive care for women across the U.S.

"An injunction here would interfere with the interests of every state in the country" said Julie Straus Harris of the U.S. Justice Department, which represented the FDA.

## Utah bans abortion clinics in wave of post-Roe restrictions

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah's Republican Gov. Spencer Cox signed legislation Wednesday that will by next year ban clinics from providing abortions, setting off a rush of confusion among clinics, hospitals and prospective patients in the deeply Republican state.

Administrators from hospitals and clinics have not publicly detailed their plans to adapt to the new law, adding a layer of uncertainty on top of fear that, if clinics close, patients may not be able to access care at hospitals because of a variety of staffing and cost con-

cerns.

With the law set to start taking effect as early as May 3, both the Planned Parenthood Association of Utah and the Utah Hospital Association declined to detail how the increasingly fraught legal landscape for providers in Utah will affect abortion access.

The turmoil mirrors developments in Republican strongholds throughout the United States that have taken shape since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Roe v. Wade decision, transformed the legal landscape and prompted a raft of lawsuits in at

least 21 states.

The Utah lawmakers have previously said the law would protect "the innocent" and "the unborn," adding that they don't think the state needs abortion clinics after the high court overturned the constitutional right to abortion.

Though Planned Parenthood previously warned the law could dramatically hamper its ability to provide abortions, Jason Stevenson, the association's lobbyist, said Wednesday it would now further examine the wording of other provisions of the law that could allow clinics to apply for new licens-

es to perform hospital-equivalent services.

Based on Planned Parenthood's interpretation, he said in an interview, clinics will no longer be able to provide abortions with their current licenses. They plan to continue, however, to provide the majority of their services such as STI and pregnancy testing and cancer screenings. Stevenson said they were "looking closely" at the licensing options in the law, but would not say whether the clinics would apply at this point.

Jill Vicory, a spokesperson for the Utah Hospital Association,

said in an email that it was "too early to comment" on whether hospitals could soon be the only abortion providers in Utah, noting each "will need to make a determination on how they choose to proceed."

If clinics stop providing abortions, experts are concerned hospitals' comparatively higher cost of care and staffing shortages will make it harder to get a legal abortion in Utah, even though the law isn't explicitly a restriction on those seeking them in the state, where they remain legal up to 18 weeks.

## NATION

# Storms end water curbs for 7M in Calif.

By JOHN ANTCAK  
AND STEFANIE DAZIO  
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — California's 11th atmospheric river left the storm-soaked state with a bang Wednesday, bringing flooded roadways, landslides and toppled trees to the southern part of the state as well as drought-busting rainfall that meant the end of water restrictions for nearly 7 million people.

Even as residents struggled to clean up before the next round of winter arrives in the coming days — with some 27,000 people still under evacuation orders statewide Wednesday — the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's decision brought relief amid the state's historic drought.

The district supplies water for 19 million people in six counties. The board imposed the restrictions, which included limiting outdoor watering to one day a week, in parts of Los Angeles, Ventura and San Bernardino counties last year during a severe shortage of state water supplies.

But weather woes remained Wednesday, as an additional 61,000 people remained under evacuation warnings and emergency shelters housed more than 650 people, according to the Cali-

fornia Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

Meanwhile in Arizona, the city of Sedona urged people in a dozen areas to immediately evacuate Wednesday evening because of predicted flooding of Oak Creek. The churning waters had submerged a roadway near a mobile home park and forecasters said it could rise to 15 feet, a foot above flood stage.

In Southern California, flooding also closed several miles of the Pacific Coast Highway through Huntington Beach, south of Los Angeles on the Orange County coast, and potholes disabled more than 30 cars on one Southern California freeway. More than 144,000 utility customers statewide remained without power Wednesday afternoon, according to poweroutage.us.

Some Southern California beaches were closed as heavy rain overwhelmed sewage systems and sent thousands of gallons of raw sewage to the sea.

In Los Angeles, a man who clung to a concrete wall of the rushing, rain-swollen Los Angeles River was saved from being swept away when a Fire Department rescuer, dangling from a helicopter, reached him and he was hauled up to safety.

Gov. Gavin Newsom surveyed



ORANGE COUNTY (CALIF.) FIRE AUTHORITY/AP

**Debris lines the cliff where three apartment structures had to be evacuated due to a landslide in San Clemente, Calif., on Wednesday. California's 11th atmospheric river of the winter has taken parting shots at southern counties as it moves out.**

flood damage in an agricultural region on the central coast, noting that California could potentially see a 12th atmospheric river next week. Officials have not yet determined the extent of the winter storms' damage, both structurally and financially.

"Look back — last few years in this state, it's been fire to ice with no warm bath in between," the Democrat said, describing "weather whiplash" in a state that has quickly gone from extreme drought and wildfires to over-

whelming snow and rain.

"If anyone has any doubt about Mother Nature and her fury, if anyone has any doubt about what this is all about in terms of what's happening to the climate and the changes that we are experiencing, come to California," the governor said.

California's latest atmospheric river was one of two storm systems that bookended the U.S. this week. Parts of New England and New York were digging out of a nor'easter Wednesday that caused tens of

thousands of power outages, numerous school cancellations and whiteout conditions on roads.

The weather service said California will see minor precipitation this weekend, followed by another substantial storm next week.

Three cliff-top apartment buildings were evacuated Wednesday morning when earth slid away from their backyards in coastal San Clemente, the Orange County Fire Authority said. Residents were also cleared out of a nearby building as the severity of the slide was studied.

Orange County had already declared a local emergency when a similar hillside collapsed March 3 in Newport Beach, leaving a house uninhabitable and endangering others.

For downtown Los Angeles, the National Weather Service said just under two feet of rain has been recorded so far this water year — making this the 14th wettest in more than 140 years of records.

Weather in the northern and central sections of the state had dried out earlier, following Tuesday's heavy rain and fierce winds that blew out windows on a San Francisco high-rise and gusted to 74 mph at the city's airport.

Forty-three of the state's 58 counties have been under states of emergency due to the storms.

## Texas takes over Houston's schools

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Texas officials on Wednesday announced a state takeover of Houston's nearly 200,000-student public school district, the eighth-largest in the country, acting on years of threats and angering Democrats who assailed the move as political.

The announcement, made by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's education commissioner, Mike Morath, amounts to one of the largest school takeovers ever in the U.S. It also deepens a high-stakes rift between Texas' largest city, where Democrats wield control, and state Republican leaders, who have sought increased authority following election fumbles and COVID-19 restrictions.

In a letter to the Houston Independent School District, Morath said the Texas Education Agency will replace Superintendent Millard House II and the district's elected board of trustees with a new superintendent and an appointed board of managers made of residents from



JUAN A. LOZANO/AP

**People hold up signs at a news conference this month in Houston while protesting a proposed takeover of the city's school district by the Texas Education Agency. The state made the move Wednesday.**

within the district's boundaries. He said the board has failed to improve student outcomes while conducting "chaotic board meetings marred by infighting" and violating open meetings act and procurement laws. He accused the district of failing to provide proper special education services and of violating state and federal laws with its approach to supporting students with disabilities.

The Texas State Teachers Association and the American Civil Li-

erties Union of Texas condemned the takeover. At a news conference in Austin, state Democratic leaders called for the Legislature to increase funding for education and raise teacher pay. An annual Census Bureau survey of public school funding showed Texas spent \$10,342 per pupil in the 2020 fiscal year, more than \$3,000 less than the national average, according to the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University in Houston.

## Teachers will join 3-day LA strike, likely closing schools

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Tens of thousands of workers in the Los Angeles Unified School District will strike for three days next week over stalled contract talks and teachers will join them, likely shutting down the nation's second-largest school system, union leaders announced Wednesday.

The strike was set to begin Tuesday. It was announced at a rally by the Service Employees International Union, which represents about 30,000 teachers' aides, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers and other support staff.

United Teachers Los Angeles, the union representing 35,000 teachers, counselors and other staff, expressed solidarity.

"Educators will be joining our union siblings on the picket lines," a UTLA tweet said.

Teachers waged a six-day strike in 2019 over pay and contract issues but schools remained open.

This time, schools would likely close and there wouldn't be any access to virtual learning, Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho said in an email to parents on Monday.

"We would simply have no way of ensuring a safe and secure environ-

ment where teaching can take place," Carvalho said.

On Wednesday, Carvalho accused the union of refusing to negotiate and said that he was prepared to meet "day and night" to prevent a strike, which he said would harm students already struggling to regain academic ground lost when classrooms were closed and they were forced to learn remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. At a news conference, he said averting a strike "will avoid keeping kids hungry in our community without access to the food they get in school."

"We are calling on them to come to the table for staff and students, right now," he said in a later statement.

The SEIU says district support staffers earn, on average, about \$25,000 per year and many live in poverty because of low pay or limited work hours while struggling with inflation and the high cost of housing in LA County. The union is asking for a 30% raise. Teachers want a 20% pay hike over two years.

The district has made what it called an historic offer to the SEIU of a \$15 wage increase, some of it retroactive, and 9% in retention bonuses.

## NATION

# San Francisco board is open to reparations

BY JANIE HAR  
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Payments of \$5 million to every eligible Black adult, the elimination of personal debt and tax burdens, guaranteed annual incomes of at least \$97,000 for 250 years and homes in San Francisco for just \$1 a family.

These were some of the more than 100 recommendations made by a city-appointed reparations committee tasked with the thorny question of how to atone for centuries of slavery and systemic racism. And the San Francisco Board of Supervisors hearing the report for the first time Tuesday voiced enthusiastic support for the ideas listed, with some saying money should not stop the city from doing the right thing.

Several supervisors said they were surprised to hear pushback from politically liberal San Franciscans apparently unaware that the legacy of slavery and racist

policies continues to keep Black Americans on the bottom rungs of health, education and economic prosperity, and overrepresented in prisons and homeless populations.

“Those of my constituents who lost their minds about this proposal, it’s not something we’re doing or we would do for other people. It’s something we would do for our future, for everybody’s collective future,” said Supervisor Rafael Mandelman, whose district includes the heavily LGBTQ Castro neighborhood.

The draft reparations plan, released in December, is unmatched nationwide in its specificity and breadth. The committee hasn’t done an analysis of the cost of the proposals, but critics have slammed the plan as financially and politically impossible. An estimate from Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, which leans conservative, has said it would

cost each non-Black family in the city at least \$600,000.

Tuesday’s unanimous expressions of support for reparations by the board do not mean all the recommendations will ultimately be adopted, as the body can vote to approve, reject or change any or all of them. A final committee report is due in June.

Some supervisors have said previously that the city can’t afford any major reparations payments right now given its deep deficit amid a tech industry downturn.

Tinisch Hollins, vice-chair of the African American Reparations Advisory Committee, alluded to those comments, and several people who lined up to speak reminded the board they would be watching closely what the supervisors do next.

“I don’t need to impress upon you the fact that we are setting a national precedent here in San

Francisco,” Hollins said. “What we are asking for and what we’re demanding for is a real commitment to what we need to move things forward.”

The idea of paying compensation for slavery has gained traction across cities and universities. In 2020, California became the first state to form a reparations task force and is still struggling to put a price tag on what is owed.

The idea has not been taken up at the federal level.

In San Francisco, Black residents once made up more than 13% of the city’s population, but more than 50 years later, they account for less than 6% of the city’s residents — and 38% of its homeless population. The Fillmore District once thrived with Black-owned night clubs and shops until government redevelopment in the 1960s forced out residents.

Fewer than 50,000 Black people still live in the city, and it’s not

clear how many would be eligible.

Critics say the payouts make no sense in a state and city that never enslaved Black people. Opponents generally say taxpayers who were never slave owners should not have to pay money to people who were not enslaved.

Advocates say that view ignores a wealth of data and historical evidence showing that long after U.S. slavery officially ended in 1865, government policies and practices worked to imprison Black people at higher rates, deny access to home and business loans and restrict where they could work and live.

Justin Hansford, a professor at Howard University School of Law, says no municipal reparations plan will have enough money to right the wrongs of slavery, but he appreciates any attempts to “genuinely, legitimately, authentically” make things right. And that includes cash, he said.



DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

**Axiom Space chief engineer Jim Stein, left, bumps fists with deputy manager for extravehicular activity Russell Ralston while demonstrating a prototype spacesuit on Wednesday in Houston.**

## Future NASA moonwalkers to have sleeker, more flexible spacesuits

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Moonwalking astronauts will have sleeker, more flexible spacesuits that come in different sizes when they step onto the lunar surface later this decade.

Exactly what that looks like remained under wraps. The company designing the next-generation spacesuits, Axiom Space, said Wednesday that it plans to have new versions for training purposes for NASA later this summer.

The moonsuits will be white like they were during NASA’s Apollo program more than a half-century ago, according to the company. That’s so they can reflect heat and keep future moonwalkers cool.

The suits will provide greater flexibility and more protection from the moon’s harsh environment, and will come in a wider range of sizes, according to the Houston-based company.

NASA awarded Axiom Space a \$228.5 million contract to provide

the outfits for the first moon landing in more than 50 years. The space agency is targeting late 2025 at the earliest to land two astronauts on the moon’s south pole.

At Wednesday’s event in Houston, an Axiom employee modeled a dark spacesuit, doing squats and twisting at the waist to demonstrate its flexibility. The company said the final version will be different, including the color. “I didn’t want anybody to get that mixed up,” said Axiom’s Russell Ralston.

## French bulldog is now top dog breed in US

Associated Press

NEW YORK — For the first time in three decades, the U.S. has a new favorite dog breed, according to the American Kennel Club.

Adorable in some eyes, deplorable in others, the sturdy, push-faced, perky-eared, world-weary-looking and distinctively droll French bulldog became the nation’s most prevalent purebred dog last year, the club announced Wednesday. Frenchies ousted Labrador retrievers from the top spot after a record 31 years.

Why?

“They’re comical, friendly, loving little dogs,” says French Bull Dog Club of America spokesperson Patty Sosa. City-friendly, with modest grooming and exercise needs, she says, “they offer a lot in a small package.”

Yet the Frenchie’s dizzying rise — it wasn’t even a top-75 breed a quarter-century ago — worries its fans, to say nothing of its critics.

The buzzy little bulldogs have been targeted in thefts, including last month’s fatal shooting of a 76-year-old South Carolina breeder and the 2021 shooting of a California dog walker who was squiring singer Lady Gaga’s pets.

There’s concern that demand, plus the premium that some buyers will pay for “exotic” coat colors and textures, is engendering quick-buck breeders and unhealthy dogs. The breed’s popularity is sharpening debate over whether there’s anything healthy about propagating dogs prone to breathing, spinal, eye, and skin conditions.

The British Veterinary Associa-



TINA FINEBERG/AP

**The American Kennel Club announced Wednesday that French bulldogs have become the United States’ most prevalent dog breed.**

tion has urged people not to buy flat-faced breeds, such as Frenchies. The Netherlands has prohibited breeding very short-snouted dogs, and the country’s agriculture minister aims to outlaw even owning them.

“French bulldogs can be a polarizing topic,” says Dr. Carrie Stefaniak, a Glendale, Wis.-based veterinarian who’s on the Frenchie club’s health committee.

She has treated French bulldogs with breathing difficulties, and she stresses that would-be owners need to research breeders and health testing and to recognize that problems can be expensive to treat.

But she’s no Frenchie foe. She owns two and has conditioned them to run agility courses and take hilly hikes.

The AKC’s popularity rankings cover about 200 breeds in the nation’s oldest canine registry. The stats are based on nearly 716,500 puppies and other dogs newly registered last year.

# NATION



NATHANIEL LEVINE, THE SACRAMENTO BEE/AP

**Officials inspect a crashed helicopter at Sacramento Executive Airport on Wednesday, in Sacramento, Calif.**

## Stolen helicopter crashes at Sacramento airport

*Associated Press*  
SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The attempted theft of a helicopter ended in wreckage on Wednesday when it crashed at Sacramento Executive Airport, authorities said.

Between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m., someone tried to start four helicopters that were sitting at the airport and managed to operate one, Sacramento police said.

The Bell 429 helicopter wound up laying on its side with its rotors sheared off and its tail boom cracked.

No injuries were reported. The thief took off and no arrests have been made, authorities said.

It's a federal crime to destroy an aircraft. The FBI, Federal Aviation Administration and National Transportation Safety Board were investigating.

# Unemployment aid claims fell last week as layoffs still low

*Associated Press*

Fewer Americans applied for jobless claims last week as the labor market continues to thrive despite the Federal Reserve's efforts to cool the economy and tamp down inflation.

Applications for jobless claims in the U.S. for the week ending March 11 fell by 20,000 to 192,000 from 212,000 the previous week, the Labor Department said Thursday.

The four-week moving average of claims, which flattens out some of week-to-week volatility, fell by 750 to 196,500, remaining below

the 200,000 threshold for the eighth straight week.

Applications for unemployment benefits are seen as a barometer for layoffs in the U.S.

Last month, the government reported that employers added a substantial 311,000 jobs in February, fewer than January's huge gain but enough to keep pressure on the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates aggressively to fight inflation. The unemployment rate rose to 3.6%, from a 53-year low of 3.4%.

Fed policymakers have forecast that the unemployment rate

would rise to 4.6% by the end of this year, a sizable increase historically associated with recessions.

Though the U.S. labor market remains strong, layoffs have been mounting in the technology sector, where many companies overhired after a pandemic boom. IBM, Microsoft, Amazon, Salesforce, Twitter and DoorDash have all announced layoffs in recent months.

Earlier this week, Facebook parent Meta said it was slashing another 10,000 jobs, in addition to the 11,000 culled in November.

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# WORLD

## Europe's central bank backs big rate increase

Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany — The European Central Bank carried through with a large interest rate increase Thursday, brushing aside predictions it might dial back as U.S. bank collapses and troubles at Credit Suisse feed fears about the impact of higher rates on the global banking system.

The ECB hiked rates by half a percentage point Thursday, underlining its determination to fight high inflation. In a statement, the bank called the banking sector in the 20 countries using the euro currency "resilient," with strong finances.

It says it's "monitoring current market tensions closely and stands ready to respond as necessary to preserve price stability and financial stability in the euro area."

ECB President Christine Lagarde said last week that it was "very likely" the bank would raise its benchmarks by a half-percentage point, part of a series of rapid rate hikes aimed at getting inflation down from 8.5% — far above the bank's target of 2%.

That was before Silicon Valley Bank in the U.S. went under last week after suffering losses on government-backed bonds that fell in value due to rising interest rates.

Then, globally connected Swiss bank Credit Suisse saw its shares plunge this week and had to turn to the Swiss central bank for emergency credit.

The troubles at Credit Suisse dragged down the shares of stalwart European lenders such as Deutsche Bank, BNP Paribas and Societe General on Wednesday. Bank shares recovered Thursday.

Analysts say the share selloff was fed by investor fear that banks took added risks to increase investment returns during years of very low interest rates and some may have failed to safeguard themselves against those holdings turning sour as rates rise.

Similar questions are being raised about what the U.S. Federal Reserve will do at its rate meeting next week.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said only last week that the ultimate level for rates would be "higher than previously anticipated," leading some analysts to predict the Fed would raise by a half-point after slowing the pace to a quarter-point in February. Since then, expectations shifted back toward a quarter-point.

European finance ministers have said that their banking system has no direct exposure to the failures of Silicon Valley Bank and others in the U.S.

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# WEEKEND



The ubiquitous John Cena  
Q&A, Page 15



# ALL THAT THEY CAN'T LEAVE BEHIND

U2 turns down the volume and reimagines 40 of its best-known songs on an intimate new collection

Music, Page 28

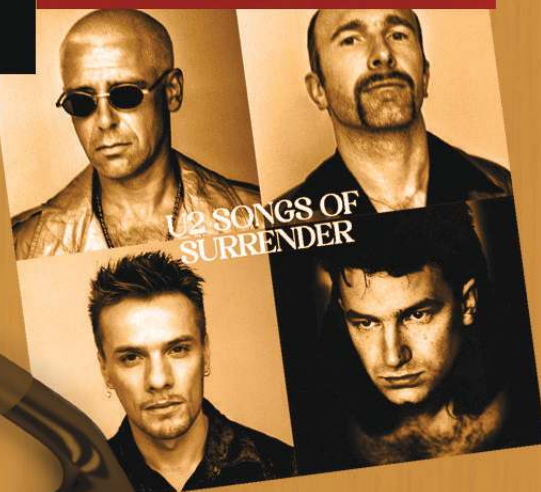


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## WEEKEND: GADGETS &amp; TECHNOLOGY



# The future of podcasting

## Amid recent challenges, Spotify unveils new content, tools

BY BRIAN CONTRERAS  
*Los Angeles Times*

Spotify unveiled a series of new podcasts, partnerships and features March 8 as part of its effort to dominate in all things audio, despite recent challenges and controversies in the space.

At an event near its offices in Los Angeles' Arts District, the Swedish music streaming giant unveiled a partnership with popular online content creator Markiplier — whose shows “Distractable” and “Go! My Favorite Sports Team” will launch exclusive video episodes on Spotify.

The company also announced a scripted Batman spinoff series called “The Riddler: Secrets in the Dark,” starring Hasan Minhaj, who played the villain in last year's scripted project “Batman Unburied.”

Though podcasts are traditionally an audio-focused format, Spotify is hoping shows that incorporate video, like Markiplier's, will be a big part of its future.

The firm reported having 70,000 video creators currently on the platform. A second season of “Uncut Gems” star Julia Fox's video podcast, “Forbidden Fruits,” is set to premiere later this month, Spotify said, while TikToker Drew Afualo's podcast, “The Comment Section,” will become a Spotify exclusive in April.

Spotify Chief Executive Daniel Ek boasted about Spotify's rapid growth in podcasting, saying the company has gone from about 10 million podcast listeners in 2018 to more than 100 million currently.

The company, Ek said, is building “the best home for creators, where you can establish your career and where the world can be inspired by your creativity.”

But the announcements follow a shake-up for Spotify's podcasting operations. Spotify's continued podcasting gambit comes during a period of stress for both the company and the wider market in which it operates.

Last fall, amid an ongoing downturn across the tech and entertainment sectors, Spotify cut 11 podcasts from its roster and laid off people from some of its podcast brands. In January, the company announced that 6% of staff had been cut.

Spotify has been trying to establish itself as a leader in the podcast space, looking to draw in new subscribers and diversify its offerings beyond music, even as investors have sometimes expressed doubt about the play.

Competition is fierce, with Apple and YouTube serving as major platforms for podcasts and TikTok

and Twitch attracting hordes of young, digitally savvy viewers.

The company has acquired a handful of podcast networks including the Ringer — a popular sports and culture brand — Gimlet Media and Parcast, as well as the podcast distribution platform Anchor FM. In 2020, Spotify became the exclusive home of the influential “The Joe Rogan Experience” in a deal said to be worth around \$100 million.

Partnerships with celebrities such as Kim Kardashian, Meghan Markle and Jordan Peele helped Spotify make inroads into the densely packed podcasting space.

But these high-profile projects were sometimes marred by controversy. Markle's podcast took a notably long time to materialize, and an exclusive deal Spotify inked in 2019 with Higher Ground, the production company run by former President Barack Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama, was ultimately not renewed after the Obamas pushed for a nonexclusive distribution plan.

Over two years ago, at the 2021 “Stream On” event, the company announced a partnership with Anthony and Joe Russo, the directors behind Marvel blockbusters “Avengers: Infinity War” and “Avengers: Endgame.” The partnership does not appear to have yielded any podcasts yet.

The company's partnership with Rogan — known for giving guests free rein to talk for hours about contentious subjects — has landed Spotify in hot water over and over again. Last year, criticism that Rogan was spreading COVID-19 misinformation on his show prompted some artists, including Neil Young, to pull their music from the platform.

Spotify also announced a handful of new tools meant to make the platform more accessible to podcasters. A “reenvisioned” Spotify for Podcasters hub will centralize the company's podcasting tools — including monetization tech as well as video podcasting and interactive episode capabilities — in one place, the company said. A new partnership with digital subscription platform Patreon is aimed at making it easier for podcasters to turn listeners into paying customers.

Netflix has signed on to use Spotify's podcast platform for companies, Spotify announced, and NPR is slated to begin publishing through the app.

Gustav Söderström, Spotify's co-president, chief product officer and chief technology officer, unveiled a new home feed for the app. Evocative of TikTok's vertical video scroll, the feed features a mix of everything from audio books to music videos and, Söderström said, will emphasize content discovery and recommendation.

# The SlimBlade Pro trackball mouse is comfortable, efficient

BY GREGG ELLMAN  
*Tribune News Service*

Switching out your computer mouse is a challenging thing to do. Most of us use a traditional mouse, which works fine, so why change? I'm one of those people. It's not broken, so why fix it? There's a lot of truth to the theory.

After using the Kensington SlimBlade Pro wired/wireless trackball for a few days, I wanted to return to my traditional mouse. The feel and layout of a trackball mouse are different; there's no scroll wheel, for example. But after using the Kensington SlimBlade Pro Trackball for a week, I was sold, and I'm not returning it.

If you are unfamiliar with a trackball mouse, it has right and left click buttons and a rolling ball in the center, which moves the cursor on the computer screen. A nice thing about trackball mice is they have an ambidextrous design. They also stay in place compared to traditional computer mice, which need prime desk real estate to drag around.

The Kensington SlimBlade Pro Trackball measures 5.23-by-6.02-by-2.2 inches and is Mac- and Windows compatible. It doesn't need any software or drivers to get it working right out of the box. Instead, it's super easy with a wired connection via the included USB cable, Bluetooth or 2.4 GHz wireless via the included USB-A dongle. A USB-C to USB-A adapter is also included.

There is free software (KensingtonWorks) for customizing and configuring the trackball. It has four individual buttons and four sets of combo buttons, all programmable. Tracking speed, double-clicking and other features can be customized in operating system's settings as well as via the Kensington software. Buttons can be assigned for features like adjusting volume, controlling music and online meetings, opening folders with one click and refreshing browsers.

The ruby-red trackball sits comfortably in your hand. Inside the SlimBlade Pro are dual sensors to accurately



KENSINGTON/TNS photos

**The ruby-red trackball in the Kensington SlimBlade Pro helps you move a cursor very quickly.**

track where you want the cursor to go. Rolling the trackball gets you to the point you wish to be more quickly compared to dragging a mouse around.

The shiny black base is slightly angled for a comfortable ergonomic feel. Ports, a pairing button and controls are built into the sides of the base for easy access. Inside is a rechargeable battery rated for four months of use on a single USB charge. Still, that number could vary depending on usage. An excellent advantage of the SlimBlade Pro is that it can still be used while charging. Other trackballs might have to go on a charging base or may be cumbersome when connected to a cable.

For wireless connections, Kensington includes government-grade 128-bit AES encryption. This keeps the connection safe from prying eyes and hacking into sensitive information through the mouse.

There is a learning curve when switching from a standard left/right click mouse to a trackball mouse. But after some time, you'll see the advantages of using the SlimBlade Pro. The SlimBlade Pro is both efficient and comfortable, even when used all day.

Online: [kensington.com](http://kensington.com);  
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**The SlimBlade Pro can connect via an included USB cable, Bluetooth or 2.4 GHz wireless (a USB-A wireless dongle is also included).**

## WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT

## Q&amp;A

## Time is his only unbeatable opponent

John Cena talks about his next match, acting, working with WWE boss McMahon

By DAN GELSTON  
Associated Press

With a wave of his hand in front of his face, John Cena built a WWE career trash-talking his opponents by telling each one, “You can’t see me.”

Can’t see Cena?

The 45-year-old ubiquitous Hollywood heavyweight can be spotted pretty much everywhere these days, from studio lots to the squared circle. Cena just wrapped a role in Peter Farrelly’s new comedy “Ricky Stanicky,” played the flawed DC Comics superhero in the “Peacemaker” series and will voice the brutish rhinoceros Rocksteady in the upcoming Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles film.

Wearing his trademark jorts, Cena hasn’t forgotten his wrestling roots. He returns to fight WWE United States champion Austin

Theory next month at WrestleMania at SoFi Stadium and can be seen — and played — as the cover boy for various editions of the WWE 2K23 game.

What’s a wrestling game with-

out a shocking twist? Cena guides gamers in the “You Can’t Beat Me” 2K Showcase mode through some of the biggest losses of his career to wrestlers such as Rob Van Dam and Kurt Angle, rather than highlighting all his championship wins.

“Perseverance is a core value of mine,” he said. “‘Never give up’ is written on all my stuff. I like the fact that [the game] walks you through my toughest opponents, my toughest losses. That’s very much a personal touch of mine and I’m glad 2K was very receptive to that.”

Cena, not much of a gamer, calls the cover “a tip of the cap” from 2K for building a game around his 20-year body of work.

“There’s been some very important moments where I didn’t live up to the hype,” Cena said.

In a recent phone interview with The Associated Press from Georgia, where he was filming “Grand Death Lotto,” the Hollywood heavyweight discusses wrestling retirement, his starring role in the WWE 2K23 video game and his relationship with embattled WWE boss Vince McMahon. Answers have been shortened for clarity and brevity:

**AP: What did you mean in your tweet after your return to WWE last week when you wrote, “it might be the last time.” Are you nearing the end of your WWE career?**

**Cena:** I tried to put it in words in Twitter. I guess I didn’t explain myself correctly. It was the first time I came out into the



Wrestling star and actor John Cena, shown in 2014, has been revealed as this year’s WWE 2K23 video game cover star.

arena knowing that this has a definitive end. Normally, you come out, you get all excited, OK, this is the next one and I’m waiting for the next one. I’m not done, of course. I made that statement accepting a match at WrestleMania so I know I have at least one more in front of me. But what I was trying to convey was, that was the first time I looked at all that excitement and energy and realized this is the twilight of that journey.

**Why come back to feud with Austin Theory?**

You would be surprised at my answer. Because that’s what I was told would happen. I don’t do that. I don’t say, I want to do this. I want to work with that person. I don’t ever do that. I’ve never done that. I just try and do what I’m told to do and do it to the best of my abilities. Instead of dictating my terms, I often just try to make the performance the best it can be. What I don’t do and what I’ve never done is curate the direction of the narrative. I don’t pick opponents, but I love to tell stories. I didn’t pick Austin Theory, but I

certainly spoke from the heart (on RAW).

