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US 'pivot' to China entangled by Russia

BY AAMER MADHANI
AND CHRIS MEGERIAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden set out to finally complete the "pivot to Asia," a long sought adjustment of U.S. foreign policy to better reflect the rise of America's most significant military and economic competitor: China.

But Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine has made that vexing move even more complicated. China's government has vacillated between full embrace and more measured responses as Russian President Vladimir Putin prosecutes his war, making the decisions for Biden far more layered.

That leaves the Biden administration needing to focus East and West at the same time, balancing not simply economic imperatives but military ones as well.

"It's difficult. It's expensive," Kurt Campbell, the coordinator for Indo-Pacific Affairs on the White House National Security Council, said during a recent forum of maintaining a high-level U.S. focus in two regions. "But it's also essential, and I believe we're entering a period where that's what will be required of the United States and of this generation of Americans."

The president has been deeply

SEE PIVOT ON PAGE 6

Retired generals say US response to invasion 'too timid' **Page 9**



ANDREW MARIENKO/AP

A Ukrainian territorial defense forces volunteer assists a woman across a street filled with rubble in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday.

Onslaught hits civilians

Rescuers search for survivors after a Mariupol theater was smashed

BY ANDREA ROSA
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Rescuers searched for survivors Thursday in the ruins of a theater blown apart by a Russian airstrike in the besieged city of Mariupol, while scores of Ukrainians across the country were killed in ferocious urban attacks on a school, a hostel and other sites.

Hundreds of civilians had been taking shelter in the grand, columned theater in central Mariupol after their homes were destroyed in three weeks of fighting in the southern port city

of 430,000.

More than a day after the airstrike, there were no reports of deaths. With communications disrupted across the city, there were also conflicting reports on whether anyone had emerged from the rubble.

"We hope and we think that some people who stayed in the shelter under the theater could survive," Petro Andrushchenko, an official with the mayor's office, told The Associated Press. He said the building had a relatively modern basement bomb shelter designed to withstand airstrikes.

Other officials had said earlier that some people had gotten out. Ukraine's ombudswoman, Ludmyla Denisova, said on the Telegram messaging app that the shelter had held up.

Satellite imagery on Monday from Maxar technology showed huge white letters on the pavement in front of and behind the theater spelling out "CHILDREN" in Russian — "DETI" — to alert warplanes to those inside.

Russia's military denied bombing the theater or anyplace else in Mariupol on Wednesday.

SEE ONSLAUGHT ON PAGE 7

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Europe Gas Prices were not made available before press time

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	Guam
Japan	..	\$5.099	..	\$5.319	\$4.389	\$4.839
Change in price	..	+24.0 cents	..	+40.0 cents	+21.0 cents	+24.0 cents
Okinawa	\$4.379	\$5.319	\$4.389	\$5.109
Change in price	+21.0 cents	+40.0 cents	+21.0 cents	+24.0 cents

*DieselEFD **Midgrade
For the week of March 18-24

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (March 18)	\$1.08	Bahrain(Dinar)	0.3770
Dollar buys (March 18)	0.8820	Britain (Pound)	1.3117
British pound (March 18)	\$1.28	Canada (Dollar)	1.2662
Japanese yen (March 18)	115.00	China(Yuan)	6.3502
South Korean won (March 18)	1192.00	Denmark (Krone)	6.7251
		Egypt (Pound)	15.7150
		Euro	0.9035
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8171
		Hungary (Forint)	335.91
		Israel (Shekel)	3.2369
		Japan (Yen)	118.76
		Kuwait(Dinar)	0.3039
		Norway (Krone)	8.8180
		Philippines (Peso)	52.27
		Poland (Zloty)	4.23
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7521
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3553

South Korea (Won)	1212.86
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9386
Thailand (Baht)	33.27
Turkey (New Lira)	14.7286

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Interest Rates Discount rate	0.75
Federal funds market rate	0.09
3-month bill	0.44
30-year bond	2.46

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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MILITARY



THERON GODBOLD/Stars and Stripes

NCR Emerald, the Defense Commissary Agency's next-generation, cloud-enabled, point-of-sale system, went into service at Yokota Air Base, Japan, on Wednesday.

Upgraded checkout systems are popping up at DOD commissaries

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

New checkout lines at U.S. military commissaries will provide grocery shoppers a faster, more user-friendly experience, a spokesman for the Defense Commissary Agency recently told Stars and Stripes.

DeCA is replacing its aging Commissary Advanced Resale Transaction system, or CART, at 46 commissaries worldwide with the next-generation, cloud-enabled, retail point-of-sale Emerald system, or NCR Emerald, according to an email Wednesday from DeCA spokesman Keith Desbois.

The agency has already installed the system at 190 of its 236 commissaries, he said.

Customers may expect quicker scanning speeds and payment processes at regular checkout lines, according to Desbois. The self-checkouts will be more user friendly with reduced transaction times.

The changeover should be complete by August, Desbois said. The commissary at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, for example, put the new system into service on Wednesday,

commissary officer Gene Davis told Stars and Stripes.

"The larger screens and new equipment will be noticeable right from the start, and like all things that change there will be some learning involved for customers and employees," he said.

Yokota commissary shopper Jamie Stowers, 42, of Lumberton, Texas, said the new system improves the self-checkout experience.

"I think it is easier to see the screen," Stowers said at the store on Wednesday. "I feel like it is much more modern."

The new software will streamline the payment process for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Women, Infants and Children and is designed for further improvements to come, DeCA CEO Bill Moore said in an email Wednesday.

The updated system will allow online payment that was not previously available for the Click2Go program, according to Davis. Click2Go permits shoppers to order online and pick up their bagged gro-

ceries at the commissary. The service came online at some DeCA commissaries during the pandemic.

"DeCA continues to maximize the convenience and effectiveness of the commissary benefit to our patrons through the Emerald deployment that has enabled us to deliver a modernized customer experience for our well-deserving DOD Patrons," DeCA chief information officer Theon Danet said in an email Wednesday.

DeCA last upgraded its point-of-sale systems between 2005 and 2007 and installed self-checkout lanes in 2008, according to Desbois and Davis.

At the 190 stores already outfitted with the NCR Emerald system, feedback has been generally positive, Danet said.

"Customers and employees alike have been pleasantly surprised by the ease of use of the new system at both the in-lane registers and self-checkouts," he said.

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Study says Army should aim for older recruits

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army, faced with an increasingly difficult recruiting environment, should target older Americans for service rather than focusing almost exclusively on high schoolers and recent graduates, an Army-commissioned survey said.

"In the coming years, devoting more resources toward recruiting older individuals may help in the Army's effort to reach its targeted end-strength goals," the Rand Corp. think tank said in a report released this week.

The study, which focuses on ways to attract more people over the age of 21, comes as the military grapples with trying to win new members in the midst of historically low unemployment.

A strong job market, combined with higher numbers of people ineligible for service because of obesity and substance abuse, means the Army must find new strategies, Rand said.

The study was commissioned after the Army in 2018 missed its recruiting goal for the first time since 2005, falling short of its target of 76,500 by about 6,500 soldiers, or around 8.5%. Although the Army has subsequently met targets, its goals have been "substantially reduced," Rand said.

Recruits who are older than 21, as a group, score higher on qualification tests, Rand found. After completing basic combat training, older recruits also are more likely to complete their first-term contract, to be promoted and to reenlist for an additional term.

"During interviews, recruiters noted that older recruits are typically more committed than young

recruits once they become involved in the recruiting process," Rand said. "That is, they are less likely than younger recruits to wash out or lose interest."

Older soldiers make up the smallest part of the enlisted ranks. Data from 2002-17 show those between the ages of 22 and 24 make up 16% of the enlisted ranks while those between the ages of 25 and 35 account for 12%. Meanwhile, those 21 and under make up 71% of the enlisted force.

While older people represent a potential growth area for Army recruiting, there are obstacles. For starters, there is the challenge of identifying and talking to people who may be interested in service but who have left school.

Developing a plan for engaging with older recruits remotely is one possibility, the study said.

"In the long term and in a post pandemic world, virtual recruiting could help mitigate the challenges of finding physical locations where large numbers of both younger and older individuals congregate," the Rand report said.

Incentives also should be considered, such as expanding the Army Loan Repayment Program, since many possible recruits are likely to have some form of college debt. Also, older recruits are more likely to need waivers to join since past drug offenses are more common, as are health issues, such as poor eyesight or hearing.

Finding a more streamlined process for handling waivers in a timely manner could make a difference in getting older recruits into the Army, the study said.

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North Korea mum after suspected missile launch that reportedly failed

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

North Korean media organizations were silent Thursday in the wake of reports that the communist regime's 10th missile test this year had failed the previous morning.

The North fired what military observers in South Korea and Japan deemed a ballistic missile test on Wednesday. The launch from Sunan Airport at around 9:30 a.m. "failed immediately," South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a message to reporters.

The Japanese Ministry of Defense also announced the launch of a "possible ballistic missile" that morning, according to public broadcaster NHK.

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command was aware of the launch and "consulting closely" with regional allies, it said in a statement Wednesday.

"The United States condemns these actions and calls on [North Korea] to refrain from further destabilizing acts," the statement said.

The suspected missile exploded at an altitude below 12.4 miles, ac-

ording to news reports citing South Korean military officials.

Photos from Pyongyang indicated debris from the projectile had fallen on the capital city, NK News reported Wednesday.

The suspected missile went unreported in North Korea's state-run news organizations. Propaganda outlets such as the Korean Central News Agency and Uriminzokkiri, or With Our People, typically trumpet missile launches the day after they occur.

KCNA, for example, said North Korea had tested a reconnaissance

satellite on March 5, the ninth missile launch and last successful test this year. It issued a similar report following a test Feb. 27.

The absence of North Korean propaganda coverage does not necessarily mean the launch was a complete failure, said Yang Uk, an associate research fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. The regime learns from its mishaps, he told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday.

"They will launch, eventually," Yang said. "I don't know if it'll be a week, two weeks, or a month, but

they will launch."

Historically, North Korea conducts its weapons tests on significant anniversaries and birthdays of its leaders, Yang said, adding that one of the most important holidays is less than a month away.

Day of the Sun on April 15 marks the birthday of Kim Il Sung, the country's founder. The event is celebrated with vast military parades and the unveiling of new weapons.

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PACIFIC

US, Philippines set for 'largest' Balikatan

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

The United States and the Philippines will soon undertake what they're billing as the countries' largest-ever military exercise against the backdrop of China's expanding power and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

After two lean pandemic years, the annual Balikatan drills are slated to kick off March 28 and run full tilt through April 8, a month shy of a consequential Philippine presidential election.

This year's Balikatan involves 5,100 U.S. and 3,800 Philippine troops, 3rd Marine Division spokesman Maj. Kurt Stahl said by phone Tuesday.

The exercise was canceled in 2020 and limited to 225 U.S. and 736 Philippine service members last year to protect locals from the coronavirus.

The drills this year will be the "largest ever" in terms of the per-

sonnel and distances involved, Stahl said. Forces will be spread throughout the Philippines.

Live-fire training by U.S. Army and Marine Corps High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, and a U.S. Air Force Special Operations AC-130J Ghost rider gunship is scheduled early in the exercise at Crow Valley Range near Clark Air Base.

U.S. and Philippine marines will make amphibious landings and train for coastal defense on the north end of Luzon island, Stahl said.

The 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment, constituted March 3 on Hawaii for specialized work in expeditionary warfare, will send a headquarters element and train with a Philippine coastal defense regiment, he said.

Meanwhile, U.S. soldiers will practice counterterrorism and urban warfare with local forces at Crow Valley and Fort Magsaysay,

Stahl said.

The U.S. Navy amphibious assault ship USS Ashland and expeditionary mobile base USS Miguel Keith will join in maritime security operations and the beach landings, he said.

F-16 Fighting Falcons from the 13th Fighter Squadron at Misawa Air Base, Japan, arrived Saturday at Basa Air Base, Philippines, ahead of the exercise, according to a Monday report in the *Inquirer*. The Philippine newspaper cited military spokesman Col. Maynard Mariano, and Stahl confirmed that U.S. F-16s are at Basa.

U.S. Army special operations troops from the Army, Navy and Air Force will also participate in Balikatan. Stahl said engineers are already at work on humanitarian construction projects at four schools on Luzon.

Balikatan comes as the world's attention is focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Marine Lt.

Col. Dan Eagan, the U.S. joint force operations officer for Balikatan, said by phone Tuesday.

"It doesn't change our strategic situation here in the West Pacific where we have regional competitors, Russia being one of them," he said.

The drills will conclude as Filipino voters look for a successor to President Rodrigo Duterte. Ferdinand Marcos Jr., 64, the son of the dictator of the same name who ruled the nation from 1965 to 1986, leads in opinion polls for the May 9 election, according to reports by Kyodo News, the BBC and other news outlets.

Duterte is stepping down after a six-year term that he began by hurling insults at then-President Barack Obama and offering warm words to Russia and China.

However, last summer, Duterte withdrew a threat to cancel a defense agreement that allows U.S. military forces to train in his

country.

U.S.-Philippine security engagement has strengthened recently, Derek Grossman, a senior defense analyst at the Rand Corp., said by phone Wednesday.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine provides impetus to get the relationship right, Grossman said.

"The counterpoint to Russia in the Indo-Pacific is China," he said.

In March 2021, then-U.S. Indo-Pacific Command commander Adm. Philip Davidson warned that China might attack Taiwan "in the next six years," based on its rapid military expansion.

"The Philippines might play a role, and from the U.S. perspective, hopefully will play a role, in allowing the U.S. to project power from Philippines bases," Grossman said.

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Patriot Express is adding more Seattle-Guam flights for moves

By MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

The Patriot Express will soon resume flights every two weeks between Guam and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, in time for moving season for military families, according to the Air Force's Air Mobility Command.

The government-chartered air service will fly that route every other week between May and September to meet the demands of families making permanent changes of station, and once a month from October through April, Amelia Dickson, spokeswoman for the 515th Air Mobility Operations Wing in Hawaii, said in an email Tuesday.

The operations wing at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam oversees Air Mobility Command passenger terminals across the Indo-Pacific region.

The Guam-Seattle route was added in March 2020 and became permanent in October after successful test runs involving more than 4,000 passengers and 400 pets.

"Demand for the Guam Patriot Express missions has been strong since the missions began, with most flights nearing capacity," Dickson wrote.

Much of that demand is driven by a stop at Kadena Air Base on Okinawa that was added in late spring 2021, Dickson said.

That stop is available only from May through September, according to an email Wednesday to *Stars and Stripes* from Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

The plan for PCS season is to have aircraft leave Seattle, stop on Guam and then push on to Kadena. Those flights will then return

to Guam before heading back to Seattle.

The next inbound flights to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, from Seattle are scheduled May 7 and 21, and outbound from Andersen on May 8 and 22, according to a schedule posted on the Andersen Air Force Base passenger terminal's website.

The Patriot Express — sometimes referred to as the Rotator or Cat B flight — ferries travelers on official duty to U.S. military installations around the globe. It also allows eligible passengers to fly on a space-available basis.

The Guam-Seattle route was the brainchild of former Andersen commander Brig. Gen. Gentry Boswell, who requested the test-run following several highly publicized reports of service members needing to raise vast sums of money to defer PCS costs.



TRICIA TOPASNA/U.S. Air Force

Airmen move baggage onto a conveyor belt ahead of a Patriot Express flight at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, in March 2020.

Service members complained about a lack of commercial carrier options and burdensome restrictions that added unforeseen expense. In one case from January 2019, a Navy family had to raise \$11,592 to ship two German shepherds from Virginia to Guam for a

PCS move.

Boswell also said he hoped more airmen would fly the route home for holidays and special occasions.

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Airport in Japan may become space plane landing site

By JONATHAN SNYDER

Stars and Stripes

A U.S. space plane operator with a NASA contract to resupply the International Space Station is considering an airport in southwestern Japan as an alternate landing site.

The unmanned Dream Chaser, developed by Sierra Space Corp. of Broomfield, Colo., is designed to carry up to six tons of cargo and crew to destinations in low-Earth orbit, including the ISS.

The plane, which rides a rocket

into space, will launch from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, according to a NASA blog posted in November 2019.

Sierra Space, a privately held company, is partnering with Kanematsu Corp. of Tokyo and Oita prefecture to provide an alternate landing site for the space plane at Oita Airport, according to recent statements from Sierra Space and Kanematsu.

Sierra Space chose the airport for its 1.9-mile-long runway and the prefecture's position as a tou-

rism and economic hub, The Mainichi newspaper reported March 1. Talks between the three about use of the airport started around May, according to the report. It said the plane could land there in 2026 if the site is officially chosen.

"Through this project with Oita prefecture and Kanematsu we can envisage a future where the Oita Space Port is a hub for Dream Chaser landings, enabling returning space missions to land in Japan as part of our growing global

network of landing sites," Sierra Space CEO Tom Vice said in a press release Feb. 26.

NASA contracted in 2016 with Sierra Space to resupply the ISS at a minimum of seven missions carrying critical supplies like food, water and science experiments, starting in 2023, according to the Sierra Corp. website. The contract also includes return and disposal service for the space station.

Sierra Space is working on multiple international landing sites, including Spaceport Cornwall in



Sierra Space

The Dream Chaser, developed by Sierra Space Corp. of Broomfield, Colo.

the U.K., according to the company website.

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MILITARY

Request for F-35s cut by 35%

By TONY CAPACCIO

Bloomberg News

The Pentagon will request 61 F-35s in its next budget, 33 fewer of the stealth jets from Lockheed Martin than previously planned, according to people familiar with the spending blueprint.

The Defense Department had planned to fund 94 of the fighters in fiscal 2023, up from the 85 in this year's budget, according to the most recent "Selected Acquisition Report" on its costliest program.

The proposed reduction for the F-35 may be the most controversial procurement item in a national security budget request that's expected to top \$770 billion for the year that begins Oct. 1.