**How do you feel about the fact that WWE could be on the market?**

That’s way above my pay grade. I just don’t know what’s going on with that. I love Vince McMahon. He’s everything you could want in a great friend, business partner, father, mentor. I love the man. But his business dealings are his business and what he shares with me, that’s between us. But I don’t know what’s going on with the corporate structure in the WWE or the creative direction of the WWE. But when I’m there as a performer, it’s (WWE champion) Roman Reigns’ show. In my mind, he needs to be in the conversation, and in my mind, he’s the greatest.

**Is it tough to reconcile the feelings you have toward Vince McMahon with the sexual misconduct accusations made against him?**

No. I mean, everyone has the right to have their perspective. I have the right to have mine. When you love somebody, you take them as imperfectly perfect as they are. We all make mistakes, we all have

poor decisions. Lord knows I’ve made my collection of poor choices. That doesn’t mean I’m not going to love somebody. There’s no way I can go on record and say I don’t love Vince McMahon.

**You have WrestleMania coming up and a slew of acting projects including “Grand Death Lotto.” Has the pace of your schedule ever become too much?**

I’m feeling my age, so to speak. I could use a little bit of rest, but all my choice. These are wonderful things to be a part of. This one I’m really excited for because this movie does not stop. It is going to be action from the opening credits. We have a great team that mixes action and comedy. I’m also trying to do my best to, I hate the term work-life balance, but I’m trying to do my best to not fall into the trap of workaholicism where I just hide in my work and I’m not a fully open, vulnerable human being to the people around me, the people that I love. I haven’t yet sacrificed my relationships for my work. I’m at a pretty good pace right now where I can hit on all cylinders.

AP

## WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

# More of everything, but not more charm

'Shazam! Fury of the Gods' has amplified action, villains, monsters, star wattage, but sequel isn't as fresh as original

By JOCELYN NOVECK  
Associated Press

Sequels, by nature, are more. Whatever the original had, just add more, the rule seems to be. Even more words in the title — how often is a sequel's title shorter than the original?

And so, exactly four years after the original DC superhero pic "Shazam!" surprised with its clever blend of innocence and silliness, and enough wit to blunt the inevitable ridiculousness of plot, we have "Shazam! Fury of the Gods." It brings five times the title wordage, more action, more villains, more monsters and more star wattage — Oscar winner Helen Mirren, for example.

But not more charm. The sequel, again directed by David F. Sandberg, feels less breezily funny, less fresh, less fleet of foot. (At two hours and 10 minutes, it's actually two minutes shorter than the original, but doesn't feel shorter.)

In its favor, though, are some elements that lent the original its pleasures, especially Zachary Levi and his goofy efforts (if perhaps more frenetic) to play a youngster in an adult superhero body, and Jack Dylan Grazer as fast-talking, always-thinking best bud (and foster brother) Freddy — this time given a love interest in appealing Rachel Zegler. It also smartly drops colorless villain Dr. Thaddeus Sivana, who's apparently still in his lonely cell.

First, a plot refresher. We're back in

Philadelphia with teen hero Billy Batson (Asher Angel), the foster kid who was bestowed in the original with magic powers by a wizard (Djimon Hounsou) and learned that the word "Shazam!" turned him into a strapping superhero (Levi). But now, his foster fam (well, just the siblings) has joined the superhero biz.

It's not going great, though. The group is known in the City of Brotherly Love as the "Philadelphia Fiascoes," because of frequent youthful mistakes. We know teenagers have only partly developed brains, right? No matter how many buses or train cars they can hold with one arm.

And there's a big new villain to fight — actually three, the ancient Daughters of Atlas, who arrive in the human world to reclaim their stolen magic.

Turns out the mythical staff of the gods, which Billy/Shazam had broken at the end of the first film, lies in a museum, and let's just say the visitors are not in for a good day when two daughters of Atlas appear — Hespera and Kalypso — ready to annihilate anyone in their way. They're soon revealed as Mirren and Lucy Liu, adding some real mean goddess vibe to the proceedings.

Meanwhile, Billy/Shazam is in a therapy session, saying he feels like a fraud. Soon, though, he and his siblings are called upon to save the city from a collapsing bridge.

The funniest parts of "Shazam!" and now its sequel involve the overlap be-



WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

Zachary Levi must battle Helen Mirren in the "Shazam!" sequel, "Fury of the Gods." Mirren plays one of three villains seeking a mystical staff of the gods from the first film.

tween teen-human and superhero life. Witness the teen-designed secret lair, complete with all the Skittles and other junk food anyone would want. There, we also learn what's currently occupying each of the siblings. The oldest, Mary, who studies organic chemistry for fun, is aching for college over superhero life. And Freddy wants to forge his own identity.

But Billy, abandoned as a child by his parents, wants family unity at all costs. Mary tries to tell him nothing lasts forever — plus, soon he'll be 18 and checks to his foster parents will stop coming. Then what?

Meanwhile, the Daughters of Atlas, accompanied by a big old dragon and some other monsters, are on the warpath. Where's the third, you ask? Ah, she's masquerading as human, and she's taken a shine to Freddy, who cannot believe his luck.

That's all you need to know to understand the action. And there's lots. Still, the best moments are when the wit of the

original shines through — like when Hespera (Mirren) reads aloud a letter that's been dictated by the young superheroes to a magic quill pen, which like a smartphone catches the extraneous dialogue, which means she's repeating gravely: "Anyone else want a Gatorade?"

The action, laden with CGI battles, could fatally weigh down the film if it weren't for Levi, who brings the nimbleness of a musical theater performer and Grazer, a bit older but still irascible.

Angel still makes an appealing teen Billy, and Hounsou gets a dashing fashion moment. The family's all back, and foster mom Rosa gets at least one good line amid apocalyptic destruction: "I am not entirely sure how to parent here."

Oh wait, we forgot the unicorns!

Did we need a dragon AND unicorns? Well, of course we did, because in a sequel, there's always more.

"Shazam! Fury of the Gods" has been rated PG-13 for sequences of action and violence, and language. Running time: 130 minutes.

## U2 documentary marred by inclusion of third wheel Letterman

By MARK KENNEDY  
Associated Press

David Letterman joins Bono and The Edge in a new streaming documentary about U2 and one obvious question soon jumps out: What exactly is David Letterman doing here?

The droll, bushy-bearded American comedian is an odd choice to be master of ceremonies for this Disney+ project, unbalancing everything, even the title, "Bono & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming, with Dave Letterman."

Director Morgan Neville does a fabulous job using new interviews — including brilliant insights by musician Glen Hansard and producer Jimmy Iovine — and melding them with old performances as he explores the band's origins, song creations, highs and lows. But he's torn about whether this is a travel show or a music documentary, and neither work well.

The film's spine is a concert by Bono and The Edge at the Ambassador Theatre in Dublin, Ireland, where they unveil some of the ways they've stripped down and reworked their catalog for the new acoustic-led album "Songs of Surrender," including such songs as "Vertigo," "Bad" and "One."

But Letterman not only distracts, he gets in the way. We watch him wander around Dublin shopping with his clueless, oddball sense of humor, as if the show was about him. "I'm interested in a wheel of cheese. I've never purchased a wheel of cheese," he says.

There's even a weird sequence in which Bono is reduced to drawing a map of Ireland for his guest and un-



RICHARD SHOTWELL, INVISION/AP

The Edge, David Letterman and Bono are a strange and unlikely trio in the documentary "Bono & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming, with Dave Letterman."

packing the complex history of Irish-English animus. "Who do I dislike in this?" asks Letterman. The answer is Letterman.

The documentary does a masterful job of giving context

to U2's rise, the social, religious and cultural changes taking place in the late 1970s and '80s in Dublin, or as Bono says "as Ireland moves from black and white into color."

There are insights — some small, like that drummer Larry Mullen Jr.'s nickname growing up was "The Jam Jar," and some big, as when Bono reveals tensions within the band regarding his activism — and moments to celebrate, like the band's important Super Bowl halftime show after 9/11.

But then there's Letterman popping up again — visiting polar swimmers or stopping by the recording studio, offering no real insight. Bono and The Edge even write him a goodbye song. Letterman is empty-handed.

Watching the documentary, you start to realize how crucial The Edge is, and even get to listen to him sing a few songs and tell the story of how he came up with "Sunday Bloody Sunday" while delivering the riff on a guitar. Bono brings up how key his bandmate is, in a sweet way, live in concert.

"The thing I don't like about Edge is that he doesn't need me. He could be doing all of this — writing, singing, performing, playing, producing — on his own. But he doesn't," Bono says.

"Because it's not as much fun," The Edge replies.

The only thing that ruins this special chemistry is the film's third wheel — the American with the wheel of cheese.

"Bono & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming, with Dave Letterman," is rated TV-14. Running time: 124 minutes. Now streaming on Disney+.

## WEEKEND: BOOKS

# Oprah announces 100th book selection

Winfrey chooses Napolitano's 'Hello Beautiful,' reflects on the club's history and its noteworthy picks over the years

By HILLEL ITALIE  
Associated Press

**F**or her 100th book club pick, Oprah Winfrey relied on the same instincts she has drawn upon from the start: Does the story move her? Does she think about it for days after? In a work of fiction, do the characters seem real to her?

"When I don't move on, that's always a sign to me there's something powerful and moving," Winfrey told The Associated Press in a recent telephone interview.

On Tuesday, she announced that she had chosen Ann Napolitano's "Hello Beautiful," a modern-day homage to "Little Women" from the author of the bestselling "Dear Edward." Winfrey believes its themes of family, resilience and perspective give "Hello Beautiful" a "universal appeal" that makes it a proper milestone.

A Winfrey pick no longer ensures blockbuster sales, but it retains a special status within the industry; for authors, a call from Winfrey still feels like being told they've won an Oscar. Winfrey told AP that she is in "awe" of the club and its history, "the very notion" that someone might go and buy a copy of "Anna Karenina" or a little-known book simply because she suggested it.

"She is the queen," says Jenna Bush Hager, who hosts the popular "Read With Jenna" club on NBC's "Today" show. "I remember being a high school senior, in AP English, and reading (David Guterson's) 'Snow Falling on Cedars' because I had walked into the local bookstore and seen that Oprah had recommended it."

Kristen McLean, an analyst for NPD Books, which tracks industry sales, says that Winfrey is especially effective these days when promoting a known author such as Barbara Kingsolver and her novel "Demon Copperhead," a bestseller since Winfrey picked it last fall that has far outsold her two previous works of fiction.

Since 1996, Winfrey's book choices

**Oprah Winfrey says she's in awe of the reach of her book club, which has now recommended 100 titles.**

CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

have set her on a journey of extraordinary influence and success, frequent reinvention and the occasional controversy. It has endured through changes for both Winfrey and the publishing industry, through the rise of the internet and the end of Winfrey's syndicated talk show, through immersions in the classics and unexpected lessons in the reliability of memoirs and the lack of diversity of book publishing.

Thanks to Winfrey, contemporary authors such as Jacquelyn Mitchard and Jane Hamilton found audiences they never imagined, while picks published decades or even centuries earlier, from "Anna Karenina" to "As I Lay Dying," placed high on bestseller lists. Winfrey didn't invent the mass market book club, but she demonstrated that spontaneous passion can inspire people in ways that elude the most sophisticated marketing campaigns.

Her most troubled choices — James Frey's fabricated memoir "A Million Little Pieces" and Jeanine Cummins' "American Dirt," a novel criticized for stereotypical depictions of Mexicans — made so much news in part because of the spotlight of a Winfrey endorsement.

The club began as the extension of conversations between herself and her producer at the time, Alice McGee. They would talk about the books they liked until McGee finally suggested, in 1996, that Winfrey share the experience with her viewers. The first pick, Mitchard's "The Deep End of the Ocean," has sold more than 2 million copies. Other books also became major bestsellers, whether by established authors like Joyce Carol Oates ("We Were the Mulvaney's") and Toni Morrison ("The Bluest Eye") or then-emerging writers like Janet Fitch and Tawni O'Dell.

The club was so successful that some suspected a catch. Winfrey remembers Quincy Jones asking her: "How much money are they paying you for that book club, baby?" The process was so informal that Winfrey at first didn't even bother going through intermediaries.

"I would just call Wally Lamb," she says of the author of "She's Come Undone," her fourth pick. "In the early stages, I would finish the book and then find the author. When you'd go to the back of the book, it gives you the bio of the author and it would tell you what city the author lives. And, this is when we had phone books, in every instance I was able to get the author's phone number because the author was listed."

Winfrey's system is now only slightly more structured. Leigh Newman, books director of the online/print publication Oprah Daily, will call the publisher first and arrange a "surprise call" with the author and Oprah. Winfrey's staff will research the author's background to make sure nothing problematic turns up — whether criminal charges or allegations of plagiarism. The vetting began, Winfrey says, after "A Million Little Pieces" turned out to have substantial falsehoods, leading to an extraordinary public scolding by Winfrey when she brought Frey back on her show to explain himself. (They have since reconciled.)

"I took it so personally," she says. "I probably should haven't taken it so personally but I felt like he had let me down and I let the audience down. ... I was the one saying, 'Can you believe this is a true story?' and shouting that from the rooftops. I felt foolish for doing that, embarrassed for doing that."

Winfrey's book choices are still in-house and intimate — mostly just determined by herself and Newman — although Winfrey says she made a rare exception for "Hello Beautiful," recommended to her by the co-chairman of Creative Artists Agency, Richard Lovett. Otherwise, Newman will seek out books she thinks Winfrey might respond to — fiction or nonfiction, as long as the story is "compelling," Newman explains. Winfrey will also come upon books on her own.

The club follows no real formula. For the first few years, Winfrey averaged a selection nearly every month, a pace she came to find exhausting. She paused the club for much of 2002-2003, focused on older works in 2004-2005, and in other years only selected one or two titles. After her talk show ended in 2011, she launched Oprah's Book Club 2.0 the following year, with the emphasis on digital media.

She is currently aiming for a new book every eight weeks, with author interviews and interactive reader discussions showcased on OprahDaily.com. Winfrey has no plans to stop, and no specific goals for selections. In the aftermath of "American Dirt," selected early in 2020, she had vowed to open herself up "to more Latinx books." But she has not since picked any for her club and is not committing herself for the future.

"I'd never choose a book because the author is Hispanic, or Black, or Indian. I'm not going to be put in that box," she says. "The book has to live on many different levels to me. It doesn't mean there are not fantastic books by authors of every race and creed. It means I haven't seen one yet (for the club). But we're mindful of it, and I've come close a couple of times."



## WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Nintendo photos

**Metroid Prime Remastered comes with standard first-person shooter controls, which make battles feel more manageable than they did in the original Prime.**

# A modern Metroid

Prime Remastered has improved controls, updated visuals

By EBENEZER SAMUEL  
*New York Daily News*

When Metroid Prime first arrived on the Nintendo GameCube 21 years ago, it was a kind-of, sort-of first-person shooter. Consoles were still figuring out ideal shooter mechanics, tank controls were all over the place, and naturally, Nintendo wanted to do things its own way. The result was fun but clunky.

Now that the game's been remastered, it's just ... plain ... fun. With Metroid Prime Remastered on the Nintendo Switch, Nintendo doesn't simply rehash one of the seminal titles in all of gaming (more on that later). It delivers a fully modern take on Metroid Prime — without ever touching the core game. You get stunningly remastered visuals and a fresh control scheme, along with a terrific story and setting that uniquely

holds up more than two decades later.

You play as Samus Aran, the space bounty-hunter star of all the Metroid games, in the game that helped transform the franchise — and help us rethink first-person shooters too. Until Metroid Prime, the Metroid franchise had been your classic 2D platform-and-shooting exploration game, as you went from room to room, killing aliens, gradually beefing up Samus and discovering a gaming world.

Metroid Prime dared to reimagine that, while still keeping the heart of Metroid's exploratory roots. The resulting title was unique among "shooters," so much so that at the time it wasn't really labeled a shooter. In an era of Goldeneye and the original Halo, games that pushed into cinematic storytelling and multiplayer, Prime was uniquely old-school.

There is no multiplayer in this experience, and really, it's only you in the game. There are no audio files to discover or voices communicating with you once you land on Tallon IV, the planet where Prime takes place. It's just you and the gaming world. This is an explorer's shooter, less about killing and spectacle and more about uncovering the secrets of Tallon IV. And the experience is uniquely wonderful even today.

There's a sense of discovery in this title. In most modern shooters, a blend of narration or exposition or sheer gunfire instantly lets you know what's going on, or propels you forward before you can figure out what's going on. Prime's rhythm is different: You'll go from area to area, sometimes never firing a shot, sometimes handling a puzzle, sometimes taking on baddies.

The game retains the familiar Metroid structure but effectively transplants it to its FPS format. There's a mix of third-person view in here too, whenever Samus transforms into a Morph ball (which you'll do frequently to traverse hidden tunnels and activate panels in certain rooms — or



**Metroid Prime Remastered retains the core story and exploratory focus of the original.**

to become more elusive to your enemies).

You'll go through the entire game without ever speaking to anyone else, and yet you'll still learn about the world. That's because Samus' head-up display will relay valuable information about dead enemies and various plant life on the planet. It's gameplay unlike that of your typical shooter — but it's terrifically satisfying and stands out against the 2023 backdrop of battle royale shooters.

Despite this throwback feel, Metroid Prime Remastered manages to feel as modern as it needs to, courtesy of its controls and visuals. The original Prime seemed unsure of how it wanted to control, trying to utilize every single tool on the weird GameCube controller of its era, maybe trying to feel a bit tanky in its controls too. You had to stand still, then look around a room to fire. This remaster comes with standard FPS controls, and they work swimmingly, making this the game Metroid Prime was supposed to be.

If you played the original Prime, you'll notice battles feel a bit more manageable

here because of your newfound agility.

But this remains a challenging game in the Metroid tradition, especially during boss battles. The bullet sponges of today's era are absent, replaced by adversaries who require strategy and force you to discern their weak points.

Add in the fresh visuals, and you have a stunning game. Metroid Prime was always good-looking, but the remaster pushes things to a new level without destroying the integrity of the original. Every texture looks to have been overhauled, and little lighting touches abound. Tallon IV comes to life because of this, as does Samus.

The end result is a fantastic shooter that today's games could learn plenty from. In truth, a host of games from the GameCube era were terrifically inventive like Metroid Prime, rethinking gameplay conventions of their day in thoughtful, creative ways. Several of those games still have a place today.

None more than Metroid Prime.

**Platform:** Nintendo Switch

**Online:** metroid.nintendo.com



## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

## Brussels: Political power and good living

While it may be easy to skip Brussels when zipping between Amsterdam and Paris by train, the city's rich brew of food and culture pleasantly surprises those who stop. Brussels is one of Europe's great secrets: a city of 1.2 million, the capital of Belgium, the headquarters of NATO and the political center of the European Union. A trade boom 500 years ago left this city with striking art and stately architecture. And it's once again a trade and cultural center of Europe.

Its magnificent grand square, aptly named La Grand Place, alone makes a visit worthwhile. From its medieval origins as a market for a small village, the Grand Place has grown into a vast public space enclosed by Old World buildings with stately gables. Today, the "Place" is the place to see Europe on parade. Visitors come to bask in the ambiance, sample chocolate and relax with a beer at an outdoor café.

My favorite budget meal in Brussels is simple grub in an atmospheric old pub with a gaggle of "beer pilgrims," who flock here from around the world to appreciate some of Europe's best brew and selection — you can sample among hundreds of Belgian varieties.

Make a point to order mussels in Brussels — they're served everywhere. They usually come in a big-enough-for-two bucket, and always with a pile of fries. Don't call fries "French" in Brussels — while it's a matter of some dispute whether they originated in Belgium, they've

certainly been perfected here.

A fine first stop after the Grand Place is the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, a sprawling complex with a trio of museums that show off the country's best all-around art collection. I particularly like its Magritte Museum — with more than



Rick Steves

250 paintings, it has the world's largest collection of works by surrealist René Magritte, who famously painted a picture of a pipe and wrote on the canvas "this is not a pipe." Although you won't see many of Magritte's most famous pieces here, this lovingly presented museum offers

an unusually intimate look at the life and work of one of Belgium's top artists.

The complex's Old Masters Museum has a dazzling collection of masterpieces by Van der Weyden, Breugel, Bosch and Rubens. And the Fin-de-Siècle Museum covers art of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including an extensive Art Nouveau collection. The museum complex is nestled in the city's "Upper Town" district — little changed since the late 1800s, when Brussels was one of Europe's few truly cosmopolitan cities, and the capital of a colonial empire.

Today Brussels is the administrative center of the European Union. It hosts businesspeople from around the world — only Washington, D.C., has more lobbyists. When Europeans have a gripe, this is where they demonstrate.

The Atomium, one of Brussels' more offbeat attractions, looms on the edge of town. This gigantic, silvery steel "molecule" has escalators connecting the various "atoms," fun space-age videos and a view from the top sphere.

Of course the city's quirkiest sight is easily the beloved Manneken-Pis — a tiny bronze statue of a lost boy taking a pee. The two-foot-tall peeing boy is an appropriately low-key symbol for the unpretentious locals, called Bruxellois. Made in 1619 to provide drinking water for the neighborhood, it's a reminder that this city has long had a sense of humor.

It's tradition for visiting VIPs to bring the statue an outfit, and he also dresses up for special occasions. A sign nearby lists the month's festival days and how he'll be dressed. For example, on January 8, Elvis Presley's birthday, he's an Elvis impersonator; on Prostate Awareness Day, his flow is down to a slow drip. He can also be hooked up to a keg to pee wine or beer. The collection of costumes he's worn for three centuries — at GardeRobe Manneken-Pis — is around the corner.

You may hear silly legends about the origin of the Manneken. The truth is simple: The city commissioned the Manneken to show the freedom and joy of living in Brussels — where happy people eat, drink ... and drink ... and then pee. And 400 years later, things haven't changed.



The famous Manneken-Pis in Brussels is a must-see for tourists.

iStock

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

## Spring break options include amusement parks, zip lines

As DODEA students eagerly anticipate their upcoming spring breaks, parents may be scrambling for ideas as to how to provide them with adventure-packed outings or overnight getaways. With a number of family-friendly attractions opening their doors for a new season around this time of year, options for a range of ages and interests abound.

## Theme parks

Alton Towers Resort in Staffordshire, England, opens for its summer season on March 18. The country's largest theme park, offering a spa, water park, mini golf course, hotel complex and more, will be one attraction the richer with the opening of The Curse at Alton Manor, a dark ride offering multiple twists and turns. The advance purchase of single-day entry passes can lead to significant savings off the standard 68 UK pound (\$80.50) entry fee, with pass prices starting at 36 pounds. Online: altontowers.com

Europa-Park in Rust, Germany, will be open for its summer season March 25-Nov. 5. The park's latest attractions include a boat ride through a castle garden, a trip on a Danube steamer and a water fountain show, all found in the Austrian themed area. Rulantica, Europa-Park's adjacent water world, offers both adrenalin-inducing rides and spa experiences. Single-day tickets can be booked online for either facility. Theme park entry costs this season start at 57.50 euros (\$60.70) for adults and 49 euros for those ages 4-11; alternately, consider various packages combining overnight stays in one of six themed hotels. Online: europapark.de

LEGOLAND Deutschland Resort in Günzburg, Germany, keeps its gates for the summer season March 25-Nov. 5. The newest offerings at the park, which is geared to families with children between the ages of 2 and 12, in-



Zip World

**Velocity 2 is a zip line at Zip World in North Wales, in Penrhyn Slate Quarry, billed as the fastest zip line in the world and the longest in Europe.**

clude a themed area inhabited by mythical creatures and a spectacular wing coaster. Purchasing date-specific tickets online can offer significant savings off regular admission prices. Online: legoland.de

## Zip lines

The Hirschgrund Zipline Area in Schiltach, Germany's Black Forest region, reopens for its new season on March 17. The zip line area consists of seven zip lines weaving a loop through the scenic Kinzig Valley. For most visitors, the day's highlight will be a turn on the "Gründle." Coming in at over a third of a mile long and 272 feet high, it's billed as the country's longest nature zipline. The cost of using the park is 56 euros per adult and 47 euros per child aged between 12 and 16 on weekdays and 59/52 euros respectively on weekends and holidays. Children under 12 years of age or weighing less than 88 pounds are not

allowed on the lines. Advance reservations are essential. Online: hirschgrund-zipline.de

Zip World in Penrhyn Slate Quarry, near Bethesda in North Wales, is home to Velocity 2, billed as the fastest zip line in the world and the longest in Europe. Riders travel at speeds up to and over 100 mph while taking in unbeatable views of Snowdonia, a rugged, mountainous region regarded as a thrill seeker's paradise. Two parallel lines accommodating four riders each allow friends and family to enjoy the experience simultaneously. Weight and height restrictions apply, and the line is shut down in the case of inclement weather. Prices begin at 92.50 pounds. Online: zipworld.co.uk

## Safari park

Serengeti Park in Hodenhagen, Germany, a safari park in Lower Saxony some 40 miles north of Hanover, is open March 25-Nov. 5 in 2023. Europe's largest safari park, home to more than 1,500 freely roaming animals, can be experienced from the comfort of one's own vehicle or as part of a bus tour. The park also offers speedboat tours, rides down raging rapids and a roller coaster. Entry fees are 45.50 euros adults and 35.50 euros for ages 3-12. Ages 2 and under enter free. Online: serengeti-park.de

## Alpine coaster

The Kolbensattel Alpine Coaster in Oberammergau, Germany, will open for the summer season, weather permitting, on March 31. Riders can achieve speeds of up to 25 mph as they cruise down its steep and curvy 8,530-foot-long track built into a mountainside. The attraction is easily reached by means of the Kolben chairlift. A chairlift ascent and ride down on the Alpine Coaster goes for 15.50 euros adults, 12 euros for ages 8-15 and 6 euros for ages 3-7. Children under the age of 8 must ride with an adult, while those age 2 or younger are not allowed on the ride. Online: kolbensattel.de/en/alpine-coaster

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

# Picture perfect and personal

Even if a dying art, sending postcards can be a fun way to show others you're thinking of them

By **GEORGE HOBICA**  
Tribune News Service

**T**rust me on this: Sending picture postcards to friends and family spreads joy back home and in the process reveals aspects of your destination you'd otherwise miss. I know this because I am an obsessive picture postcard sender, as you'll see.

You've already guessed, from your own mailbox perhaps, that sending picture postcards is a dying art (and it really can be an art if done right). Years ago tens of millions of them were sent worldwide annually. These days fewer than 5 million are sold, and many of these are for souvenirs, not mailing. Blame Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

I eschew social media, mostly on sociopolitical grounds, so instead of impersonal brag posts of my travels, I reveal my whereabouts, and show my peeps I'm thinking of them, by sending postcards.

And not just any postcards. I shop for them with a connoisseur's eyes. Whatever the subject, they have to be of highest quality, not the 10 for \$1 variety.

Why send them, when a blast on Instagram to everyone you've ever met is so easy?

Because that's impersonal. Because your pals haven't received one in years. Send to delight them! To surprise them! To be different from the social media scrum.

And to surprise yourself, perhaps. You'll encounter people you'd otherwise never meet and learn unexpected and amusing things about the country and city you're visiting.

More than once in France (it's always France for some reason — perhaps a national obsession with thrift) I've argued with a postal clerk that it's OK to buy two beautiful or interesting stamps and pay a bit more in postage than a single tedious stamp for the exact required amount. “But Monsieur is paying too much!” she will scold, even if it's 5 cents more.

“Let me see if there's a cheaper way” (futilely searches through vast book of stamps and produces a plain and dowdy item depicting a female bust — Marianne, the mythical symbol of France).

“No! I don't want cheaper. I want the pretty ones!” (Exasperated Gallic shrug to dismiss crazy tourist with nothing better to do than waste money.)

Don't get me wrong. Send 20 or even 10 postcards, and you can be talking serious cash, depending on where you are. It's puzzling how different countries charge vastly different amounts to send a postcard overseas. It can cost more than \$4 in Switzerland, but pennies in a country like Fiji, where a postmistress greeted me with “Tell me all about your day!” (Fiji isn't known as the world's happiest country for nothing) and then actually wanted to hear all about my day.

In the U.K., the post office also issues “figurehead” stamps in many denominations, all looking alike except for the color, depicting the bust of the ruling monarch, including one for the exact amount required for international postcards. These are unlovely in a particularly British



iStock photos

**You can learn a lot about the culture of the place (above: Ghent, Belgium) that you're visiting during the process of buying and mailing a postcard.**

way. But His Majesty's post office issues a huge range of gorgeous commemorative first-class stamps meant for domestic use. (Much like our “anytime” stamps in the U.S., they have no denomination.) Let's say one of these cute stamps sells for 45 pence and the going rate for an international postcard is 90 pence. So you'd put two of these beauts on a card, right? But a postmistress in Scotland insisted that my gifts would not arrive thus stamped.

Unsure, I sent a test to myself. It arrived just fine, and on all subsequent visits to the country I would use only the pretty stamps.

This same buzzkill insisted that an irregularly shaped postcard of a red double-decker bus would require extra postage. Wrong again. These triumphs over postmistresses can be thrilling.

Some postal clerks are more agreeable than others. Years ago I brought my cards to a post office near my favorite hotel, the oasis-like Park Hyatt Tokyo, in the Shinjuku district.

“Welcome to the post office!” the lone clerk (I was the lone customer) boomed, in Japanese of course, so I'm just guessing really. Maybe he really said don't slam the door. No translation was required to determine why I was there, and he leafed through my unstamped postcards to gauge the appropriate postage. Luckily, he had only interesting stamps.

But rather than handing the cards and stamps back to me after paying, he carefully deperforated them, moistened them, and with total precision (this is Japan, after all) affixed

them. I was quite shocked, expecting everything to be tossed back to me like they do, say, everywhere else.

Postcarders also learn a lot about hotel culture. Some hotels, like the glorious Alcron in Prague, will stamp (admittedly, machine stamp) your postcards for free, as many as you like, which can be quite a perk if you're sending a lot. Some hotels won't even accept postcards for mailing, stamped or not. “Guests blame us if the post doesn't arrive,” the lugubrious clerk at London's St. Pancras Renaissance told me without apology.

Go on a trip with think-of-everything Micato Safaris and they provide lovely postcards with lovely stamps for free and mail them for you. No hunting for a mailbox in the Serengeti!

Not that hunting for the post office can't be fun; it can be enlightening. Some post offices are quite beautiful, even majestic, like the central one in Prague for example. (I declined the free postage at the Alcron, as you can imagine.) Some can be impossible to find, like the ones in Denmark, where they've done away with them altogether (an ominous development you'd have missed had you not been postcarding).

What to write once you've acquired the cards and the stamps? Here's the thing: Postcards are small. After you affix the stamps and write the address, and maybe add a bright blue “Par Avion/Air Mail” sticker for good measure, there's not much room to pontificate. It's the

thought that counts, truly. Your recipients will be surprised and pleased no matter what you write. They'll get it that you went out of your way, even on your fab vacay, to delight them old-school. Your card will be the only piece of mail they'll receive all week that isn't a solicitation to join AARP or open a new credit card or try the menu at the new taqueria. You bought the cutest cards, you chose the most colorful stamps, addressed them (I bring labels already addressed, printed on my computer), and then found a mailbox, which is sometimes the hardest part of the project.

Try to be a bit less mundane than “Wish you were here!” but no need to go overboard; you've done enough already. Describe something funny that happened. “The postmistress gave me a hard time for spending more than I needed! But aren't these stamps dope?” Or “This stamp cost \$5 and the card \$3. This is all you're getting” are favorites of mine.

Also, please do not use those apps that for a fee will arrange your snapshots on the front of a card and on the back print your greeting and mail them from the recipient's country. They're tacky and ugly. A friend of mine does this all the time. No, it's actually not better than nothing.

OK, you won't be traveling for a while, but so what? Send a postcard from wherever you are. It doesn't have to be Paris or Bangkok. Wherever you send it from, the “like” you'll get, your recipient's smile, will be just as warm.



**It doesn't matter what you write in the small amount of room available on a postcard — it's the thought that counts, after all.**

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

# Conversations in the cabin

An etiquette expert and a former flight attendant offer their tips for when and when not to talk on an airplane

By NATALIE B. COMPTON  
*The Washington Post*

It's an issue that divides people of all ages and genders, both introverts and extroverts: When, if ever, is it okay to talk on a plane? If planes had an equivalent to the quiet car on trains, we wouldn't be here. But in the air, there are no such parameters keeping us on the same page — save the law banning passengers from making calls on U.S. flights (thank God). Many people would appreciate a plane-wide mute button, but others welcome the opportunity to connect with their travel companion or seatmate. “I think some of the nicest conversations can actually arise with fellow travelers,” says Thomas P. Farley, an etiquette expert, speaker and author. “I have people in my life who I have met on airplanes a decade or two ago who remain friends.” And so we're left with a nation divided, the in-flight chatterers and those who loathe them. The only way to keep things civil is to establish some ground rules. Some of them already exist unspoken, but just in case, we'll spell them out. “My definition of etiquette is being mindful of how your behavior affects other people,” says Jacqueline Whitmore, a former flight attendant who wrote a book on workplace etiquette. “And when your behavior affects other people negatively, then we have a problem.”



## Acknowledge the crew

When you board your flight, you may notice workers wearing uniforms: flight attendants, pilots, gate agents, aircraft cleaners and bag handlers. Those are human beings, remember, and they make your flight possible. The bare minimum is to acknowledge their existence.

You can keep it simple: eye contact, hello, goodbye and, especially, thank you. “Just be kind,” Whitmore says. “That doesn't take a whole lot of effort and it costs you absolutely nothing.”

It shouldn't be the only reason you're being decent, but Whitmore says you might be rewarded for being polite and patient with flight attendants. From a free drink coupon to a seat upgrade, “you'd be surprised to how many favors you can gain,” she says. “When you're kind you do stand out.”

## Greet your seatmates

If your seatmate is a stranger, you'll still be sitting shoulder-to-shoulder the entire flight, pressed together like a sentient panini: It's bizarre not to say hello in such intimate quarters. Go ahead and soften the tension with a quick hello. Anything additional is optional.

## Look for cues that strangers want to chat

Should you be feeling social — it's fair game to engage with your neighbor at the beginning and end of your flight. Plenty of travelers are down to chat, and plenty more think doing so is akin to committing a crime.

Look for signs to distinguish one group from the other. They can be obvious: headphones in, eye mask on, a T-shirt that says “don't talk to me.”

But it's not always that straightforward. If you're keen to talk, put the ball in their court. Test the waters with an innocuous opening line or two. Try something like, “Headed home?” Or “I still can't believe we're on a 16-hour flight to nowhere.” Then see how it lands. If the person answers with a thin smile and a nod, or a two-word response, drop it.

“It's a shame not to at least try,” Farley says. Even if your conversation doesn't go further than a little small talk, “you've humanized a very dehumanizing experience which is today's air travel.”

## Keep your voice down, unless you're putting in a drink order

A plane is not a private place. It's shared, similar to a doctor's office or a museum. Keep that in mind when talking, and use a hushed voice over a booming one to respect the travelers around you.

“One of the most annoying things is people who talk loudly, whether it be on the phone or to their seatmate,” Whitmore says. “Some people want to rest, some people want to get some work done ... and when you've got two or three loud people sitting behind you, it's very disruptive.”

Whitmore has gone so far as to switch seats to avoid loud talkers on flights. But if you can't get away, “sometimes you have no other choice but to politely turn around and say, ‘Would you mind lowering your voice? I'd like to get some work done,’ or ‘I'm trying to sleep,’” she says.

There is an exception: “Speak up when you're dealing with a flight attendant,” Farley says.

Throughout the trip, “Flight attendants constantly have to say, ‘I'm sorry, could you speak up? Could you say that again?’ So speak clearly. Don't mumble. Enunciate ... you're down below and they're up high.”

## Limit conversation to your immediate neighbors

To keep conversation quiet, engage with your immediate neighbors only. When you start shouting across rows, “you start to hold the rest of the plane hostage to your conversation,” Farley says.

If you are one of those nightmare pairs who book the aisle and window seat, leaving a stranger stuck in the middle, for the love of all things holy please do not talk over them. Yes, this happens — they have even been

known to pass snacks back and forth over the middle seat.

With fights over the arm rest and the discomfort of being sandwiched, it's uncomfortable enough being the middle seat passenger. “But now if you've got two people on either side of you engaged in full-on conversation, I just can't think of a worse fate,” Farley says.

## Keep it PG

When it comes to what to talk about, Whitmore has a good rule of thumb. “Don't share anything that you wouldn't want posted on the front page of *The Washington Post*,” she says.

What you're comfortable sharing is up to interpretation, but at the very least, limit explicit content, from topics to profanity. It's not the end of the world for other adults to hear your dirty secrets, but it's a courtesy to keep them to yourself.

“Even if there aren't children around, some people are just totally offended by profanity,” Whitmore says. “It's just not appropriate — like watching an X-rated video in front of a family of four.”

## Make calls quick, quiet and essential

As the age of unplugging comes to an end, it's easier than ever to make and receive calls while you travel. While you're not allowed to talk on the phone in-flight, you may be tempted to pick up a call before or after take-off.

If you must answer it (maybe you're expecting news from a doctor, or a loved one needs help), “avoid cell yell,” Whitmore says. “Keep your voice to a conversational tone ... and keep the call brief.”

And please, no speakerphone. Ever.

## No talking on a red eye

A red eye is torture, usually booked because it can save you time or money but never worth its physical and emotional toll. Red-eye passengers are fighting to get the worst sleep of their lives; don't make it harder on them by talking.

# WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



Bundesbank Bunker Cochem

Examples of German wartime replacement currency are on display at the former German Federal Bank bunker in Cochem, now a museum.

## A costly secret

Museum in Cochem preserves bank bunker that once held German Cold War cash stash

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL

*Stars and Stripes*

A house with a basement vault full of money sounds like the storyline lifted from the pages of comics featuring Scrooge McDuck.

In the German riverside town of Cochem, however, more than half of the country's currency reserves were once stored beneath residential homes. The Cold War nuclear bunker of the Bundesbank, Germany's federal reserve, was a long-kept secret.

Seven years ago, the bunker was transformed into a museum open to the public. Visiting it seemed like a perfect activity on a cold and cloudy day.

There is no parking, so a shuttle brings visitors from downtown to the museum. We walked instead and after about 20 minutes, we arrived at a concrete-and-glass entrance at the end of a hillside cul-de-sac.

Before we entered the bunker our tour guide, Martin Moonsen, pointed out the buildings next door.

Behind the ordinary facade of the buildings was the original bunker entrance, Moonsen revealed. The camouflage was so effective that the buildings were never suspected of harboring billions in what might be one of the world's most unusual basements.

To explain the heavy foot traffic at the site until its closure in 1993, the government designated it the official training and recreation home of the Bundesbank. The bunker itself was accessed via a secret tunnel from inside the houses.

Visitors today can stay in the formerly camouflaged buildings at "Hotel Vintage," which maintains the site as a bed and breakfast. But why was it once necessary to hide money in this sleepy

### On the QT

**Address:** Am Wald 35, Cochem, Germany

**Hours:** The bunker must be visited as part of a tour. During the summer months, from April 1 to Nov. 1, tours are available once per hour from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. During the winter, tours are limited to 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.

**Cost:** German-language tours through the facility start at 13 euros per adult and 7 euros for children under 17. Pre-booked English group tours are available for a 30-euro additional fee.

**Information:** Online: bundesbank-bunker.de/en

Alexander Riedel

neighborhood?

During World War II, Nazi agents planned to influence the British pound with fake currency created in forced labor camps. Operation Bernhard was intended to cripple the United Kingdom's wartime economy by devaluing British cash reserves.

"Without trust in your currency, you can't do business," Moonsen explained. "That can be very destabilizing very quickly."

Fearing similar threats from the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War, West German planners wanted to be able to replace a weakened German mark quickly in case the country was flooded with counterfeit money.

Should the public lose faith in the validity of the marks in their wallets, the federal reserve would have rolled out all-new Bundesbank-Series II bills.

In the meantime, Germany need a secure location for the reserves of "BBK II." One fear was the looming threat of nuclear attack.

"This location along the Moselle seemed particularly protected (from attack)," Moonsen said. "One thought that a possible atomic pressure wave during the Cold War would simply sweep across the deep river valley."



ALEXANDER RIEDEL/Stars and Stripes

Reserve currency was once stacked floor-to-ceiling and frequently counted by select examiners of Germany's federal bank to ensure accountability while in storage in Cochem, Germany. Today, replica boxes show visitors the extent of the stash that was kept by the bank in that underground bunker.



ALEXANDER RIEDEL/Stars and Stripes

A mannequin in full protection gear in a decontamination chamber in the bunker highlights the Cold War nuclear threat.

Cochem's proximity to the Bundesbank headquarters in Frankfurt and the West German capital, Bonn, also was deemed ideal for the reserve cache.

Construction of the bunker began in 1960 and was completed in 1965, costing what would be almost \$99 million today.

When residents complained about the construction noise, they were told that the structure was an air raid shelter they would be able to use in case of war.

"This was not uncommon during the time, as many shelters were built during those days," Moonsen said.

Starting in 1965, the federal bank began transporting freshly printed bills via hundreds of truck deliveries, arriving slowly over nearly a decade. Once filled, the vault stored about 15 billion marks for more than two decades.

Downstairs, visitors enter an airlocked corridor through blast-proof metal doors. A decontam-



ALEXANDER RIEDEL/Stars and Stripes

Two houses in Cochem once concealed the secret entrance to the underground bunker complex of Germany's federal bank. Today, the buildings are home to Hotel Vintage.

ination chamber, equipped with a mannequin in full protection gear, highlights the drab vision of the doomsday scenario the bunker was prepared for: a nuclear attack on Germany.

At the heart of the museum is a large, tubular vault. Unlike Scrooge McDuck's money chamber, however, this one had no coins or gold bars to dive into.

It was all paper money in various denominations, stacked floor to ceiling in shipment-ready boxes in a humidity-controlled underground chamber.

Only replica boxes now remain to show visitors the extent of the stash, while imitations of the BBK-II replacement series can be bought as souvenirs.

Despite the riches stashed away here, the money was usually not guarded by more than three men of the site management and custodial staff so as to not arouse suspicion, Moonsen said.

Until official release, the al-

ternative bills weren't valid anyway.

"The only keys to the vault door, which weighs several tons, were kept at the Bundesbank headquarters in Frankfurt," Moonsen said. "If there was even a false alarm, the authorized staff had to travel from Frankfurt to check on the facility."

As electronic finance and security requirements changed over the decades, reserve currency plans were abandoned.

By the time the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and long before the arrival of the euro, all money in the bunker had been removed and destroyed, leaving an almost untouched historical site vacant.

After nearly an hour perusing the vault, our tour group emerged into the daylight. The hills of Cochem provided a wonderful view of the town and the Moselle River before we headed home.

riedel.alexander@stripes.com  
Twitter: @lexRiedel

## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DINING

# A fancy take on Pfalz fare

Restaurant Orangerie elevates even the odder German dishes to deliciousness

BY MATT WAGNER  
Stars and Stripes

**T**he three months since I moved into my new home in Germany kept me so busy that I didn't have much chance to check out the sort of restaurant where you relax for a little while.

With that behind me, my culinary kickoff came at Restaurant Orangerie in Kirchheimbolanden, about 25 miles northeast of Kaiserslautern.

The restaurant reopened under new management in October 2022, meaning the new Orangerie arrived on the scene roughly the same time I did.

Its intimate feel is noticeable the moment you walk in. A hallway leads to two rooms for seating. Doors can be closed on both sides, as well as between walls in the main room to give patrons plenty of privacy.

I wanted to try a taste of the Pfalz, so I started with a chestnut soup that had hints of Riesling, bacon bits, croutons and sour cream. On a day with temperatures near freezing, its warmth was most welcome. The bacon bits and croutons added a crunchiness that I also found pleasing.

Saumagen was the next thing I sampled. I'm glad I didn't look it up ahead of time, as I guarantee I would not have ordered stuffed pig offal if I had known what it was.

A German friend whose grandfather was a butcher later described the dish to me as a por-



**AFTER  
HOURS  
GERMANY**

## Restaurant Orangerie

**Address:** Dr.-Edeltraud-Siessl-Allee 4, Kirchheimbolanden, Germany  
**Hours:** Thursday through Monday, 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. and 5:30-10 p.m.; closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays  
**Prices:** Between 10 and 30 euros for entrees, soups and appetizers. Dessert options are available.

**Information:** Online: restaurant-orangerie.eatbu.com

Matt Wagner

cine version of haggis. It was a favorite of former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Restaurant Orangerie's version consists of two patty-like shapes, carrot bits and chopped onions wrapped in a pig's stomach lining. On top was a chestnut glaze with cabbage and croquettes.

Even though I now know the ingredients, the saumagen tasted so good I would consider having it again.

The last dish I ordered came from a special menu for Glan cattle, a traditional Rheinland-Pfalz breed.

I ordered the tafelspitz, or boiled beef. It came with a horseradish sauce that wasn't as overbearing as others I've tried. The sauce left a little tangy aftertaste while finishing off the accompanying steamed vegetables and parsley potatoes.



PHOTOS BY MATT WAGNER/Stars and Stripes

The tafelspitz, or boiled beef, is part of Restaurant Orangerie's Glanrindwochen, or weeks with meals featuring Glan cattle, a breed from the Rheinland-Pfalz region.

Each dish was excellent, and I want to return to try some other menu items. Restaurant Orangerie isn't cheap, but it's not so expensive that it bars people from going on a regular basis. As long as you stay away from a steak or a rack of lamb, the main dishes are priced between 17 and 25 euros.

The restaurant also has a large wine selection, appropriate for a major wine-producing region, with suggestions for each dish. My waiter tried to interest me in butterscotch schnapps after my meal, but I declined for the sake of my drive home.

Overall, I consider Restaurant Orangerie a great place for date night and get-togethers of small groups. And as a solo diner, I didn't feel at all out of place there.

Reservations are advised, as even on the Monday evening I visited, only a few tables were open the entire time I was there.

wagner.mathew@stripes.com  
Twitter:@MWagsStripes



Restaurant Orangerie opened in Kirchheimbolanden, Germany, in October 2022. The entrance is off of Dr.-Edeltraud-Siessl-Allee.



The saumagen with chestnuts, cabbage and croquettes is one of the regional delicacies.



The chestnut soup at Restaurant Orangerie comes with croutons, pieces of bacon and sour cream.

## Quick garlic pan sauce transforms spicy chicken traybake

BY CHRISTOPHER KIMBALL  
Milk Street/Associated Press

When you're roasting food, air circulation is everything. That's why we prefer low-rimmed baking sheets.

But in some instances, a bit of crowding on the pan can be beneficial, such as in this spicy chicken alla diavola. Chicken parts are arranged in a circle around eight whole, peeled garlic cloves, which soften and sweeten — perfect for mashing into a paste to mix with the chicken's juices for a savory sauce that is ready in just a minute. Mixing lemon zest and peperoncini into the sauce gives it an extra kick.

Adding broccoli to the pan makes it a complete one-pan dinner.

### Chicken alla Diavola w/ Broccoli

#### Ingredients

1 tablespoon dried thyme  
1/4 teaspoons red pepper flakes  
Kosher salt and ground black pepper  
Four 12-ounce bone-in, skin-on chicken breasts or 3 pounds bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs, trimmed and patted dry  
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided  
2 pounds broccoli crowns, cut into 3-inch florets  
8 medium garlic cloves, peeled  
1 tablespoon grated lemon zest, plus lemon wedges to serve  
1/2 cup chopped drained peperoncini  
1/4 cup fresh oregano, chopped

#### Directions

Heat the oven to 475 degrees F with a rack in the middle position. In a large bowl, stir together the thyme, pepper flakes, and 2 teaspoons each salt and black pepper. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of the mix onto all sides of the chicken. To the remaining seasoning mix in the bowl, add the 1/4 cup oil and the broccoli, then toss to coat.

Place the garlic in the center of a rimmed baking sheet, then arrange the chicken, skin up, around the garlic; this placement helps prevent the garlic from scorching during roasting. Arrange the broccoli in an even layer around the chicken. Roast until the thickest part of the

breasts (if using) reaches 160 degrees F and the thickest part of the thighs (if using) reaches 175 degrees F, about 30 minutes.

Using tongs, transfer the chicken and broccoli to a serving platter. Transfer the garlic to a medium bowl and, using a fork, mash to a rough paste. Carefully pour 1/4 cup water onto the baking sheet and scrape up any browned bits. Pour the pan juices over the garlic and add the lemon zest and peperoncini, then whisk in the remaining 2 tablespoons oil. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Pour the sauce over the chicken and broccoli, then sprinkle with oregano. Serve with lemon wedges.

# WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY JENNESSA DAVEY/Stars and Stripes

Yokohama Kaiun Aquarium is an often-overlooked gem in the city's famous Chinatown.

## Find your fishy fortune

'Good luck' aquarium in Yokohama's Chinatown is a hidden gem

BY JENNESSA DAVEY  
Stars and Stripes

Often overlooked within the 300,000 square yards of Yokohama Chinatown's shops and restaurants is a hidden gem, Kaiun Aquarium Fortune.

This "good luck" aquarium, which you'll find on the third floor of China Square, features six themed rooms based on Chinese culture.

With English signs and friendly staff ready to help, Kaiun Aquarium Fortune is an accessible trip for the whole family.

Visitors begin in the Relationship Fortune room, which emphasizes coexistence by featuring two types of creatures living together. The Monetary Fortune room is next, with its variety of unique goldfish, including the Bubble Eye and Lionhead.

In the Color Fortune room you'll find well-lit displays of vibrant species such as the bicolor dotyback and the harlequin filefish calmly floating around their tanks.

After the lively color room is the Health Zone, which houses long-bodied creatures such as the white ribbon eel and the zebra eel to symbolize longevity.



From Love to Relationships, Yokohama Kaiun Aquarium features several themed rooms filled with colorful fish and aquatic animals.

In the Coral Zone, a colorful tank contains various fungiidae corals and jawfish.

The final section of the aquarium is called the Love Zone. Creatures in this room swim in pairs. The most interesting feature of the Love Zone is that fish like seahorses and angelfish share space with amphibious creatures such as Pacman frogs and axolotls.

After completing the aquarium's loop, visitors can grab a souvenir, snack or drink before moving on to other lively parts of Chinatown.

davey.jennessa@strips.com  
Twitter: JenDav\_Stripes

### On the QT

**Directions:** 144 Yamashita-cho, Naka-ku, Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture 231-0023. A short walk from most stations serving Yokohama Chinatown.

**Times:** Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday and Sunday.  
**Costs:** 1,400 yen for adults, 1,000 yen for students and 600 yen for children.

**Food:** There is a café at the end of the aquarium that serves tea and small snacks.

**Website:** Online: fortune-aquarium.com

## Japanese town finds way to make kelp-consuming creature useful

Japan News

An initiative has been launched to remove an unwanted fish from fishing ground and, instead, place it on dining tables.

The mottled spinefoot has long been a source of frustration among fishermen because it eats nutrient-rich seaweed that enhances fishing waters.

A town in Minami, Tokushima prefecture, joined forces with a Tokyo-based company in a bid to protect seaweed beds and market the fish — which are usually not sold — as a local specialty product by creating mottled spinefoot dishes with the help of local restaurant owners.

The mottled spinefoot is about 1 foot long and is native to the Pacific side of western Japan and Okinawa prefecture. It is venomous, and being pricked by its dorsal fin is extremely painful. Its entrails have a strong odor.

In the town of Minami, several tons of the fish, locally known as "bari" or "ai," are caught in fixed nets and landed every year, mainly in winter. But as it is worth only tens of yen per kilogram, the fish has typically been discarded, except to make dried food. "The fish is delicious if it is prepared properly," said Yoshiteru Toyosaki, 69, head of the Hiwasa Fisheries Cooperative.

The fisheries cooperative and others conducted a decade-long survey using an underwater camera and found that the fish consumes large amounts of seaweed, thus degrading the environment.

The Tokushima Prefectural Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Technology Support Center said: "Kelp forests are called the 'cradle of the sea' and are a rich source of nutrients, various fish and shellfish to grow. If they are decimated, catches of abalone will also decrease."

According to the Fisheries Agency, the population of such fish has been increasing in the waters of the Tohoku and Kanto regions due to the recent rise in ocean temperatures.

"If a system were put in place to distribute the fish in markets, fishermen will be motivated to catch them," Toyosaki said.

Together with Mitsui Consultants Co., the town asked local restaurants, fish processing operators and others to incorporate items that use mottled spinefoot into their lineup, with the aim of both restoring the kelp forest and utilizing the fish.

At a tasting event held in Minami in January, five restaurants introduced 12 dishes in which mottled spinefoot was fried, made into sandwiches, smoked and even used in a risotto.

People who tried mottled spinefoot sashimi said they were not bothered by its smell, and compared it favorably to sea bream.

Setsuo Abe, 68, who runs a French restaurant in the town, cooked quiche and seven other dishes using mottled spinefoot.

"The fish is easier to cook than I thought, and it can be made into a variety of dishes. I would like to create more recipes," Abe said.



Japan News-Yomiuri

Sandwiches have been made with mottled spinefoot in Minami, Japan.

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# WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



Gumbo Hut Shioya serves a decent version of the Louisiana staple — though a few more shrimp would have been nice — within walking distance of Yokota Air Base, Japan.



Above: A meal of sides — mashed potatoes and gravy, Cajun corn and mac and cheese — from Gumbo Hut Shioya.



Right: A side of fried okra.

## Gobbling up the flavors of home

Gumbo Hut near Yokota Air Base serves up respectable versions of Louisiana classics

BY CHRISSEY YATES  
Stars and Stripes

The weekend before Mardi Gras, my cousin and I decided to check out Gumbo Hut Shioya to get a little taste of our southern Louisiana home right outside the main gate of Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo.

My skepticism led me to first try one of the eatery's to-go cups of gumbo for 400 yen, or about \$3. What I got was a decent preview of the main attraction, albeit a little oily, with little meat, in a lidless container.

Luckily, it was a different story when we dined in. The English-speaking chef-owner has done his research and the outcome is pretty good. He even picked up that we were from Louisiana (he said our orders of the delicious chicory coffee were a sign) and told us about how he'd spent time traveling around Louisiana and Mississippi.

My more cautious cousin decided to make a meal of a few



**AFTER HOURS JAPAN**

sides — mashed potatoes and gravy, Cajun corn and mac and cheese. I went all in with an order of gumbo with shrimp and a side of fried okra.

I know a few things about gumbo, mainly eating it. At home, my Louisiana-style cooking ability includes red beans and rice, dirty rice and shrimp etouffee — and stops there. I don't have the patience for a dark roux, which requires almost an hour of cooking a one-to-one ratio of flour and fat (butter, lard or oil) until it's a dark chocolate brown. If you don't stir it enough, it burns and you have to start over.

The folks at Gumbo Hut Shioya have the patience and the time; the gumbo has a deep nutty flavor in the background that can



PHOTOS BY CHRISSEY YATES/Stars and Stripes

Gumbo Hut Shioya offers a taste of Louisiana just outside the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo.

only be achieved with a dark roux. The good news for me is that they sell their refrigerated roux, called a base, on their web-site.

The dark roux also serves perhaps an unintended purpose. It gives the gumbo a look similar to curry rice, which may draw in local taste buds used to that roux-based dish while keeping the flavor authentic to its Southern roots.

I'm also particular about the ingredients, too. My general preference is a Cajun-style seafood gumbo filled with plenty of shrimp, crab claws, crab legs and even crawfish tails. I want to dip that big ladle down to the bottom of that Magnalite pot and have it come up heavy! So yes, being

served a bowl with fewer than seven shrimp in it didn't quite hit the spot.

My cousin enjoyed her meal of sides, especially the cheesiness of the mac and cheese, and after trying a few bites of my gumbo agreed it was good but needed a little more heat and more shrimp.

The owner even had some of the Louisiana brand hot sauce if you want to make your selection spicier. I declined as I'm a Crystal Hot Sauce fan.

I sadly didn't get to try any of the po'boys on offer, but hope to in a future visit. Perhaps I can get a few coworkers to join me in letting the good times roll.

yates.christina@stripes.com  
Twitter: @Chrissy\_Stripes

### Gumbo Hut Shioya

**Location:** 2477-5 Fussaninomiya, Fussa, Tokyo 197-0014

**Hours:** Hours vary. Call ahead or check the restaurant's Instagram account, [gumbo.hut.shioya](https://www.instagram.com/gumbo.hut.shioya).

**Prices:** 650 yen to 1200 yen for most entrees. Sides start at 350 yen. Non-alcoholic drinks are 350 yen and alcoholic drinks start at 550 yen.

**Dress:** Casual

**Directions:** About a 10-minute walk from the main gate at Yokota Air Base.

Information: Phone: 042-849-0391; Online: [gumbohuts.base.shop](https://gumbohuts.base.shop) and [gumbo.hut.shioya](https://gumbo.hut.shioya) on Instagram.

Chrissy Yates



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## WEEKEND: FOOD

**What is tempeh?**

Tempeh is a fermented soybean cake, says Lara Lee, author of “Coconut & Sambal,” an exploration of the cuisine of Indonesia. Tempeh originated at least several hundred years ago in Java, part of present-day Indonesia.

“Tempeh has that really nutty, slightly bitter, sour flavor, but it’s really, really compelling when you eat it,” Lee says.

It is most often made with soy, though versions may star rice, cassava, coconut and other types of beans, according to Lee.

To make tempeh, whole soybeans are inoculated with a starter fungus, and the whole thing is left to ferment for 24 hours, though it can be stretched to two or three days for particularly funky, umami-rich results. The fungus causes a mycelium, the thread- and root-like portion of a mushroom, to grow over the soy, forming a firm cake. Because of the way it’s made, tempeh, particularly when fresh, is often described as having a mushroomy flavor.

Soft, white fresh tempeh is widely available in Indonesia and from some smaller producers in the States. In American supermarkets, what you’re likely to find is pasteurized tempeh, which is firmer, drier, tan in color and a little more sour, Lee says.

**What are tempeh’s nutritional benefits?**

“Fermentation makes tempeh quite possibly the most nutritious, digestible form of soy around. It’s also one of the least-processed, using the whole bean (as opposed to tofu, made from soy milk),” Washington Post Food editor Joe Yonan wrote.

Also of note to vegans, Lee says, is that tempeh can be a source of vitamin B12, which occurs naturally in some animal-based foods. It is also high in protein, approaching, but not quite equal to, what you’d find in beef (3 ½ ounces of cooked tempeh has about 20 grams of protein, while the same amount of roasted chuck has about 25 grams of protein, according to data from the Agriculture Department’s FoodData Central). As a plant-based product, it is cholesterol-free. It’s high in fiber and probiotics as well, Yonan says.

**How to buy and store tempeh**

You’ll typically find tempeh in the refrigerated case along with tofu and other plant-based products. Lightlife is a popular supermarket brand. Franklin Farms and Tofurky are more brands you may see. Some sell tempeh “bacon” or other flavored options.

According to “The New Food Lover’s Companion” by Sharon Tyler Herbst and Ron Herbst, tempeh can be refrigerated for up to two weeks or frozen for three



SCOTT SUCHMAN/For The Washington Post

Plain tempeh, plus tempeh with flax, top middle, and five-grain, bottom middle.

# It’s tempeh’s time to shine

The fermented soy bean cake is underappreciated but as nutritional, tasty, versatile as other plant-based proteins

BY BECKY KRystal  
The Washington Post

Over the last few years, grocery stores have been awash in new plant-based proteins. But some of the most reliable, nutritious options have been around for hundreds, even thousands, of years. I’m talking about beans, tofu and tempeh. Of those three, tempeh probably gets the least amount of love in the United States. And while it’s often mentioned in the same breath as tofu, this vegan staple deserves to stand on its own merits. Here’s what you need to know about tempeh, including how to cook with it:



REY LOPEZ/For The Washington Post

Crumbled tempeh being cooked for tacos.