The F-35 is currently being deployed to Eastern Europe in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Six F-35s from the Air Force's 34th Fighter Squadron are flying "air policing" missions from Estonia and Romania. German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht announced Monday that Germany would buy 35 of the warplanes.

But the proposed slowdown in

purchases may raise questions among lawmakers, Lockheed investors and overseas customers about a lessening of the U.S. commitment to a program projected to cost \$398 billion in development and acquisition plus an additional \$1.2 trillion to operate and maintain the fleet over 66 years. The people familiar with the budget plan asked not to be identified in advance of the budget release in coming weeks.

The rationale for the reduction won't be officially explained until the proposed Pentagon budget is made public.

But the request comes as negotiations with Bethesda, Md.-based Lockheed over the next F-35 contract — for about 400 planes — are going slower than anticipated. And F-35s remain hobbled by flawed execution of a crucial upgrade of their software and hardware capabilities that's estimated to cost \$14 billion.

Along with the proposed F-35 reduction, the Air Force will request 24 non-stealthy F-15EX jets built by Boeing Co., up from 14 planned in the fiscal 2021 budget. The EX model carries more ord-

nance than the F-35 and is estimated to be cheaper to fly. Still, the service plans to purchase many more F-35s than EX jets.

Asked about the cutback in planned F-35 purchases, Laura Seal, spokeswoman for the Defense Department's F-35 program office, said the budget request can be discussed "once it is delivered and released, but not before." Spokespersons for the Air Force, the largest customer for F-35s, and the Navy made similar comments.

The Air Force will request 33 F-35As instead of the 48 planned, the Navy will seek 13 of its version instead of 26 and the Marine Corps will seek 15 rather than 20.

The F-35's "Block 4" software and hardware upgrade is currently being installed on deployed jets even though it's "immature, deficient and insufficiently tested," according to an assessment by the Pentagon testing office released in January. Aircraft operators "identified deficiencies in weapons, fusion, communications and navigation, cybersecurity and targeting processes that required software modification and additional time and resources, which caused de-



SEONGJOON CHO/Bloomberg

A U.S. Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II fighter jet performs maneuvers during the Singapore Airshow in Singapore in 2020.

lays," it said.

The aircraft flying missions now, including those in Europe, are described as capable by Pentagon officials, however. "We understand the threats that the F-35 is going up against today," Lt. Gen. Eric Fick, who heads the F-35 program office, told reporters this month. "We understand the threats largely propagated throughout Europe, and those were the threats that the airplane was developed to counter."

A person familiar with the Air Force's rationale for purchasing fewer planes said it shouldn't be seen as stepping back from the service's long-stated goal to buy

1,763 F-35s. Instead, the person said, it's a matter of slowing purchases until the full Block 4 capability can be delivered on new jets in order to minimize the cost to retrofit them.

In addition, the F-35 is at least 14 months from starting and completing a much-delayed combat simulation to test its performance against the most advanced Russian and Chinese air defense and aircraft threats it faces now and are likely in the future. The simulated sorties were to take place in 2017, then 2020 and are now planned for sometime between June and September of 2023, Fick told reporters this month.

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EUROPE

Transfer of air defense system still on hold

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Talks between the U.S. and fellow NATO member Slovakia about sending a Soviet-era long-range air defense system to Ukraine yielded no results Thursday, but the potential transfer remains under review, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said.

Allies will keep looking at possibilities to get the S-300 system into Ukraine and potentially backfill the gap created by the delivery, Austin and his Slovakian counterpart said.

"I don't have any announcements this afternoon," Austin said. "These are things that we will continue to work with all of our allies on."

Slovak Defense Minister Jaroslav Nad said his country is willing to furnish Ukraine with its air defense system, which can knock down warplanes and cruise missiles hundreds of miles away.

But first, allies must provide



Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin talks to his Slovak counterpart, Jaroslav Nad, after arriving in Bratislava, Slovakia, on Thursday.

Twitter

Slovakia with a "proper replacement," Nad said.

Discussions about giving Ukraine longer-range air defenses come after repeated pleas from

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for more support from NATO countries.

Among Ukraine's requests: long-range defenses and a NATO-

led no-fly zone. But for allies, the idea of instituting a no-fly zone in Ukraine remains a nonstarter.

"President (Joe) Biden has been clear: We will not have U.S. forces fighting in Ukraine," said Austin, who equated a no-fly zone with being in combat, since allies could be required to shoot down Russian aircraft to enforce such a zone.

By delivering longer-range defenses, NATO could put Ukraine in a better position to protect its own skies.

But so far, the majority of the support from the U.S. and other NATO states has centered on short- and mid-range air defense systems, which Austin said the Ukrainians have been using to great effect to counter Russian forces.

On Wednesday, Biden announced that more short- and mid-range systems and other weapons are on the way to Ukraine.

The transfer of \$800 million worth of equipment includes 800 anti-aircraft systems and 9,000 anti-armor systems. Biden said the U.S. also is working with allies to identify and transfer longer-range anti-aircraft systems.

Following Austin's talks with Slovakia, Nad didn't spell out the exact requirements to enable his country to send S-300s into Ukraine.

However, a new NATO battle-group is planned for the country. The force will be equipped with Patriot air defense systems provided by Germany and the Netherlands, which could fill capability gaps.

The 1,200-troop contingent also is expected to include forces from several countries, including the U.S.

A launch date for the new unit hasn't yet been announced.

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Pivot: Biden keeps sights on China

FROM PAGE 1

invested in rallying NATO and Western allies to respond to Russia with crippling sanctions, supplying an overmatched Ukraine military with \$2 billion in military assistance — including \$800 million in new aid announced Wednesday — and addressing a growing humanitarian crisis.

Eastern flank NATO allies, including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, have made clear to the Biden administration that they want the U.S. to increase its military presence in the region and do more to address the worst humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II. More than 3 million Ukrainian refugees have fled their country in recent weeks.

Though the war in Ukraine has dominated Biden's focus of late, White House officials insist they haven't lost sight of China — and are watching intently to see how Xi Jinping decides to play his hand.

In recent months, Biden has announced the sale of nuclear submarines to Australia and raised the profile of the Indo-Pacific security dialogue known as the Quad (Australia, India, Japan and the United States). He's also called out China for military provocations against Taiwan, human rights abuses against ethnic minorities and efforts to squelch pro-democracy advocates in Hong Kong.

Biden's national security team was somewhat surprised that Pacific partners — Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and South Korea — moved so quickly

to hit Russia with sanctions following the invasion, according to a U.S. official familiar with the administration's thinking.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to talk about private discussions, said there was a recognition among the Pacific allies that Beijing is watching how the world responds to Russia as China calculates how aggressive it can be with its smaller neighbors in the region. In backing sanctions, the Pacific nations were trying to send a message to Xi as well as Putin, the official added.

From the first days of his presidency, Biden has said the aims of his China policy are to find ways to cooperate with Beijing on issues of mutual interest — such as stopping North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and coaxing Tehran to return to the Iran nuclear deal with the U.S., China, Russia and other world powers — and to avoid confrontation.

To that end, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan and senior Chinese foreign policy adviser Yang Jiechi met earlier this week for an intense, seven-hour talk about the Russian invasion and other issues. They spent part of their time together discussing North Korea's recent intercontinental missile tests.

Still, Beijing's approach to the Russian invasion is causing Washington concern. The White House has made clear to Beijing that throwing a lifeline to Russia's collapsing economy or assisting its bruised military would be hazardous to a country that sees itself as

the next great world power. The White House has not publicly specified what actions it would take should China assist Russia.

"We don't need China to be with us. We just need them not to be against us," said Frank Jannuzzi, president of the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation, which focuses on U.S.-Asia relations.

Xi and Putin met in early February, weeks before the invasion, with the Russian leader traveling to Beijing for the start of the Winter Olympics. During Putin's visit, the two leaders issued a 5,000-word statement declaring limitless "friendship."

In the days after Putin ordered the invasion, Xi's government tried to distance itself from Russia's offensive but avoided criticizing Moscow. The government has offered to act as mediator and denounced trade and financial sanctions against Russia.

At other moments, Beijing's actions have been provocative.

Last week, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian echoed unsubstantiated Russian claims that there were 26 bio-labs and related facilities in Ukraine in "which the U.S. Department of Defense has absolute control." The United Nations has said it has received no information backing up such accusations.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki took to Twitter to charge that the Russian claim was "preposterous" and could be part of an attempt by Russia to lay the groundwork for its own use of such weapons of mass destruction



SUSAN WALSH/AP

President Joe Biden meets virtually with Chinese President Xi Jinping from the Roosevelt Room of the White House on Nov. 15.

against Ukraine. She also blamed China for having "seemingly endorsed this propaganda."

Xi's government has also sought to use the conflict to accentuate Chinese ascendancy and the decline of the West.

But China has its own internal troubles, including a major economic slowdown, difficulties that sanctions against Russia could make worse.

"The Ukraine war has proceeded in ways China did not expect and the war is not conducive to China's rise or development," said Xiong Zhiyong, professor of international relations at China Foreign Affairs University.

Still, concerns that China could come to Russia's aid have only deepened at the White House in recent days.

On the same day of the Sullivan-Yang meeting, the U.S. informed Asian and European allies that American intelligence had determined that China had signaled to

Russia that it would be willing to provide both military support for the campaign in Ukraine and financial backing to help stave off the impact of severe sanctions imposed by the West.

White House officials said Sullivan made clear there would be "severe" consequences should China assist Russia.

Ryan Hass, who served as China, Taiwan and Mongolia director at the NSC during the Obama administration, said Beijing faces a "momentous decision" on whether to aid Russia.

If Xi decides to do that, "It's hard for me to see how the path remains open for China to maintain non-hostile relations with the United States and others in the West," Hass said.

At the White House, Psaki has said any country doing business with Russia should "think about where you want to stand when the history books are written on this moment in time."

EUROPE

Onslaught: Russia stepping up strikes against civilian sites

FROM PAGE 1
day.

The strike against the theater was part of a furious bombardment of civilian sites in multiple cities over the past few days.

In the northern city of Chernihiv, at least 53 people had been brought to morgues over the past 24 hours, killed amid heavy Russian air attacks and ground fire, the local governor, Viacheslav Chaus, told Ukrainian TV on Thursday.

Ukraine's emergency services said a mother, father and three of their children, including 3-year-old twins, were killed when a Chernihiv hostel was shelled.

Civilians were hiding in basements and shelters across the embattled city of 280,000.

"The city has never known such nightmarish, colossal losses and destruction," Chaus said.

At least 21 people were killed when Russian artillery destroyed a school and a community center before dawn in Merefa, near the northeast city of Kharkiv, according to Mayor Veniamin Sitov. The region has seen heavy bombardment in a bid by stalled Russian forces to advance.

In eastern Ukraine, a municipal pool complex where pregnant women and women with children were taking shelter was also hit Wednesday, according to Pavlo Kyrylenko, head of the Donetsk regional administration. There was no word on casualties in that strike.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for more help for his country in a video address to German lawmakers, saying thousands of people have been killed, including 108 children. He also referred to the dire situation in Mariupol, saying: "Everything is a target for them."

The address began with a delay because of a technical problem caused by an attack close to where Zelenskyy was speaking, Bundestag deputy speaker Katrin Goering-Eckardt said.

Zelenskyy's office said Russian

"The city has never known such nightmarish, colossal losses and destruction."

Viacheslav Chaus
Chernihiv Oblast governor

airstrikes hit the Kalynivka and Brovary suburbs of the capital, Kyiv. Emergency authorities in Kyiv said a fire broke out in a 16-story apartment building hit by remnants of a downed Russian rocket, and one person was killed.

The U.N. Security Council planned to meet Thursday on the crisis.

In a joint statement, the foreign ministers of the Group of Seven leading economies accused Putin of conducting an "unprovoked and shameful war," and called on Russia to comply with the International Court of Justice's order to stop its attack and withdraw its forces.

Russian President Vladimir Putin went on television Wednesday to excoriate Russians who don't back him.

Russians "will always be able to distinguish true patriots from scum and traitors and will simply spit them out like a gnat that accidentally flew into their mouths," said Putin, using language reminiscent of the Stalinist era. "I am convinced that such a natural and necessary self-purification of society will only strengthen our country."

He said the West is using a "fifth column" of traitorous Russians to create civil unrest. "And there is only one goal, I have already spoken about it — the destruction of Russia," he said.

The speech appeared to be a warning that his authoritarian rule, which had already grown tighter since the invasion began on Feb. 24, could become even more repressive.

In a sign of that, Russian law en-



RODRIGO ABB/AP

A soldier looks through binoculars at a military checkpoint, in Lityn, Ukraine, on Wednesday.



MAXAR TECHNOLOGIES/AP

A satellite image shows the Mariupol Drama Theater in Mariupol, Ukraine, on Monday, with the word "children" written in large white letters in Russian in front of and behind the building.

forcement announced the first known criminal cases under a new law that allows for 15-year prison terms for posting what is deemed to be "false information" about the war. Among those charged was

Veronika Belotserkovskaya, a Russian-language cookbook author and blogger living abroad.

Both Ukraine and Russia this week reported some progress in negotiations. Kremlin spokesman

Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that some negotiators were breaking into working groups, "but there should be contacts today."

Talks were held by video Wednesday. An official in Zelenskyy's office told the AP that the main subject under discussion was whether Russian troops would remain in separatist regions in eastern Ukraine after the war and where the borders would be.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive talks, said Ukraine was insisting on the inclusion of one or more Western nuclear powers in the negotiations and on legally binding security guarantees for Ukraine.

In exchange, the official said, Ukraine was ready to discuss a neutral military status.

Russia has demanded that NATO pledge never to admit Ukraine to the alliance or station forces there.

The fighting has led more than 3 million people to flee Ukraine, the United Nations has estimated. The death toll remains unknown, though Ukraine has said thousands of civilians have died.

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EUROPE

DOD ups size, scope of aid to Ukraine military

BY DAN LAMOTHE
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon will expand the size and scope of weaponry being rushed to Ukraine, the Biden administration said Wednesday, including for the first time armed drones capable of inflicting significant damage to Russian ground units while U.S. officials continue to search for sophisticated anti-aircraft systems owned by European allies.

The disclosure coincided with President Joe Biden's pledge of an additional \$800 million in security assistance for Ukraine, and after his Ukrainian counterpart, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, made an emotional appeal to Congress for the United States either to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine or to provide fighter jets and powerful surface-to-air weapons that would enable Zelenskyy's military to shoot down Russian aircraft themselves.

"I need to protect our sky," Zelenskyy said, calling on the United States "to do more" in "the darkest time for our country." He asked for the "S-300 and other similar systems" that can take out aircraft flying at high altitudes.

Hours later, in an address of his own, Biden thanked Zelenskyy for

his "passionate message" and said that it had been "convincing" and "significant."

"This new package on its own is going to provide unprecedented assistance to Ukraine," Biden said, adding that the inclusion of drones "demonstrates our commitment to sending our most cutting-edge systems to Ukraine for its defense."

Biden has declined to provide Ukraine with fighter jets, even after Poland floated a proposal that would have transferred their Soviet-era MiG-29 fighter jets, which Ukraine already operates, to U.S. custody so that Washington — not Warsaw — could send them on to Ukraine. The president declined to discuss the jets Wednesday.

"I'm not going to comment on that right now," Biden said. "I'm not going to comment on anything other than what I told you."

The new aid package approved Wednesday includes 100 Switchblade drones, small unmanned aircraft packed with explosives that crash into targets in "kamikaze" fashion, said a U.S. official, who like some others spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the subject's sensitivity.

The single-use weapons are



SARAH PYSHER/U.S. Marine Corps

U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Isiah Enriquez, a rifleman, prepares a Switchblade Drone for launch during a training exercise at Camp Lejeune, N.C., in 2021.

cheaper than most U.S. drones, and come in two sizes, according to AeroVironment, the manufacturer. The Switchblade 300 weighs about five pounds, flies up to 15 minutes at a time, and is designed to be carried in a backpack, assisting small infantry units tracking the Russians' movements.

The Switchblade 600, by comparison, weighs about 50 pounds, flies up to 40 minutes, and is known as a "loitering missile" that can target armored vehicles. It was not clear which version the United States will be sending Ukraine.

A senior U.S. defense official said it's "safe to assume" that one of the drones' purposes is "to deliver a punch." This official added that he would not rule out whether

the United States would send more of the drones to Ukraine in rolling fashion, as the Pentagon has with Javelin antitank weapons and Stinger missiles, human-portable weapons that are designed to take out low-flying aircraft.

The announcement came as Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was in Europe on a trip that was to include stops at NATO headquarters in Brussels, and in Slovakia and Bulgaria, NATO nations that possess the S-300 anti-aircraft systems capable of targeting jets at higher altitudes. The administration has declined to detail what specific additional European surface-to-air missiles could be sent to Ukraine, but Biden said Wednesday that the United States has identified and is helping Ukraine acquire additional "longer-

range anti-aircraft systems and the munitions for those systems."

Separately, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan called his counterpart in Greece, Thanos Dokos, on Wednesday. Greece, which also owns the S-300, "reiterated their commitment to international efforts to hold Moscow to account for its actions and to ensure Ukraine has the ability to defend itself," Emily Horne, a spokeswoman for the National Security Council, said in a statement.

Lawmakers have stressed the need to send S-300s. But some countries may have reservations about giving their weapons away, and "certainly we respect that," a senior defense official said. He, too, declined to specify which systems could be sent.

Cheap but lethal Turkish drones bolster Ukraine's defenses

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Despite three weeks of Russian bombardment, Ukraine has kept up a stiff defense of its cities by using Turkish-made drones to carry out pop-up attacks on the invaders with a lethal effectiveness that has surprised Western military experts.

The Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles, which carry lightweight, laser-guided bombs, normally excel in low-tech conflicts, and Turkey has sold them to more than a dozen countries, including Azerbaijan, Libya, Morocco and Ethiopia.

The drones have carried out unexpectedly successful attacks in the early stages of Ukraine's conflict with Moscow, before the Russians were able to set up their air defenses in the battlefield, said Jack Watling of the London-based Royal United Services Institute.

"The (TB2s) shouldn't be making a meaningful impact because they are medium altitude, slow-fly-



EFREM LUKATSKY/AP

A Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drone is displayed during a rehearsal of a military parade dedicated to Independence Day in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Aug. 20, 2021.

ing aircraft with a large electromagnetic signature and a large radar cross-section. And the Russians have very capable air defense systems, so they should be being shot down. The terrain is very open and gives good radar coverage," Watling added.

He said Ukrainian forces "have been essentially flying in at a low-level and then coming up and raid-

ing with them. So striking targets of opportunity."

Over time, as the Russians get more organized and push out their air defenses, Watling said "the freedom to employ those drones is diminishing. And so what we are now seeing is that the Ukrainians are having to be careful as to when they commit them."

In a briefing to Parliament on

March 9, British Defense Minister Ben Wallace praised the drones, along with other weapons donated to Ukraine by the West.

"One of the ways they are delivering close air support or actual fire in depth is through the Turkish TB2 UAVs, which are delivering munitions onto their artillery and indeed their supply lines, which are incredibly important in order to slow down or block the Russian advance," Wallace said.

The drones also have scored success on social media. Their aerial video of the destruction of Russian armored vehicles has become a key tool for Ukraine's information war.

Vasyl Bodnar, Ukraine's ambassador to Turkey, shared videos of drone attacks on Twitter, including one that appeared to show a convoy of destroyed Russian military vehicles.

"Mashallah" or "Praise be" he wrote in a caption on one of the videos.

A video using a song titled "Bayraktar" with sounds of explosions timed to coincide with the beats has been uploaded on YouTube and played on Ukrainian radio.

"So as long as they still fly in, as long as they're still armed, they will be useful. They will mostly be useful for the propaganda side," said Aaron Stein, director of research at the U.S.-based Foreign Policy Research Institute. "The videos have enraptured people because you can see an airstrike in high definition."

Turkey began selling the TB2 drones to Ukraine in 2019, and Kyiv used them in fighting Russian-backed separatists in the eastern Donbas region — a move that Moscow called "destabilizing."

Turkish officials have refused to disclose details of the drone sales to Ukraine, including how many were involved and whether Kyiv is being resupplied. Independent estimates put the number of TB2s in Ukraine at between 20 and 50.

EUROPE

Retired generals: US response 'too timid'

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The United States should do more to support Ukraine as Russia's invasion of its western neighbor enters a fourth week, four retired U.S. generals who each served as NATO's top commander in Europe said Wednesday.

The former supreme allied commanders Europe also endorsed the establishment of a limited airlift or no-fly zone mission over Ukraine strictly for humanitarian purposes. They warned an audience with the Washington think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies that without further American or NATO intervention in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin might be emboldened to turn his forces farther west.

"I think we've been far too timid on the support that we are giving to the Ukrainians," retired Air Force Gen. Joseph Ralston, who served as SACEUR from 2000 to 2003, told the think tank panel Wednesday. "If we don't stand up, [Putin] is going to get worse. This is not going to stop with Ukraine. He's going to go on to ... NATO countries, and that is a problem."

Ralston spoke alongside his direct predecessor, retired Army Gen. Wesley Clark; retired Marine Gen. James Jones, who served after Ralston; and retired Air Force Gen. Philip Breedlove. Breedlove was SACEUR from 2013 to 2016, including when Russia first invaded Ukraine in 2014. The former top officers all said a limited NATO or U.S. air mission to remove endangered civilians from Ukraine — or at least to protect them from being targeted as they attempt to flee — was feasible.

President Joe Biden has vowed any incursion by Russian troops into NATO territory would be met



PAVEL DOROGOV/AP

Damaged vehicles and buildings in Kharkiv city center in Ukraine, on Wednesday.

with U.S. military power, but he has balked at sending American forces or aircraft into the war-torn country.

Biden has sent thousands of American forces toward NATO's eastern flank in recent weeks to bolster alliance defenses, and he has shipped some \$2 billion in defensive weapons — including anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles — to the Ukrainians.

On Wednesday, he approved a new \$800 million package of aid including thousands of missiles, ammunition, drones and body armor and helmets for Ukrainian troops, who have mounted a strong defense of their nation against Russian forces. Biden's announcement Wednesday came shortly after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed Congress, seeking even more aid including a full no-fly zone to close Ukrainian airspace to all Russian aircraft.

But Biden and the Pentagon have dismissed a no-fly zone over widespread fears that U.S. military clashes with Russian forces could spark a world war.

The retired generals who spoke Wednesday were critical of some of Biden's approaches, including his waiting until Russia invaded before announcing key sanctions. Breedlove labeled the administration's approach to Russia "passive in nature," saying it gave Putin the confidence to launch his unprovoked invasion.

"Our leaders told us that we explained to [Putin] what was going to happen if he invaded," Breedlove said. "He measured all that up, and he went in anyway. So, our passive deterrence statute did not deter."

"We need to be taking greater risks," added Clark, who led NATO forces in Europe from 1997 to 2000. "We've been excessively timid in this. We don't know what

the red lines are [for Putin] and of course we don't want World War III. But can we do more? Absolutely."

Some 3 million refugees have already fled Ukraine as Russia has launched nearly 1,000 missiles into the country since invading Feb. 24, according to the Pentagon. Russian forces have been widely accused of striking civilian targets, and footage of the war has shown apartment buildings and homes destroyed in the fighting.

The retired generals warned such attacks could become more frequent as Putin lashes out against the strong Ukrainian defenses that have largely stalled Russian advances for days and inflicted thousands of casualties and vehicles losses on Putin's forces.

A humanitarian airlift and no-fly zone would see NATO use cargo aircraft, such as C-17s, accompanied by fighter jets to move refugees out of Ukraine, said Jones,

who also served as Marine commandant and as former President Barack Obama's first national security adviser. The mission would require making clear to Putin and his military that the NATO forces were "not looking to engage Russians in air-to-air combat."

"But, if fired upon we'll retaliate," he said. "There is a humanitarian need and a great suffering right now among the Ukrainians that needs to be addressed. If Vladimir Putin wants to oppose that, well that just adds another nail in the coffin of his reputation."

Ralston said the limited humanitarian mission was something American service members "certainly could do," and the Biden administration "needs to be looking at."

But such an operation must be established soon, warned Breedlove, who has previously called on Biden to establish a humanitarian no-fly zone in Ukraine. He warned as fighting in Ukraine's western region ramps up — such as Russia's targeting of training bases this week miles from the Poland border — NATO could "lose the opportunity" for any humanitarian operations that do not come with a high risk of sparking a NATO-Russia conflict.

"This humanitarian no-fly zone would be completely compatible with the [limited humanitarian] airlift ... and that gives us the best chance at not ending up in a bell-shaped situation," Breedlove said, labeling fighting in Ukraine's east "pretty hot."

"It's getting hotter in the west, and if we don't do something like [the humanitarian no-fly zone] in the west now, we're probably going to lose the opportunity to do it in the future."

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Biden calls Putin a 'war criminal' for 1st time since Russia's invasion

BY TIM BALK
New York Daily News

President Joe Biden on Wednesday publicly called President Vladimir Putin a "war criminal" for the first time, using a loaded phrase that the White House had avoided throughout Russia's 21-day-old invasion of Ukraine.

Asked at a crowded White House event whether he would call Putin a war criminal, Biden said no, but returned moments later to change his answer.

"I think he is a war criminal," Biden said, waving his right hand, and then turning away from reporters blurting out questions.

Other world leaders have leveled the charge against Putin, who is waging a savage war on his democratic neighbor.



PATRICK SEMANSKY/AP

President Joe Biden responds to a question about Russian President Vladimir Putin in the East Room of the White House on Wednesday.

After Russia bombed a maternity ward in Mariupol last week, the White House press secretary, Jen

Psaki, called the act "barbaric" but declined to call it a war crime. "There's a legal review process

that the United States undergoes to make considerations of labeling something as a war crime," Psaki told reporters last week. "We need to go through the legal assessment and review in order to make a formal conclusion."

On Wednesday, Psaki suggested Biden's proclamation was the product of the president's sincere opinion, not a legal analysis.

"The president's remarks speak for themselves," Psaki said. "He was speaking from his heart and speaking from what he's seen on television, which is barbaric actions by a brutal dictator through his invasion of a foreign country."

"There is a legal process that is underway," Psaki added, noting that the State Department is continuing its review.

President Andrzej Duda of Poland has said it is "obvious" that Russia is committing war crimes in Ukraine. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said that the Kremlin's use of munitions "fully qualifies as a war crime."

The International Criminal Court said two weeks ago that it would begin a probe of the invasion.

The court's prosecutor, Karim Khan, said in a statement at the time that there was a "reasonable basis to believe that both alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed in Ukraine."

The invasion has gotten far bloodier since then, with more civilians targeted by Russian artillery.

NATION

Fewer Americans file for jobless claims last week

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Fewer Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week as layoffs continue to fall amid a strong job market rebound.

Jobless claims fell by 15,000 to 214,000 for the week ending March 12, down from the previous week's 229,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. First-

time applications for jobless aid generally track the pace of layoffs.

The four-week average for claims, which compensates for weekly volatility, fell to 223,000 from the previous week's 231,750.

In total, 1,419,000 Americans — a 50-year low — were collecting jobless aid the week that ended March 5, down 71,000 from the

week before that.

Earlier this month, the government reported that employers added a robust 678,000 jobs in February, the largest monthly total since July. The unemployment rate dropped to 3.8%, from 4% in January, extending a sharp decline in joblessness to its lowest level since before the pandemic erupted two years ago.

U.S. businesses posted a near-record level of open jobs in January — 11.3 million — a trend that has helped pad workers' pay and added to inflationary pressures.

The Federal Reserve launched a high-risk effort Wednesday to tame the worst inflation since the early 1980s, raising its benchmark short-term interest rate and signaling up to six additional rate

hikes this year.

The Fed's quarter-point hike in its key rate, which it had pinned near zero since the pandemic recession struck two years ago, marks the start of its effort to curb the high inflation that followed the recovery from the recession. The rate hikes will eventually mean higher loan rates for many consumers and businesses.

Study: SUVs, pickups more likely to strike pedestrians than cars

By TOM KRISHER

Associated Press

DETROIT — Drivers of bigger vehicles such as pickup trucks and SUVs are more likely to hit pedestrians while making turns than drivers of cars, according to a new study.

The research released Thursday by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety points to the increasing popularity of larger vehicles as a possible factor in rising pedestrian deaths on U.S. roads. The authors also questioned whether wider pillars holding up roofs of the larger vehicles make it harder for drivers to spot people walking near the corners of vehicles.

"The link between these vehicle types and certain common pedestrian crashes points to another way that the increase in SUVs on the roads might be changing the crash picture," said Jessica Cicchino, a study author and vice president of research for the institute.

Although the study mentioned previous research showing blind spots caused by the "A-pillars" between the windshield and the cabin, the authors said more study is needed to link the blind spots to the increased deaths.

In 2020, the last year for which complete statistics are available, 6,519 pedestrians were killed in the United States, according to government data. That's up 59% since 2009, and a 4% increase from 2019, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said.

Over the same time period, SUV and pickup truck sales have skyrocketed. In 2009, pickup trucks, SUVs and vans accounted for 47% of all U.S. new vehicle sales, according to Motorintelligence.com. Last year, light trucks were more than three-quarters of new vehicle sales.

Not all SUVs and pickup trucks have the blind spots, though. Compact SUVs, for instance, are now the largest part of the U.S. market.

The study also found that the larger vehicles were more likely than cars to be involved in crashes where pedestrians were standing, walking or running near the edge of the road and away from intersections.

Researchers studied federal crash statistics in which pedestrians were killed, as well as all pedestrian crashes reported to police in North Carolina from 2010 through 2018.

The North Carolina statistics showed that pickups were 42%



GLEN STUBBE, STAR TRIBUNE/AP

A truck drives through the marked crosswalk in front of pedestrian volunteers Dave Passiuk and Nelsie Yang in St. Paul, Minn., on June 8, 2016.

more likely than cars to hit pedestrians while making left turns. SUVs were 23% more likely to hit people than cars. There was no significant difference in the odds of a right turn crash for the different types of vehicles, the study showed.

Outside of intersections, pickups were 80% more likely than cars to hit a pedestrian along the road. SUVs were 61% more likely and minivans were 45% more likely to hit people than cars, IIHS said.

Trucks, SUVs and vans typically have thicker "A-Pillars" than cars

because of federal roof-strength standards to prevent collapse in rollover crashes, the IIHS said. The pillars are typically wider because they have to withstand the higher weights of the bigger vehicles.

And the pillars aren't the only things creating blind spots in the bigger vehicles. Consumer Reports found last year that high hoods also obstructed driver views of pedestrians crossing in front of the vehicles.

"To see over that high hood, you're going to be looking further down the road," said Jennifer

Stockburger, director of operations at Consumer Reports' auto test center.

The magazine and website found that pickup truck hood heights have risen 11% since 2000. The hood of a 2017 Ford F-250 heavy-duty pickup was 55 inches off the ground, as tall as the roofs of some cars, Stockburger said.

Ford, General Motors and Stellantis, which sell the bulk of the large SUVs and pickups in the U.S., all declined comment on the study. Messages were left seeking comment from Auto Innovators, an industry trade group.

Oz vows to renounce dual Turkish citizenship if elected senator

By MARC LEVY

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Mehmet Oz, warding off criticism from a key rival in Pennsylvania's heated Republican primary race for U.S. Senate, said Wednesday that he will renounce his dual citizenship in Turkey if he is elected, as the expensive campaign took on a harder and more personal edge.

Oz — the celebrity heart surgeon best known as daytime TV's host of "The Dr. Oz Show" — made the statement hours after disputing a media report that claimed he said he planned to forego security



Oz

clearances in the Senate to maintain his dual citizenship. Until Wednesday, Oz said he'd keep his dual citizenship so he has legal power in Turkey to make health care decisions for his Alzheimer's-stricken mother.

He now says it's become a campaign distraction and, if he wins, he will renounce Turkish citizenship before being sworn in to the Senate.

Senate historians have been unable to find a U.S. senator who knowingly maintained dual citizenship. The only comparable situation they found is Texas Sen. Ted Cruz renouncing his Canadian citizenship in 2014 after learning that he had received it by virtue of being born in Canada.

Oz was born in the United States to Turkish parents and, if elected, would be the first U.S. senator who is Muslim.

Oz said there would be no reason for him to give up security clearances anyway, speaking on Philadelphia's WPHT-AM radio.

"I was born in America, I'm a proud participant in American society, I've given up everything to run because I love this country so much," Oz said. "I have no intention of doing anything that would harm this country."

Still, the scrutiny of Oz's dual citizenship gave the campaign a harder and more personal edge, and Oz accused one primary opponent, former hedge fund CEO David McCormick, of "bigoted attacks."

McCormick's campaign on Wednesday brought out a sitting senator to criticize Oz's purported willingness to waive security

clearances in the Senate to keep his dual citizenship, well after Oz had disputed the report.

On a conference call with reporters organized by McCormick's campaign, Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan of Alaska said senators routinely receive briefings from intelligence agencies involving material that is not shared with America's closest allies.

"To me, it's inconceivable that you would make a decision that would somehow limit your access to this kind of intelligence that you need to do the job," Sullivan told reporters.

NATION

US Olympian Liu, father targeted in spy case

Associated Press

U.S. Olympic figure skater Alysa Liu and her father Arthur Liu — a former political refugee — were among those targeted in a spying operation that the Justice Department alleges was ordered by the Chinese government, the elder Liu said late Wednesday.

Arthur Liu told The Associated Press he had been contacted by the FBI last October, and warned about the scheme just as his 16-year-old daughter was preparing for the Winter Olympics that took place in Beijing in February. The father said he did not tell his daughter about the issue so as not to scare her or distract her from the competition.

“We believed Alysa had a very good chance of making the Olympic Team and truly were very scared,” Arthur Liu said.

The Justice Department earlier Wednesday announced charges against five men accused of acting on behalf of the Chinese government for a series of brazen and wide-ranging schemes to stalk and

harass Chinese dissidents in the United States.

Arthur Liu said he and his daughter were included in the criminal complaint as “Dissident 3” and “family member,” respectively.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said he was “not aware of the specifics” surrounding the allegations, but said China is “firmly opposed to the U.S. slandering by making an issue of this out of thin air.”

“China always asks Chinese citizens to abide by the laws and regulations of host countries, and we would never ask our citizens to engage in activities that violate local laws,” Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing Thursday. “The so-called transnational harassment schemes are just trumped up.”

Liu said he took a stand against China’s bullying by allowing his daughter to compete at the recent Olympic Winter Games, where she placed 7th in the women’s event.

“This is her moment. This is her



DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP

Figure skater Alysa Liu performs at the 2022 Winter Olympics on Feb. 20 in Beijing.

once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to compete at the Olympic Games. I’m not going to let them stop her from going and I’ll do whatever I can to make sure she’s safe and I’m willing to make sacrifices so she can enjoy the moment,” Arthur Liu said. “I’m not going to let them win — to stop me — to silence me from expressing my opinions anywhere.”

The father said he agreed to let his daughter compete with assur-

ances from the State Department and U.S. Olympic Committee that Alysa Liu would be closely protected and kept safe while competing in China. They said she would have at least two people escorting her at all times.

“They are probably just trying to intimidate us, to ... in a way threaten us not to say anything, to cause trouble to them and say anything political or related to human rights violations in China,” Arthur Liu said. “I had concerns about her safety. The U.S. government did a good job protecting her.”