TOM MCCORKLE/For The Washington Post

**Gochujang-Braised Tempeh Lettuce Wraps.**

months. Lightlife notes that you may notice some diminished quality with frozen tempeh, especially the longer it’s been on ice and the closer to the “best by” date it was put in the freezer.

If you see black spots on your packaged tempeh, don’t be put off. These are a natural byproduct of fermentation, according to Lightlife. “The dark areas are purely cosmetic and will not affect the flavor, texture or shelf life of the product,” the company says.

**How to cook with tempeh**

“I think people classify it as a meat substitute,” Lee says of tempeh, but it’s so much more. “It’s considered a really celebrated source of food for Indonesians,” who often rely on tempeh as their main source of protein, along with fish. So let tempeh be tempeh. Don’t just consider it as a one-for-one swap for, say, a steak or piece of chicken. Look for recipes that call for it and play to its strengths.

Tempeh works well in a variety of dishes, including soups, stews, stir-fries, sauces, kebabs and sandwiches, whether it’s treated the same way as meat or not. Tempeh can be cut into strips, cubes or steaks. It can be grated or crumbled.

Among the preparations to consider, Lee recommends baking, steaming, boiling and frying. Overall, the more surface area that is browned, especially in frying (whether deep or shallow), the better it tastes, giving that “lovely crunch that’s super moreish,” Lee says. What she does not recommend: eating raw pasteurized tempeh, which will not be appealing in flavor or texture and might turn you off it for good.

Tempeh acts like a sponge, meaning it’s ideal for marinating, which can be done in as little as 15 minutes, though longer is also fine. Marinating works well if you plan to deep- or pan-fry, Lee says, because it allows the ingredients to penetrate the interior before the exterior is sealed in browning. But marinating is not mandatory, especially if you’re planning to simmer tempeh in a broth or stew, when flavors will be absorbed during the cooking process. Another option is to glaze, which can be done at the end of cooking after, say, pan-frying. You can also glaze during cooking. Lee likes to baste tempeh with kecap manis, an Indonesian sweet soy sauce, every few minutes as it bakes.

**Best dishes to use tempeh**

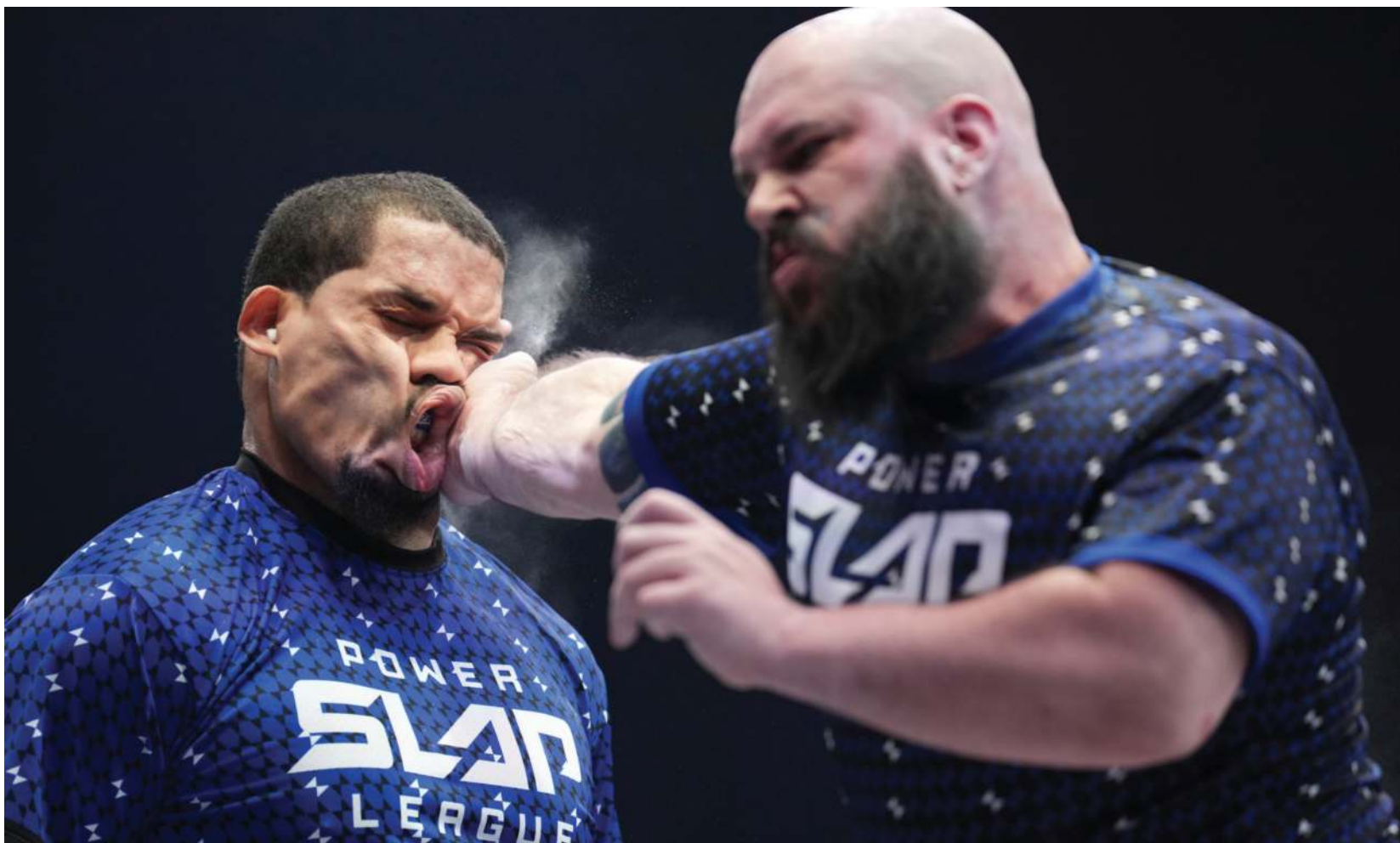
“Tempeh works really well with bold seasonings,” Lee says. Look for recipes with punchy, zingy flavors, knowing that those in the quintessential Asian and Indonesian pantries are natural pairings. Think chiles, ginger, garlic, shallot and makrut lime leaf.



SCOTT SUCHMAN/For The Washington Post

**Sweet Soy Tempeh (Tempe Manis), a frying-glazing combo.**

## WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE



CHRIS UNGER, ZUFFA LLC/AP

Ryan Phillips slaps Rob Perez at a Power Slap event in Las Vegas last March. When the open-handed blow is delivered, there's a sharp report and the reaction can be dramatic. Some fighters barely move, while others stumble backward or fall to the floor. Some are knocked out.

# Legitimate sport or 'really stupid activity'?

UFC President White is selling slap fighting as the next big thing in combat sports despite questions of safety

BY MARK ANDERSON  
Associated Press

**T**he competitors stand rigidly upright with their hands behind their backs, waiting to absorb a brutal slap to the face.

When the open-handed blow is delivered, there's a sharp report and the reaction can be dramatic. Some fighters barely move, while others stumble backward or fall to the floor. Some are knocked out.

UFC President Dana White is selling slap fighting as the next big thing in combat sports, putting his money and the resources of one of the world's foremost mixed martial arts organizations behind the Power Slap League. The Nevada Athletic Commission has sanctioned the league for competitions in Las Vegas.

"It's a home run," said White, who is among several UFC officials involved in the league.

Some slap-fighting beatdowns have gone viral, including a video from eastern Europe showing a man who continues to compete even as half of his face swells to seemingly twice its size. Such exposure has led to questions about the safety of slap fighting, particularly the risk of chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, a degenerative brain disease believed to be caused by repeated blows to the head. A former chairman of the commission, which regulates combat sports in Nevada, says approving the league was a mistake.

Chris Nowinski, co-founder and CEO of the Concussion Legacy Foundation,

agrees, calling slap fighting "one of the stupidest things you can do."

"There's nothing fun, there's nothing interesting and there's nothing sporting," Nowinski said. "They're trying to dress up a really stupid activity to try to make money."



White

White and the competitors remain unfazed, comparing commentary on slapping to the negative reaction the UFC faced in its infancy more than 20 years ago.

"I think it's definitely overblown with the topics of CTE and the damage that we're taking," said Ryan Phillips, a Power Slap League fighter. "I think a lot of people still just don't understand that it's still a slap."

Despite the naysayers, White said he believes slap fighting will follow a similar trajectory to MMA, which the late Sen. John McCain referred to as "human cockfighting" in 1996, when the UFC didn't have weight classes or many rules. McCain's criticism helped force the organization to become more structured, leading to its widespread acceptance.

White said he realized there could be a market for the sport in the U.S. when he clocked the millions of YouTube views of slap-fighting videos from eastern Europe in 2017 and 2018. The videos were often

poorly produced, the slap matches unregulated. White became convinced that fights with written rules and shot with professional video equipment could convert many internet viewers into dedicated, paying fans.

The Nevada commission gave slap fighting some much needed legitimacy when it unanimously sanctioned the sport in October and a month later awarded White a license to promote it.

But White's enterprise was hampered when he was captured on video slapping his wife on New Year's Eve. White apologized, but has acknowledged it damaged efforts to get the league off the ground. White is no newcomer to controversy: Former UFC fighters Kajan Johnson and Clarence Dollaway filed a lawsuit in 2021 against Endeavor, the organization's parent company, alleging that UFC takes an inordinate share of the profits.

But White is charging ahead.

Three qualifying events have taken place at the UFC Apex in Las Vegas, ahead of the March 11 telecast on the streaming platform Rumble in which champions will be crowned in four weight classes.

Power Slap fights are typically three to five rounds. The fighters take turns hitting each other in the face with an open hand, and those on the receiving end stand with their hands behind their backs. A fighter has up to 60 seconds to recover and respond after receiving a blow. Fighters can earn up to 10 points based on the effectiveness of the slap and the defender's reaction.

Fights can end in a decision, knockout, technical knockout or disqualification, such as for an illegal slap. All slaps are subject to video review. Each event has two referees and three judges.

Also present are a supervising doctor and a physician or physician's assistant, plus three EMTs and three ambulances. White has touted the safety record of the UFC, but has not talked specifically about injuries in the Power Slap League.

White says slap fighting is safer than boxing or MMA because each contestant usually takes only three blows per bout. In boxing, White said, that number could be 400 or more, and that doesn't include the shots taken during sparring. There is no sparring in slap fighting, he noted.

Nowinski of the concussion foundation said while there may be no sparring in practice sessions, that doesn't mean it doesn't happen elsewhere. He said comparing boxing to power slapping is misleading because slap fighters take a full blow each time.

"You can slip (boxing) punches," Nowinski said. But in slap fighting "you're taking out everything that's interesting to watch and everything sporting (from boxing) and just doing the brain damage part."

Nowinski said slap fighters don't make enough money to justify the risk. The Power Slap League wouldn't disclose how much it pays fighters, but said in a statement that participants are compensated for every match and can also earn "appearance fees" and "additional discretionary bonuses."

## WEEKEND: MUSIC



Guitarist The Edge, left, and singer Bono perform during their “eXPERIENCE + INNOCENCE Tour” in 2018 in Washington.

AP

# The sound of surrender

## In unusual step, U2 strips down its best-known songs

BY DAVID BAUDER  
Associated Press

In reimagining 40 of its best-known songs, U2 recognized that many fans would experience them through earphones connected to a device in their pockets — rather than being belted out onstage.

That was one thought behind “Songs of Surrender,” coming out March 17. The four men of U2, now either 61 or 62 years old, revisit material written in some cases when they were little more than kids out of Dublin.

Particularly in those days, U2 songs were written primarily with concerts in mind. The Edge told The Associated Press in an interview that U2 wanted to catch the attention of people seeing the band for the first time, perhaps in a festival or as an opening act.

“There’s a sort of gladiatorial aspect to live performances when you’re in that situation,” he said. “The material has got to be pretty bold and even strident at times. With this reimagining, we thought it would be fun to see

**“With this reimagining, we thought it would be fun to see intimacy as a new approach, that intimacy would be the new punk rock, as it were.”**

The Edge

On U2’s latest album, “Songs of Surrender”

intimacy as a new approach, that intimacy would be the new punk rock, as it were.”

The Edge was the driving force behind “Songs of Surrender,” using pandemic downtime to record much of the music at home.

Given that his electric guitar and Bono’s voice are the musical signature of U2, there’s a certain irony in the absence of that guitar being the most immediately noticeable feature of the new versions. He sticks primarily to keyboards, acoustic guitar and dulcimer.

The process began without a roadmap or commitment to see it through if it wasn’t working.

“As we got into it and got into a groove, we really started to enjoy what was happening,” he said.

“There was a lot of freedom in the process, it was joyful and fun to take these songs and sort of reimagine them, and I think that comes across. It doesn’t sound like there was a lot of hard work involved, because it wasn’t.”

Much of the intimacy comes through Bono’s voice. There’s no need to shout, so he sometimes uses lower registers or slips into falsetto.

Lyrics are often rewritten, sometimes extensively in even a recent song like “The Miracle of Joey Ramone.” Some changes are more subtle but still notice-

able: replacing the line “one man betrayed with a kiss” with “one boy never will be kissed” takes Jesus out of “Pride (In the Name of Love).”

At the same time, “Sunday Bloody Sunday” is rearranged to end with a question: “where is the victory Jesus won?”

Cellos replace the driving guitar of “Vertigo.” Keyboards give “Where the Streets Have No Name” an ambient sound. “Two Hearts Beat as One,” the original a high-octane rock dance song, now has a slinkier, sexy vibe and is one of four songs where The Edge takes lead vocal.

The band is fairly democratic in taking songs from throughout its catalog, although 1981’s “October” album and 2009’s “No Line on the Horizon” are not represented. “New Year’s Day,” “Angel of Harlem” and “Even Better Than the Real Thing” are among the songs left alone.

“We’re one of the only acts that has this body of work where a project like this would be pos-

SEE SOUND ON PAGE 29



### Songs of Surrender

U2 (Universal)

Imagine walking into your living room and all your stuff is there, but it’s different. The sofa has moved, the bookcase is leaning on a different wall and the framed photos have swapped locations. That’s the feeling you get listening to U2’s new album.

“Songs of Surrender” is a “reimagining” of 40 songs from the Irish quartet’s deep catalog, cleverly presented from “One” to “40.” Think of it as a thrilling home makeover.

“I want to tear down the walls that hold me inside,” Bono sings in the new “Where the Streets Have No Name” — lyrics that perfectly fit this sonic experiment. This version of the song is virtually unrecognizable from the one the band made famous in 1987.

That’s the point of this exercise led by Bono and The Edge. “Once we surrendered our reverence for the original version, each song started to open up to a new authentic voice of this time,” The Edge writes in the liner notes.

There are triumphs and a few fumbles, but there’s a growing realization that the architecture of these songs is strong indeed, even with some new lyrics. The new “Vertigo” has Middle Eastern instrumentation, while an acoustic guitar-driven “Sunday Bloody Sunday” sounds more like something from a coffeehouse open-mic night than a strident arena-ready demand. But they’re both still gorgeous.

Some might even be improvements. One of the band’s earliest hits — “11 O’Clock Tick Tock” — is smoother, slower and cleaner than the original. And would you believe the new “The Miracle (Of Joey Ramone)” might be better than the one on “Songs of Innocence”?

SEE SONGS ON PAGE 29

## WEEKEND: MUSIC

## Ranking Oscars' Best Song performances

Music and film go hand in hand. Both appeal to the rawest emotions a human can come by, and both can be the coziest of comfort food. Feeling down? Spin a record and that mood can change at the drop of a needle. Bored with the same old television shows? Throw on a favorite movie and lose yourself in an alternate reality for a couple hours. Not only can music and movies help us feel; they can also be a lifeline for when our worst dispositions overcome us.

Oddly, though, I've never had much interest in movie soundtracks. I understand the occasional hit those things can produce — from Aerosmith's "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing" to Justin Timberlake's "Can't Stop the Feeling," there's no denying the staying power of a movie's biggest song — but for the most part, soundtracks feel disjointed to me. They were mixed CDs before CD burners became affordable. How can Primus offer a killer Pink Floyd cover on a "Mission Impossible" soundtrack, only to have it be preceded by ... Limp Bizkit's take on that franchise's iconic theme? This is not a world in which we should be pressured to live.

Still, after watching Sunday's Oscars ceremony, I realized that sometimes, the movies can be the catalyst for some great songs — even if they have to stand by themselves. Rarely have I paid attention to the Best Song performances these ceremonies provide each year, but for some reason, Sunday night's offerings caught my eye in a way no other year has done in the past. As such, here's my completely unofficial official rankings (from worst to best) of the 2023 Best Song performances on ABC's Oscars telecast. And yes, this is a Limp Bizkit-free zone.

#### 5. Sofia Carson and Dianne Warren, "Applause"

The most underwhelming performance of the evening wisely doubled as the first one that took the stage (hey, set the bar low and see what happens, right?). Warren is great for all she is and Carson is a fine-enough singer, but so much about this rendition of "Applause" felt flat, no matter how hard Carson tried to sell us on the fact that she was ... emoting. For a song designed to inspire, Warren and Carson combined for one of the least

## LINER NOTES

By Colin McGuire

inspiring moments of the night. And to think, the forced inspiration wouldn't stop there.

#### 4. Rihanna, "Lift Me Up"

Dubbed as the makeshift headliner of the night's performances, Rihanna was the artist who suffered most from the "Hey, let's go right to the bridge!" format for Oscar performances. Or, in other words, you get a verse, maybe a chorus, head right to the song's middle section and what was once a 4-minute epic is cut into no more than a minute and a half. That said, it felt like as soon as she was about to get going ... well, that was all, folks, and the performance ended. The good news is that she was able to showcase her singing voice in a way we don't always see Rihanna showcase it in a live setting. The bad news is that we didn't see enough of it. And hey — this comes from someone who actually liked her Super Bowl halftime performance quite a bit. So, don't blame me. We're only here for the facts.

#### 3. Lady Gaga, "Hold My Hand"

And for those who forgot Lady Gaga also fancies herself an actress ... behold a performance that was just as heavy on inspirational motifs as it was musically sound. Gaga is fine — if anything, I reside in Apathy Land when it comes to her work — but boy, she laid it on so thick here with that spoken-word interlude, it felt like she was more determined to make sure she clocked in as the longest music performance of the night than she was, you know, just singing a song. My guess is this will be the one people talk about most coming out of Sunday night's festivities, but for me? A little more full-band and a little less dramatic posturing would do.

#### 2. Rahul Sipligunj and Kaala Bhairava, "Naatu, Naatu"

This was just so much fun! (Yes, that was deserving of an exclamation point). Not only did the show get a much-needed jolt of non-American culture, but they even figured out a



CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP

#### David Byrne performs "This is a Life" at the Oscars on Sunday in Los Angeles.

way to re-create the sequence from "RRR," the movie from which this song came. If you walked away from this not smiling, you either needed to check your pulse or return your attention to that "On Patrol" marathon Peacock airs 24 hours a day. This performance came right at a time when the show needed a reset in order to make sure our fickle attention spans didn't wane too much, and it delivered in spades. The energy was infectious, the performance was beyond impressive, and it reminded everyone that not every great film song has to be aimed at making people cry.

#### 1. David Byrne, Stephanie Hsu and Son Lux, "This Is a Life"

The genius that is David Byrne knows no bounds, and this fabulously weird song came complete with a fabulously weird performance that also happened to represent a fabulously weird movie. I loved it. The older Byrne gets, the more stoic he seems, and that's saying something for a guy who's rarely been caught on camera without a suit stretching over his thin frame. There's a special levity to him now, though, and he brings it to everything he does. Sunday's performance was no different. Bonus points for Hsu, whose recent appearance on "Poker Face" was one of the season's most underappreciated by a guest star, sitting in for the great Mitski, who gave the show a pass. Her loss. This one stole the night and it wasn't even close.

## Songs: U2 offers new takes on hits in latest set

## FROM PAGE 28

Many reworkings are relatively straightforward, like "Cedarwood Road," "Peace on Earth," "Bad" and "I Will Follow." Most have a stripped-down feel, which gives Bono's voice little shelter amid moody keyboards or choppy acoustic guitar. "Every Breaking Wave" is cinematic, like something that should run over the end credits when an anguished drama has faded to black.

"I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" gets a cowboy vibe and unexpected honky-tonky electricity. "Desire" has Bono high in his falsetto against a strummy dulcimer, and the effect is hypnotic.

"Get Out of Your Own Way" is remade as a Mumford & Sons tune, in a good way, and the new "Stuck in a Moment" is a folkish prayer, the structure holding. The new "One" is a little marred by a choir effect, but it is such a beautiful song that it could be remade as a punk tune and it would still sparkle.

Listening to the new "Somebody You Can't Make It On Your Own" is like running into an ex who is barely recognizable.

The reworked "With or Without You" has an air of antiseptic menace. One effect of the album is to put Bono's lyrics under a spotlight, making his words and imagery more pronounced. The new "Ordinary Love" emerges like a tone poem, the new "Invisible" reveals deeper pain than originally sang.

Some don't work, as when the grimness of "Red Hill Mining Town" is undercut by horns, effectively remaking it into a defanged children's song. The new "Beautiful Day" is not an improvement over the original; it has been made lounge-y and meandering, despite some nifty new lyrics.

In a new "Pride (In the Name of Love)," Bono's voice has been harnessed and tamed, losing the original's stridency and anger. And the new "40" — with Bono appropriately arguing "I will sing a new song" — has been made limp and passive.

If you're not a U2 fan, this collection will not convince you to embrace them. If you are a mega-fan, you will marvel at their mutability. And if you are a casual fan, you must admire a band willing to get in its own way.

— Mark Kennedy/AP

## Sound: Band turns up intimacy while making 'Surrender'

## FROM PAGE 28

sible, with the distance of time and experience where it would be interesting to revisit early songs," The Edge said.

Throughout music history, bands have occasionally re-recorded material for contractual reasons.

Taylor Swift is the most famous example, putting out new versions of her older songs in order to control their use. Squeeze's "Spot the Difference" makes sport of how they tried to make new recordings indistinguishable from the originals.

Live recordings and archive-cleaning projects like Bob Dylan's "bootleg" series gives fans the chance to hear familiar songs differently.

Many older artists don't see the point of making new music,

since there's little opportunity to be heard and fans are partial to the familiar stuff, anyway, said Anthony DeCurtis, Rolling Stone contributing editor.

"Revisiting your body of work in a creative way is a means of sustaining interest in your career," DeCurtis said. "Older fans might not be interested in another collection of your hits, but reworking them in a meaningful way could prove enticing. Younger fans don't have the same investment in your classics, so these new versions offer a route into your catalog."

The Edge encourages fans to give the new versions a try, suggesting they may even grow to prefer some of them.

"I don't think there's a competition between these and the original versions," he said. "It's more of an additive thing than a

substitution. If you like the new arrangements, great. If you prefer the originals, keep listening.

"It's no problem either way," he said. "They're both valid."

The Edge said he's working on new music for U2, "and we've got some great stuff in the pipeline."

The quartet that met in drummer Larry Mullen Jr.'s kitchen when they answered an ad placed on a high school bulletin board is a remarkable story in longevity.

A passage toward the end of Bono's book "Surrender," where he talked about looking around onstage at the end of their most recent tour in 2019 and wondering if it was the end, raised natural questions about how long U2 would continue.

"There are many reasons why U2 has stayed together for so long, but one of the main reasons

is that it works so well for us as individuals," The Edge said. "I think we all shine the brightest as part of this collective. I certainly would not like to hang up the guitar."

This year will provide a test for a band that can count on one hand the number of times it has performed without all four members. U2 has committed to a run of shows in Las Vegas without Mullen, who is recuperating from surgery.

Would U2 continue if one of the original quartet decides it's time to hang it up?

"I wouldn't rule out the possibility that we could go forward with different members," The Edge said. "But also, equally, I could imagine us deciding not to. It would be a big challenge. But I think at the time we would know what felt right."

## WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Fox

Country music star Jennifer Nettles, best known for being a member of the band Sugarland, with the farmers on “Farmer Wants a Wife,” a reality dating show she hosts on Fox.

# From Sugarland to TV’s heartland

Country star Nettles, also an actress and host of ‘Farmer Wants a Wife,’ wants to be known for more than just her music

BY EMILY YAHR  
The Washington Post

Jennifer Nettles has one of the most expressive voices in country music, but she can also say a lot with just a look. When asked during a video interview whether anyone ever tried to dissuade her from expanding her career beyond music, she leaned into the camera with a meaningful, deadpan expression on her face.

“All. The. Time.”

After all, once you’re part of a Grammy-winning duo that sold millions of albums, what more could you want? That is certainly the thinking among a certain set in country music, which can get territorial with its stars. It was one thing when Nettles, 48, embarked on solo projects more than a decade after conquering Nashville with her Sugarland duo partner, Kristian Bush. It was quite another when Nettles decided she wanted to try acting. And Broadway. And reality TV.

“It’s hard whenever you feel like, OK, I’m branching out over here, I’m going solo over there, I’m doing this over here. And some people are still like, ‘One half of

the country duo Sugarland!’” Nettles said, imitating a deep broadcaster voice. “And I’m like, ‘Well, I love that. But guys, I’ve done so many other things.’”

In an ideal world, Nettles’s dream career is a combination of on-camera work and live theater and music, or as she puts it, “if Barbra Streisand and Lin-Manuel [Miranda] and Linda Ronstadt were a throuple and had a baby — that’s the career that I want.” As of this month, that mix includes a gig as host of Fox’s new reality dating show “Farmer Wants a Wife.” When she was first presented with the opportunity from her agents, she responded with an immediate “no.” She had no interest in a series where, she assumed, a bunch of aspiring influencers would try to create scandalous moments to extend their 15 minutes of fame.

Then Nettles watched the Australian version (the show has aired in more than 30 countries, including the United States on the CW in 2008) and found the premise — pairing up women from “the big city” with farmers from small towns where dating is a struggle — more genuine than she expected. Nettles, who was born and

raised in rural southern Georgia and now lives in New York City, liked the idea of being a “facilitator” of that potential love story. (Fox says that the show has resulted in 180 marriages and 410 children worldwide.) Mostly, it just sounded fun.

“We did a rodeo, we did a demolition derby, we did a barn dance,” Nettles said, ticking off activities the contestants participated in during their quests to find love. “To get to be a part of a story happening in real time, in someone else’s story, I think that that’s what we’re all looking for when we watch these shows. ... We’re really all looking to feel seen and to see some of ourselves in other people. I think it’s very rewarding to get to be a part of a different kind of storytelling.”

So, no, maybe back when her band got its big break with the smash hit “Baby Girl” nearly two decades ago and was nominated for best new artist at the Grammys, Nettles didn’t expect she would one day host a show where she would cheerfully announce to a barn full of women, “Who’s ready to fall for a farmer?!” But she finds it delightful that her career leads her to unexpected places, even if people

see her and reflexively think “Sugarland.”

“People remember you from where they first saw you. ... It’s like they remember you where they imprint on it, and sometimes want to keep you in it,” Nettles said. “But I’m sorry. I can’t stay in one place.”

Back in 2015, director Stephen Herek (“Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure,” “The Mighty Ducks”) was nervous when he first saw Nettles’ audition tape for NBC’s “Dolly Parton’s Coat of Many Colors,” the film based on Parton’s childhood in Tennessee. It looked like someone had coached her to act like she was in a Broadway play, which wasn’t ideal for a made-for-TV movie.

An executive had strongly suggested that the production hire Nettles — it would be great for publicity — so even though she had little acting experience, Herek invited her to an in-person meeting. And he was blown away.

“She was incredible — she was like a savant,” Herek said, adding that Nettles, who played the role of young Dolly’s mother, absorbed his feedback immedi-

SEE NETTLES ON PAGE 31

## WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Bob Odenkirk plays an English department chairman whose life is unraveling in “Lucky Hank,” which premieres Sunday on AMC.

AMC

# Odenkirk gets ‘Lucky’

‘Better Call Saul’ actor says his ‘Lucky Hank’ character is more cynical

By **LUAINEE LEE**

*Tribune News Service*

Actor Bob Odenkirk has finally gotten lucky. Odenkirk has replaced Saul from “Better Call Saul,” with Hank in “Lucky Hank,” which premieres Sunday on AMC and AMC+. Here he plays an English department chairman whose life is beginning to unravel.

And while the role of Saul remains a high point of memorable character performances, Odenkirk, 60, says that he never intended to be a serious actor. In truth, he was a struggling writer.

“I started as a writer. And I did that for so long. And I had a lot of fun doing it. It was a struggle, though. And I had, certainly, even years where I was in ‘development heck,’ where I was just developing shows and they weren’t going anywhere. I always did act, I always performed. I guess I would say I performed, not acted, until I got ‘Breaking Bad,’” he says.

“And then I had to learn how to act. Quick! Right now! ‘Bryan Cranston is sitting opposite you;

learn to act.’ ... It was really, really tough.”

He says that though he’d been performing in front of a camera, it wasn’t really acting. “If I thought about it a long time I could try to describe it, but losing yourself inside a character, that’s richer than the kind of comic presentations you do as a sketch (artist) ... those are very simple characters, and fun to play, and quick to jump into and out of.

“And the kind of acting that they were doing on ‘Breaking Bad’ when I joined them, and the kind of writing that I got to work with, asks a lot more of you to lose yourself and discover a person with multiple dimensions and sides to them. And you have to kind of always keep those things alive and be in touch with them as you’re playing any moment. So it was hard,” he says.

“And then ‘Saul’ was another level of hard. And then this (‘Lucky Hank’) is a different thing, but I would say I’ve gotten better at it because Saul was such a challenge and so many hours doing it. ...

“Saul was tough because he was kind of a very younger guy than me. He just was mentally younger. He looked at the world in a — he was truly a more innocent guy, even though he’s a scammer. He had a hope and an innocence to him that I think I left behind a long time ago.

“This guy (Hank) is more like me. He’s more cynical. He’s also an idealist, but that’s what a real cynic is, I think, deep inside.”

## Other television news

■ German actress Emilia Schüle is the latest to portray the controversial Marie Antoinette, the queen of France in the late 1700s, on the series “**Marie Antoinette**,” premiering Sunday via PBS.

■ Hulu is uncorking another version of Charles Dickens’ “**Great Expectations**” on March 26. This series has at least one sure thing going for it: Olivia Colman as Miss Havisham. Colman’s roles have ranged from a seaside cop in “Broadchurch” to the queen of England in “The Crown.”

# Nettles: Artist has acted on Broadway, in WGN and HBO shows

FROM PAGE 30

ately. He urged her to channel as much of herself as possible into the role. “She was a natural ... she was able to pick up on things very quickly.”

Nettles remembers that she had to tamp down her natural inclination to play to the cheap seats, because in addition to touring arenas, she spent years in community theater and drama club when she was a teenager. She leveraged her love of musical theater into a limited Broadway engagement as Roxie Hart in “Chicago” in 2014, and returned to the stage in 2021 to briefly take over the lead role from Sara Bareilles in “Waitress,” which she calls “dream-level stuff.”

As she sharpened her acting skills while appearing on shows such as WGN’s “Underground” and Harriet Tubman biopic “Harriet,” Nettles caught the attention of Danny McBride, creator of HBO’s televangelist sendup “The Righteous Gemstones.” He and his producers were looking for someone to play the late matriarch in flashback scenes, someone with a strong moral compass. When his casting director showed them a tape of Nettles, McBride said, he was immediately sold.

“There was something familiar about her — something relatable and accessible and warm and caring,” McBride said. “It instantly made you sad to think of her not being around anymore.”

His instincts were proven right with Nettles’ performance of “Misbehavin’,” one of those songs written for TV that you can’t believe isn’t a real-life hit. Nettles, unrecognizable in a curly-haired wig and glasses, belted out the upbeat tune with Walton Goggins, and the scene went viral. McBride was also impressed that even though Nettles was new to acting, she could go “toe to toe” with veterans such as Goggins and John Goodman when they tossed out improv lines.

She exudes “a warmth that’s inherent,” McBride said. “And she’s found a way to translate that into music and performances, and that’s what makes her work as a singer and actor.”

Nettles is well aware of how rare her trajectory is, especially in country music, where successful artists tend not to stray too far from the industry that made them famous — though there are a few obvious exceptions.

“Dolly, Reba ... me? I’m into it,” she joked.

As eager as Nettles is to branch out, she’s still an extremely influential figure in country music, a genre that does not have a great reputation when it comes to promoting contemporary female artists. Despite Sugarland’s

**“People remember you from where they first saw you. ... It’s like they remember you where they imprint on it, and sometimes want to keep you in it. But I’m sorry. I can’t stay in one place.”**

Jennifer Nettles

massive success in the early 2000s, when Nettles went solo a decade later her radio singles stalled on the charts, as happens to so many other women in the genre.

While many artists have called out country radio in recent years for its gender imbalance (studies have shown only 10 to 15% of songs on country radio are by women), Nettles caused quite a stir in 2019 when she appeared on the Country Music Association Awards red carpet with a dramatic cape that read in bold letters, “PLAY OUR F\*#@!N RECORDS.”

Nettles said that, observationally, she hasn’t seen things improve much: “I don’t feel like I’m seeing the numbers

change with any significance, with any impact, unfortunately.” But the image has stayed with many in the country music industry.

“Who else would do that but Jennifer Nettles?” said Leslie Fram, CMT’s senior vice president of music strategy. “I know artists have quietly gone to her for advice. ... She’s really helped open doors for a lot of other artists,” Fram said. CMT awarded Nettles its inaugural Equal Play Award in 2020 for her advocacy for women in country music.

The network also wanted to honor someone who championed underrepresented voices, Fram said, and pointed to Nettles’ outspoken support of artists of color and the LGBTQ community in the majority-white, heteronormative genre. “We just felt she was the natural choice.”

Though fans are always curious about the status of Sugarland, Nettles said that she and bandmate Bush started working together organically, and at the moment they are just as organically focused on their own careers.

Nettles was thrilled to recently reveal that she’s joining the upcoming reboot of “The Exorcist,” and right now she is hoping people really enjoy “Farmer Wants a Wife,” which she promises is far more authentic than similar dating shows, particularly with the participants.

“Their hearts are in it for the right reasons. They’re curious, and they’re open, and they want adventure, and they want something new, and they want to ask the hard questions, you know: ‘What are you willing to do for love? What are you willing to risk? Are you willing to change your life?’” Nettles said.

The latter is something Nettles can relate to — she noted that some of the earliest Sugarland songs were all about reinvention and a woman changing her life in one way or another, which brings a neat, full-circle moment to her current path of exploring everything.

“All of those messages, while they’re in different contexts, are ones of expansion, growth and change,” she said. “And that’s what I’m doing in my life.”

## WEEKEND: HEALTH &amp; FITNESS



# Cereal before bed?

iStock

Post's Sweet Dreams among nighttime snacks marketed as sleep enhancers, yet may have the opposite effect

BY ANAHAD O'CONNOR  
AND TEDDY AMENABAR

*The Washington Post*

**Y**ou've heard of breakfast cereal. But what about bedtime cereal?

Post Consumer Brands, the cereal company known for Raisin Bran, Grape-Nuts and Fruity Pebbles, has launched a new line of cereals that it wants you to include in your nightly sleep routine.

The cereal of crunchy flakes and almonds, called Sweet Dreams, comes with a description that reads like a box of herbal tea, touting notes of lavender and chamomile, as well as vitamins and minerals intended to support your body's production of the sleep hormone melatonin. But Sweet Dreams cereal also contains as much as 13 grams of added sugar from cane sugar, corn syrup, "invert sugar" and molasses, which according to studies can be detrimental to your nightly sleep.

The company says its goal is to help people establish healthy nighttime habits "by providing a nutrient dense before-bed snack" that supports your sleep routine.

But some studies have found that eating late-night meals, including those with a lot of added sugar, actually can worsen your sleep and increase your risk of obesity. Although some of the vitamins contained in Post's new cereal can influence your body's melatonin levels, experts say it's not clear that they'll have more than a minor impact, especially when consumed in the evening.

"You're not going to eat this at 7 p.m. and have it boost your melatonin secretion at 9 p.m. to help you fall asleep," said Marie-Pierre St-Onge, an associate professor of nutritional medicine at Columbia University Irving Medical Center and the director of the Sleep Center of Excellence at Columbia. "It's not going to be a quick fix two hours before bedtime."

Sweet Dreams is one of a growing number of nighttime snacks marketed to a large segment of sleep-deprived consumers in search of better shut-eye.

Studies show that more than half of all adults in the United States experience difficulty falling asleep, and 1 in 5 have insomnia. Marketing late-night meals as sleep enhancers is a way for the food industry to achieve one of its longtime objectives: To boost sales by creating a so-called fourth meal that follows dinner.

"It's a potential new eating occasion," said Nicholas

Fereday, the executive director of food and consumer trends at investment firm Rabobank. "If they can somehow turn it into a ritual, and it becomes more habit rather than the occasional thing, they'll start getting their repeat purchases."

Expanding into late-night meals is a timely move for the cereal industry, which has lost ground in its fight over "share of stomach" to other breakfast-food competitors.

Despite an uptick in sales during the pandemic, cold cereal has largely been on the decline as breakfast habits have changed, with more people either skipping breakfast, eating foods on the go or opting for "healthier" meals — such as eggs and Greek yogurt — that are higher in protein and lower in sugar.

**"You're not going to eat this at 7 p.m. and have it boost your melatonin secretion at 9 p.m. to help you fall asleep. It's not going to be a quick fix two hours before bedtime."**

Marie-Pierre St-Onge

associate professor, Columbia University Irving Medical Center, director of the Sleep Center of Excellence at Columbia

Other food companies are also catering to late-night snackers. Nightfood sells "sleep-friendly" cookies and ice creams with vitamin B6, magnesium, zinc and other ingredients.

Numerous candy bars and chocolates infused with melatonin, herbal extracts and other ingredients claim to help you sleep. One company sells "sleepy chocolate" candy bars with magnesium, melatonin and a blend of botanicals "designed to help you fall asleep faster and more soundly." You can wash it down with PepsiCo's Driftwell brand of still-water, which contains L-theanine and magnesium and is marketed to help you wind down

before bed.

Scientists know that what you eat plays a role in how you sleep. Diets high in sugar, saturated fat and simple carbohydrates like white bread are associated with poorer sleep. Large studies show that eating a diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and foods high in unsaturated fats like fish, olive oil, nuts and avocados is linked to better sleep.

One reason a diet high in plant foods may help: Almost all plants, including tomatoes, olives, rice and walnuts, contain melatonin in varying concentrations. And a healthy diet provides nutrients that support the production of melatonin, such as zinc, magnesium and B vitamins. To synthesize melatonin, your body needs tryptophan, an amino acid, which you can find in milk, salmon, tuna, nuts and poultry.

St-Onge has found in her research that people who eat a lot of simple carbs wake up more frequently throughout the night.

But eating complex carbs keep blood sugar levels stable throughout the night, she said, resulting in better sleep. Some of her favorite "sleep-promoting foods" are cruciferous and green leafy vegetables, mushrooms, nuts, seeds, olive oil and lentils.

She recommends not eating too close to bedtime. But you also shouldn't go to bed hungry. If you need a nighttime snack, she suggests eating something light, such as a bowl of plain yogurt with fresh fruit.

Erin Hanlon, a research associate professor at the University of Chicago and behavioral neuroscientist who studies sleep, said it's fascinating to see companies marketing foods for a better night's sleep. But, she adds, a box of sugary cereal might not be "the best way forward."

Hanlon suggested dimming lights and limiting screen exposure, because light stops the brain from releasing melatonin.

Logan Sohn, a senior brand manager at Post, said the company recommends eating Sweet Dreams cereal as part of a relaxing bedtime routine that includes things like switching off electronic devices and practicing meditation.

As with any snack, people should consume it in moderation "while being mindful of other added sugars they are consuming throughout the day," he said.

## WEEKEND: FAMILY



STEVEN SENNE/AP

Evena Joseph assists her son, J. Ryan Mathurin, as he does his homework Dec. 22 at their home in Boston.

# Unaware they're struggling

## Schools get bad grades on communicating with parents about kids' progress

By **BIANCA VAZQUEZ TONESS**  
Associated Press

**E**vena Joseph was unaware how much her 10-year-old son was struggling in school. She found out only with help from somebody who knows the Boston school system better than she does.

Her son, J. Ryan Mathurin, wasn't always comfortable pronouncing words in English. But Joseph, a Haitian immigrant raising him by herself, did not know how far behind he was in reading — in the 30th percentile — until a hospital where her son was receiving treatment connected her with a bilingual advocate.

"I'm sad and disappointed," Joseph said through an interpreter. "It's only because I was assigned an educational advocate that I know this about my son."

It's widely known from test scores that the pandemic set back students across the country. But many parents don't realize that includes their own child.

Schools have long faced criticism for failing to inform certain parents about their kids' academic progress. But after the COVID-19 school closures, the stakes for children have in many ways never been greater. Opportunities to catch up are plentiful in some places, thanks to federal COVID aid, but won't last forever. It will take better communication with parents to help students get the support they need, experts say.

"Parents can't solve a problem that they don't know they have," said Cindi Williams, co-founder of Learning Heroes, a nonprofit dedicated to improving communication between public schools and parents about student academic progress.

A 2022 survey of 1,400 public school parents around the country by Learning Heroes showed 92% believed their children were performing at grade level. But in a federal survey, school officials said half of all U.S. students started this school year behind grade level in at least one subject.

At home, J. Ryan races through multiplication problems at his dining room table. His mother watches as he lingers for several minutes on a paragraph about weather systems and struggles to answer questions about the reading.

"Sometimes I can't understand the writing or the main idea of the text," J. Ryan said after putting away his homework.

The struggles that ultimately brought J. Ryan to the hospital for mental health treatment began in third grade, when he returned to in-person school after nearly a year of studying online. His teacher called frequently, sometimes every day. J. Ryan was getting frustrated, disrupting lessons and leaving the classroom.

J. Ryan displayed these behaviors during English language arts and other classes including Mandarin and gym, according to his special education plan shared with The Associated Press. He happily participated in math class, where he felt more confidence.

Joseph changed her work schedule at a casino to the night shift so she could talk with teachers during the day. The calls continued in fourth grade. But Joseph said teachers never mentioned his problems reading.

Last spring, she sought treatment for what was becoming obvious: Her son was depressed. She was teamed up at the hospital with a parent advocate who speaks English and Haitian Creole.

The advocate, Fabienne Eliacin, pushed to get J. Ryan's scores from the tests given each fall to monitor student learning. She explained to Joseph what it meant to be scored in the 30th percentile. It's not good, Eliacin told her. He can do better.

To Joseph, it suddenly made sense why J. Ryan was acting out in English class. But why, she wondered, were his teachers only focused on her son's behavior if his trouble reading was causing his distress? "They don't really care how much they learn, as long as they stay quiet," Joseph concluded.

Boston Public School officials wouldn't comment on J. Ryan's case. "We are committed to providing families with comprehensive and up-to-date information regarding their student's academic performance," district spokesperson Marcus O'Mard said.

Before this year, it was up to Boston schools to share midyear evaluations with parents, but it's not clear how many were doing it. In the fall, Boston rolled out a communications campaign to help teachers explain testing results to parents as much as three times a year.

J. Ryan's former teachers did not respond to emails seeking comment.

There are many reasons teachers might not talk to parents about a student's academic progress, especially when the news is bad, research shows.

"Historically, teachers did not get a lot of training to talk to parents," said Tyler Smith, a school psychology professor at the University of Missouri. School leadership and support for teachers also make a difference, he said.

That's consistent with findings from national teacher surveys conducted by Learning Heroes. At times, Williams said, teachers also "make assumptions" that some low-income parents don't care or shouldn't be burdened, or that parents won't believe them.

Without these conversations, parents have had to rely on report cards. But report cards are notoriously subjective, reflecting how much effort students show in class and whether they turn in homework.

## THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



# I'm not Irish, but you can kiss me anyway

St. Patrick's Day is one of those ambiguous special occasions that can be quite confusing for non-Irish adults like me.

As a kid, the allure of St. Patrick's Day was uncomplicated. I got to wear something green to school, and if I begged, my mom would take me to McDonald's for one of my all-time favorite seasonal treats. Mildly green, with just a hint of mint, the Shamrock Shake was strangely delicious when paired with a side of fries for dipping. And I didn't need to be Irish to enjoy it.

As a college student, having Irish heritage was still irrelevant when March 17 rolled around. No one I knew was interested in getting in touch with their roots. To the contrary, St. Patrick's Day was simply an excuse to drink green beer at the local bars until we made complete idiots out of ourselves. In fact, my best St. Patrick's Day memory was during my senior year in college at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Our marathon annual "Green Beer Day" celebration ended at dusk, when the shopping cart we were riding down an alley while laughing hysterically came to a stop in front of a police officer.

Good times.

But when I turned into a middle-aged adult, St. Patrick's Day's relevance in my life became muddled. My taste buds had lost their longing for fast-food shakes, and it was inappropriate for a mother of three to be drinking pitchers of green beer at the bars, so I had to adopt different traditions. One might think that pouring a pint of Guinness and requesting The Cranberries on Pandora is everyone's God-given right on March 17, but I've discovered that non-Irish Americans are marginalized on St. Paddy's Day.

People with Irish blood have more rights on St. Patrick's Day. Even if their only connection is that their great uncle thrice removed was one-seventh Irish. Even if the closest thing they've ever had to Irish culture was a bowl of Lucky Charms. Even if they were born and raised on a chili pepper farm outside of Albuquerque. As long as they are technically Irish, they are afforded full privileges on St. Patrick's Day.

Pseudo-Irish Americans have carte blanche to suddenly speak with a lilting Irish brogue. They're permitted to utter phrases like "Top o' the mornin' t'ya!" They can unattractively fist pump to U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday" even though all they know is the chorus. They can suddenly develop a hankering for bland Irish soda bread and pungent slow cookers full of fatty corned beef and mushy cooked cabbage.

On the other hand, we non-Irish, despite our identical American upbringing, are not afforded the same liberties. We must simply stand back and repeatedly listen to that insensitive saying about the only two kinds of people in the world — "the Irish, and those who wish they were."

The only way for the non-Irish to avoid this annual humiliation is to concede defeat, no matter how unjust it seems. And don't try to reason with them because it simply won't work. I once drew a comparison between my direct Welsh heritage, with its Celtic language and similar agrarian way of life, to the Irish culture. Despite the fact that Wales and Ireland are separated only by the tiny Irish Sea, my analogy was met with indignant outrage by a distantly Irish in-law who was born and raised in New Jersey. "You're not Irish!"

I've learned that, in order for us non-Irish to enjoy St. Patrick's Day, we need to tell a little white lie — or green, as it were — and exclaim that we wish we were Irish too. Like amnesty for undocumented immigrants, simple surrender will authorize us to wear tacky green beads and silly plastic hats, to guzzle Guinness and slop stew and to shamelessly dangle shamrocks from our ears and rearview mirrors.

In other words, when dealing with the "fighting Irish" on St. Patty's Day, it's always best to roll with the punches.

Read more at [themeatandpotatoesoflife.com](http://themeatandpotatoesoflife.com) and in Lisa's book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com." Email: [meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com](mailto:meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com)

# WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

## NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

### AS HEARD AROUND THE DINNER TABLE

BY JOHN-CLARK LEVIN / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

John-Clark Levin, of Ojai, Calif., is a Ph.D. student at Cambridge, in England, studying how governments can better anticipate the impacts of artificial intelligence. In his spare time he does stage magic and stand-up comedy. With a partner, he once held the Guinness world record for the "longest continuous handshake" — 15-plus hours. That's even longer than it took him to make this puzzle. — W. S.

#### ACROSS

- 1 Commuter's ticket
- 8 They take bows
- 15 G-rated, say
- 19 "It's not coming to me"
- 20 Floral brew
- 21 Quintessential ingredient to borrow from a neighbor
- 22 Dine out
- 24 Competitive setting in Fortnite
- 25 Like many phone cards
- 26 Often-mispunctuated word
- 27 Lets it all out, say
- 28 Aurora, to the Greeks
- 31 Powerful weapon, for short
- 32 Pop option
- 34 Firefly, e.g.
- 35 Aid in some makeshift repairs
- 38 Blackhead remover
- 40 Company that created Pong
- 41 They can make a huge impact
- 42 Spongy mushroom
- 43 Movie character who said "I love you" to 110-Across
- 45 Network supported by "Viewers Like You"

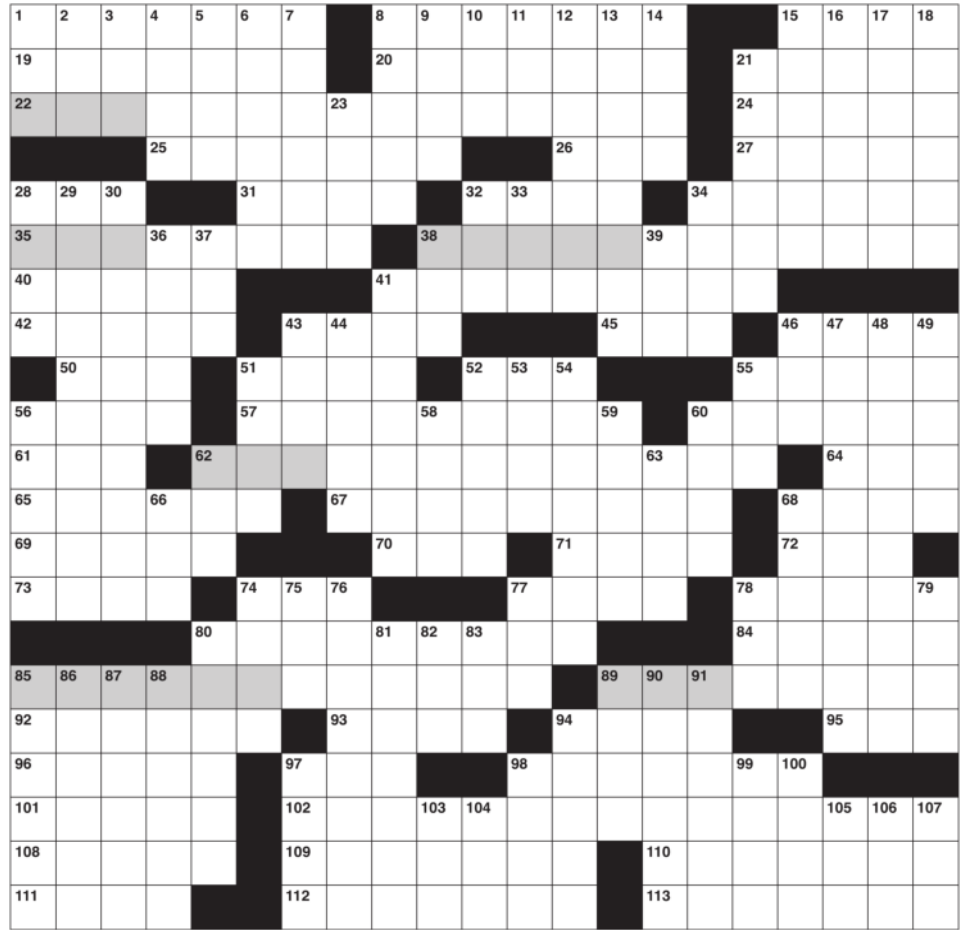
- 46 Literary character who cries, "I am madness maddened!"
- 50 Bog
- 51 Ill humored
- 52 "Cool!"
- 55 Act theatrically
- 56 "Meet the Press" host Chuck
- 57 Attractions for antique hunters
- 60 Donnybrooks
- 61 Ironically funny
- 62 Part of many a weight-loss ad
- 64 Buck chaser?
- 65 Something checked at a T.S.A. checkpoint
- 67 One vs. 52?
- 68 Go on and on
- 69 "Cool!"
- 70 Crib
- 71 Bad impression?
- 72 Tiny bit of work
- 73 Famed Deco designer
- 74 Whitman of "Parenthood"
- 77 Aftermath of a toddler's meal
- 78 Train that stops in New Haven and New York
- 80 They often don't mature until they turn 30
- 84 Yucatán native
- 85 Lie out on a scorching day
- 89 Landmark at the entrance to Narnia
- 92 "Yeah, but still . . ."
- 93 Online handicrafts marketplace

- 94 Bareilles who sang "Love Song"
- 95 Tribe native to the Great Basin
- 96 Suit fabric
- 97 Agcy. impersonated in some scam calls
- 98 Crouched in terror
- 101 Private
- 102 Vegetarian options . . . or what the shaded letters in this puzzle are, phonetically
- 108 "The Three Musketeers" action scenes
- 109 Flatten
- 110 Movie character who replied "I know" to 43-Across
- 111 They may be long and shocking
- 112 Clink
- 113 Gray matter?

#### DOWN

- 1 Tom Hanks movie featuring a giant piano
- 2 It might turn out to be a drone
- 3 Barfly
- 4 Blue diamond in "Titanic," e.g.
- 5 Lab-culture medium
- 6 Star close to Venus?
- 7 Take responsibility
- 8 Bandleader Shaw
- 9 Share the \_\_\_\_ (sign)
- 10 Fort Collins sch.
- 11 "\_\_\_\_ Loss" (2022 No. 1 album by Drake and 21 Savage)

- 12 Cyber Monday merchant
- 13 Mall security guard, pejoratively
- 14 Exams with a 400-1,600 range
- 15 Soup-serving dish
- 16 Interfacers with publishers
- 17 Layer between the crust and the core
- 18 Need for a tough crossword, perhaps
- 21 Command for creating a revised draft
- 23 Sushi-bar drink
- 28 Wax-coated cheese
- 29 Like words this clue the in?
- 30 Easily frightened sort
- 32 Where you might go down in the ranks?
- 33 Bauxite or galena
- 34 Things usually made in the morning
- 36 What's in
- 37 Fore
- 38 MADD ad, e.g.
- 39 Lefty
- 41 Apple wireless file transfer
- 43 Do nothing
- 44 Paris bar tender?
- 46 Reddit Q. and A.
- 47 "The nerve!"
- 48 Finally
- 49 Under siege
- 51 Turned red, say
- 52 Like an allegro tempo
- 53 Landed
- 54 Subjects of VH1's "I Love the . . ." series
- 55 Fore
- 56 Packaging string



- 58 Actress Ward
- 59 Many teens' rooms, to parents
- 60 Pulitzer-winning columnist Stephens
- 62 "Du-u-u-ude!"
- 63 Large coffee vessels
- 66 Made a fast stop?
- 68 "Previously on . . ." segment
- 74 "The kissing disease"
- 75 "Coming face to face with yourself," per Jackson Pollock
- 76 Otherworldly
- 77 Minority in New Zealand's parliament
- 78 What goes "up to 11," in "Spinal Tap"
- 79 Pot grower?
- 80 Skinflints
- 81 Does well on a test, say
- 82 Wild donkey
- 83 Fellow
- 85 Along
- 86 Many a Monopoly property
- 87 Ear piece?
- 88 Marx's co-author for "The Communist Manifesto"
- 89 They can be passed but not failed
- 90 Franklin who sang "R-E-S-P-E-C-T"
- 91 Robin Hood's love
- 94 On the wagon
- 97 Little mischief-makers
- 98 Veggie that's often pickled
- 99 Virgil described its "cloud of pitch-black whirling smoke"
- 100 Sign of neglect
- 103 Channel that airs old MGM and RKO films
- 104 \_\_\_\_ Bankman-Fried, fallen crypto mogul
- 105 Excessively
- 106 Boston's Liberty Tree, for one
- 107 Kind of sauce for dim sum

## GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

## RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

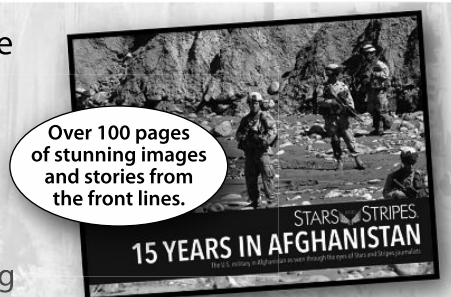


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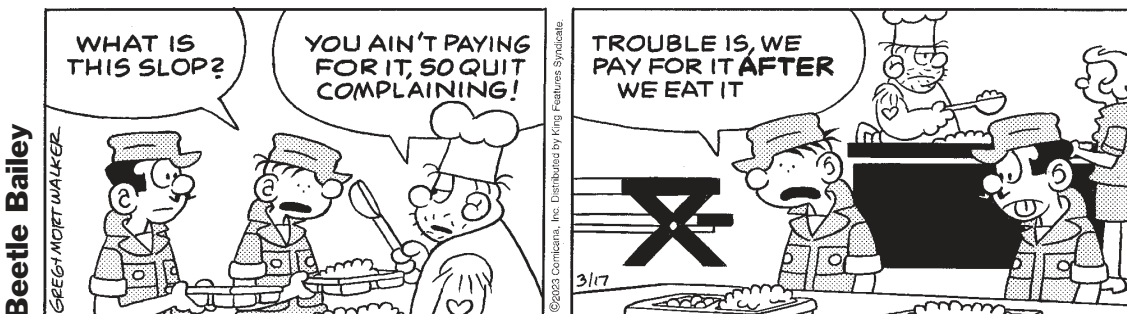
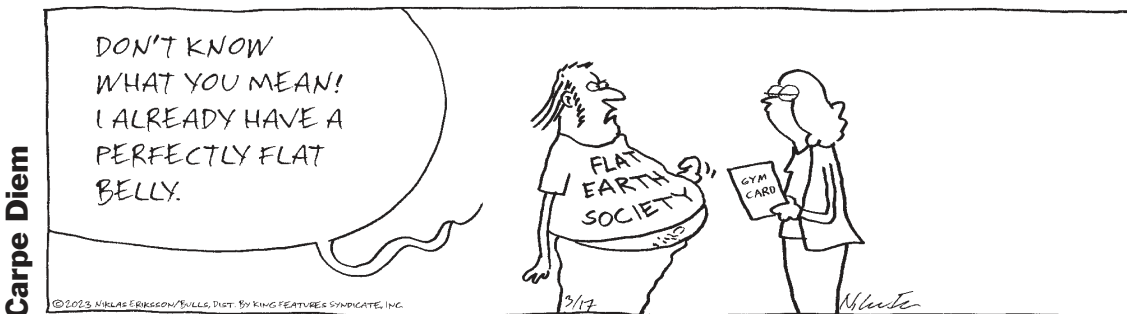
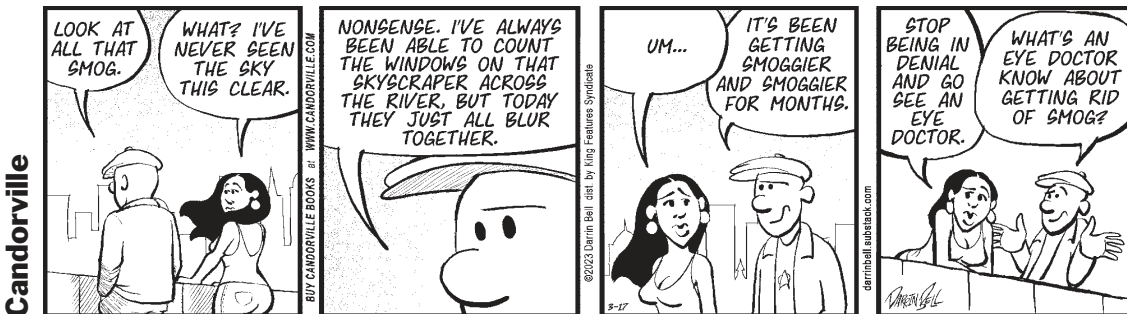
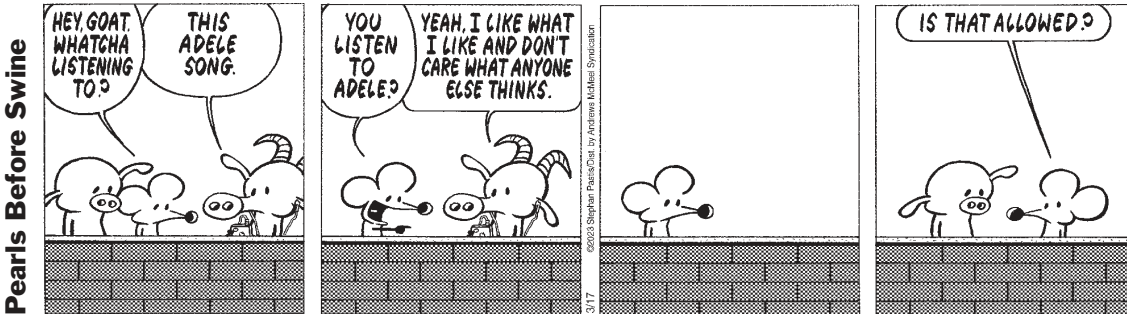
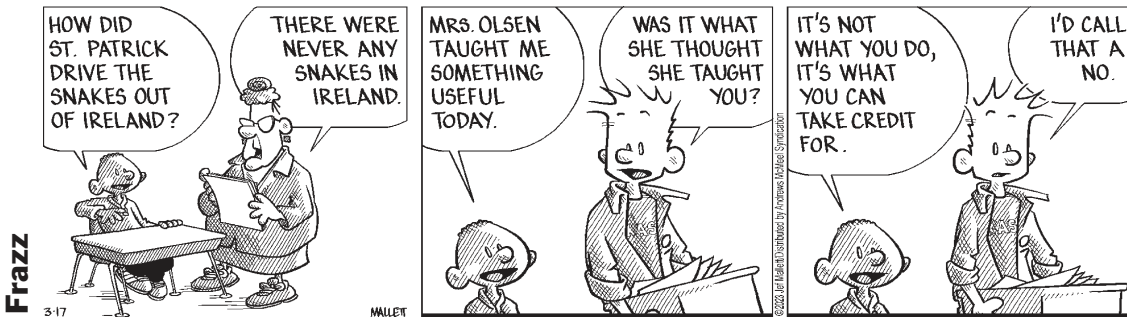