Arthur Liu said a man called him in November claiming to be an official with the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, and asked for his and his daughters’ passport numbers. Arthur Liu refused to provide them and said he would call his contact at Team USA the next day.

“I didn’t feel good about it. I felt something fishy was going on,” Arthur Liu said. “From my dealings with the U.S. Figure Skating association, they would never call me

on the phone to get copies of our passports. I really cut it short once I realized what he was asking for.”

The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee couldn’t immediately be reached for comment. A spokesman for U.S. Figure Skating deferred comment to Team USA.

Arthur Liu does not remember being approached in person by Matthew Ziburis, who was arrested Tuesday on charges that include conspiring to commit interstate harassment and criminal use of a means of identification. Ziburis was released on a \$500,000 bond.

Prosecutors allege that Ziburis was hired to perform surveillance on the family and pose as a member of an international sports committee to ask Arthur Liu for a copy of his and Alysa Liu’s passports by claiming it was a travel “preparedness check” related to COVID-19. The complaint said when Arthur Liu refused, Ziburis threatened to delay or deny them international travel.

US grew wealthier and better educated in 2nd half of 2010s

Associated Press

The U.S. grew wealthier, better educated, less impoverished and less transient during the second half of the last decade, according to data released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Median household income for the nation, which had been almost \$54,000 from 2011 to 2015, rose to almost \$65,000 during the 2016 to 2020 period, which was the final stretch of the longest expansion in the history of U.S. business cycles, according to American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

With the exception of Colorado, the states with the biggest gains in household income were primarily on the coasts. The Rocky Mountain state joined the District of Columbia, California, Massachusetts and Washington with household jumps ranging from \$15,000 to \$20,000. The smallest gains, of \$6,000 or less, were in Alaska, Louisiana and Puerto Rico.

The data released Thursday capture the second half of a decadelong expansion in the U.S. economy that followed the Great Recession. The expansion ended in spring 2020 as the coronavirus started spreading

throughout the U.S., forcing businesses to close and workers to be laid off. The data captured only a small part of the initial impact from the pandemic, according to the Census Bureau.

The nation’s poverty rate dropped significantly in the last half of the decade, going from 15.5% in the 2011 to 2015 period, in the aftermath of the Great Recession, to 12.8% in the 2016 to 2020 period. With the exception of Alaska, where its change wasn’t statistically significant, poverty decreased in 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Along with the increase in household income and decline in poverty, home sizes got bigger. The number of owner-occupied homes with at least four bedrooms jumped from 29.7% to 31.3%.

People were slightly less mobile in the last half of the 2010s, with 86.2% staying in the same home in the 2016 to 2020 period, compared to 85.1% in the 2011 to 2015 span. Young adults, who tend to move more than any age group, also slowed down their mobility, with 76.4% of people between ages 25 and 34 staying put compared to 75% be-



TED SHAFFREY/AP

The luxury, residential skyscraper buildings of “Billionaire’s Row” in Manhattan are visible from Central Park in New York City in February.

tween 2011 and 2015.

The U.S. became better educated in the second half of the 2010s, with almost a third of the population over age 25 having a bachelor’s degree or higher between 2016 and 2020, compared to 29.8% between 2011 and 2015.

The American Community Survey pro-

vides the most comprehensive data on American life by asking 3.5 million households each year questions about commuting times, internet access, family life, income, education levels, disabilities, military service and employment. Disruptions caused by the pandemic produced fewer responses in 2020.

Florida massacre families to get millions in settlement for FBI’s inaction

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Federal officials confirmed Wednesday that the U.S. Department of Justice has reached a multimillion-dollar settlement with the families of most of those killed or wounded in a 2018 Florida high school massacre over the FBI’s failure to stop the gunman even though it had received information he

intended to attack.

Attorneys for 16 of the 17 killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland and some of those wounded previously announced in November that they had reached a monetary settlement with the government over the FBI’s failure to investigate a tip it received about a month before the massacre. The 17th family

chose not to sue.

The government’s announcement Wednesday said the settlement resolves 40 cases connected to the shooting for \$127.5 million. The settlement does not amount to an admission of fault by the United States, according to a Justice Department news release.

About five weeks before the Feb.

14, 2018, shooting, an FBI tip line received a call saying a former Stoneman Douglas student, Nikolas Cruz, had bought guns and planned to “slip into a school and start shooting the place up.”

“I know he’s going to explode,” the caller told the FBI.

But that information was never forwarded to the FBI’s South Florida of-

fice and Cruz was never contacted. He had been expelled from the school a year earlier and had a long history of emotional and behavioral problems.

Cruz, 23, pleaded guilty last October to 17 counts of first-degree murder. He will receive either a death sentence or life in prison after a penalty trial that is scheduled to start in April.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Water district says fired worker locked accounts

ME MADISON — A Maine water district said its former superintendent locked its board of trustees out of key systems when he was on his way out.

The Anson-Madison Water District in Madison said the former superintendent changed email and Amazon account passwords as well as locking trustees out of financial, mapping and billing applications. The Bangor Daily News reported that the trustees filed a lawsuit via their attorney in U.S. District Court in Bangor.

The trustees fired the superintendent in November. His attorney told the Daily News that “there are disputed facts on how this all took place.” The attorney said he and the former superintendent planned to meet with the district.

‘Little Miss Nobody’ ID’d 60 years later with DNA

AZ PRESCOTT — “Little Miss Nobody” finally has a name.

The Yavapai County Sheriff’s office said Tuesday the previously unidentified little girl whose burned remains were found over 60 years ago in the Arizona desert was 4-year-old Sharon Lee Gallegos, of New Mexico. The child’s remains were found on July 31, 1960, partially buried in a wash in Congress, Ariz. Her age was then estimated at between 3 and 6 years old.

Sharon Lee Gallegos was reportedly abducted from behind her home in Alamogordo, N.M., on July 21, 1960, a little over a week before her body was found. Authorities say they do not know who took and killed the child.

The remains were exhumed to get DNA samples.

Bills to allow horse racing bets with apps introduced

SC COLUMBIA — A group of lawmakers considering how to support the horse industry in South Carolina is suggesting the state should allow legalized betting on horse races.

Bills filed in the House and Senate would limit betting to only horse races through online apps where bettors would have to already have money deposited into their accounts. The money made on the app could create horse therapy programs for veterans, public equestrian trails and horse care programs for inmates or troubled teens, supporters said.

Task force head accused of taking seized cash

PA HARRISBURG — The fired head of Lancaster County’s drug task force was charged Tuesday with stealing more than \$200,000 in money seized or forfeited by court orders during drug investigations.

State prosecutors filed charges against John E. Burkhart, 56, of



BILL GRAHAM, THE MERIDIAN (MISS.) STAR/AP

Put a bow on it

Alexis Frenette plays a tune with the group Emerald Accent during ShamRockin’ Spring Break in Meridian, Miss. on Monday. The event, hosted by the Meridian Council for the Arts, featured Irish dancing and a scavenger hunt around Dumont Plaza.

theft and tampering with evidence and government records, as a grand jury alleged he had been “secretly pocketing money and diverting it to his own use.”

Burkhart was hired as the officer in charge of the drug task force in 2011. He was fired by Lancaster District Attorney Heather Adams in March 2020, allegedly for poor management skills and falsifying a report. Three months later, Adams made public that some \$150,000 in cash seized in drug cases was not accounted for and that she had brought in the attorney general’s office to investigate.

Animal rescue founder faces federal charges

OR PORTLAND — One of the founders of a Northeast Portland-based pet rescue and adoption organization is now facing federal fraud conspiracy charges months after Multnomah County animal authorities seized over 100 animals from the organization.

Court documents obtained by KOIN-TV say Tori Lynn Head is accused of charging Woofin Palooza customers “fake appointment fees,” failing to reimburse payment for spay and neuter services, mislabeling animal drugs, and improperly charging customers to treat sick animals.

“From at least December 2019 through January 2021, on more than 280 occasions, defendant Tori

THE CENSUS

8 The number of recruits that the Connecticut State Police terminated for violating rules against cheating and plagiarism at the state police academy. State police did not disclose the recruits’ names or details of the rules violations in a statement Tuesday. The recruits were part of the 131st Training Troop that is scheduled to graduate on March 24. There were 53 recruits remaining in the class after the dismissals. A recruit termination board recommended the firings, and an internal affairs investigation found the trainees violated rules, officials said.

Lynn Head and others made material misrepresentations about the health and behavior of animals to customers,” according to the federal court document filed March 10.

Feds again nix Mount Rushmore fireworks

SD PIERRE — The National Park Service has denied South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem’s request to mark the Fourth of July with fireworks at Mount Rushmore, citing opposition from Native American tribes as well as the possibility of igniting wildfires.

“Mount Rushmore is the best place in America to celebrate our nation’s birthday — I just wish President (Joe) Biden could see that,” the Republican governor said in a statement Tuesday. “Last year, the President hypocritically held a fireworks celebration in Washington, D.C., while denying us our own event. This year, it looks like they are planning to do the same.”

Noem said she would continue a court battle to hold the fireworks.

She filed a federal lawsuit against the Biden administration after it refused to issue a permit for a similar celebration last year. A federal judge rejected her arguments, prompting an appeal to the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis.

Official apologizes after mock slave auction

NC PITTSBORO — A North Carolina schools superintendent has apologized for a mock “slave auction” in which white middle-schoolers pretended to sell their Black classmates.

“Actions such as these, they just do not reflect who we are as a school system,” Chatham County Schools Superintendent Anthony Jackson said after parents raised an outcry. “And I say, unapologetically, will not be tolerated in the school system.”

The school board adopted some policy changes and will also review the student code of conduct and discipline policies involving acts of racism, Jackson said.

A coalition of local groups called on the board Monday to address the situation at the J.S. Waters School in Goldston and require the instigators to apologize, news outlets reported.

Christy Wagner made an emotional plea to the board, saying she learned what happened on the baseball field from another parent and had to explain to her biracial son why he shouldn’t have to suffer such racism in silence.

Museum receives gift worth nearly \$60 million

VA RICHMOND — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts announced Tuesday that it has received a gift worth nearly \$60 million, including a significant contribution to the museum’s expansion campaign and 15 paintings by prominent American artists.

The gift from longtime patrons James W. McGlothlin and Frances Gibson McGlothlin is the largest private gift in the museum’s expansion campaign, which will culminate in a second major wing at the museum named after the couple.

Alex Nyerges, VMFA’s director and chief executive officer, said in a news release that the gift “will help the museum tell a more nuanced and complete story of the nation’s artistic contributions and ensure that these works will continue to be accessible to all Virginians.”

NATION

DHS gives Afghans in US temporary protected status

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Department of Homeland Security announced Wednesday that it will designate Afghanistan for temporary protected status, providing 18 months of deportation relief to Afghans who fled the country following its fall to the Taliban last year.

The designation will provide immigration protections to tens of thousands of Afghans who were permitted to enter the United States without visas under humanitarian parole after the evacuation. It will also allow them to work legally, though many already sought work permits under the terms of humanitarian parole.

“This TPS designation will help to protect Afghan nationals who have already been living in the United States from returning to unsafe conditions,” said Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, citing oppressive actions by the Taliban regime and a worsening humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

The designation will also “provide additional protections and as-

surances to trusted partners and vulnerable Afghans who supported the U.S. military, diplomatic and humanitarian missions in Afghanistan over the last 20 years,” Mayorkas said.

Following the Afghanistan government’s collapse, the U.S. evacuated tens of thousands of vulnerable Afghans, including individuals in line for special immigrant visas and their families as well as people not eligible for special immigrant visas but otherwise deemed “vulnerable.”

After undergoing overseas security vetting, evacuees were processed on domestic military bases before being resettled across the U.S. More than 75,000 Afghans have been resettled in the U.S. under the sweeping effort known as Operation Allies Welcome. But roughly 36,000 lack a direct pathway to permanent residency, according to a report released by DHS last month.

Only Afghans who were in the U.S. as of March 15 will be eligible for TPS under Wednesday’s announcement.

Prosecution: Suspect played music after shooting victim

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A man suspected of shooting five homeless people in Washington and New York City — killing two of them — appeared to hold up a phone and play music after he shot one of the victims and was caught when a longtime friend identified him after police linked the cases through ballistics evidence, telephone records and the suspect’s social media posts, prosecutors said Wednesday.

Gerald Brevard, 30, was ordered held without bail after appearing before a judge in Washington on a first-degree murder charge in the death of Morgan Holmes, 54, who was found shot and stabbed inside a burning tent in Washington this month. Brevard has not been formally charged in the other Washington shootings or the New York cases.

Prosecutors alleged Brevard escalated his violence as he stalked and shot homeless people asleep on the streets of the two cities over a 10-day period.

The earliest known shooting happened at around 4 a.m. on March 3 in Washington, police

said, when a man was wounded in the city’s Northeast section.

In court Wednesday, Magistrate Judge Tanya Jones Bosier pointed to that allegation as one of multiple reasons to hold Brevard without bail, saying he is alleged to have played the music “as if there was some kind of amusement” after the shooting.

“This is a disturbing escalation of violent behavior, particularly against individuals who are already vulnerable because they live on the street,” assistant U.S. attorney Sarah Santiago said.

Police identified Brevard after a tipster who knew him called and provided his name, telephone number and Instagram profile. Brevard also posted photos on Instagram showing him wearing a black quilted jacket, similar to what was worn by the suspect in two of the shootings.

Brevard’s lawyer, Ron Resetarits, argued in court that his client should be released because of conflicting statements about the suspect’s description given by witnesses in New York and Washington. He also pointed to the fact that police have not recovered a gun.



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WORLD



Kyodo News/AP

People clear a street covered by fallen walls from a building in Fukushima, northern Japan, on Thursday.

Cleanup begins after 7.4 quake shakes Japan, injuring several

Associated Press

TOKYO — Residents in Fukushima and Miyagi were cleaning their homes after a sleepless night following a powerful 7.4 magnitude earthquake that struck off the northern Japanese coasts, smashing furniture, knocking out power and killing four people.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters Thursday morning that four people died during the quake and the cause of their deaths are being investigated, while 107 others were

injured. A man in his 60s in Soma city died after falling from the second floor of his house while trying to evacuate, and a man in his 70s panicked and suffered a heart attack, Kyodo News reported.

The Japan Meteorological Agency early Thursday lifted its low-risk advisory for a tsunami along the coasts of Fukushima and Miyagi prefectures.

Tsunami waves as high as 11 inches reached shore in Ishinomaki, about 240 miles northeast of Tokyo.

As Ukraine war rages, diplomats nearing Iran nuclear agreement

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As the war in Ukraine rages on, diplomats trying to salvage the languishing 2015 Iran nuclear deal have been forging ahead with negotiations despite distractions caused by the conflict. They now appear to be near the cusp of a deal that would bring the United States back into the accord and bring Iran back into compliance with limits on its nuclear program.

After 11 months of on-and-off talks in Vienna, U.S. officials and others have said only a very small number of issues remain to be resolved. Meanwhile, Russia appears to have backed down on a threat to crater an agreement over Ukraine-related sanctions that had dampened prospects for a quick deal.

That leaves an agreement — or at least an agreement in principle — up to political leaders in Washington and Tehran. But, as has been frequently the case, both Iran and the U.S. have said those

decisions must be made by the other side, leaving a resolution in limbo even as all involved have said the matter is urgent and must be resolved as soon as possible.

“We are close to a possible deal, but we’re not there yet,” State Department spokesman Ned Price said Wednesday. “We are going to find out in the near term whether we’re able to get there.”

Also Wednesday in Berlin, German Foreign Ministry spokesman Christofer Burger said work “on drafting a final text has been completed” and “the necessary political decisions now need to be taken in capitals.”

Reentering the 2015 deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, has been a priority for the Biden administration since it took office.

Once a signature foreign policy achievement of the Obama administration in which now-President Joe Biden served as vice president, the accord was abandoned in 2018 by then-President Donald

Trump, who called it the worst deal ever negotiated and set about restoring and expanding on U.S. sanctions that had been lifted.

The Biden administration has argued that any threat currently posed by Iran would be infinitely more dangerous should it obtain a nuclear weapon. Deal opponents, mostly but not entirely Republicans, have said the original deal gave Iran a path to developing a nuclear bomb by removing various constraints under so-called “sunset” clauses. Those clauses meant that certain restrictions were to be gradually lifted.

Both sides’ arguments gained intensity over the weekend when Iran targeted the northern Iraqi city of Irbil with missile strikes that hit near the U.S. consulate compound. For critics, the attack was proof that Iran cannot be trusted and should not be given any sanctions relief. For the administration, it confirmed that Iran would be a greater danger if it obtains a nuke.



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FACES

Zelenskyy
TV comedy
on Netflix

TNS

Netflix is giving its U.S. subscribers what they want — and apparently that's more of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

After popular demand, the streaming giant announced Wednesday that it will bring Zelenskyy's 2015 comedy TV series, "Servant of the People," back to its service.

"You asked and it's back!" Netflix said in a tweet. "'Servant of the

People' is once again available on Netflix in The US."



Zelenskyy

The satirical show was originally available in the Netflix library from 2017 to 2021. It stars

Zelenskyy, who was a comedian before he entered politics, as a Ukrainian high school teacher who unexpectedly becomes president after a video of him complaining about corruption goes viral.

Of course, life imitated art and Zelenskyy was elected to Ukraine's highest office in 2019 and he named his real political party Servant of the People.

The Russian-language series, whose 23-episode first season began streaming Wednesday, is available to U.S. audiences with English subtitles. It also starred Natalya Sumskaya, Viktor Saraykin, Stanislav Boklan and Ekaterina Kisten.

It's unclear when or if Netflix will stream the subsequent seasons and the film adaptation it spawned in 2016.

Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24 has renewed interest in Zelenskyy's background as an entertainer (he also voiced Paddington bear in the Ukrainian version of the live-action animated film). His grit as a leader and his social media savvy have fascinated broadcasters and allies alike — rallying many behind Ukraine and simultaneously fueling the demand for "Servant of the People."

"The series is a comedy but also an important document of where Zelenskyy comes from," said Echo managing partner Nicola Soderlund. "His fictional president is a normal man who grows into his role as a heroic and adored leader. While the real-world scenario facing Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people is far more grim and appalling than the comedy of the series, there are obvious parallels with the real-world situation, and 'Servant of the People' is a fascinating, important and historic piece of television."

The series was broadcast in the U.K. for the first time on Sunday.



Taking it personally

Samuel L. Jackson's family history similar to issues in 'Ptolemy Grey'

BY MARK MESZOROS

The News-Herald (Willoughby, Ohio)

Samuel L. Jackson has been dealt pretty good cards when it comes to aging.

"I was fortunate enough to be blessed with a really great gene pool," the actor said. "There's a lot of Alzheimer's in my family, but people live a long time, too."

The history of Alzheimer's disease in his family is a big reason why the prolific performer — whose notable big-screen credits include "Pulp Fiction," "Unbreakable" and "Black Snake Moan" — long has been captivated by Walter Mosley's 2010 novel, "The Last Days of Ptolemy Grey."

Jackson is an executive producer of Apple TV+'s new six-episode adaptation of the work and stars as its titular character, a man suffering from crippling dementia and memory loss who, through the use of an experimental drug, is able to recapture a wealth of recollections for a finite period.

"It's something I've been preparing for a long time," Jackson said during the show's panel during the Television Critics Association's recent virtual press tour, in which Jackson's primary co-star, Dominique Fishback, and Mosley, the limited series' writer and another of its EPs, also took part.

"Walter can tell you how long we've talked about doing this and how badly I've wanted to do it. I've seen this series for about 10 years in my head."

At the time of the panel, Jackson was in London, again reprising the role of Nick Fury for an upcoming project in Disney-owned Marvel Studios' Marvel Cinematic Universe. Fury, a highly skilled intelligence operative, may be the only character he's played that he knows as well as Mosley's creation.

"I repeat (Fury) a lot. I know who he is, and he's easy to access," Jackson said. "Ptolemy was easy to access because I read the book a lot. I mean, I read the book a lot of different times in different time periods when we were trying deal with other people to get it made."

Problem was, he said, earlier potential collaborators saw "The Last Days of Ptolemy Grey" as a movie.

"I was always banging my head against the wall about that because I never wanted to tell the story that way," Jackson said.

Instead, he, Mosley and four directors have about six hours to tell the story, which begins with a focused, well-dressed Ptolemy, pouring himself a drink, handling a gun and making an audio recording for Fishback's character, Robyn, in which he apologizes for what is about to happen.

We then flashback two months, to a disheveled Ptolemy living in squalor, struggling to remember things from minute to minute. Eventually, Robyn — an orphaned family friend trying to get her life together — will clean and debug his home and then move in to take care of him.

She'll also take him to an appointment with a medical specialist made for him by his nephew Reggie (Omar Benson Miller), who has since been shot and killed. Although Robyn has reservations, Ptolemy decides to undergo the cutting edge, memory-restoring treatments offered by the doctor — portrayed by Walton Goggins, one of Jackson's scene partners from "The Hatefule Eight" — because he hopes to solve the mystery of who killed Reggie, as well as unearth what he believes to be buried treasure.

Through the first two episodes, available now through Apple's streaming platform, and the one releasing March 18, the viewer experiences the character's challenges with memory loss in rather vivid detail.

"I don't know of any show like this one," said Mosley, whose other novels include "Devil in a Blue Dress," "Fearless Jones" and last year's "Blood Glove." "Just concentrating on having a whole experience around a person who's experiencing dementia in a television environment (is unusual)."

Jackson may have been so intimately familiar with the character that the mental preparation for the role was no great burden, but turning him into a man of Ptolemy's age required him spending about 90 minutes in the makeup chair.

Jackson said family members including a grandfather, uncle, aunt and his mother have suffered from Alzheimer's directly.

"I watched them change, deteriorate and become different people over the years," he said, soon adding he appreciates giving "an audience an opportunity to know that they aren't the only people who watch their loved ones deteriorate that way."

Samuel L. Jackson stars in "The Last Days of Ptolemy Grey," an adaptation of a Walter Mosley novel.

Apple TV+

Reedus suffers
concussion on set

From wire reports

"Walking Dead" star Norman Reedus suffered a concussion on the set of the zombie apocalypse show, and is on the mend.

"Norman suffered a concussion on set," his spokesman, Jeffrey Chassen, told the New York Daily News on Wednesday. "He is recovering well and will return to work soon. Thank you to everyone for their concern."

The injury occurred March 11 in Georgia and it's unclear if he was filming at the time, according to Deadline.

Reedus, 53, plays crossbow-bearing Daryl Dixon on the hit AMC show, which is currently filming the last episodes of its 11th and final season.

"We can confirm it will push series wrap by a few days," an AMC rep said, adding won't hold up the release of the final episodes.

Season 11 was split into three parts, with the second segment currently airing.

The series, which follows a pack of survivors constantly fighting off zombies and rival groups, has seen other on-set accidents before, including the tragic death of stuntman John Bernecker in 2017.

Other news

■ **Steve McQueen**, the Oscar, BAFTA, Golden Globe and Turner Prize-winning "12 Years a Slave" director, officially received his knighthood on Tuesday. During an investiture ceremony at Windsor Castle in England, McQueen was knighted by Princess Anne, Queen Elizabeth's daughter, for his services to art and film.

■ **Amazon** on Thursday said that it closed its acquisition of MGM, in an \$8.45 billion deal that will allow the e-commerce giant to expand its TV and movie offerings. MGM's decades-old library of hits, including "Rocky" and "Legally Blonde," will help bolster Amazon's video catalog, which faces fierce competition from other streaming services as well as traditional movie studios.

■ **Tom Cruise's** repeatedly delayed "Top Gun" sequel is expected to screen at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival. "Top Gun: Maverick" will reportedly screen for the first time at the invitation-only event held May 17-28 this year in the south of France. The Paramount Pictures movie directed by Joseph Kosinski is finally expected to open in U.S. theaters on May 27.

■ The hit ABC sitcom "Abbott Elementary," created by and starring Quinta Brunson, has been renewed for a second season, the network confirmed. The mockumentary-styled workplace comedy was ABC's strongest comedy telecast of a new or returning series among the 18-49 demographic in nearly two years.

WEEKEND



The season's
smash hit

Video games, Page 19



iStock/Stars and Stripes illustration

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



RICH POPE/Orlando Sentinel

Rachel Sharpe demonstrates a Samsung Smart fridge and app during an open house March 3 at The Oasis at Moss Park Preserve, a tech-heavy apartment complex in Orlando, Fla. All of the apartments include appliances with built-in smart technology that residents can control from their smartphone.

Apartment of the future

Smart tech comes standard in Orlando community

BY TREVOR FRASER
Orlando Sentinel

Smart technology has spread so fast that more than half of the homes in the U.S. have at least one smart device, such as an Amazon Echo or Google Home Dot. A new tech partnership is looking to expand that reach even more in apartment communities, according to a report in GrowthSpotter.

Samsung last week announced a partnership to integrate its SmartThings devices with tech company CommScope's Ruckus network, which allows landlords and property to have connected smart technology throughout their buildings.

At the Oasis at Moss Park in southeast Orlando, Fla., every unit comes standard with smart devices, managed through a single app for residents. Apartments also include WiFi access.

"Welcome to the apartment of the future," said Anna Hoang, vice president of sales and client relations for iQueue, which developed the management software for the technology at Oasis.

New residents to the complex, which opened in 2020, will notice a difference from the moment they sign a lease. "Any resident moving in won't get physical keys," Hoang said. Instead, door locks, central air and appliances are managed through the app.

Voice commands such as "I'm home," can unlock the door, turn on the lights and crank up the air conditioning or heat.

Door locks were one of the operational challenges to bringing smart tech to apartments, said Jonathan Rivera, co-founder of iQueue.

"How do you put a smart door lock on a door that has turnover?" he said. "You don't want a system where, every time someone leaves, you have to send technicians in to reset everything."

The answer, according to Rivera, was a single network for management and residents.

Mark Grodzinsky, vice president of technology at CommScope, said the issues with rolling this kind

of tech out to multifamily is related to how developers have traditionally treated apartments.

"The way the technology moved from single-family to multifamily treated multifamily as a bunch of single-family homes next to each other," he said. "There's great benefit to a much more broad management solution."

Technology is a chief attractor for new residents, Grodzinsky said.

"Residents [in typical apartments] set up their WiFi networks before they set up their beds," he said. "The transition happening here is that you walk in, you look at your phone, it's all already here."

In addition to the locks, Oasis residents have temperature control and lights connected to the app, and apartments come with smart appliances like refrigerators that let you see what's inside them on your phone and can send alerts about your milk or cheese running low or even about expiration dates approaching.

The Oasis features 1, 2 and 3-bedroom apartments, running between \$1,698 and \$2,430 per month. Rivera said developers are able to charge \$20-\$50 more per unit with integrated smart technology, at a cost of around \$1,000 per unit installation.

Residents are also able to purchase more smart devices and integrate them into the complex's network.

While residents may enjoy convenient technology, the system also aids the management company.

"It's more than lights and locks," Grodzinsky said. Property managers, for example, will be able to set thermostats in unoccupied apartments to keep energy costs low.

Matt Mercado, a maintenance worker at the Oasis, said the network has made his job easier.

"It will send out alerts and notifications when some things need attention," he said. "It really helps with the preventative maintenance we do."

GADGETS

StudioDock plus iPad forms unique desktop workstation

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

The Kensington StudioDock is a multifunctional desktop accessory that magnetically docks an iPad and a Qi wireless charging pad for your entire Apple ecosystem. Add in various built-in ports to make it a unique workstation with accessory expansion and functionality.

Combining the iPad with the aluminum StudioDock forms a desktop workstation, similar to having an iMac. When the iPad is docked and connected to the USB-C port, it can be positioned in landscape or portrait mode.

The StudioDock is AC-powered. On the back is a 3.5mm headphone/microphone port, three USB-A 3.1 ports, an HDMI video port and a Gigabit Ethernet port. An SD memory card slot is on the side. The built-in USB ports can connect keyboards, mice and external drives to help form the complete workstation.

On the base is a Qi wireless charging pad for 7.5-watt iPhone charging and 5-watt AirPods charging.

Kensington lists comparability with iPads with USB-C ports. The USB-C charging speed is 37.5 watts, rated as up to 108% faster than the Apple 18-watt charger.

Online: kensington.com

LinearFlux's new HyperSonic

360 is a 10-in-1 true wireless headphone system that includes an integrated wireless charging power pack and storage for the earbuds.

The travel-friendly all-on-one accessory has Bluetooth true wireless earbuds stored at the end of the battery. The Qi and MagSafe charging is built into the battery for compatible wireless charging devices. With charging cables, the USB-A port has 15 watts of power and 20 watts in and out for the USB-C connection.

The battery has two-way magnetic charging, making it easy to mount into a magnetic desk or car smartphone holder (not included). The magnetic system allows a smartphone to easily attach on and off with magnets and connect to wireless charging.

A display on the battery shows the charging percentage, and a HyperMag micro-USB recharging cable is included along with alignment strips. The true wireless earbuds are IPX6 sweat- and water-resistant protection and produce over 360 hours of playtime with portable power.

The earbuds produce hyper definition 3D sound, and have built-in microphones for hands-free calls. Touch controls on the earbuds work well for play, track selection, volume and access Siri and Google voice assistants.

Online: linearflux.com; \$139.99



KENSINGTON/TNS

The Kensington StudioDock forms a desktop workstation similar to having an iMac when combined with an Apple iPad.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Hooked from the beginning

Lost Ark pulls players in from the start with its easy but entertaining content

BY SHANNON LIAO

The Washington Post

I'd done it. Or had I? After prevailing in my most recent boss battle in Lost Ark, the cutscene played — all the while displaying an error message that the servers were shutting down for their daily three-hour maintenance. Players around me in area chat told me my character would likely be

evicted from the dungeon the next time I booted up the game, erasing my progress. Unlucky.

Wading into another dungeon, complete with its mobs

of enemies and mini-bosses just 20 minutes before its scheduled maintenance at 3 a.m. Eastern time was probably ill-advised, but that's the thing about Lost Ark: It's good, and it's hard to put down once you're in the game.

More than a million people, like me, are playing Lost Ark at the time of writing, according to Steam Charts. The game broke records upon its February launch across North America and several other regions, becoming the game with the most concurrent players of all time on the PC games store/platform Steam after PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds. Some servers for the game are still often so busy, they're hard to join.

It's hard not to be hooked. In the first few minutes of the game, you can try out several skills that look and feel incredibly powerful, and take down impressive-looking bosses with a few hits. Some of my friends commonly purchased platinum Founder's Packs (retailing for \$100), and many are already nearing the endgame. It takes just over a dozen hours to get to level 50, the level at which many consider the game truly begins.

Amazon Games, which published Lost Ark in North America, Europe, Latin America, Australia and New Zealand, is counting on the bounty of content added to the game over the past two years by developers at Korea's Smilegate studio to keep

audiences engaged. Amazon worked with the studio to localize the dialogue in English, French, Spanish and German.

Unlike Amazon Games' original titles, Crucible and New World, which had to find new audiences, Lost Ark has one built in, within some pockets of the Asian diaspora given its previous release there. It also appeals to gamers who already enjoy titles like MapleStory, Black Desert Online and League of Legends. In 2019, Lost Ark won Korea's game-of-the-year award, the Korea Game Awards Grand Prize, and peaked with 260,000 concurrent players in that country alone.

Before Lost Ark, Amazon's track record on games has so far been rocky. Crucible was shut down in November of 2020, months after its release. New World is still receiving updates, although its player base is on the decline.

Lost Ark has silly quests that add levity. Like many multiplayer games, it has a quest introducing pets to players. The game has fun with it, asking you to pick up loot (grains and rice) by hand until you acquire a pet that can pick up loot for you. Another quest entails obtaining carrots and herbs to woo a character who is a terrible cook. After you try her cooking, you must decide to lie to her or tell her the truth. (My friend and I continuously heaped praise onto her instead of coming clean.) Running around town to complete some of these quests takes time away from the main storyline, but often these side exploits are some of the most compelling.

Lost Ark also has good quality-of-life features. It's a free game, yet there are so many perks. For starters, you can ride a mount across towns and there's an auto-move function, so you don't have to constantly move your cursor to reach places. (New World notably does not have any mounts, and while there's a lore reason for that, it's more of an inconvenience than a fun fact.)

Fast travel is enabled as soon as you reach a new location, so you can go back and visit old NPCs or help out a lower-level friend. It usually costs silver, a form of in-game currency, to travel, but players who bought



Amazon Games photos

In the first few minutes playing Lost Ark, you can try out several skills that look and feel incredibly powerful, and take down impressive-looking bosses with a few hits.

any tier of the Founder's Pack (ranging from \$14.99 to \$99.99) get free trips. You can also talk to people over a wide area without having to pay real money to access world chat, as in some other games. The minimap also takes a nod from mobile game design and marks quest objectives with massive icons so you can't get lost, no matter how bad your sense of direction might be.

When Lost Ark arrived in closed beta on Steam in November 2021, I decided to wait until the game launched to play with a wider group of friends, as that's how I enjoy multiplayer games. From the start of the game, Lost Ark allows you to sample multiple classes and skills, as well as how combat feels against a boss or a bunch of mobs, before you advance deeper into the game. Considering how much time in Lost Ark is spent hacking and slashing through dungeons and wild terrain, combat has to feel slick and suit each player's preferences. By presenting this demonstration early in the game, Lost Ark lowers the risk that a player gets locked into a class and a playstyle they hate.

I play an assassin, as a nod to MapleStory's heyday, and I'm a "Shadowhunter," meaning I deal a lot of sharp attacks that feature cool animations and a demonic growl. This is a class that excels at destroying dozens of mobs at once, which I knew would come in handy for a long grind.

Luckily, Lost Ark's grind is pretty bearable. The game gives you so many skills upfront that it makes the early game super enticing but the teenage levels a bit more boring, at least until you unlock more of the kit. Players start off at level 10 (unless you play through the prologue, which is also skippable). What's more, if you charge up your power gauge long enough by landing attacks,



Lost Ark broke records during its February launch, and the popular game's servers are often so busy that it's hard for players to join.



Demonstrations early in Lost Ark allow players to "try on" different classes and playing styles before choosing the one they want.

you can unleash a special combat mode and wreak havoc on the map.

The question now is how long Lost Ark's fun will last. A game like this lives and dies by its community. So far, Lost Ark has that. Growing pains — like the game having a three-hour maintenance period every day that fans are complaining about — seem tolerable for now. And people I spoke to said they are having fun but aren't sure if they will make this their main game that replaces a behemoth mul-

tiplayer title that demands daily attention, like League of Legends and Black Desert Online. So far, they're entertained by the content Lost Ark pumps out, and there's enough in store that excites them.

The feeling of solidarity when everyone in the chat is sending well wishes and saying goodbye to their dead world as the server is about to close for the night is a fun one. It's one that a lot of games can provide, but for now Lost Ark is the one people have glommed onto.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

REVIEW

‘The Outfit’ carefully crafted like a fine suit

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

Leonard (Mark Rylance), the proprietor of the finest bespoke suiting shop in 1956 Chicago, wants to make one thing clear: He’s not a tailor; he’s a cutter.

“Anyone with a needle and thread can call themselves a tailor,” he sniffs. No, Leonard trained for years on legendary Savile Row in London learning the art of cutting suits from fine cloth, and he wields his trusty old shears with the precision and confidence that comes from decades dedicated to his craft.

“The Outfit,” written by Johnathan McClain and Graham Moore, is the directorial debut of Moore, who won the adapted screenplay Oscar for “The Imitation Game.” It takes place entirely within Leonard’s shop, a cozy respite from the freezing, seemingly bullet-riddled Chicago streets. But the gang warfare creeps beyond the threshold of L. Burling Bespoke, and the result is a twisty, blood-soaked chamber piece, a retro gangster noir as meticulously crafted as a fine custom suit.

An immigrant from England, Leonard claims that he’s come to Chicago to ply his trade because he was under attack — from blue jeans. He’s slipped into this world of Al Capone wannabes by submitting to their demands: There’s a secret letterbox in the back of his shop where the Irish mob sends and receives messages. It doesn’t arouse suspicion for men to come and go frequently from the suit shop, and gang leader Roy Boyle (Simon Russell Beale) has a taste for nice clothing and Leonard’s refined English manner: tea and biscuits and Oscar Wilde quotes.

But it’s Boyle’s arrogant son, Richie (Dylan O’Brien) who runs his errands, with his menacing compatriot Francis (Johnny Flynn) by his side, Richie shooting a few too many grins in the direction of Leonard’s comely

receptionist, Mable (Zoey Deutch). One night, Richie and Francis burst through the door, Richie bleeding from a bullet in his gut. They have in their possession a recording from an FBI bug, and if only they can find something to play it on, they’ll discover who the rat might be. This is only the beginning of the gory drama that will play out in this space.

Portrayed with thoughtfulness and studied physicality by Oscar-winner Rylance, one can’t shake the feeling that Leonard’s quiet, unassuming nature belies something much deeper below the surface. He’s just a bit too quick on his feet and too clever with a lie, placating all sorts of suspicions as Richie, Francis and Roy cycle through, the situation becoming increasingly dangerous and wider in scope.

Set in the one location and driven by the script and performances, “The Outfit” feels theatrical, like a play, but what could have otherwise been a minimalist potboiler is elevated by the cast, especially Rylance, who delicately carries the tale and tone, offering subtlety and nuance to contrast the brutishness of the men around him. O’Brien, Flynn and Deutch play off Rylance’s Leonard with swagger (O’Brien), psychopathy (Flynn), and softness (Deutch).

Legendary cinematographer Dick Pope lenses the film with the kind of desaturated color palette that’s become de rigueur for a period piece, and there’s a warm, lamp-lit beauty and texture to the film’s style. Alexandre Desplat’s score is a bit aggressive at times, but it lends to the throwback 1950s appeal of the project. They don’t often make them like this anymore, a story cut, folded and stitched together with care, so “The Outfit” is worth slipping into and savoring.

“The Outfit” is rated R for some bloody violence and language throughout. Running time: 105 minutes. Now in theaters.



Focus Features

Mark Rylance appears in a scene from “The Outfit.”



Focus Features

Graham Moore on the set of “The Outfit,” about a Chicago tailor who serves mobsters. Moore says the film was inspired by his grandfather as well as the Chicago tailor shop where the FBI planted its first bug.

Crime film isn’t cut from the same cloth

Graham Moore puts new spin on mobster movies in directorial debut

By PETER SBLENDORIO
New York Daily News

Oscar-winning filmmaker Graham Moore wanted to bring new style to the mobster movie genre.

The Columbia University graduate makes his directorial debut with “The Outfit,” a crime drama about a Chicago tailor whose primary customers are merciless gangsters.

The story came together after Moore and co-writer Johnathan McClain took interest in London’s famed Savile Row tailoring district and started researching the industry for a potential film.

Moore molded the lead character after his grandfather, whom he described as an upstanding man who ran a small-town medical practice where notorious Genovese mobster Jerry Catena was a patient.

“The first bug that the FBI ever planted in its history was to get at the mob, and they planted it in Chicago in 1956 inside a tailor shop,” Moore told the Daily News. “Once we read that, we lit up. It was like, ‘Oh, this is the movie!’ It’s about a man like my grandfather: a sort of gentle soul who makes these clothes for vicious killers.”

“The Outfit” stars Mark Rylance as a former Savile Row tailor named Leonard who operates a high-end shop in Chicago where the deep-pocketed gangsters who buy his suits are the only ones keeping him in business.

“All he wants to do is lock himself in his shop and make these beautiful objects, and he wants to pretend the outside world doesn’t exist,” Moore, 40, said of the character. “He wants to pretend that some of the violence and the danger that lurks just outside the door isn’t there.”

“The problem with that is it doesn’t work. You can’t do that. Bad people are out there, and violent people are out there, and at some point they’re going to come knocking on your door, and then Leonard, like everyone, has to make a decision about what he’s going to do about it.”

Moore, who was born in Chicago, won the Oscar for best adapted screenplay in 2015 for the World War II-era drama “The Imitation Game” starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley.

The filmmaker said he wanted “The Outfit” to pay homage to classic Alfred Hitchcock thrillers such as 1948’s “Rope” and

1954’s “Rear Window.”

“We wanted to make a movie that would keep audiences guessing until the very end,” Moore said. “It’s a puzzle piece, but not quite a whodunit. We talk about it a lot as a chess match. Every character in the film has their own agenda. Every character in the film is lying about something.”

Moore was thrilled by the chance to work with Oscar-winning Rylance, whom he praised as “the best actor in the world.”

“Mark is an expert craftsman himself,” Moore said of the actor who won his Academy Award for “Bridge of Spies.” “As our lead character has devoted decades and decades of his life to perfecting the craft of tailoring, I think Mark has devoted decades and decades of his life to utterly perfecting the craft of acting.”

Moore, who now lives in Los Angeles, spent 10 years in New York and says his time studying at Columbia helped him become a thorough researcher.

“I tend to work on these historical pieces, or pieces like this one that are inspired by a real event,” Moore said. “I learned so much from my time there about how to approach doing research on a huge topic.”

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS



A24

Mia Goth stars in "X," about a crew making a porn film in a cottage they rent from an older couple.

'X' marks sexy slasher

Film flips script on sex with repression tipping off mayhem, not lust

By JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

In Houston 1979, a small film crew arrives to make a porn film in a rented cottage on a farm belonging to an aged couple, one of whom greets the producer at the door with a shotgun and — unaware of their cinematic ambitions — an order for "discretion." What could possibly go wrong?

But in Ti West's "X," it's never in doubt that a bloodbath is to follow. The aftermath is glimpsed in the movie's opening scene, when a police detective steps timidly through hallways strewn with bloody sheets covering corpses and a black-and-white TV blares with a local televangelist preaching about "a world of sin."

Sex has long been a punishable offense in slasher movies, but "X" cleverly flips the script. The movie juggles all the expected tropes but shuffles them around to make not a whole-cloth original but a patchwork homage that turns tired formulas new — quite appropriate since "X" is ultimately a gory struggle between young and old.

In a Dodge van marked "Plowing Service" are a group of amateurs who think they can make it big with their first porn film. Their chipper, confident leader and executive producer Wayne (Martin Henderson) is a cowboy who believes his girlfriend Maxine (Mia Goth) has "that x factor" to make her a star.

Just as eager is Bobby-Lynne (Brittany Snow) and her boyfriend Jackson (Scott Mescudi, a.k.a. Kid Cudi), a laid-back Vietnam veteran. Directing and camera operating is RJ (Owen Campbell) who

has brought his girlfriend Lorraine (Jenna Ortega) to hold the boom. She's slightly shocked to discover that they're making "smut," as she says. RJ asks her when she became "such a prude."

In your average slasher, you might be thinking Lorraine, in her noble piety, is sure to outlast them all. I won't divulge anything in terms of murder order, but the mayhem in "X" is tipped off not by lasciviousness but by fear of sexuality. Once they start making the movie, Lorraine is moved by the joyful experience and wants to join in. Now, it's RJ who can't handle his girlfriend's desires. Repression, not lust, is more likely to get you killed in "X."

Now about that older couple. Their names are Howard (Stephen Ure) and Pearl (Goth, again, unrecognizable under prosthetics). Once a great beauty who could make her husband do anything she wanted, he's now too old for lovemaking. Those feelings of inadequacy and frustration, for the kids out back making a porno, spell trouble.

"X" loses some of its grip once the killings start. It would have been more powerful if Pearl was played by a genuinely older actor: The exaggerated artificiality of her appearance leaves one side of the young-old dichotomy in "X" sagging.

Still, this is strong genre filmmaking by West, a writer-director of horror films and thrillers. The photography is vivid. The actors are uniformly good. And by fusing two types of films that have long been bedfellows "X" makes for a gripping shotgun marriage of genres.

"X" is rated R for strong bloody violence and gore, strong sexual content, graphic nudity, drug use and language. Running time: 105 minutes. Now in theaters.

'Alice' a racial riff on Carroll's 'Wonderland'

By PAT PADUA

For The Washington Post

Imagine that an enslaved woman — in what appears to be the rural, pre-Civil War South — has escaped from bondage and somehow emerges in the 20th century. That's the high concept, very loosely inspired by true events, of writer-director Krystin Ver Linden's first feature, "Alice."

Unfortunately, this promising gambit only goes so far. Despite its potentially harrowing subject and a strong central performance, this oddly restrained film seldom breaks free from mediocrity.

The film begins on a Georgia plantation, where Alice (Keke Palmer) and her family are enslaved by a man named Paul (an unrecognizable Jonny Lee Miller), a sickly patriarch who viciously punishes the people he refers to as "domestics" and "livestock." After Paul kills Alice's husband Joseph (Gaius Charles) during Joseph's escape attempt, Alice makes her own move — and during her successful flight, finds herself on a busy highway, where she gets picked up by a trucker named Frank (Common, who with Palmer also takes on the role of executive producer). Alice screams at the sight of Frank and the truck and the speeding traffic, but she remains fairly calm when he tells her the most frightening news: The year is 1973.

The name Alice echoes Lewis Carroll's iconic heroine, lost in a world whose rules and freedoms she finds thoroughly perplexing. And, for this Alice, the 1970s are a strange wonderland.

Palmer makes for a compelling presence as she charts Alice's arc from innocence to experience. Once Alice learns about history and where she is, she gains confidence, and it's a thrill to see Alice come into focus as she develops. And Ver Linden's rendering of plantation life seems spot on, thanks to strong performances from Charles and

Miller. Alex Disenhorf's cinematography turns the film's initial setting — a former Savannah plantation — into a lush and gorgeous idyll, in tragic contrast to the violence that pervades it.

But the film's evocation of the "Me" Decade is less convincing, despite vintage set dressing. Maybe it's the signage and advertising fonts that don't look quite right. Maybe it's the film's budget constraints. Apart from the vivid fashions, the world in which Alice finds herself seems much like our own. And maybe that's the point.

The bigger problem is an underdeveloped script. Aptly, we spend time watching Alice learn about our country's past, but the story doesn't really give Common much to hold onto. Playing a disillusioned former Civil Rights activist, the actor-rapper has a largely passive role. Common's strengths are put to better use on the film's score.

The ambiguity of the premise remains intriguing throughout. Does it involve time travel, or is something more pernicious going on? Ver Linden has said that she wrote the screenplay after reading about Black people who had been kept in indentured servitude as recently as the 1960s.

Alice has mysteriously landed in a free world (or at least one that has been advertised as such). But even 100 years after Abraham Lincoln, she sees unfortunate reminders of the past, as when she mistakes farmworkers for enslaved people. And when Frank's brother punishes migrant workers for stealing berries, it seems that the oppressed has become the oppressor.

"Alice" is the story of one woman's empowerment, but it's also about time, which can seem to pass with great speed and, at the same time, stand still. It's a fantastic idea, but the execution is inconsistent.

"Alice" is rated R for some violence and strong language. Running time: 100 minutes. Now in theaters.

Horror movie 'Master' a metaphor for race in America in mold of 'Get Out'

By ANN HORNADAY
The Washington Post

In "Master," Regina Hall plays Gail Bishop, the newly appointed dean of students — or master — at a prestigious Massachusetts college called Ancaster. While Gail is moving into her new home, another initiation is occurring across campus, with the arrival of Jasmine Moore (Zoe Renee), a freshman who makes her way to the quad with a familiar mixture of confidence and wariness.

"We've got a live one," an upperclassman chirps when she spies Jasmine, a line

delivered with such cheerful malice that the viewer is immediately put on edge. There are moments in "Master," which marks the promising uneven feature debut of writer-director Mariama Diallo, when Gail and Jasmine's parallel but common travails feel like they're heading into territory already plumed by such satires as "Dear White People." Soon enough, it becomes clear that Diallo's main reference is "Get Out" and other works of elevated horror that have sought to dramatize the displacement and psychic violence so often experienced by Black

people navigating historically white spaces.

Of course, as one character says midway through "Master," this isn't about Ancaster. It's about America. Although Diallo makes some trenchant observations, she jams too many plot beats, characters and polemical points into the narrative for all of them to pay off satisfactorily. And although "Master" involves a fair amount of magical realism and dream sequences, too it often lacks credibility. Would it really take Jasmine as long as it does to meet one of the only other Black

students on campus?

"Master" is a deeply pessimistic movie, in which both Renee and Hall deliver quietly powerful portrayals of women who come to crucial realizations much too late — about isolation, identity and their own roles within structures and stories that were never created to support them. "Master" might be a horror film, but its scariest elements are off screen, in the form of the persistent social realities that inspired it.

"Master" is rated R for strong language and some drug use. Running time: 91 minutes. Now in theaters.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

BY MOIRA MACDONALD
The Seattle Times

Fall movies are a thing, winter movies are definitely a thing, but spring movies? Spring is a distinctive season, but it's a little harder to pin down as a distinctive movie look. What is a spring movie, really, but a summer movie with a light sweater on? But I came up with three things that mean spring to me and found three lovely movies for each. I've noted the streaming services that include them below, but all can be rented from services like Vudu, Google Play, Apple TV or Amazon Prime Video. Happy spring!

Cherry blossoms

"Mary Poppins" (1964): The recent sequel was a delight, but there's nothing like the original, with Julie Andrews being practically perfect and Dick Van Dyke doing the oddest Cockney accent you'll ever hear. And, appropriately for a story set at number 17 Cherry Tree Lane, it's filled with gorgeous pink clouds of cherry blossoms. You can't watch it without feeling more chim-chim-che-ree. (Disney+)

"Our Little Sister" (2016): Japanese filmmaker Hirokazu Kore-eda makes lovely, quiet movies about families. In this one, three 20-something sisters living in a seaside town decide to take in their teenage half-sister, the daughter of their recently deceased father and his third wife. Seasons pass, and you can practically smell the perfume of the cherry blossoms when spring comes — a change as constant and comforting, this film tells us, as family.

"The Wind Rises" (2014): The blossoms here are of the animated variety (and both pink and lavender), but are no less breathtaking. For a while, it looked like this moving film about a Japanese engineer and designer of planes might be the great Hayao Miyazaki's last; now word comes that he is, in his 80s, working on a new film. This one, like all of his work, is

9 spring films to watch this season



BOX HILL FILMS, FOCUS FEATURES/TNS

Anya Taylor-Joy, right, dons a joy-inducing bonnet in "Emma," based on the novel.

nearly all hand-drawn; you'll get happily lost in his endless skies and glorious flowers. (HBO Max)

Baseball

"A League of Their Own" (1992): Spring means the return of baseball. And it also means it's time to re-watch Penny Marshall's delightful ode to the first female professional baseball league, and to the fact that "there's no crying in baseball." (I've never gotten past the scene where Geena Davis says, "Oh, sweetie" — you know the scene I mean — without completely losing it.) Lots of great baseball action, and the cast, particularly Da-

vis, Tom Hanks, Lori Petty and Madonna, is a joy. (Peacock)

"Sugar" (2008): This lovely film about a young Dominican baseball player's version of the American dream didn't get much attention when it played in theaters a while back; luckily, it's never too late to discover it. Algenis Pérez Soto plays a 19-year-old pitcher known as Sugar (for his love of desserts and his genuine sweetness) who's spotted one day by a baseball scout and quickly finds himself in Arizona for spring training and Iowa for a minor-league season. Filmmakers Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden wonderfully capture that delicious thwack a baseball makes as it

makes contact with a catcher's mitt, as well as a young man's quest for an ever-elusive goal. (HBO Max)

"Moneyball" (2011): A sports movie without a whole lot of sports in it, this breezy comedy is about men in back-rooms debating player averages, and how one of those men (played by Jonah Hill) came up with a revolutionary way to build a baseball team. And it's about how Brad Pitt, as a former baseball golden boy-turned manager of the Oakland A's, does that effortless movie-star thing that he does; the turf seems just a bit greener when he's on screen. Sunny (particularly Pitt), funny and great fun. (Netflix, Hulu)

Hats

"Easter Parade" (1948): Oh, you didn't think I was going to leave this one off, did you? Fred Astaire and Judy Garland co-starred, for the only time in their careers, in this film, billed on its original poster as "the happiest musical ever made." Fred dances (and sings), Judy sings (and dances), and there are Easter hats galore marching down Fifth Avenue atop their proud wearers. Spring personified.

"Emma" (2020): Despite director Autumn de Wilde's first name, this stylish Jane Austen pastiche is in every way a spring movie, from the charming romance at its center to the delightful bonnets perched on the characters' heads, as if they dropped down from hat heaven. Having played theaters just before the pandemic hit, it seems to stem from another, prettier time. Watching it just might make flowers grow. (Amazon Prime)

"Enchanted April" (1991): It's hard to believe that this ageless movie came out more than 30 years ago. Based on the novel by Elizabeth von Arnim (itself a perfect spring read), "Enchanted April" is about four women enduring a dreary winter in post-World War I England who save up for a spring vacation at a beautiful Italian villa, advertised as having multitudes of "wisteria and sunshine." Sounds about right, doesn't it? (Pluto TV)

'Deep Water' a low-water mark for erotic thriller director Lyne

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Meet Vic and Melinda Van Allen, the yin and yang of the country club circuit. He likes to brood; she likes to dance. He's a teetotaler; she's a lush. He rather likes monogamy; she likes to nuzzle other men in front of her husband. Actually, on second thought, maybe steer clear entirely of the Van Allens — or their movie.