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Loose Parts



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1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
18							19	20				
			21				22			23	24	25
26	27	28				29				30		
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37			38				39					
			40				41			42	43	44
45	46	47				48	49					
50						51				52		
53						54				55		

ACROSS

- 1 Lawyers' org.
- 4 Staffer
- 8 Platter
- 12 Entanglement
- 13 Swindle
- 14 Galley supply
- 15 Puccini opera
- 17 Military group
- 18 Low clouds
- 19 Tease
- 21 Heavy weight
- 22 Leprechaun's prank
- 26 St. Patrick's Day color
- 29 Antlered grazer
- 30 Sturdy tree
- 31 Beloved
- 32 Do sums
- 33 Wrong
- 34 Gore and Pacino
- 35 Hosp. section
- 36 Emergency signal
- 37 Grammy-winning cellist
- 39 "The Greatest"
- 40 Group of seals
- 41 Infielder's gaffe
- 45 Undo a dele
- 48 Retired
- 50 iPhone voice
- 51 Partner
- 52 Einstein's birthplace
- 53 Dealer's foe

- 54 Right on the map?
- 55 Novelist Grafton

- 24 Novelist Caleb
- 25 Terrier type
- 26 Aussie greeting
- 27 Move, in Realtor-speak
- 28 Relaxed
- 29 Sch. URL ender
- 32 College community
- 33 Suspect's excuse
- 35 Texter's "As I see it"
- 36 Broccoli piece
- 38 Eye-related
- 39 Helps a hood
- 42 A/C measures
- 43 Humdinger
- 44 Salinger girl
- 45 Nine-digit ID
- 46 — Maria
- 47 Blunder
- 49 Goat's cry

DOWN

- 1 Piercing tools
- 2 Exhausted
- 3 Shortened wd.
- 4 Actor Kutcher
- 5 Strand during a blizzard
- 6 Weir
- 7 — Isle
- 8 Uncertainty
- 9 Author Fleming
- 10 Hindu honorific
- 11 White House monogram
- 16 Western flick
- 20 Pen filler
- 23 Nebraska neighbor

Answer to Previous Puzzle

A	L	M	S	R	A	G	U	T	B	D
R	E	I	N	E	N	O	S	A	L	A
T	A	K	E	S	F	I	V	E	X	E
S	H	E	E	T	S	R	U	F	U	S
		R	A	P	E	S	T	O		
E	F	T	S	J	A	N	E	R	G	O
T	A	R	A	N	D	M	O	B		
S	T	E	M	D	E	S	A	S	T	I
		E	X	P	E	L	O	R		
A	L	F	I	E	S	A	N	D	E	R
B	A	R	T	A	S	K	F	O	R	C
E	M	O	A	C	A	I	L	E	O	S
T	A	G	L	E	N	D	D	I	N	T

3-17

CRYPTOQUIP

TL BASCY CQBY MBP IJBEDP  
 ACZKSE JBXQDK TK B WZKAM  
 CL LTJQV, SMCVD XCZJP WD  
 VMBYTL'V VMDYTLLV.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: STOP ATTEMPTING TO EXPLAIN TO ME WHY YOU ALWAYS NEGLECT TO SECURE YOUR SHIP. NO MOOR EXCUSES!

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals F

**Bizarro**

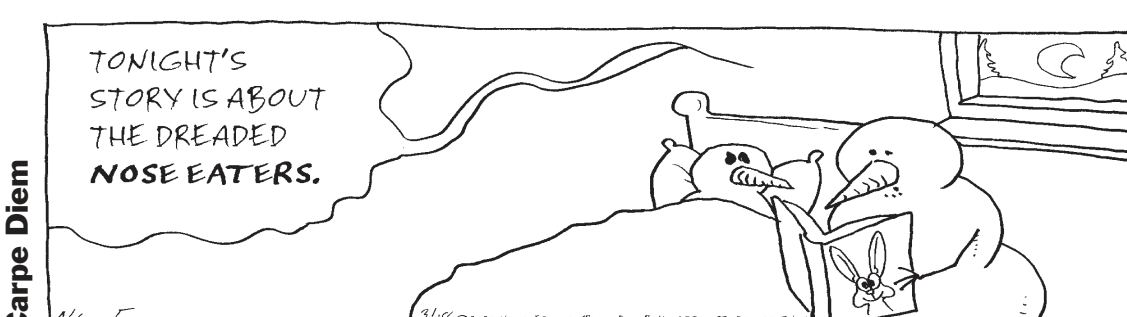
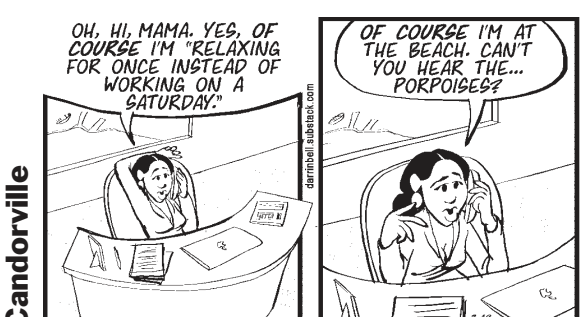
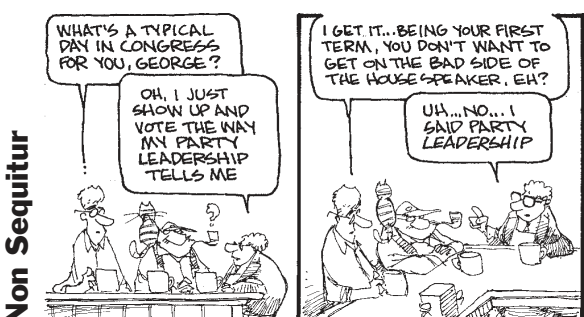
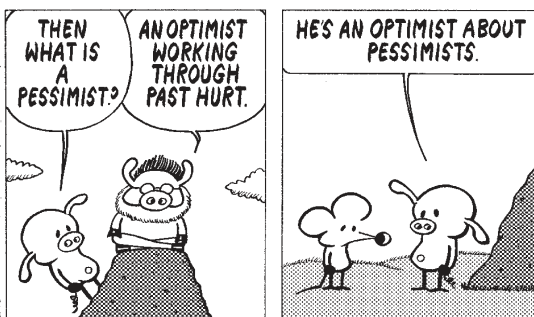
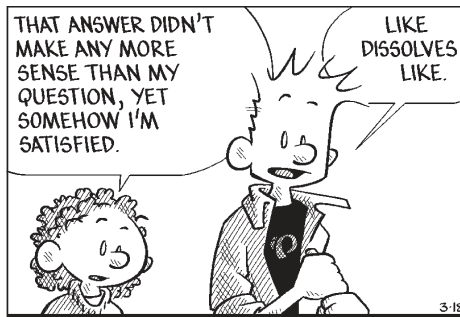


**Loose Parts**



**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11
12							13					
14							15					
16					17	18				19		
			20	21			22	23				
24	25	26		27			28		29		30	31
32			33					34				
35					36					37		
		38		39		40			41			
42	43			44	45				46	47	48	49
50			51					52	53			
54								55				
56								57				



**ACROSS**

- 1 No-frills
- 6 Steam baths
- 12 Cuba's Fidel
- 13 Realm
- 14 Open, as a letter
- 15 Not as messy
- 16 Villa d'—
- 17 June honorees
- 19 Unpaid TV spot
- 20 Finn's vessel
- 22 Hindu honorific
- 24 Tease
- 27 Congers
- 29 PC picture
- 32 Party treats from Carvel
- 35 Stubborn beast
- 36 Links hazard
- 37 Span. lady
- 38 Muumuu accessory
- 40 Glitz partner
- 42 "Whatever"
- 44 Hamilton-Burr event
- 46 Contented sounds
- 50 Island greetings
- 52 Water park rides
- 54 Have hopes
- 55 Foes
- 56 Chess expert
- 57 Relinquish

**DOWN**

- 1 Proscribes
- 2 Celeb's aide
- 3 Take the wheel
- 4 Glass of public radio
- 5 Strong apprehension
- 6 Dispatch
- 7 Make — of (bungle)
- 8 — tree
- 9 Quibbles
- 10 War god
- 11 Antitoxins
- 12 Prompt
- 18 On the run
- 21 — Lingus
- 23 Estuary
- 24 Edge
- 25 Post-op area
- 26 Hotel personnel

- 28 Pipsqueak
- 30 Poetic contraction
- 31 Code-breaking gp.
- 33 Bee follower
- 34 IRS employee
- 39 "Do —?" ("Is it worth the risk?")
- 41 Purple shade
- 42 Sir's counterpart
- 43 "Frozen" snow queen
- 45 Manual reader
- 47 Human rights lawyer Clooney
- 48 Maintained
- 49 Radiator sound
- 51 Chart-topping song
- 53 Roman
- 52

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

A	B	A		A	I	D	E			D	I	S	H
W	E	B		S	C	A	M			O	A	R	S
L	A	B	O	H	E	M	E			U	N	I	T
S	T	R	A	T	I		R	I	B				
				T	O	N		A	N	T	I	C	S
G	R	E	E	N			E	L	K		O	A	K
D	E	A	R			A	D	D		A	W	R	Y
A	L	S		I	C	U		F	L	A	R	E	
Y	O	Y	O	M	A			A	L	I			
				P	O	D		B	O	B	B	L	E
S	T	E	T			E	M	E	R	I	T	U	S
S	I	R	I			M	A	T	E		U	L	M
N	A	R	C			E	A	S	T		S	U	E

**3-18**

**CRYPTOQUIP**

G X Q O M L I U F Y G L F Y H H O L Y A  
 E M X G L A L A F L I G Y H E Y Z G G L L A  
 O X F L L V O I L A L H Z Y U D I Z : O M L  
 O L V Y G I Y D L I G .

**Yesterday's Cryptoquip:** IF ACTOR OMAR HAD PLAYED COUNTY LAWYERS IN A BUNCH OF FILMS, THOSE WOULD BE SHARIF'S SHERIFFS.  
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals B

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## EDITORIAL

Terry Leonard, Editor  
leonard.terry@stripes.comRobert H. Reid, Senior Managing Editor  
reid.robert@stripes.comSean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation  
moores.sean@stripes.comAnn Pinson, Digital Managing Editor  
pinson.ann@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)886-0033Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News  
bowers.brian@stripes.com

## CIRCULATION

## Mideast

David Schultz, District Manager  
schultz.david@stripes.com  
xsscirculation@stripes.com  
+49(0)152.5672.5036; 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  
+81-3 6385.3171; DSN (315)227.7333

## CONTACT US

## Washington

tel: (+1)202.886.0003  
633 3rd St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20001-3050

## Reader letters

letters@stripes.com

## Additional contacts

stripes.com/contactus

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## Meta layoffs reveal that tech exceptionalism is dead

BY BETH KOWITT AND PARMY OLSON  
*Bloomberg Opinion*

During the tech sector's pandemic-era boom, employee headcount became one of the reigning barometers of success. Quarter after quarter, alongside traditional metrics like revenue growth and operating margin, companies across Silicon Valley reported to analysts and investors the thousands of workers they had added to their ballooning payrolls.

A prime follower of this more-the-merrier hiring approach was Facebook parent company Meta Platforms, which for the last three years grew its employee base at a dizzying pace. Between the end of 2019 and its peak headcount in 2022, the company nearly doubled in size to some 87,000 employees.

The hiring sustained its ambitious (and in some cases seemingly ill-fated) projects like its big bet on the metaverse. But it also let the company take an aggressive stance in the talent wars as it scooped up skilled tech workers rather than watch them migrate to competitors. Recently, a former Meta employee who was laid off in the first round of cuts said in a video posted on rival platform TikTok that it "seemed like Meta was hiring us so other companies couldn't have us and then they were just kind of hoarding us like Pokémon cards."

But now in a serious case of corporate whiplash, Meta Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg on Tuesday said that the company would slash an additional 10,000 employees on top of the 11,000 in cuts announced in November. Taken together, that's a nearly 25% reduction of its work-

force from the company's peak just six months ago. Investors sent the stock up 7.25% Tuesday, though the shares are still hovering at around half the value reached during their 2021 zenith.

The intense tech hiring boom has now turned into a hiring bust — less euphemistically known as mass layoffs. On the surface the deep cuts are about all the usual things that layoffs are meant to signal: controlling costs, making Wall Street happy, etc. But they also reflect a deeper shift in thinking about the metrics that matter in a tech sector that has long been able to make up its own rules.

During the pandemic, as tech CEOs accelerated their empire building, a massive and growing headcount somehow became equated with a company's overall health — a sign that it had cash, clout and big ambitions. Apple was unique in avoiding a pandemic-fueled hiring binge, and thus big layoffs. But for the rest, a mammoth employee base now means bloat and a lack of discipline, hence why Zuckerberg has dubbed 2023 Meta's "Year of Efficiency."

Tech companies are instead turning to more traditional ways to measure success — in part because that's what Wall Street is demanding as the economy and their performance sours. At Salesforce, for example, CEO Marc Benioff for years was able to defy calls to grow the company's profitability alongside revenue. Now, as he faces off against a half dozen activist investors, he has cut his workforce by thousands and has lasered in on profit margins. For Zuckerberg, broad restructuring also lets him quietly pull back on business ventures that don't seem to be going anywhere, such as

his misguided efforts to sell virtual reality headsets to employers.

One source of inspiration for slimming down comes from none other than Elon Musk, who has decimated Twitter's staff since acquiring the social media platform last year. It has gone from 7,500 employees to about 2,000, with reportedly an additional 10% of employees cut as recently as last month. That Musk has somehow been able to keep the social media platform running — many would argue just barely — on a demoralized skeleton crew has likely given other tech CEOs license to reevaluate the scale of their own operations and their ability to do more with less.

Silicon Valley enterprises tend to work in a herd mentality. They hire together as a pack, and they fire together as a pack. That's one reason why so many of the initial cuts across the sector fell in the 6% to 10% range of a company's overall head count. There doesn't appear to be any real magic to those numbers, other than that's what the other guy was doing.

With Meta now hitting a nearly 25% staff reduction, there is a very real likelihood that others in the tech world will follow suit. But if there was ever a time to break free of tech's group-think mentality, this is it. The companies that apply more rigor to their layoff decisions than they did to their free-wheeling hiring will be the ones who reap the greatest benefit in the long run.

Beth Kowitz is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering corporate America. She was previously a senior writer and editor at Fortune Magazine. Parmy Olson is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering technology. A former reporter for The Wall Street Journal and Forbes, she is author of "We Are Anonymous." This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

## It's likely that rain-on-snow floods will get much worse

BY KEITH MUSSELMAN  
*Los Angeles Times*

California's latest atmospheric rivers are sending rainfall higher into the mountains and onto the state's crucial snowpack. The rain alone is a problem for low-lying areas already dealing with destructive flooding, but the prospect of rain on the deep mountain snow has triggered widespread flood warnings.

When rain falls on snow, it creates complex flood risks that are hard to forecast. Those risks are also rising with climate change.

For much of the United States, storms with heavy rainfall can coincide with seasonal snow cover. When that happens, the resulting runoff of water can be much greater than what is produced from rain or snowmelt alone. The combination has resulted in some of the nation's most destructive and costly floods, including the 1996 Midwest floods and the 2017 flood that damaged California's Oroville Dam.

But rainfall itself has limited energy to melt snow. Rather, it is the warm temperatures, strong winds and high humidity — which can transport substantial energy in the form of latent and sensible heat — that predominantly drive snowmelt during rain-on-snow events.

Snowpack has air spaces that water can move through. As the rain falls, the water can travel relatively rapidly through the snowpack's layers to reach the underlying soil. How streams respond to that runoff depends on how much water is already flowing and how saturated the soil is.

When the soil isn't yet saturated, it can dampen or delay a flood response by soaking up

rain and melting snow. But when the ground is saturated, snowmelt combined with rainfall can lead to fast and devastating flooding.

To predict whether a flood will occur requires knowledge of weather and hydrological conditions. It requires knowing the soil moisture and snowpack conditions before the storm, the elevation at which rain transitions to snow, the rainfall rate, the wind speed, air temperature and humidity, and estimates of how those factors contribute to snowmelt. Additionally, each factor varies in time and in complex ways during a storm, especially across a mountainous landscape. That's why so little is known about rain-on-snow floods, considered compound extreme events, despite the extensive damage they can cause.

In the California mountains right now, it's the middle elevations — where either substantial rainfall or snowfall can occur — that face the most severe effects. The lower elevations have primarily seen rainfall rather than snow, so there is less snowpack to melt. And at the highest elevations, colder temperatures ensure the deep snowpack continues to accumulate and rainfall is less likely.

If all storms were created equal, there would be well-defined rain zones and snow zones, and the rain-on-snow flood risk would be low. But instead, not only does the snow zone elevation vary during an event, but it also varies substantially from one storm to the next. The most destructive rain-on-snow events occur when rivers are already running high and soils are saturated, as is happening in California after a series of warm atmospheric rivers. The order in which these storms occur

is especially important for assessing flood risk because these events are caused in part by rapid shifts between cold periods of snow accumulation followed by warm rainfall.

How rain-on-snow flood risk will change as the planet warms is still not well understood. Will increases in precipitation extremes and winter rainfall increase rain-on-snow occurrence and the flood risk? Or will less snow cover and larger soil-moisture deficits reduce rain-on-snow flood risk in a warmer climate?

A few points are becoming clearer. In a warming climate, there will be less risk of precipitation falling on snow in the lower elevations as the snowpack declines, particularly in warmer regions such as the Pacific Northwest. But at higher elevations, there may be more frequent rain-on-snow events. Increased flood risk comes from the rain-snow transition zone expanding higher in elevation to include alpine areas that historically received snowfall.

Flood control and reservoir management systems in these mountainous regions will have to consider these shifts — in addition to changes in rainfall intensity and storm sequencing — to fully understand and prepare for future local flood risks. As the planet warms, the rain-on-snow effect is only one of many costly risks local communities will need to account for. This week, California is seeing what might become a more common phenomenon as a result of climate change.

Keith Musselman is an assistant professor in geography, mountain hydrology and climate change at the University of Colorado Boulder. This article was produced in partnership with The Conversation.

# SCOREBOARD

## COLLEGE BASKETBALL

### Men's NIT

#### First Round Tuesday, March 14

Hofstra 88, Rutgers 86, OT  
UAB 88, Southern Miss. 60  
E. Washington 81, Washington St. 74  
Vanderbilt 71, Yale 62  
Wisconsin 81, Bradley 62  
Michigan 90, Toledo 80  
Liberty 62, Villanova 57  
Colorado 65, Seton Hall 64

#### Wednesday, March 15

Morehead St. 68, Clemson 64  
Oklahoma St. 69, Youngstown St. 64  
Oregon 84, UC Irvine 58  
UCF 67, Florida 49  
Cincinnati 81, Virginia Tech 72  
North Texas 69, Alcorn St. 53  
Utah Valley St. 83, New Mexico 69  
Sam Houston St. 58, Santa Clara 56

#### Second Round

#### Saturday, March 18

Hofstra vs. Cincinnati  
Oregon vs. UCF  
Morehead St. vs. UAB  
Oklahoma St. vs. E. Washington  
Colorado vs. Utah Valley St.  
Vanderbilt vs. Michigan  
Sam Houston St. vs. North Texas

#### Sunday, March 19

Wisconsin vs. Liberty

### Women's NCAA Tournament

#### FIRST FOUR

#### Wednesday, March 15

At Columbus, Ohio  
Mississippi St. 70, Illinois 56  
At Bloomington, Ind.  
Sacred Heart 57, Southern U. 47  
Thursday, March 16  
At South Bend, Ind.  
Purdue (19-10) vs. St. John's (22-8)  
At Stanford, Calif.  
Monmouth (NJ) (18-15) vs. Tennessee Tech (22-9)

#### SEATTLE 4

#### First Round

Friday, March 17  
At Stanford, Calif.  
Stanford (28-5) vs. Sacred Heart (19-13)  
Mississippi (23-8) vs. Gonzaga (28-4)  
At Iowa City, Iowa  
Florida St. (23-9) vs. Georgia (21-11)  
Iowa (26-6) vs. SE Louisiana (21-9)

#### Saturday, March 18

At Austin, Texas  
Louisville (23-11) vs. Drake (22-9)  
Texas (25-9) vs. East Carolina (23-9)  
At Durham, N.C.  
Colorado (23-8) vs. Middle Tennessee (28-4)  
Duke (25-6) vs. Iona (26-6)

#### Second Round

#### Sunday, March 19

At Stanford, Calif.  
Stanford-Sacred Heart winner vs. Mississippi-Gonzaga winner  
At Iowa City, Iowa  
Iowa-SE Louisiana winner vs. Florida St.-Georgia winner

#### Monday, March 20

At Austin, Texas  
Texas-East Carolina winner vs. Louisville-Drake winner  
At Durham, N.C.  
Duke-Iona winner vs. Colorado-Middle Tennessee winner

#### GREENVILLE 2

#### First Round

Saturday, March 18  
At Bloomington, Ind.  
Indiana (27-3) vs. Monmouth (NJ)-Tennessee Tech winner  
Oklahoma St. (21-11) vs. Miami (19-12)  
At Bryn Mawr, Pa.

#### Washington St. (23-10) vs. Florida Gulf Coast (32-3)

Villanova (28-6) vs. Cleveland St. (30-4)  
Friday, March 17  
At Baton Rouge, La.  
Michigan (22-9) vs. UNLV (31-2)  
LSU (28-2) vs. Hawaii (18-14)  
At Salt Lake City

#### NC State (20-11) vs. Princeton (23-5)

Utah (25-4) vs. Gardner-Webb (29-4)  
Second Round  
Monday, March 20  
At Bloomington, Ind.  
Indiana-Monmouth-Tennessee Tech winner vs. Oklahoma St.-Miami winner  
At Bryn Mawr, Pa.

#### Villanova-Cleveland St. winner vs. Washington St.-Florida Gulf Coast winner

Sunday, March 19  
At Baton Rouge, La.  
LSU-Hawaii winner vs. Michigan-UNLV winner  
At Salt Lake City

#### Utah-Gardner-Webb winner vs. NC State-Princeton winner

GREENVILLE 1  
First Round

### Friday, March 17

At Columbia, S.C.  
South Carolina (32-0) vs. Norfolk St. (26-6)  
South Florida (26-6) vs. Marquette (21-10)

#### At South Bend, Ind.

Creighton (22-8) vs. Mississippi St. (21-10)  
Notre Dame (25-5) vs. S. Utah (23-9)  
At College Park, Md.  
Arizona (21-9) vs. West Virginia (19-11)  
Maryland (25-6) vs. Holy Cross (24-8)

#### Saturday, March 18

At Los Angeles  
Oklahoma (25-6) vs. Portland (23-8)  
UCLA (25-9) vs. Sacramento St. (25-7)  
Second Round  
Sunday, March 19

#### At Columbia, S.C.

South Carolina-Norfolk St. winner vs. South Florida-Marquette winner  
At South Bend, Ind.  
Notre Dame-S. Utah winner vs. Creighton-Mississippi St. winner  
At College Park, Md.

Maryland-Holy Cross winner vs. Arizona-West Virginia winner  
Monday, March 20  
At Los Angeles  
UCLA-Sacramento St. winner vs. Oklahoma-Portland winner

#### SEATTLE 3

First Round  
Friday, March 17  
At Blacksburg, Va.  
Virginia Tech (27-4) vs. Chattanooga (20-12)  
Southern Cal (21-9) vs. S. Dakota St. (28-5)

#### Saturday, March 18

At Knoxville, Tenn.  
Iowa St. (22-9) vs. Toledo (28-4)  
Tennessee (23-11) vs. Saint Louis (17-17)  
At Columbus, Ohio  
North Carolina (21-10) vs. Purdue-St. John's winner  
Ohio St. (25-7) vs. James Madison (26-7)  
At Storrs, Conn.

Baylor (19-12) vs. Alabama (20-10)  
UConn (29-5) vs. Vermont (25-6)  
Second Round  
Sunday, March 19

#### At Blacksburg, Va.

Virginia Tech-Chattanooga winner vs. Southern Cal-S. Dakota St. winner  
Monday, March 20  
At Knoxville, Tenn.  
Tennessee-Saint Louis winner vs. Iowa St.-Toledo winner

#### At Columbus, Ohio

Ohio St.-James Madison winner vs. North Carolina-Purdue-St. John's winner  
At Storrs, Conn.  
UConn-Vermont winner vs. Baylor-Alabama winner

### Women's NIT

First Round  
Wednesday, March 15  
Syracuse 84, Kent St. 56  
Nebraska 74, Missouri St. 65  
Thursday, March 16  
Morgan St. (17-11) at Wake Forest (16-16)

Colorado St. (20-11) at N. Iowa (22-9)  
Towson (21-11) at Harvard (17-11)  
Illinois St. (24-8) at Missouri (17-13)  
Saint Joseph's (20-10) at Seton Hall (18-14)

High Point (17-14) at Clemson (17-15)  
Texas St. (23-9) at Stephen F. Austin (26-6)  
Drexel (21-9) at Fordham (18-12)  
Louisiana Tech (19-12) at Arkansas (21-12)

Long Beach St. (23-9) at San Diego (17-13)  
UTEP (20-11) at Texas Tech (18-14)  
Liberty (24-8) at Bowling Green (27-6)  
Wichita St. (18-14) at Kansas St. (17-16)  
UALR (21-10) at SMU (16-12)  
Niagara (18-12) at Green Bay (27-5)

San Francisco (19-12) at Washington (15-14)  
Jackson St. (21-9) at Memphis (20-10)  
N. Arizona (21-13) at New Mexico (20-12)  
Penn (17-11) at Richmond (20-10)  
Belmont (23-11) at Ball St. (25-8)  
Wofford (22-9) at Florida (16-14)

#### Friday, March 17

Tulane (18-13) at Auburn (15-14)  
N. Dakota St. (18-11) at Oregon (17-14)  
Rice (22-8) at BYU (16-16)  
W. Kentucky (19-13) at Kansas (19-11)  
UC Irvine (24-6) at San Diego St. (23-10)  
Fairleigh Dickinson (24-7) at Columbia (23-5)

Texas A&M-CC (19-11) at Wyoming (22-10)  
Boston U. (24-8) at Rhode Island (24-6)  
Albany (NY) (22-11) at UMass (26-6)

## TENNIS

### BNP Paribas Open

#### Wednesday

At Indian Wells Tennis Garden  
Indian Wells, Calif.  
Purse: \$8,800,000  
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor  
Men's Singles  
Quarterfinals

Frances Tiafoe (14), United States, def. Cameron Norrie (10), Britain, 6-4, 6-4.  
Daniil Medvedev (5), Russia, def. Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (23), Spain, 6-3, 7-5.

#### Women's Singles

Quarterfinals  
Aryna Sabalenka (2), Belarus, def. Coco Gauff (6), United States, 6-4, 6-0.

Maria Sakkari (7), Greece, def. Petra Kvitová (15), Czech Republic, 4-6, 7-5, 6-1.

#### Men's Doubles

Quarterfinals  
Rohan Bopanna, India, and Matthew Ebden, Australia, def. Denis Shapovalov and Felix Auger-Aliassime, Canada, 6-4, 7-5.  
John Isner and Jack Sock, United States, def. Simone Bolelli and Fabio Fognini, Italy, 6-2, 6-4.

#### Women's Doubles

Quarterfinals  
Laura Siegemund, Germany, and Beatriz Haddad Maia, Brazil, def. Belinda Bencic and Jil Teichmann, Switzerland, walkover.  
Shuko Aoyama and Ena Shibahara, Japan, def. Magda Linette, Poland, and Caty McNally, United States, 6-4, 3-6, 10-8.