"Deep Water," despite an all-star team behind it, barely makes a splash. Although it is being billed as an erotic thriller, it's tedious and clunky. Trips to the supermarket are more exciting. Even the tagline — "The love story is never the whole story" — makes no sense.

Director Adrian Lyne has a reputation as the master of sexy mind games with such films as "Fatal Attraction," "Indecent Proposal," "Unfaithful" and "9½ Weeks." But whereas those were taut, this is frighteningly slack. It



20TH CENTURY STUDIOS/AP

Ben Affleck and Ana de Armas are an odd pair in "Deep Water."

takes a dysfunctional couple, stretches their meandering toxicity to silly lengths and then adds murder too late.

It stars Ben Affleck and Ana de Armas as the battling Van Allens, he a wealthy computer chip maker who has retired young and she as a homemaker laser-focused on being a homewrecker by cheating on him. The stars give the

film an extra fission only because they dated in real life.

Most of the movie is Affleck in slow-burn mode, doing his best Jay Gatsby, wandering around mansions alone during parties or glumly following his wife in his car. He grips banisters tightly and passive-aggressively throws away her lover's bouquet of flowers.

De Armas plays her role as anything but boring — but not stable, either. She's a potty-mouthed, boozy, finger-licking sexpot in a clingy dress, the kind of lady who is ready to dance a little too quickly and enthusiastically at parties and who is likely to suggestively mount a piano. She has two modes: cold or frighteningly hot. There is no real woman on Earth like her.

Affleck's Vic fills his days with marathon bike rides, absent-mindedly watching over their child and inspecting his snails — yes, more on that later — while his wife concentrates on wine and one young lover after another, making things very awkward for everyone. His friends warn him, but he's not the confronting type.

The assumption is that this arrangement suits both people. She says he would die of boredom in a regular relationship; she enjoys pushing his buttons, egging him on to be spontaneous.

"Deep Water" is based on a story by novelist Patricia Highsmith that's been co-adapted by "Euphoria" creator Sam Levinson. But something seems to be lost. Highsmith was inverting sexual stereotypes of the 1950s, while the film is just shallow rich people weirdness in 2022 with some horror movie music.

Take the use of snails. In the book, Vic gives them names and creates backstories for them, finding it touching to watch as two court each other, enchanted by what he is missing in his own life. In the film, he's just a sad sack with pet snails.

It's a hard film to watch and wastes Tracy Letts, Lil Rel Howery and a great turn by newcomer Grace Jenkins, who plays the poor child of this mismatched couple with aplomb. But it's hopeless: "Deep Water" needs to stay a deep cut.

"Deep Water" is rated R for some violence, language, sexual content and nudity. Running time: 115 minutes. Now streaming on Hulu.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Remembering the Cold War in Budapest

Back in the 1980s, on a train heading for Budapest, I stood in the aisle with my elbows on the edge of an open window, enjoying the moonlit countryside rushing by. I was soon joined by a Czech woman who was doing the same thing. She told me she was on her first trip out of her country. I asked her if she was excited about visiting Budapest. She said she was most excited about eating a McDonald's hamburger. The buzz throughout "Eastern" Europe was that Hungary had just opened a branch of the American chain.

If communism was a religion during the Cold War, Budapest was Eastern Europe's sin city, offering tourists from communist countries a taste of the decadent West: rock concerts, Adidas sports gear, and the first McDonald's east of the Iron Curtain. There was nothing fast or cheap about Western "fast food." A Happy Meal was a splurge. People traveling from other communist countries to Hungary waited in lines that stretched around the block for a burger, fries and a Coke. Across the street, wannabe capitalists drooled over window displays featuring running shoes that cost two months' wages.

As I visit Budapest today, it's clear that the younger generation of central Europeans has no memory of the communist era.

My first stop on this trip is the House of Terror, long the headquarters of communist Hungary's secret police.



Rick Steves

When the Communists moved into Budapest after World War II, their secret police took over the Nazis' secret police headquarters. It was here that Hungarians suspected of being "enemies of the state" were given sham trials, tortured and routinely executed. The museum's atrium features a Soviet tank and a vast wall plastered with portraits of victims. Exhibits cover gulag life, Social Realist art and propaganda.

In the museum's poignant finale, the "walls of victimizers" are lined with the photos and biographical information of members and supporters of both the Nazi and communist secret police — many of whom are still living and were never brought to justice.

When regimes fall, so do their monuments. Across once-com-



CAMERON HEWITT/Rick Steves' Europe

Budapest's House of Terror once was the headquarters of communist Hungary's secret police.

munist Europe, statues of Stalin, Lenin and their local counterparts came crashing to the ground. In Budapest, these stony reminders of communist tyranny are collected in Memento Park, where tourists flock to get a taste of the communist era.

I head over for a lesson in Social Realism, the art of communist Europe. Under the communists, art wasn't just censored.

It was acceptable only if it furthered the goals of the state.

Wandering through Memento Park, I'm entertained by the jumbled collection of once fearsome and now almost comical statues. While they seem to preach their ideology to each other, locals and tourists take funny photos mocking them. The gift shop hawks a fun parade of communist kitsch. I pick up a

Stalin vodka flask and a CD featuring 20 patriotic songs — the Greatest Hits of Communism. It occurs to me that Stalin — whose estate gets no royalties for all the merchandise featuring his dour mug — must be spinning in his communist grave.

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.

Equinox brings seasonal celebrations throughout Europe

On the afternoon of March 20, Europe will welcome the spring equinox and with its passing, longer hours of daylight and the budding and blossoming of flowers and trees. Throughout time, people have welcomed the season that is associated with new life and the sowing of crops with rituals and traditions that remain with us to date. Even in times of trouble, the coming weeks will bring plenty of ways to welcome spring on a hopeful note.

England: The origins of the ancient tradition of Well Dressing are lost to time, but it is thought the practice originated with the pagan custom of making sacrifice to the water gods believed to inhabit wells and springs. Such traditions were later adopted by the church, particularly in rural Derbyshire. The village of Tissington is among several towns that continue to adhere to the custom, with its Well Dressing date always timed to coincide with Ascension Day. The process involves soaking a board, applying a thin layer of wet clay, tracing an outline and filling in the spaces with petals, berries or other natural materials as if they were shingles on a roof. The completed panel generally lasts for about a week. Tissington's next Well Dressing takes place May 26-June 1. Online: tinyurl.com/yc2e546a



Karen Bradbury

Germany: In some parts of southwest Germany, saying farewell to winter takes the form of a cleansing ritual known as Stabaus, literally, "out with the dust." The date of festivities usually coincides with the religious holiday known as Laetare Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Lent, which falls on March 27 in 2022.

Heidelberg's "Sommertagszug," in which participants march through the Old Town to music while carrying sticks decorated with a pretzel, egg and colorful ribbons, starts at St. Anna Gasse and leads along the main street to the Market Square, where a battle between summer and



iStock

Greek tradition holds that Martakia bracelets should be tied to the first signs of spring to wish the crop good luck.

winter follows. Festivities are set to take place from 3 p.m.-4:30 p.m. March 27. Online: tinyurl.com/mwy5d77r

In Speyer, the annual "Sommertagszug," a procession of the town's youngest citizens along the Maximilianstrasse, is followed by the burning of a large snowman in the cathedral garden. Festivities are slated for at 2:30 p.m. March 27. Online: tinyurl.com/48a7tv4m

Greece: As the month of March begins, tradition holds that it is time to adorn a "Martakia" bracelet woven out of red and white yarn. The white symbolizes purity, whereas red is the color of life and passion. Such bracelets were worn to protect the wearer not only from disease but also the damaging rays of the sun. At the end of March, or when the bracelet's wearer spots a sign of spring such as a stork, swallow or budding branch, he or she should tie the bracelet to a rosebush or fruit tree, in doing so transferring its positive energy to the future crop. Similar bracelets and traditions appear throughout the Balkans.

Luxembourg: "Bretzelsonndeg," or Pretzel Sunday, is celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent. According to tradition, a man should offer his would-be sweetheart a Luxembourg-style pretzel, which is made of puff pastry, frosted with fondant icing and covered in almond slivers. Should the feelings be reciprocal, the man receives an egg on Easter Day. If not, he'll get an empty basket: "De Kuerf kréien" is a Luxembourgish term for getting rejected. In leap years, it's women who offer the pretzels.

To mark the day, a large parade will usually pass through Luxembourg City as the Pretzel Queen passes out the sweet treats. Pretzel Sunday falls on March 27 this year, but the city has yet to confirm festivities will take place. Online: tinyurl.com/yxtpkb76

Poland: According to ancient Slavic custom, Marzanna, a goddess symbolic of winter, pestilence and death, could only be stopped by drastic measures. On the first day of spring, Marzanna, represented by a straw doll wrapped in colorful linens and decorated with ribbons, beads and other adornments, was set alight, thrown into a river, retrieved and paraded through town. In many places, the kindergartners of today continue to create these dolls. Online: tinyurl.com/49jfwjp6

Switzerland: An annual highlight for Zurich's residents is the day known as Sechseläuten, or the six o'clock ringing of the bells. The festival harks to the 16th century, when trade unions known as guilds would extend the hours of their workers by an hour in sync with the increasing hours of daylight. The ringing of the bells of the Grossmünster cathedral would announce the change of schedule. Festivities are slated for April 25 in 2022. A parade starts along the Bahnhofstrasse at 3 p.m. and ends at the Sechseläutenplatz, where at 6 p.m., a gigantic effigy of a snowman, known as the Böögg, is set alight. Just how long it takes for the Böögg's firecracker-laden head to explode serves as a predictor for the upcoming summer. Online: zuerich.com/de/besuchen/sechselaeuten

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

A spirited transatlantic infusion

A dash of Americana is stirred into the London cocktail mix

By WILL HAWKES

For *The Washington Post*

I had expected to find Shannon Tebay at the Savoy's American Bar. In August, she became the first American head bartender at this London institution, hired to add a fresh, New York touch to the bar's historical luster. Given that the American Bar has been serving up cocktails since 1893, that seemed significant. A bold new era, even.

But here we are, drinking coffee at Grind, a cafe-cum-cocktail bar on the south end of London Bridge, on a chilly morning in February. She has left the American Bar in search of a better fit for her approach to mixology. "It was a cultural mismatch" is all Tebay, whose previous role was head bartender at Death & Co., a cocktail lounge in New York's East Village, will say on the matter.

Luckily for the city's cocktail drinkers, the 36-year-old is aiming to stay in London. Her short stint at the American Bar means she's already stitched into the liquid story of this city, one of the world's best for cocktails, but in that respect, she's not unusual. London's cocktail story is infused with transatlantic influence, from the American Bar to the modern age.

No one knows more about this than Anistatia Miller and Jared Brown, the Anglo American authors and editors (and much else besides) behind excellent books about mixed drinks, such as the two-volume "Spirituous Journey: A History of Drink" and 2020's "The Distiller of London." When I speak to them via Zoom — they live in England's West Country — they emphasize that it's a story of cultural exchange as much as American influence: English roots, American assimilation, German bartenders and much more.

Nonetheless, London owes a debt to American drinking culture.

"The passion for cocktails is



Shannon Tebay, shown at the Savoy's American Bar, adds another chapter to British cocktail history as the first American head bartender at this London institution. The American-style mixed drinks did not become part of British drink history until the 1930s, when consumption was done mostly by American travelers.

WILL STANLEY/The Savoy London

truly American," Miller says. "They love cocktails. We resisted cocktails [in Britain] until the 1930s ..." Brown picks up the thread. "Even then, there was this whole understanding, especially in the '30s, that Brits would come in [to a London hotel bar] and order a whiskey soda, or perhaps a gin and tonic. Virtually all cocktail consumption was American visitors. It was Americans who made [cocktail-drinking] part of drink history in Britain."

And not just history, but everyday life. Cocktails are everywhere now. The day after chatting with Miller and Brown, I went for a walk through central London. I'm more of a pubgoer than cocktail drinker, to put it mildly, so I wanted to get a sense of cocktail culture at street level. (When I've visited cocktail bars, such as Tayer and Elementary, run by the hyper-creative Norwegian-Czech partnership of Monica Berg and Alex Kratena, or Lyaness, flagship of Britain's homegrown cocktail king Ryan Chetiyawardana, I've enjoyed it — but it's not my world.)

The exhortations to try this or that drink are endless. Shore-ditch's tangled weave of streets is full of enticing spots, including Callooh Callay (opened in 2008, it was the first of the new breed of New York-inspired London speakeasies, according to Brown) and the many pubs with fruit-based concoctions on offer. Even amid the somnolent gray stone of the City, there are opportunities for a drink: In a modern walkway off Ropemaker Street, for example, there's the Refinery, which offers dozens of mixed drinks (including, appropriately enough, "Plenty of Fish in the Sea," made with gin, manzana verde, blue curacao and tonic water), and Notes, where more traditional options, including Aperol spritzes and old-fashioned, dominate.

In Mayfair, the invitations are less obvious — but if you know, you know. London's cocktail world can be divided in a number of ways: Mayfair vs. Shore-ditch, hotel bar vs. speakeasy-style bars, ancient vs. modern. The Savoy may be down on the Strand, but many of its old-mon-

SEE COCKTAIL ON PAGE 25

"There was this whole understanding, especially in the '30s, that Brits would come in [to a London hotel bar] and order a whiskey soda, or perhaps a gin and tonic. Virtually all cocktail consumption was American visitors. It was Americans who made [cocktail-drinking] part of drink history in Britain."

Jared Brown

Co-author of "Spirituous Journey: A History of Drink" and 2020's "The Distiller of London"

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Cocktail: America's love of mixed drinks is infused into British drinking culture

FROM PAGE 24

ey rivals — Dukes, Brown's, the Langham and the Connaught, winner of the "World's 50 Best Bars" list for the past two editions — are in and around Mayfair.

Not all hotel bars hew so closely to the traditional model. Back in Shoreditch, Chetiyawardana is getting ready to open his latest bar, Seed Library, in the basement of a new hotel, One Hundred Shoreditch. "It's quite an industrial site but also really warm, which reflects the area," he tells me as we sit down in the hotel's soon-to-be lobby.

"When we first opened a hotel bar, Dandelyan in Sea Containers [in 2014], we wanted to disrupt the idea of what that would be. I love the magic of the American Bar or the Connaught, but I have friends who'd say, 'Oh, I'm going to a hotel bar, I have to dress up.' It can be stiff and formal. We wanted to challenge that."

Chetiyawardana runs Super Lyan in Amsterdam and Silver Lyan in D.C., along with his bars in London. It gives him a unique perspective on the American influence in London. "There's been a pendulum between New York and London, and it's swung either way at different times," the 37-year-old says. "What's changed now is it's no longer just New York — there's other great cocktail cities in the U.S. This is part of the reason I was so excited to open in D.C."

And London? "I'm biased, but I think London is the most incredible food and drink city on the planet. What's special about London is its diversity. You get lots of other very multicultural cities, but nowhere blends [that] so harmoniously as London."

That is evident even at the fanciest end of the market, such as the Connaught, where three Italians (Director of Mixology Agostino Perrone, Head Mixologist Giorgio Bargiani and Bar Manager Maura Milia) run the show. After chatting with Chetiyawardana, I wander across town and grab the last empty table in a packed bar, at 4:30 p.m. Like pretty much everyone else in the room, I order a martini, priced at 25 pounds (about \$33). That is a lot, but it includes some marvelous theater, from the excellent staff and my fellow drinkers.

A trolley, maneuvered by Bargiani, arrives at my table. I'm given a pad infused with five flavored bitters: Dr. Ago (a house mixture of bergamot and ginseng), lavender, coriander, tonka and cardamom. Which would I like? Lavender. Gin or Vodka? Gin. Lemon zest or olives? Lemon zest. The martini is stirred and flamboyantly poured from an arm's length into a hand-etched crystal glass. It's a bravura performance.

There's another one going on alongside me, where three men — two British, one American — are demonstrating how the other half live. The Connaught is an intimate space, and I keep catching chunks of their conversation: "He's seriously rich, like proper billions." "Weirdly, they do need to work. They've got no family money." "I'm sure he's one of the Vanderbilts." "Better not have another one, I might chunder on the train." That's Mayfair. On my way home, I watch a yellow Lamborghini, chugging like an asthmatic bulldog, slowly negotiating the corner of New Bond Street, by the sculpture of Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. That's also Mayfair.

Hotel bars such as the Connaught represent a big difference between London and New York, according to Tebay; another is the significance of conceptual venues, such as Tayer and Elementary or Lyaness, as opposed to the neighborhood places that characterize New York. Does Tebay have a favorite spot of that kind in London? Happiness Forgets, a basement bar in Shoreditch.

On a Monday evening, I enlist the company of a friend, Martin, and head up there. I can see what Tebay likes: It's a marvelous, unpretentious place. As we arrive, I'm greeted by a smiling barman as I peer through the window: "You seem very keen to come in!" I am. We sit at the bar, with a view across the moodily lit, burgundy-painted room, close to full at 7:30 p.m. All cocktails are 10 pounds (about \$13). My "Tokyo Collins" is a delightfully fresh blend of gin, yuzu, sake, lemon, grapefruit and soda,



NIALL CLUTTON/The Savoy London

The Savoy hotel's American Bar has been serving cocktails in London since 1893.



WILL HAWKES/For The Washington Post

The Connaught Hotel in Mayfair is home to the Connaught Bar, winner of the "World's 50 Best Bars" list for the past two editions. Cocktails, once strictly an American passion, are now found everywhere in London.

like a grown-up version of France's greatest soft drink, Orangina.