## BASEBALL

### World Baseball Classic

#### GROUP A

	W	L	Pct.
Cuba	3	2	.600
Netherlands	2	2	.500
Panama	2	2	.500
Taiwan	2	2	.500
Italy	2	3	.400

#### GROUP B

	W	L	Pct.
Japan	5	0	1.000
Australia	3	2	.600
South Korea	2	2	.500
Czech Republic	1	3	.250
China	0	4	.000

#### GROUP C

	W	L	Pct.
Mexico	3	1	.750
United States	3	1	.750
Canada	2	2	.500
Britain	1	3	.250
Colombia	1	3	.250

#### GROUP D

	W	L	Pct.
Venezuela	4	0	1.000
Puerto Rico	3	1	.750
Dominican Republic	2	2	.500
Israel	1	3	.250
Nicaragua	0	4	.000

#### Wednesday's games

Cuba 4, Australia 3  
Venezuela 5, Israel 1  
Mexico 10, Canada 3  
Puerto Rico 5, Dominican Republic 2  
United States 3, Colombia 2

#### Thursday's game

Japan 9, Italy 3

#### Friday's game

Puerto Rico at Mexico

#### Saturday's game

United States at Venezuela

#### Sunday's game

Cuba at Semifinalist 3

#### Monday's game

Semifinalist 2 at Semifinalist 4

#### Tuesday's game

Finalist 1 at Finalist 2

### Wednesday's transactions

#### BASEBALL

Major League Baseball  
American League  
BOSTON RED SOX — Reassigned LHP Matt Dermody to minor league camp. Optioned 2B Emmanuel Valdez to Worcester (IL).

CLEVELAND GUARDIANS — Optioned 3B Jhonkensy Noel, Ss Juan Brito, Jose Tena and Angel Martinez to Columbus (IL). Released S John Johnson III and DE Jadeveon Clowney.

DETROIT TIGERS — Optioned RHP Brendan White, 3B Andre Lipcius and OF Parker Meadows to Toledo (IL).

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Optioned RHPs Jackson Kowar and Max Castillo and INF Samad Taylor to Omaha (IL).

MINNESOTA TWINS — Optioned LHP Brent Headrick to St. Paul (IL).

NEW YORK YANKEES — Reassigned OF Michael Hermosillo, LHP Lisandro Santo and INF Jamie Westbrook to minor league camp.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Placed RHP Andrew Kittredge on the 60-day IL.

TEXAS RANGERS — Optioned RHP Yerry Rodriguez to Round Rock (PCL).

#### National League

ATLANTA BRAVES — Optioned RHP Ian Anderson to Gwinnett (IL).

CINCINNATI REDS — Optioned SS Ely De La Cruz and RHPs Casey Legumina and Ricky Karcher to Louisville (IL).

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Optioned OFs Jonny DeLuca and Andy Pages, SS Eddy Leonard and C Diego Cartaya to Tulsa (TL) and 2B Michael Busch to Oklahoma (PCL).

MIAMI MARLINS — Optioned RHP George Soriano and SS Xavier Edwards to Jacksonville (IL).

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Optioned RHPs Janson Junk and Cam Robinson and LHP Ethan Small to Nashville (IL) and RHP Abner Uribe to Biloxi.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Reassigned C Patrick Bailey to minor league camp. Optioned OF Luis Matos.

#### BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association  
NBA — Suspended Sacramento F Trey Lyles one game without pay and fined Milwaukee C Brook Lopez \$25,000 for an on-court altercation in a game on March 13 against one another. Suspended Memphis G Ja Morant eight games without pay for conduct detrimental to the league on March 4 at a Denver nightclub.

PHOENIX SUNS — Named Gerald Madkins as assistant general manager and vice president of personnel evaluation.

#### FOOTBALL

National Football League  
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Re-signed OL Will Hernandez to a two-year contract and LB Ezekiel Turner to a one-year contract.

### MLB spring training

#### Wednesday's games

Boston 9, Tampa Bay 1  
Houston 9, Atlanta 3  
Philadelphia 9, N.Y. Yankees 8  
Toronto 7, Pittsburgh 1  
Washington at Miami, ppd.  
St. Louis 4, N.Y. Mets 1  
Chicago White Sox at San Francisco (ss), ppd.

Texas 4, Kansas City 3  
Seattle at Oakland, ppd.  
San Francisco (ss) at Arizona (ss), ppd.  
Chicago Cubs at Cincinnati, ppd.  
Colorado at L.A. Dodgers, cancelled  
Milwaukee at Arizona (ss), cancelled  
Cleveland at San Diego, cancelled

#### Thursday's games

Atlanta vs. Tampa Bay (ss) at St. Petersburg, Fla.  
Houston vs. St. Louis at Sarasota, Fla.  
Tampa Bay (ss) vs. Minnesota at Fort Myers, Fla.

Arizona vs. Chicago Cubs at Mesa, Ariz.  
Chicago White Sox vs. Cleveland at Goodyear, Ariz.  
Oakland vs. Kansas City at Surprise, Ariz.

L.A. Angels vs. Milwaukee at Phoenix, Ariz.  
San Diego vs. Colorado at Scottsdale, Ariz.  
San Francisco vs. Seattle at Peoria, Ariz.  
N.Y. Mets vs. Washington at Palm Beach, Fla.

Toronto vs. Baltimore at Sarasota, Fla.  
Philadelphia vs. Detroit at Lakeland, Fla.  
Pittsburgh vs. N.Y. Yankees at Tampa, Fla.  
Texas vs. L.A. Dodgers at Phoenix, Ariz.

#### Friday's games

Atlanta vs. Boston at Fort Myers, Fla.  
Baltimore vs. Minnesota at Fort Myers, Fla.  
Washington vs. Houston at Palm Beach, Fla.

Tampa Bay vs. Pittsburgh at Bradenton, Fla.  
N.Y. Yankees vs. Detroit at Lakeland, Fla.  
Toronto (ss) vs. Philadelphia (ss) at Clearwater, Fla.

Philadelphia (ss) vs. Toronto (ss) at Du-nedin, Fla.  
St. Louis vs. Miami (ss) at Sarasota, Fla.  
Chicago Cubs (ss) vs. Chicago White Sox at Phoenix, Ariz.

L.A. Dodgers vs. Chicago Cubs (ss) at Mesa, Ariz.  
Milwaukee vs. Texas at Surprise, Ariz.  
San Francisco vs. Oakland at Mesa, Ariz.  
Arizona vs. Colorado at Scottsdale, Ariz.  
Kansas City vs. L.A. Angels at Tempe, Ariz.  
Miami (ss) vs. N.Y. Mets at Port St. Lucie, Fla.

Cleveland vs. Cincinnati at Goodyear, Ariz.  
Seattle vs. San Diego at Peoria, Ariz.

## DEALS

Agreed to terms with LB Kyzir White, OL Hjalte Froholdt on two-year contracts and DL Kevin Strong on a one-year contract.

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Signed RB Justice Hill to a two-year contract. Signed QB Tyler Huntley to a tendered contract. Traded S Chuck Clark to the New York Jets for an undisclosed draft pick.

BUFFALO BILLS — Signed WR Deonte Harty to a two-year contract. Re-signed S Jordan Poyer.

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed TE Hayden Hurst to a three-year contract.

CHICAGO BEARS — Traded WR D.J. Moore to Carolina in exchange for a No. 1 overall selection and second-round 2023 draft pick and a 2024 first and second round pick. Agreed to terms with LBs Tremaine Edmunds and T.J. Edwards, DE De-Marcus Walker, OL Nate Davis and RB Travis Homer.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Re-signed RB Trayveon Williams.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Re-signed C Ethan Pocic and CB A.J. Green. Agreed to terms with DT Dalvin Tomlinson and DE Ogbornia Okoronkwo.

DALLAS COWBOYS — Released RB Ezekiel Elliott. Agreed to terms with OT Tyrion Smith.

DENVER BRONCOS — Signed CB/KR Tremon Smith to a two-year contract.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed OT Yosh Nijman to a tendered contract. Re-signed TE Tyler Davis and CB Keisean Nixon.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Signed DT Sheldon Rankins to a one-year contract.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Re-signed WR Ashton Dulin to a two-year contract. Signed DT Taven Bryan to a one-year contract. Released QB Matt Ryan.

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Re-signed CB Tevaughn Campbell to a one-year contract.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Signed QB Shane Buechele to an exclusive rights tender.

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Re-signed S Roderic Teamer.

LOS ANGELES RAMS — Signed DT Michael Hoecht, CB Shaun Jolly and LB Christian Rozeboom to tendered contracts.

MIAMI DOLPHINS — Re-signed OT Kendall Lamm and RB Raheem Mostert. Traded TE Hunter Long to Los Angeles Rams in exchange for CB Jalen Ramsey. Signed DB DeShon Elliott. Re-signed RB Myles Gaskin to a one-year contract. Claimed WR Freddie Swain from Denver waivers. Signed TE Eric Saubert to a one-year contract. Released CB Byron Jones with a failed physical and post-June 1 designation.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Agreed to terms with OLB Marcus Davenport, CB Byron Murphy Jr. and TE Josh Oliver. Re-signed TE Ben Ellefson and OLB Kenny Willekes.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Signed OT Riley Reiff. Signed OT Yodny Cajuste to a tendered contract. Signed WR JuJu Smith-

## PRO SOCCER

### MLS

#### EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Atlanta	2	0	1	7	6	2
Nashville	2	0	1	7	4	0
Cincinnati	2	0	1	7	3	1
Inter Miami CF	2	1	0	6	4	1
Philadelphia	2	1	0	6	5	3
New England	2	1	0	6	4	4

## NBA

## AROUND THE NBA

# West play-in spots will be difficult

BY TIM REYNOLDS  
Associated Press

Let's go ahead and put Denver and Sacramento into the Western Conference playoffs. It's hard to imagine Memphis and Phoenix falling out of the mix, even with Ja Morant away from the Grizzlies and Kevin Durant still not able to make his home debut for the Suns because of ankle trouble. Put them on the bracket as well.

And from there, it's anyone's guess.

The West is an absolute mess, and the middle of the pack — the race for the last two guaranteed playoff spots and the four berths into the play-in tournament — is as muddled and murky as possible.

"Hope," Utah coach Will Hardy said, "is a good motivator."

True. There's plenty of hope still out there, too.

The West has, more often than not in recent years, been the power-broker side of the NBA. Not this year. The shinier records are at the top of the Eastern Conference, which is on pace to finish with three of the best four records this season — something that hasn't happened since 2008-09.

The West has become a logjam this year, and the standings change nightly. A single win or loss can change everything: Utah was ninth in the West entering Monday, and a four-point loss at Miami left the Jazz tumbling three spots to 12th. The Los Angeles Lakers, meanwhile, went from 11th to ninth — from out of the play-in to



JAE C. HONG/AP

**Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry, left, defends against Los Angeles Clippers' Kawhi Leonard during the first half Wednesday in Los Angeles. Both teams are fighting for play-in spots to make the playoffs.**

back in — without even playing. They are 10th after losing Wednesday.

Defending champion Golden State beat Phoenix and went from sixth to fifth. The Warriors then lost to the Clippers on Wednesday and the two flopped places. Minnesota and Dallas are tied for seventh, Oklahoma City is ninth, Utah New Orleans tied for 11th.

Put another way, three games separated the fifth-place Clippers from the 10th-place Lakers entering Thursday's games. Only 2½ games separated the Warriors from the Jazz and Pelicans. It's hard to envision a scenario where at least some West races for seeding don't go down to the final day.

"No one's really out of it right now, at this point in the Western

Conference," Hardy said. "There's a couple teams that have fallen, I guess, out of the race, but 5 through 13 are so tight that every team is competing each night with that hope of like, 'Hey, if you string a few together, you can really vault in the standings.' We'd all be lying if we say we don't check the standings. We definitely do, but it can be a little distracting."

# Morant suspended 8 games for gun video

Associated Press

MIAMI — Ja Morant will be back with the Memphis Grizzlies next week after the NBA handed the All-Star guard an eight-game suspension without pay Wednesday. His displaying a firearm at a club in suburban Denver earlier this month was "conduct detrimental to the league," according to an official statement.

Morant missed his sixth consecutive game when the Grizzlies played in Miami on Wednesday night. He will miss the next two games — at San Antonio on Friday and home against Golden State on Saturday — then be eligible to return on Monday when Memphis plays Dallas, though he is not expected to play that night.

The games he already missed will count toward the suspension, and Morant will forfeit about \$669,000 in salary.

"Ja's conduct was irresponsible, reckless and potentially very dangerous," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement. "It also has serious consequences



KAREN PULFER FOCHT/AP

**The NBA has suspended Memphis Grizzlies guard Ja Morant eight games without pay after determining that his holding a gun at a club in Denver earlier this month was "conduct detrimental to the league."**

given his enormous following and influence, particularly among young fans who look up to him."

Silver met with Morant in New York before announcing the league's decision. Other league officials, as well as representatives

from the National Basketball Players Association, were part of that meeting.

Grizzlies coach Taylor Jenkins said he doesn't expect Morant to play Monday, saying the team is "going to be respectful of the time

off he's had."

"There will be a quick ramp-up period after that," Jenkins said. "Obviously, he hasn't been playing basketball for almost two weeks now."

The league's investigation, which started almost immediately after the March 4 incident in which Morant livestreamed himself on Instagram, found that he was "holding a firearm in an intoxicated state" — but did not prove that the gun was owned by Morant "or was displayed by him beyond a brief period."

The league investigation also did not find that Morant had the gun with him on Memphis' flight to Denver, or that he possessed the gun while in any NBA facility. Police in Colorado said last week that they looked into the circumstances surrounding the video and concluded there was no reason to charge Morant with a crime.

Morant spoke with ESPN for an interview that was to air later Wednesday night, and said the gun was not his.

## Scoreboard

### Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	48	22	.686	—
Philadelphia	46	22	.676	1
New York	41	30	.577	7½
Brooklyn	39	30	.565	8½
Toronto	33	36	.478	14½

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	38	33	.535	—
Atlanta	34	35	.493	3
Washington	32	37	.464	5
Orlando	28	41	.406	9
Charlotte	22	49	.310	16

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Milwaukee	50	19	.725	—
Cleveland	44	28	.611	7½
Chicago	31	37	.456	18½
Indiana	31	38	.449	19
Detroit	16	54	.229	34½

### Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	41	27	.603	—
Dallas	35	35	.500	7
New Orleans	33	36	.478	8½
San Antonio	18	51	.261	23½
Houston	17	52	.246	24½

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	46	23	.667	—
Minnesota	35	35	.500	11½
Oklahoma City	34	35	.493	12
Utah	33	36	.478	13
Portland	31	38	.449	15

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Sacramento	41	27	.603	—
Phoenix	37	32	.536	4½
L.A. Clippers	37	33	.529	5
Golden State	36	34	.514	6
L.A. Lakers	34	36	.486	8

x-clinched playoff spot

### Tuesday's games

Washington 117, Detroit 97  
Cleveland 120, Charlotte 104  
Toronto 125, Denver 110  
San Antonio 132, Orlando 114  
L.A. Lakers 123, New Orleans 108  
Oklahoma City 121, Brooklyn 107  
New York 123, Portland 107  
Milwaukee 116, Phoenix 104

### Wednesday's games

Miami 138, Memphis 119  
Philadelphia 118, Cleveland 109  
Boston 104, Minnesota 102  
Sacramento 117, Chicago 114  
Houston 114, L.A. Lakers 110  
Dallas 137, San Antonio 128, OT  
L.A. Clippers 134, Golden State 126

### Thursday's games

Denver at Detroit  
Oklahoma City at Toronto  
Sacramento at Brooklyn  
Indiana at Milwaukee  
Orlando at Phoenix

### Friday's games

Philadelphia at Charlotte  
Golden State at Atlanta  
Washington at Cleveland  
Memphis at San Antonio  
Minnesota at Chicago  
New Orleans at Houston  
Boston at Portland  
Dallas at L.A. Lakers

### Saturday's games

Denver at New York  
Orlando at L.A. Clippers  
Minnesota at Toronto  
Philadelphia at Indiana  
Golden State at Memphis  
Miami at Chicago  
Sacramento at Washington  
Boston at Utah

### Sunday's games

Denver at Brooklyn  
Phoenix at Oklahoma City  
Atlanta at San Antonio  
Miami at Detroit  
New Orleans at Houston  
Toronto at Milwaukee  
L.A. Clippers at Portland  
Orlando at L.A. Lakers

### Monday's games

Indiana at Charlotte  
Chicago at Philadelphia  
Minnesota at New York  
Golden State at Houston  
Dallas at Memphis  
Sacramento at Utah

## WOMEN'S NCAA TOURNAMENT

## Healthy Holmes gives Hoosiers best shot

By MICHAEL MAROT  
Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — Indiana center Mackenzie Holmes spent a whole year working so she could take one more shot at an NCAA championship.

She committed herself to recovering fully from the left knee injury that limited her mobility and productivity last March when the Hoosiers fell short of their title dreams. She promised to come back a better, stronger player.

After leading the Hoosiers through an unforgettable season, Holmes finally gets her chance to show everyone she's happy, healthy and capable of helping Indiana meet the lofty expectations that come with being a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

"I think it's really cool to see different teams getting those one-seeds and just being in those top-10, top-five teams because in years past, it's pretty consistently been the same teams," Holmes said after the pairings were announced Sunday. "So to see how much the game has grown and all these different teams up there has been really cool."

Indiana is one of this year's intriguing top-line newcomers and Holmes, of course, is a big reason the Hoosiers are viewed as a legitimate championship contender.

Since arriving on campus in 2019-20, the 6-foot-3 Maine native has been a double-digit scorer, a solid rebounder and a team-first player. As Holmes fine-tuned her all-around skills, coach Teri Moren increasingly structured her offense to run through the post.

Not surprisingly, Indiana's ascent tracked perfectly with Holmes' improvements.

The Hoosiers jumped from a 10th-place conference finish in 2018-19 to fourth in Holmes' first college season. When Holmes



BRUCE KLUCKHOHN/AP

Indiana forward Mackenzie Holmes, left, is healthy after being slowed by injuries last year. She hopes to take Indiana on its first Final Four trip.

became a full-time starter in Year 2, Indiana finished second in the Big Ten and advanced to the Elite Eight. Last season, with Holmes hobbled, the Hoosiers slipped to a fourth-place conference finish and lost in the regional semifinals.

But in what has undoubtedly been the best season of her career, Holmes responded by leading Indiana to unprecedented heights for one obvious reason: she's healthy.

"I'm not who I was when I came back from my surgery last season," Holmes said after a February victory. "I learned from it, and I think I'm better because of it."

Holmes was named a first-team AP All-American on Wednesday. She'd already earned her third straight all-conference se-

lection, made her second appearance on the league's all-defensive team and was selected as the Big Ten's player of the year.

She starts postseason play ranked No. 7 nationally in scoring with a career-best 22.3 points per game, second nationally in field goal percentage at 68.8% and second in the Big Ten with 1.9 blocks.

Holmes and her teammates never measured success by individual stat lines and that perspective has helped them produce the best season in school history.

Indiana (27-3) broke the program record for overall wins and tied the mark for conference wins (16). It finished the season ranked a program-best No. 2, set four new single-game home attendance marks

capped by the first-ever Assembly Hall sell-out as the Hoosiers celebrated their first regular-season conference crown since 1982-83.

"A lot of the credit goes to Grace (Berger) and coach Moren and Mac, they built this program," said Sydney Parrish, Indiana's 2020 Indiana Miss Basketball who transferred back to her home state from Oregon before this season. "They're the ones that did this. They built it from the bottom, a program that wasn't much at the start."

They're not finished, either.

On Saturday, Indiana hosts NCAA tournament games for the second straight season and the second time in school history. The Hoosiers will face either Tennessee Tech (22-9) or Monmouth (18-15), who met in Thursday's First Four.

Could all of this have happened last season had Holmes not needed midseason surgery?

"Once Mac got hurt, she wasn't quite 100%," Moren said last fall. "So I think in retrospect, when we look back at what could have been different — if Mac would have been 100% — could we have won a Big Ten championship? I think we could have."

The Hoosiers have never been big on reflection and they're not about to start now as they step into the national spotlight with Holmes and Berger, the scrappy fifth-year guard, playing the leading roles.

Instead, Indiana intends to rely on its nimble centerpiece as long as possible.

"I know there are a lot of good post (players) in the country, but there's none better than the one that lives in Bloomington right now," Purdue coach Katie Gearlds said. "If they stay healthy, if they stay out of foul trouble, there's a good chance we see this team in Dallas."

## Injuries change dynamic heading into openers

By PAT EATON-ROBB  
Associated Press

Athletes and coaches aren't the only ones putting in extra time this week to help teams get ready for the NCAA Tournament.

Doctors and trainers are playing a big role, with injuries leaving question marks on several top teams. A look at which programs could have their championship dreams impacted by missing or returning players this March:

## Notre Dame

The Fighting Irish (25-5) won the ACC regular-season title but lost star Olivia Miles to a right knee injury in their Feb. 26 win over Louisville. Miles, who was averaging 14.3 points, 7.2 rebounds and 6.9 assists, missed the ACC Tournament, and her return is uncertain.

No. 3-seeded Notre Dame already had lost fifth-year guard Dara Mabrey to an injury during a Jan. 22 win over Virginia.

Notre Dame's tournament hopes may well depend on when Miles can return and how effective she can be once she does.



MATT FREED/AP

Notre Dame guard Olivia Miles, left, was injured on Feb. 26. The Irish are still waiting to see if she will be healthy enough to play.

"She's gonna be with the doctors a little bit more this week, but she is progressing," coach Niele Ivey told reporters on Sunday.

## UConn

UConn's prospects to earn a

15th straight trip to the Final Four suffered a major blow before the season began when national player of the year Paige Bueckers and incoming freshman Ice Brady both went down with season-ending knee injuries.

The No. 2-seeded Huskies (29-5) then lost leading scorer Azzi Fudd for 22 games with two separate knee injuries and guard Caroline Ducharme for 13 games with a concussion. Only two Huskies, Lou Lopez Senechal and Aaliyah Edwards, have played every game this season.

Fudd, who was averaging just under 18 points before being hurt, and Ducharme, a three-point threat, both returned for the Big East Tournament, though neither was in top form: Fudd averaged just 8.3 points over the three games and Ducharme scored a total of four points.

UConn, which faces Vermont (25-6) on Saturday, hopes that the return of Ducharme and Fudd can help propel the Huskies back into title contention.

## Texas

The Big 12 regular-season champion Longhorns (25-9) are another team looking to bounce back from a slew of injuries.

Players who were part of the Texas rotation missed a total of 45 regular-season games. The big-

gest loss came when 6-foot-1 forward Aaliyah Moore went down with an ACL tear on Dec. 13.

Sonya Morris (quad) and Ndjakalenga Mwentanda (ankle) also are banged up, but coach Vic Shafer expects to have both of them back when the No. 4 seed takes on East Carolina (23-9) in the opening round.

Forward Taylor Jones is back from a lower-body injury that kept the Oregon State transfer out for nine games late in the season.

## North Carolina State

North Carolina State (20-11) is a No. 7 seed after losing to Notre Dame in the ACC Tournament.

The Wolfpack were missing guard Diamond Johnson, who has been bothered by a right ankle injury that also cost her seven regular-season games. Johnson, who leads the Wolfpack in scoring (12.3 points) and assists (3.5 per game), hasn't played since Feb. 16.

She was held out to give her ankle more time to heal and could be back for the opening-round game against Ivy League champion Princeton (23-5).

## MEN'S NCAA TOURNAMENT

# Jackson-Davis' Indiana legacy tied to March run

By MICHAEL MAROT  
Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — Trayce Jackson-Davis' storybook career can be told many ways.

His stat sheet is one of the greatest in Indiana history: First player with 2,000 points and 1,000 rebounds, career leader in blocks and rebounds, No. 3 all-time in scoring.

The accolades — first team pre-season Associated Press All-American, four-time all-conference selection and first Hoosier in a decade to make consecutive Big Ten all-defensive teams — show how he's revered by those outside the program.

Teammates speak glowingly of Jackson-Davis' leadership, determination and commitment to restore the Hoosiers' once proud and annual postseason tradition.

Yet the 6-foot-9 forward enters this year's NCAA Tournament understanding the book has not closed on his college career.

"Gentleman, we've got a lot of ball left to be played," he said following his final home game as he referenced the program's championship history. "We've got to go get one of those (Big Ten titles) and then we've got to go get No. 6."

At Indiana, after all, legacies are established by hanging banners.

Jackson-Davis' first title run opportunity came up two wins short at last weekend's conference tournament. His second shot, and like-

ly his last, begins Friday as Indiana (22-11), the No. 4 seed, faces Mid-American Conference tourney champ Kent State (28-6) in Albany, N.Y.

Jackson-Davis certainly has done his part in ways that defy today's trends.

The 2019 IndyStar Mr. Basketball Award winner could have gone to college anywhere but chose to play one hour from his home in Greenwood, Ind., to don the trademark candy-striped pants.

He arrived as the latest in-state recruit expected to lead Indiana's program back to national prominence and a sixth national championship. He has stuck around four years, despite the ever-changing script.

And while his 2,211 points, 1,124 rebounds, 260 blocks, 265 assists and 49 career double-doubles reveal one chapter, the respect he's earned from others tells another tale.

"Trayce is fabulous, great person, great player," Purdue coach Matt Painter said. "He's added more pieces to his game. His decision-making when he first started was just OK. Now he's gotten really good. When we made moves, our guys just bounced off him. He's got a bright future."

Many thought he was bound for the NBA after making the Big Ten's all-conference and all-freshmen teams in 2019-20. Instead he

came back to develop his right hand, extend his range and become a stronger post presence.

His sophomore season was marred by pandemic restrictions, mostly empty seats, unfulfilled dreams and eventually a coaching change that again nearly prompted him to turn pro. One meeting with new coach Mike Woodson changed everything.

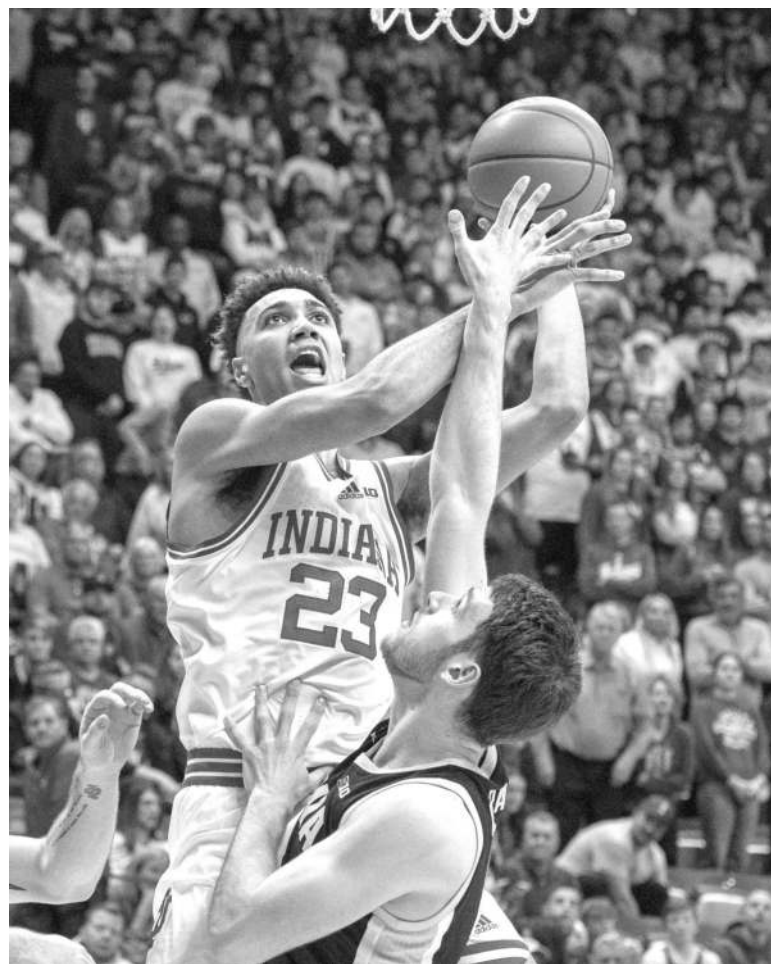
"I want to get Indiana basketball back on track. That's my goal, that's why I came back," he said at the time. "I believe in the tradition. I believe what we have here is something special. I didn't want to be someone who ran away when it was tough."

Jackson-Davis made good on his promise over the past two seasons.

When a five-game losing streak late last season threatened to extend the Hoosiers' NCAA Tournament drought to six years, Jackson-Davis put the team on his back and carried them to four wins in six games and a victory over Wyoming in the play-in round. Eight games in 15 days proved to be too much for the weary Hoosiers in a blowout loss to Saint Mary's.

He was headed to the NBA Draft combine until a positive COVID-19 test kept him home. He took it as a sign he should return for Year 4.

"What sticks out to me is him telling me he was coming back and, you know, that kind of set the



DOUG MCSCHOOLER/AP

**Trayce Jackson-Davis is the first Indiana player with 2,000 points and 1,000 rebounds. He begins his quest to cement his legacy on Friday.**

stage for where we are today," Woodson said.

Jackson-Davis relied on his nimble moves, an advanced passing game, uncanny timing to thwart opponents' shots and the vision to lead fast breaks in his most productive season yet.

Jackson-Davis recently announced this would be his final college season, though the Senior Night crowd chanted "one more year" because they're not ready to bid farewell to their popular star.

With a potential Sweet 16 con-

test against top-seeded Houston and former Indiana coach Kelvin Sampson, could there be a more fitting final chapter?

One memorable, banner-winning run would cement his place in Hoosiers' history.

"I know I left everything I have out there on the court. I think Indiana fans and fans that enjoy college basketball will appreciate that," he said. "But at the same time, we've still got some ball left to be played, and we're just going to see what happens."

## TCU motivated by OT loss to top seed last year

By STEPHEN HAWKINS  
Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Chuck O'Bannon, Mike Miles and their TCU teammates have been motivated all this season by what happened in the NCAA Tournament last year, when the Horned Frogs came so close to upsetting a No. 1 seed and getting to the Sweet 16.

"Still to this day, we talk about that last game," O'Bannon said.

After getting through another brutal Big 12 schedule, including a six-game stretch without leading scorer Miles after he hyperextended his right knee, 22nd-ranked TCU (21-12) is making consecutive March Madness appearances for the first time in 70 years.

"It feels like it's come up on us quick," Miles said. "I feel like we're more prepared than last year. We're more experienced, we know how it feels to be in the tournament."

TCU last March beat Seton Hall for its first NCAA Tournament victory in 35 years, when current coach Jamie Dixon was a senior guard on that 1987 team. The Frogs then overcame a nine-point deficit in the final eight minutes of regulation against Ari-



CHARLIE RIEDEL/AP

**Chuck O'Bannon Jr., right, and Mike Miles Jr. were part of last year's TCU team that just missed the Sweet 16.**

zona before falling 85-80 in overtime.

Seven of the nine TCU players who took part in that OT loss are with the sixth-seeded Frogs in Denver for their first-round game Friday night. They play No. 11 seed Arizona State.

Eddie Lampkin, the 6-foot-11, 263-pound center who had 20 points and 14 rebounds against Arizona, is still listed on TCU's ros-

ter but has entered the transfer portal after not being at the Big 12 tournament last week. He has deleted Instagram posts with screenshots of text messages from his mother that appeared to accuse Dixon of player mistreatment and "racial comments."

Dixon has said he and the Frogs still love Lampkin, but there have been no further comments from the school.

O'Bannon had a career-high 23 points against Arizona last March. Miles scored 20, including a go-ahead basket with 3½ minutes left, but lost the ball at midcourt at the end of regulation without being able to at least attempt a tiebreaking shot.

"I'll always think about that," Miles said.

That was the first NCAA appearance for the Frogs since 2018.

With so much talent back this season, a tourney return was expected. And the Frogs made it, working through a series of injuries and absences to get there.

TCU played its first six games without senior guard Damion Baugh because of an NCAA-imposed suspension for signing with an NBA certified agent after last season. Baugh, who self-reported the incident, has

started all 27 games since.

Miles got hurt before the first media timeout in a loss at Mississippi State on Jan. 28. TCU then lost four of the next five games without him. Micah Peavy (back) missed four games in January, and Oklahoma State transfer Rondel Walker (elbow) was out four games in February.

"It shows we're resilient," Miles said. "We've missed a lot of players and a lot of games. We've mixed the lines up a lot this year. But we still find a way to compete, still find a way to win."

After Big 12 coaches tabbed Miles the preseason player of the year, he was a second-team All-Big 12 pick after the missed time. He still averages 17.3 points a game, and in TCU's two games at the Big 12 tournament was 12-for-26 shooting (five made three-pointers) for 37 points.

"I feel like I've got a rhythm going into the tournament. I feel confident in everything, my knee and my shot," Miles said.

"He's playing really well, he's practicing well, he's shooting the ball well. ... Mike is defending well," Dixon said. "He's playing his best basketball this time of the year. He's healthy."

# MEN'S NCAA TOURNAMENT

## Scoreboard

**FIRST FOUR**  
**At Dayton, Ohio**  
**Tuesday, March 14**  
 Texas A&M-Corpus Christi 75, SE Missouri 71  
 Pittsburgh 60, Mississippi St. 59

**Wednesday, March 15**  
 Fairleigh Dickinson 84, Texas Southern 61  
 Arizona St. 98, Nevada 73

**EAST REGIONAL**  
**First Round**  
**Friday, March 17**  
**At Columbus, Ohio**  
 Purdue (29-5) vs. Fairleigh Dickinson (20-15)  
 Memphis (26-8) vs. FAU (31-3)  
**At Greensboro, N.C.**  
 Kentucky (21-11) vs. Providence (21-11)  
 Kansas St. (23-9) vs. Montana St. (25-9)  
**At Columbus, Ohio**  
 Michigan St. (19-12) vs. Southern Cal (22-10)  
 Marquette (28-6) vs. Vermont (23-10)

**Thursday, March 16**  
**At Orlando, Fla.**  
 Duke (26-8) vs. Oral Roberts (30-4)  
 Tennessee (23-10) vs. Louisiana-Lafayette (26-7)

**Second Round**  
**Sunday, March 19**  
**At Columbus, Ohio**  
 Purdue-Fairleigh Dickinson winner vs. Memphis-FAU winner  
**At Greensboro, N.C.**  
 Kansas St.-Montana St. winner vs. Kentucky-Providence winner  
**At Columbus, Ohio**  
 Marquette-Vermont winner vs. Michigan St.-Southern Cal winner

**Saturday, March 18**  
**At Orlando, Fla.**  
 Tennessee-Louisiana-Lafayette winner vs. Duke-Oral Roberts winner

**SOUTH REGIONAL**  
**First Round**  
**Thursday, March 16**  
**At Birmingham, Ala.**  
 Alabama (29-5) vs. Texas A&M-Corpus Christi (24-10)  
 Maryland (21-12) vs. West Virginia (19-14)

**At Orlando, Fla.**  
 San Diego St. (27-6) vs. Coll. of Charleston (31-3)  
 Virginia (25-7) vs. Furman (27-7)  
**At Sacramento, Calif.**  
 Missouri (24-9) vs. Utah St. (26-8)  
 Arizona (28-6) vs. Princeton (21-8)

**Friday, March 17**  
**At Denver**  
 Creighton (21-12) vs. NC State (23-10)  
 Baylor (22-10) vs. UC Santa Barbara (27-7)

**Second Round**  
**Saturday, March 18**  
**At Birmingham, Ala.**  
 Alabama-Texas A&M-Corpus Christi winner vs. Maryland-West Virginia winner  
**At Orlando, Fla.**  
 Virginia-Furman winner vs. San Diego St.-Coll. of Charleston winner  
**At Sacramento, Calif.**  
 Arizona-Princeton winner vs. Missouri-Utah St. winner

**Sunday, March 19**  
**At Denver**  
 Baylor-UC Santa Barbara winner vs. Creighton-NC State winner

**MIDWEST REGIONAL**  
**First Round**  
**Thursday, March 16**  
**At Birmingham, Ala.**  
 Houston (31-3) vs. N. Kentucky (22-12)  
 Iowa (19-13) vs. Auburn (20-12)  
**At Des Moines, Iowa**  
 Texas A&M (25-9) vs. Penn St. (22-13)  
 Texas (26-8) vs. Colgate (26-8)

**Friday, March 17**  
**At Albany, N.Y.**  
 Miami (25-7) vs. Drake (27-7)  
 Indiana (22-11) vs. Kent St. (28-6)  
**At Greensboro, N.C.**  
 Iowa St. (19-13) vs. Pittsburgh (23-11)  
 Xavier (25-9) vs. Kennesaw St. (26-8)

**Second Round**  
**Saturday, March 18**  
**At Birmingham, Ala.**  
 Houston-N. Kentucky winner vs. Iowa-Auburn winner  
**At Des Moines, Iowa**  
 Texas-Colgate winner vs. Texas A&M-Penn St. winner

**Sunday, March 19**  
**At Albany, N.Y.**  
 Indiana-Kent St. winner vs. Miami-Drake winner  
**At Greensboro, N.C.**  
 Xavier-Kennesaw St. winner vs. Iowa St.-Pittsburgh winner

**WEST REGIONAL**  
**First Round**  
**Thursday, March 16**  
**At Des Moines, Iowa**  
 Kansas (27-7) vs. Howard (22-12)  
 Arkansas (20-13) vs. Illinois (20-12)  
**At Sacramento, Calif.**  
 Northwestern (21-11) vs. Boise St. (24-9)  
 UCLA (29-5) vs. UNC-Asheville (27-7)

**Friday, March 17**  
**At Albany, N.Y.**  
 Saint Mary's (Cal.) (26-7) vs. VCU (27-7)  
 UConn (25-8) vs. Iona (27-7)

**At Denver**  
 TCU (21-12) vs. Arizona St. (23-12)  
 Gonzaga (28-5) vs. Grand Canyon (24-11)

**Second Round**  
**Saturday, March 18**  
**At Des Moines, Iowa**  
 Kansas-Howard winner vs. Arkansas-Illinois winner  
**At Sacramento, Calif.**  
 UCLA-UNC-Asheville winner vs. Northwestern-Boise St. winner

**Sunday, March 19**  
**At Albany, N.Y.**  
 UConn-Iona winner vs. Saint Mary's (Cal.)-VCU winner  
**At Denver**  
 Gonzaga-Grand Canyon winner vs. TCU-Arizona St. winner

# Miami brings balanced scoring

## 'Canes boast four players averaging 13 points a game

BY TIM REYNOLDS  
 Associated Press

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — The voters deciding the Atlantic Coast Conference's player of the year say Isaiah Wong is Miami's best player.

He might be. Then again, so might Jordan Miller. Or Norchad Omier. Or Nijel Pack. It almost varies by game.

Such is the strength of Miami heading into the NCAA Tournament.

The ACC's regular-season co-champions are one of only two teams that made the field of 68 to have four players averaging at least 13 points per game (Xavier is the other). It's the sort of production that keeps defenses guessing and a good argument for suggesting the Hurricanes have a shot at making another deep tournament run.

"One of the best teams in the country," Wake Forest coach Steve Forbes said. "They're elite on offense. I don't think they get enough credit by the way they defend. Their guards are really fast. They can really move their feet. They're physical. They're handsy. ... They have an outstanding team."

Not only are they deep and balanced — Wong, Miller, Omier and Pack all average between 13 and 16 points per game — now, evidently, they're annoyed.

Based on preseason prognostications, not much was expected



CHRIS SEWARD/AP

Guard Jordan Miller, left, forward Norchad Omier, center, and guard Isaiah Wong give Miami the balanced scoring that makes the Hurricanes a threat in the NCAA Tournament.

from Miami this season even after coming off a run to the Elite Eight a year ago.

On Wednesday, the team, in conjunction with The Players' Tribune, released a video that playfully recommends those filling out their brackets not pick Miami.

"You didn't pick us before, so why start now?" Miller asks in the video.

Fair question, though it's also fair to think that Miami earned plenty of respect between the pre-season and the postseason.

The Hurricanes, seeded fifth in the Midwest Region, open Friday against 12th-seeded Drake in Albany, N.Y.

"We know we have a big challenge in front of us," Drake coach Darian DeVries said.

The Hurricanes were in the last 14 editions of the AP Top 25 this season, something only 12 other schools can say. They were the No. 1 seed in the ACC Tournament and lost to eventual champion Duke, falling in a semifinal game where Omier — the team's best inside player — badly rolled an ankle 66 seconds after tip-off.

Wong and Miller started last season when Miami won 26 games and wound up losing to eventual national champion Kansas in a re-

gional final. Pack and Omier transferred in and Wooga Poplar was promoted to the starting lineup.

They didn't miss a beat.

"Somebody asked me, 'When did I think we could be really good?'" Miami coach Jim Larrañaga said. "I said, it amazed me, the chemistry and the bond these guys had from Day 1 during the summer when our four freshmen came in, when our two transfers were in and our returning players were there. Watching them in workouts, they got along so well with each other and played really good basketball."

# Plan: Supporting cast willing to be role players

FROM PAGE 48

Ethan Morton earned a starting job this year because he's a defensive stopper though he previously seemed comfortable being the high-scoring Pennsylvania prep star who earned the state's Mr. Basketball and Gatorade Player of the Year awards in 2019-20.

Guard David Jenkins Jr., a 24-year-old veteran, compiled more than 1,800 points at three schools, earning all-conference honors in two leagues before coming to Purdue. He is 11 points shy of 2,000.

Beefy forward Mason Gillis was an Indiana Junior All-Star and one of the state's top baseball players before a knee injury cost him his senior high school season. He helps Purdue play physical, but he's also a skilled shooter as Rutgers discovered when he went 7-for-8 in last week's quarterfinal win and Penn State learned when he made a career-high nine three-pointers in February.

"You've got to do something, right?" perplexed Nittany Lions coach Micah Shrewsberry said after that 20-point loss. "But Zach beat us up in the paint so badly the last time ... it's



Painter

also about how you construct the team. You have the most dominant player in college basketball, and you put guys around him that fit perfectly."

Few have devised a solution this season and now Purdue has its first No. 1 seed since 1996.

Perhaps nobody appreciates the contributions or sacrifices Edey's teammates have made better than Painter, who grew up in Indiana a fan of the rival Hoosiers but was never recruited by Bob Knight even after making the 1989 Indiana All-Star team.

Instead, Painter was overshadowed by others at Purdue — Steve Scheffler, Woody Austin and Glenn "Big Dog" Robinson, the focal point of the 1992-93 team many also dubbed a one-man show.

Clearly, Painter didn't construct this roster by happenstance.

"In recruiting I just tell them, if you become one of our top two or three scorers, here's how

we'll use you. If you don't, you're going to play a role," Painter said. "But you've got to have people that will play roles, and that's really a tip of the hat to those guys."

Now as Painter and the Boilermakers get set to face Fairleigh Dickinson (20-15) Friday in Columbus, Ohio, the hope is that this NCAA trip won't end like some other recent ones.

Purdue has been to the Sweet 16 four times in its last five tourney appearances but has only advanced to the Elite Eight once. There have also been three first-round exits since 2015.

To achieve their first taste of the Final Four since Joe Barry Carroll took them in 1980, Purdue's complementary players need to produce alongside Edey. Painter knows people will watch to see if the Boilermakers "overdo" their talented big man.

"I just think we have good balance," Painter said. "I always talk about everybody's going to have to sacrifice to be able to win big, and then if you win big collectively, you get individual honors. When you win a championship by three games, I would hope people can kind of open their eyes to it."

## NFL/BASEBALL

## Rodgers, other QBs move to open free agency

By ROB MAADDI  
Associated Press

After a flurry of moves in the two days ahead of the official start of the NFL free agency period, Aaron Rodgers made the biggest news Wednesday by announcing his intention to play for the New York Jets.

Several more players switched teams, others are staying put and a few stars, including Ezekiel Elliott, will be looking for new homes in 2023.

But Rodgers is the dominant story of the offseason, and the four-time AP NFL MVP cleared things up during an appearance on "The Pat McAfee Show" on YouTube and Sirius XM a few hours before the league year started at 4 p.m. EDT.

Rodgers said the Packers assured him after the season that they wanted him to return, but things changed after he emerged from a five-day darkness retreat. He said he was told by people, mostly players on other teams, that the Packers shopped him around because they want to move on and make 2020 first-round draft pick Jordan Love their starting quarterback.

Rodgers said he entered the retreat "90% retiring, 10% playing" but he has since made a decision to play this season.

"At this point, as I sit here, I think since Friday, I've made it

clear that my intention was to play and my intention was to play for the New York Jets," Rodgers said. "I haven't been holding anything up at this point. It's been compensation the Packers are trying to get for me, kind of digging their heels in."

Rodgers, who replaced Brett Favre as the starter in Green Bay after the Hall of Famer was traded to the Jets, spent 18 seasons with the Packers and led them to a Super Bowl title following the 2010 season.

Former No. 1 overall pick Baker Mayfield was among other players on the move Wednesday, agreeing to an \$8.5 million, one-year contract with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press.

Mayfield, the top pick by Cleveland in 2018, joins his third team since last July. He gets an opportunity to compete with Kyle Trask to replace Tom Brady, who retired after three seasons with the Buccaneers.

Mayfield was 2-8 in 10 starts last season with the Panthers and Rams.

Jacoby Brissett, who replaced Mayfield in Cleveland while Deshaun Watson served a suspension, agreed to terms with the Washington Commanders on a one-year contract worth \$10 million with \$8 million guaranteed, according to a person with knowl-



MATT LUDTKE / AP

**New York Jets head coach Robert Saleh, center, laughs with Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers during a joint training camp practice Aug. 18, 2021 in Green Bay, Wis.**

edge of the deal.

Brissett will compete with projected starter Sam Howell, a second-year pro. Brissett threw for 2,608 yards, 12 touchdowns and six interceptions last season for the Browns in 11 starts.

The New England Patriots made their first big pickup of free

agency, adding wide receiver Juju Smith-Schuster. A person with knowledge of the deal said it is for three years and could be worth as much as \$33 million.

Smith-Schuster confirmed the move in a post on Twitter saying he was "Excited for my next chapter in New England!"

Smith-Schuster had 78 receptions for 933 yards and three touchdowns last season for Kansas City. He was held by Eagles cornerback James Bradberry on a play that led to a go-ahead field goal late in the fourth quarter of the Chiefs' 38-35 win in the Super Bowl.

## WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC ROUNDUP

## Mets' Díaz hurts knee as Puerto Rico tops Dominicans

Associated Press

MIAMI — New York Mets star closer Edwin Díaz injured his right knee celebrating a win Wednesday night that advanced Puerto Rico in the World Baseball Classic and eliminated the Dominican Republic.

Díaz was taken off the field in a wheelchair in Miami soon after pitching a perfect ninth inning to close out Puerto Rico's 5-2 win over the Dominicans.

The Mets later tweeted that Díaz injured his knee and would undergo further tests Thursday.

The Puerto Rican players were jumping together in the infield when Díaz collapsed to the ground, and he quickly reached for his right leg. Díaz was in tears and did not put any weight on the leg.

Christian Vázquez homered in a four-run third inning as Puerto Rico advanced to the WBC quarterfinals to face Mexico on Friday in Miami.

**United States 3, Colombia 2:** Mike Trout had three hits and three RBIs, and the United States used a stellar night from its deep bullpen to beat Colombia in Phoenix and advance to a quarterfinal against Ve-



DAVID SANTIAGO, MIAMI HERALD/AP

**Puerto Rico pitcher Edwin Diaz is helped off the field by team pitching coach Ricky Bones and medical staff after a game against the Dominican Republic on Wednesday in Miami.**

nezuela on Saturday.

Mexico and the U.S. both finished with 3-1 records in Group C to advance. Mexico gets the top seed because it beat the U.S. 11-5 on Sunday.

Trout singled in the third, bringing home Mookie Betts and giving the U.S. a 1-0 lead. Colombia bounced back quickly, taking a 2-1

lead in the bottom of the third on Gio Urshela's sacrifice fly and an RBI double from Reynaldo Rodriguez. Trout put the Americans ahead again in the fifth with a two-run single that scored Betts and Will Smith.

Merrill Kelly gave up two runs in three innings for the Americans. Kelly then gave way to a parade of hard throwing bullpen arms: Ken-

dall Graveman, Daniel Bard, David Bednar, Jason Adam, Devin Williams and Ryan Pressly each threw a scoreless inning to finish the win.

**Japan 9, Italy 3:** Shohei Ohtani pitched shutout ball into the fifth inning and sparked a four-run third with a bunt single, leading Japan over Italy in Tokyo and into its fifth straight World Baseball Classic semifinal.

Boston's Masataka Yoshida homered and drove in the go-ahead run with a grounder, giving him a tournament-leading 10 RBIs. Kazuma Okamoto hit a three-run homer for Japan, which has outscored opponents 47-11 in five games.

Japan will travel to Miami for a semifinal on Monday against Puerto Rico or Mexico. Cuba will play the other semifinal against the United States or Venezuela.

**Cuba 4, Australia 3:** Cuba earned a 7,500-mile flight from Tokyo to Miami for a trip to the WBC semifinals for the first time since 2006.

Alfredo Despaigne hit a tiebreaking sacrifice fly and Yoelkis Guibert followed with a two-run single in three-run fifth inning.

Using current major leaguers for

the first time at the WBC, Cuba plays on Sunday in Marlins Park against the winner of the U.S.-Venezuela quarterfinal.

**Mexico 10, Canada 3:** Randy Arozarena had two doubles and five RBIs, Rowdy Tellez added a two-run single and solo homer, and Mexico pulled away late from Canada in Phoenix to earn a spot in the quarterfinals.

José Urquidy gave up two runs over four innings, striking out five to earn the win. Arozarena — the 2021 AL Rookie of the Year for the Tampa Bay Rays — hit a bases-clearing double in the sixth that broke the game open, giving Mexico a 6-2 lead.

**Venezuela 5, Israel 1:** Eugenio Suárez homered, singled twice and had three RBIs and starter Jesús Luzardo struck out five in four scoreless innings in Miami to lead Venezuela, which already had clinched the Group D title and a quarterfinal berth.

Ronald Acuña Jr. had two singles while Eduardo Escobar also went deep for Venezuela, which finished with 10 hits.

# NHL

## Scoreboard

Eastern Conference							
Atlantic Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Boston	66	50	11	5	105	248	148
Toronto	67	40	18	9	89	227	181
Tampa Bay	68	40	22	6	86	237	207
Florida	67	33	27	7	73	229	226
Buffalo	67	33	28	6	72	246	244
Ottawa	67	33	30	4	70	210	218
Detroit	67	30	28	9	69	200	219
Montreal	68	27	35	6	60	190	248
Metropolitan Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Carolina	66	44	14	8	96	222	168
New Jersey	67	44	17	6	94	236	181
N.Y. Rangers	67	38	19	10	86	222	189
Pittsburgh	67	34	23	10	78	221	216
N.Y. Islanders	70	35	27	8	78	204	195
Washington	69	33	29	7	73	216	209
Philadelphia	67	24	32	11	59	172	222
Columbus	66	21	38	7	49	175	249
Western Conference							
Central Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Dallas	68	37	18	13	87	236	185
Minnesota	68	39	21	8	86	203	183
Colorado	66	38	22	6	82	216	186
Winnipeg	68	38	27	3	79	213	194
Nashville	65	34	24	7	75	188	190
St. Louis	67	29	33	5	63	210	250
Arizona	68	25	32	11	61	192	240
Chicago	67	23	38	6	52	171	239
Pacific Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	68	42	20	6	90	222	188
Los Angeles	68	39	20	9	87	233	223
Edmonton	68	37	23	8	82	264	231
Seattle	67	37	23	7	81	234	216
Calgary	68	30	24	14	74	212	209
Vancouver	66	29	32	5	63	227	255
Anaheim	68	22	36	10	54	175	277
x-San Jose	68	19	36	13	51	198	263

**Note:** Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.  
 x-clinched playoff spot  
 y-clinched division  
 z-clinched conference

**Wednesday's games**  
 Colorado 2, Toronto 1, SO  
 Washington 5, Buffalo 4, SO  
 N.Y. Islanders 6, Anaheim 3  
 Minnesota 8, St. Louis 5

**Thursday's games**  
 Colorado at Ottawa  
 Montreal at Florida  
 Pittsburgh at N.Y. Rangers  
 Tampa Bay at New Jersey  
 Boston at Winnipeg  
 Chicago at Nashville  
 Dallas at Edmonton  
 Calgary at Vegas  
 Vancouver at Arizona  
 Columbus at Los Angeles  
 Seattle at San Jose

**Friday's games**  
 Buffalo at Philadelphia  
 Carolina at Toronto  
 St. Louis at Washington  
 Columbus at Anaheim

**Saturday's games**  
 Colorado at Detroit  
 Boston at Minnesota  
 Winnipeg at Nashville  
 Edmonton at Seattle  
 Carolina at Philadelphia  
 New Jersey at Florida  
 Montreal at Tampa Bay  
 Toronto at Ottawa  
 Pittsburgh at N.Y. Rangers  
 Dallas at Calgary  
 Vancouver at Los Angeles  
 Chicago at Arizona  
 N.Y. Islanders at San Jose

**Sunday's games**  
 Boston at Buffalo  
 Washington at Minnesota  
 Columbus at Vegas  
 Nashville at N.Y. Rangers  
 New Jersey at Tampa Bay  
 Winnipeg at St. Louis  
 Vancouver at Anaheim

**Scoring leaders**  
**Through Thursday**

	GP	G	A	PTS
Connor McDavid, EDM	68	56	73	129
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	66	44	56	100
Nikita Kucherov, TB	68	27	69	96
David Pastrnak, BOS	66	46	43	89
Matthew Tkachuk, FLA	64	30	57	87
Tage Thompson, BUF	67	42	45	87
Mitch Marner, TOR	67	24	62	86
Erik Karlsson, SJ	68	20	65	85
Jason Robertson, DAL	68	39	46	85

# Bruins focusing on Cup over records

By JIMMY GOLEN  
*Associated Press*

BOSTON — In a season full of extreme numbers, the Boston Bruins know exactly what value they put on winning the most games in NHL history.

“Zero,” defenseman Charlie McAvoy said last week, a day before Boston became the fastest team in history to 50 wins. “Bottom of anything I care about.”

The Bruins have been cruising through the regular season, and racking up milestones along the way. But even though they could amass the most wins ever — and most points, too — the players and brass have insisted they don’t have any interest in the biggest regular-season records of all.

“We play for the Stanley Cup,” Bruins President Cam Neely said flatly. “I tell everybody, ‘Enjoy the ride, but it’s all about the Stanley Cup.’”

The Bruins were coming off back-to-back 100-point seasons — and three straight early playoff exits — when they fired coach Bruce Cassidy last summer and hired Jim Montgomery to replace him. Key players like McAvoy, a Norris Trophy contender, and Brad Marchand, the team’s No. 2 scorer, were recovering from surgery, but the Bruins didn’t wait until they were at full strength.

They won six of seven games before Marchand got back on the ice, moving to the top of the Eastern Conference in the second week of the season; McAvoy’s return helped boost them to the league’s No. 1 overall seed, where they have remained since Veteran’s Day. They didn’t lose at home in regulation until January.

They were the fastest team in NHL history to 100 points and 50 wins, and the first one to clinch a playoff berth this year. Still, after winning their 50th game, which also turned out to be the playoff clincher, goalie Linus Ullmark couldn’t be less enthusiastic.

“Congrats to us, then,” he said. “I guess.”

Boston has a chance to post the most wins in NHL history, surpassing the 62 by the 1995-96 Red Wings and tied by the 2018-19 Lightning. It also has a chance to surpass the record 132 points amassed by the 1976-77 Montreal Canadiens.

But for a team that has already won the Presidents’ Trophy twice since 2004 — and failed to win the Cup both times — a league-leading third top finish doesn’t hold much allure.

“To me, the regular season (record), it is nice,” captain Patrice Bergeron said. “But you’re working hard to get into the playoffs. And that’s where the main focus is.”

Montgomery said the team hasn’t talked about the records, in-



CHARLES KRUPA/AP

**Boston Bruins forward Jakub Lauko, center, smiles after scoring against the Buffalo Sabres on March 2 in Boston.**

stead concentrating on getting in shape for the playoffs. If the Bruins have only the records to play for in the final days or weeks, he said, they will instead try to make sure everyone is rested and healthy for what they hope will be a two-month postseason slog.

“Us preparing for the Stanley Cup playoffs is more important than anything in the regular season,” he said.

Defenseman Matt Grzelczyk al-

lowed that the regular-season record “would be quite an accomplishment,” but one that is “pretty low on the list.” It hasn’t escaped his notice that neither the ’96 Red Wings nor the ’19 Lightning won the Cup.

“We’ve seen that it’s kind of bit teams in the past,” Grzelczyk said. “We’ll just go out there and compete and let the chips fall where they may.”

Similar fates befell the 2001


Seattle Mariners, who won 116 games but didn’t even make the World Series; the ’16 Golden State Warriors, who broke the NBA record with 73 wins but lost in the Finals; and the ’07 New England Patriots, who won all 18 games in the regular season and playoffs before losing in the Super Bowl.

“It was an unbelievable season, ’18-19, but I think it was almost too easy for us to play great,” said former Lightning winger Ondrej Palat, whose team was swept by Columbus in the first playoff round.

“It was very frustrating after a year like that,” Palat said. “But I’m not saying it’s like the Bruins. The Bruins are playing unbelievable hockey, and they have a big chance in the playoffs.”


Of course, Tampa Bay won the Stanley Cup in each of the next two seasons.

Neely never played his way to the trophy, losing in the Final to the Edmonton Oilers in 1988 and again two years later; he did get his name on the Cup when he helped build the Bruins team that won it all in 2011. That was their last championship, a drought this year’s team is looking to end.



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A maximum of 30 spaces are available, tickets are 19€, and can be bought at the Information Desk!

**We hope to see you there!**



*Echt gut gemacht.*

# SPORTS



## Ready to switch teams

Rodgers announces intention to play for Jets next season » **NFL, Page 46**

### MEN'S NCAA TOURNAMENT



CARLOS OSORIO/AP

Michigan State guard A.J. Hoggard loses the ball while dribbling between Purdue guard David Jenkins Jr., left, and guard Braden Smith on Jan. 16 in East Lansing, Mich.

# Sticking with the plan

## Purdue's supporting cast content to set table for big man Edey

By MICHAEL MAROT  
*Associated Press*

**P**urdue stuck to a simple game plan this season: Feed the ball to All-American Zach Edey and let the 7-foot-4 center feast in the post.

The old-school philosophy defied today's trendy, small-ball style heavy on the three-pointer attack but it allowed the Boilermakers to ascend to No. 1 in the AP Top 25 twice this season.

Coach Matt Painter's squad needed more than just Edey to claim its first Big Ten Tournament title since 2009. If the East Region's top seed wants to avoid another earlier-than-expected NCAA tourney exit, Purdue's supporting cast must supplement Edey's medley in the middle.

"We have a lot of guys who could go to a different team and average a lot of points,

### INSIDE

Balanced scoring makes Hurricanes tough to stop  
**Page 45**

Last year's overtime loss to top seed driving TCU  
**Page 44**

be on all-Big Ten teams or whatever, but they're happy we're here," Edey said Sunday. "We have a lot of guys who love winning. That's what Purdue is."

The regular-season Big Ten champions are no one-man band. At No. 3 Purdue (29-5), the talent pool runs deep — and everybody has a role.

Freshman guards Braden Smith and Fletcher Loyer have started all season after finishing first and second in last year's IndyStar Mr. Basketball Award voting, just like teammates Caleb Furst and Trey Kaufman-Renn did in 2021.

Loyer is the smooth, polished shooter, the son of an NBA coach who averages 10.9 points per game. Smith is the confident, gritty guy who basks in driving opponents and their fans bonkers. He's also scores 9.8 per game.

"We all can shoot. We knew that coming into the season," Smith said last weekend. "Early on, we haven't shot it well but we're starting to figure it out."

The Boilermakers' rotation has a flavor for everyone.

SEE PLAN ON PAGE 45



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP

Purdue's offense runs through 7-foot-4 center Zach Edey, who is averaging 22.3 points and 12.8 rebounds this season.

# Bruins' focus is on Cup, not setting records » **NHL, Page 47**