Having sunk two in fairly short order, we head for Callooh Callay, but I've blundered. After two years of the coronavirus pandemic, I'm out of the habit of booking, and I've forgotten it's Valentine's Day. The place is packed, as is Nightjar, where a queue snakes out of the door and onto Old Street. We retreat to a local pub, the Old Fountain, to recuperate over a few pints of beer.

It's not a permanent retreat, though. Now that I've had a proper taste of London's cocktail world, I'm keen for more. Tebay, happily, appears to feel the same way. She's not sure what her next move will be. Perhaps a New York-style neighborhood bar? "It's certainly something I've considered, and would love to do down the line. I think it would bring something to the table that exists here, definitely, but in a different way. It would kind of represent New York."

The American Bar's culture may not have suited her, but she could yet add another chapter to the venerable London tradition it's part of: a passion for punchy mixed drinks, served American-style.

If you go

Where to stay

The Savoy

The Strand, WC2R 0EZ
011-44-20-7836-4343
thesavoylondon.com

Lodged between the Thames and the West End, the Savoy has two famous cocktail bars: the American Bar and the Beaufort Bar. Rooms from about \$847 per night.

One Hundred Shoreditch

100 Shoreditch High St., E1 6JQ
011-44-20-7613-9800
onehundredshoreditch.com

One Hundred Shoreditch, which opened this month, is close to the area's many cocktail bars. It also houses Seed Library, Ryan Chetiyawardana's new bar, in the basement. Rooms from about \$230 per night.

Where to eat

The Connaught Bar

Carlos Place, Mayfair, W1K 2AL
011-44-20-7314-3419
bit.ly/connaught-bar

The Connaught Bar offers immaculate Italian service in a very British ambiance. Open Monday to Saturday, 4 p.m. to 1 a.m.; closed Sunday. Cocktails from about \$28, nonalcoholic drinks from about \$19.

Happiness Forgets

8-9 Hoxton Sq., N1 6NU
happinessforgets.com

Find a warm welcome and delicious cocktails at this tiny speakeasy-style location. Menu includes 14 cocktails, with three nonalcoholic options. Open daily, 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Cocktails from about \$13, nonalcoholic drinks about \$9.

Tayer and Elementary

152 Old St., EC1V 9BW
tayer-elementary.com

With Elementary at the front and Tayer at the back, this is two cocktail bars in one. A constantly changing cocktail list keeps things fresh — and often very surprising. Open Tuesday to Wednesday, 3 p.m. to midnight, and Thursday to Saturday, 3 p.m. to 1 a.m.; closed Sunday. Walk-ins only. Cocktails from about \$12, nonalcoholic drinks from about \$11.

Information: visitlondon.com

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

The Royal Palace of Caserta, near Naples, Italy, is visible in the background of this view from the Royal Park's parterre.

The 'Versailles of Italy' is a royal treat

Leave the chaos of Naples behind with a day trip to the Royal Palace of Caserta

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

There's no doubt that the Royal Palace of Caserta is impressive. In a country with so much world-renowned architecture, the moniker "Versailles of Italy" has to be earned.

Extending over an area of 47,000 meters and including five floors, the palace boasts its own chapel, library and theater. Yet it's something outside that will keep you coming back.

The Royal Park features vast lawns, wooded areas, reflecting pools, fountains and gardens, making it a perfect place to take the kids to explore or find a quiet spot away from the chaos that is Naples.

To get there, take a 45-minute train ride from Naples Centrale station to Caserta. It won't be hard to find the palace; it's across the street from the train station. A five-minute walk across an expansive garden puts you at the main entrance.

From there, you have a choice to make. Head through the palace's portico and out the back entrance if you want to see the park first.

Midway through the portico, on the right, is an impressive staircase leading to the palace's apartments.

Depending on the time of year, the park

Royal Palace and Park of Caserta

How to get there: Take the train (about 7 euros round trip) from Naples Centrale station (Piazza Garibaldi) to Caserta. The palace is on the Piazza Carlo di Borbone. Fares and schedules available online at trenitalia.com/it.html.

Cost: A comprehensive ticket costs 14 euros and includes admission to the apartments, the Royal Park, the English Garden and, when open, the Royal Court Theater. Tickets for just the Royal Park and the English Garden are priced at 9 euros. Tickets can be purchased online for 15 euros.

Hours: 8:30 a.m. opening time for the whole palace complex, which is open every day of the week except Tuesday. Also closed on Christmas and New Year's Day. Palace apartments close at 7:30 p.m., but park and garden hours vary. The Royal Court Theater is open Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Check the palace website for details.

Information: reggiadicaserta.cultura.gov.it

Alison Bath

can close as early as 3:30 p.m., and caretakers are very firm about closing time. The apartments close at 7:30 p.m., with the last admission at 6:30 p.m.

Once you step through the palace's back entrance, stop to take in the telescopic view leading from the parterre through a

SEE CASERTA ON PAGE 27



The Grand Staircase at the Royal Palace of Caserta leads to the palace's apartments, halls, chapel and other rooms. The architecture of the palace and its grounds was influenced by the palace in Versailles, France.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

From 'Hmm' to 'Mmmmm'

Newmarket's Hmmburger near RAF Lakenheath and Mildenhall corners the market on burger bliss

BY KYLE ALVAREZ
Stars and Stripes

There are times when a burger craving graduates beyond fast food. Thankfully, Newmarket has a restaurant for such occasions, and it's only 12 to 15 minutes from RAF Lakenheath and Mildenhall.

Just off High Street, Hmmburger has been open since 2017. It is right next to the clock tower, an architectural nuance common to many U.K. cities that for me is among the charms of British urban living.

The entryway was a little tight for my 7-month-old son's stroller, but we managed. The window at the table where we were seated afforded us a fine vantage point for people-watching and gazing at the clock tower.

The wife and I ordered the brunch burger, which consists of prime beef, American cheese, smoked bacon, a fried egg, onions, ketchup and mayo. We also ordered my 4-year-old daughter a kid's cheeseburger.

Americans in England, take note: Be sure to order streaky bacon, as that is how the Brits



**AFTER
HOURS
ENGLAND**

Hmmburger

Address: 3 High Street, Newmarket, CB8 8LX, England

Hours: Monday through Saturday, 12-9:30 p.m.; Sunday, 12-9 p.m.

Prices: Burgers range from 6.95 to 11.45 pounds; children's menu, 4.95 to 5.95 pounds; fries, onion rings and coleslaw range from 2.85 to 3.85 pounds; shakes and desserts range from 2.45 to 6.35 pounds; drinks, 1.95 to 2.85 pounds

Information: hmmburger.co.uk or on Facebook at facebook.com/hmmburgernewmarket

Kyle Alvarez

refer to the kind of bacon we're used to. English bacon is more akin to Canadian bacon, and that is not everyone's cup of tea.

It was nice to see the food cooked to order, reassuring me that there weren't any precooked meals or reheated foods in this restaurant. After about a 10-minute wait, our food was ready.



KYLE ALVAREZ/Stars and Stripes

A brunch burger is served at Hmmburger in Newmarket, England. The burger comes with a prime beef patty topped with American cheese, smoked streaky bacon, an egg, cooked onion, ketchup and mayo.

The burger was simply outstanding. The flavor and the seasoning of the patty was unlike anything I had ever had in a burger. There was a bit of a peppery kick to it and the spices made each bite superb.

Credit for the unique taste belongs to the restaurant's Turkish owner, Mehmet Yamak, who has been living in the U.K. for 29 years. He first came to the country in 1993 to study economics and international relations in London. He also landed his first job, which was at none other than Burger King.

Having a head for business, he opened a cafe in Colchester in

1996. His love for burgers gave rise to the Newmarket eatery two decades later.

"This was a new idea," Yamak said. "In the old days, you only ever saw a kebab shop, fish and chips and pubs, but you never saw a burger place aside from fast food."

He said he's had much success in Newmarket and loves getting to know many of his restaurant patrons.

"One of the first customers I ever had still brings his family to this day," he continued. "I remember he even called me the first time he ate here and said 'Don't change a thing. Your food

is delicious."

That's a sentiment my family and I share wholeheartedly. So naturally, we couldn't help but splurge further to top off the tasty dinner.

For dessert, we all had Oreo milkshakes, which were incredible. I finished with a cappuccino because I'm a dad and need all the energy I can get.

In case any hesitancy remains about this place's burger bona fides, just take Hmmburger's slogan to heart: "First you go 'Hmm.' And then you go 'Mmmmm.'"

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Caserta: Influences from Versailles evident throughout the park



ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

The Fountain of Ceres is among many water features in the Royal Park at the Royal Palace of Caserta.

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series of reflecting pools, also known as the waterway, to the Great Waterfall.

It's as if you can take in the entire 11-acre park at once.

Designed by architect Luigi Vanvitelli, whose son Carlo finished it after his father died, the park blends the Italian tradition of a Renaissance garden with influences of the Palace of Versailles in France, according to the palace's website.

Like the gardens at Versailles, the park features a large "boulevard" that stretches from the palace straight up to the main waterfall. Along the way, there are a multitude of paths that can be explored.

Go ahead and allow yourself a diversion, but don't forget to come back to the boulevard or you'll miss the waterway and its

series of waterfalls and ornate sculptures of Roman goddesses. Among my favorites were the Fountain of Ceres and the Fountain of the Dolphins.

Continue up the boulevard to see the Great Waterfall and the Fountain of Diana and Actaeon. From here, you can get a selfie with the park and the palace in the background.

Head back down the boulevard to visit the palace, also designed by Vanvitelli, and started in 1752 for Charles of Bourbon (Charles III of Spain).

Take the Grand Staircase and travel through the rotunda to the Palatine Chapel, again inspired by Versailles and featuring Renaissance, Mannerist and Baroque influences.

Outside the chapel, a doorway to the right leads to apartments, halls, the ballroom and the

throne room, each ornately decorated and featuring captivating frescoes.

Spend a minute gazing at the fresco in the vault of the Hall of Alexander depicting the marriage of Alexander the Macedonian and Roxane by Sicilian painter Mariano Rossi, according to the palace.

You'll also want to spend time in the Palatine Library, which spans three rooms furnished in oak and mahogany. The self-guided tour also includes the Bourbon Nativity scene and an art gallery.

Caserta's palace is one of the largest in Europe. And a visit to the palace and its extraordinary park comes with the bonus of crossing a UNESCO World Heritage Site off your must-see list.

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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



Dresden State Art Collections

Left: Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer's 17th century painting "Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window" before its 2017 restoration. Right: "Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window" after it was restored to reveal a painting of Cupid within the painting. The painting is the centerpiece of a collection on loan from Dresden State Art Collections in Germany.

Vermeer revealed

Catch a rare glimpse of a restored painting by the Dutch master at Tokyo's Metropolitan Art Museum

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

Johannes Vermeer in his own day catered to a local clientele and so when he died, indebted, at age 43, with maybe 45 paintings to his credit, his name faded into obscurity until the late 19th century.

Today he's among the most well-known painters of all time, if not by name, then by his signature piece, "Girl with a Pearl Earring," played so well by Scarlett Johansson in the eponymous 2003 film with Colin Firth as the artist himself.

Another of Vermeer's now-famous works, "Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window," is in Tokyo, on exhibit, but hurry and plan ahead if you want to see it. The exhibit at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, the first for the restored painting outside Germany, closes April 3.

The exhibit's popularity and lingering concerns over COVID-19 mean you must book a time online. Based on the lines to see the exhibit and the three days in advance I was barely able to book a time slot, the show is very popular.

It's definitely worth seeing. Even the mildly enthusiastic art aficionado will get a kick out of standing in front of this famous painting, which was restored by its

On the QT

Location: The Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tokyo, 8-36 Uenokoen, Taito City, Tokyo 110-0007

Directions: From Kanda Station take the Yamanote Line to Ueno Park. From the station it's a straight shot past the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan on your left toward the zoo. At the Starbucks in the park, bear right and you're there. Signs mark the way.

Hours: 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday through Thursday; open to 8 p.m. Friday for special exhibits. Last admission 30 minutes prior to closing.

Costs: Admission ranges from 2,100 yen, or \$18.18 for adults to 1,500 yen, or \$11 for students.

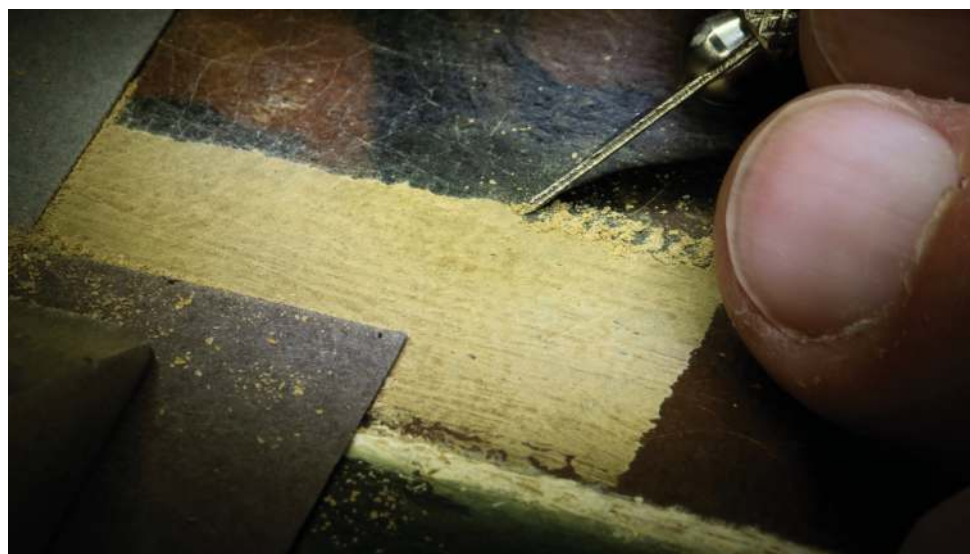
Food: The museum has a restaurant but the area around Ueno Park is chock full of restaurants.

Information: Online: tobikan.jp/exhibition/2021_dresden.html

Joseph Ditzler

custodian, the Dresden State Art Collections, over 1½ years starting in 2017. The restoration unveiled another painting within the painting, a Cupid figure looming on the wall above and behind the girl reading her letter.

Cupid's presence was known for decades, and scientific analysis showed it was covered up long after Vermeer's death.



A detail of the restoration work that went into Johannes Vermeer's "Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window." Restoration of the piece took 1½ years to complete.

Nearly an entire gallery is dedicated to the painting and an exposition of the restoration methods, which are painstaking but also fascinating as a process.

But the result itself is stunning. The painting occupies a place of pride, and a handful of rapt viewers are clustered in front of it at all times. The revealed Cupid is interesting, but the painting itself is much more vibrant, colorful and lively.

Vermeer's hand captured the woman's figure in lifelike pose, along with a rich, detailed setting from her reflected image in the window glass to the woven pattern in the folds of fabric on a foreground table. The restored work is so much more alive than you would expect a 300-plus year-old oil painting to be.

Wait, there's more. The Vermeer is a headliner for a more expansive showing of

paintings by Dutch painters of the 17th century, 70 works, most by the old masters of the Golden Age in Holland.

Rembrandt, Frans Hals, Gerard ter Borch and many others are represented in the collection on loan from Dresden. These painters turned to scenes of everyday life for their subjects. Selling poultry apparently was a popular motif, along with artist self-portraits, still life and landscape paintings. The exhibit is stacked on three floors and numerous galleries. You may grow weary of Dutch genius, but the Vermeer is worth the trek.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Museum is located in Ueno Park, so make a day of it and stroll the grounds for sakura before catching an eyeful of oil on canvas.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Discover the taste of Peru

Ceviche 210 is just a short stroll from Osan Air Base, South Korea

BY JAZZMIN SPAIN

Stars and Stripes

Ceviche 210 is a Peruvian restaurant in the heart of the Songtan entertainment district in Pyeongtaek, South Korea, with many more options on the menu than the eponymous raw fish in citrus juices.

The staff was very friendly and accommodating. They gave me a table by the window with a view of the district.

Every meal comes with chips and a side of mild and spicy dip, and the chips were so good they could easily be eaten by themselves.

Since it was my first time at Ceviche 210, I took recommendations from the server. She suggested the seco de carne, which is a Peruvian beef stew, or the arroz chaufa, a Peruvian fried rice with a choice of chicken or beef.



AFTER HOURS
SOUTH KOREA

Ceviche 210

Location: 12 Shopping-ro, Pyeongtaek-si, South Korea

Directions: A one-minute walk from Osan Air Base's pedestrian gate, directly across from McDonald's

Hours: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Closed Tuesdays.

Prices: Dinner entrees cost about \$8 to \$22.

Dress: Casual

Information: 031-665-4698; www.facebook.com/cevicheinkorea

Jazzmin Spain

The menu comes in Spanish, English and Korean with pricing in Korean won.

I smelled the beef stew on another table and decided to go



JAZZMIN SPAIN/Stars and Stripes

The seco de carne, a Peruvian beef stew, from Ceviche 210 near Osan Air Base, South Korea.

with that for 16,000 won, or about \$13.80. A double-meat option is available for 24,000 won.

While devouring the chips, I looked over the extensive drink menu trying to decide what to get. From water, sodas, Peruvian juices, to sangria, beer and cocktails, the selections are reasonably priced between 3,000 and 8,000 won.

The beef stew was served

before I decided on my drink, and I realized I should've ordered the double meat option.

The plate comes with three decently sized pieces of beef, but only three.

I was thrown off by that until I started to mix the rice into the stew and break the beef down. To my surprise, everything was evenly distributed, and I was thoroughly satisfied.

The meat was very tender and the flavors in the stew broth made the entire meal that much better.

The stew could've been warmer, though. It seemed like the only warm thing on my plate was the rice. Honestly, I still ate it with no complaints because the flavor was there.

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You don't need to press your tofu for this spicy Korean-style dish

BY JOE YONAN

The Washington Post

The more you cook, the more you learn. And sometimes unlearn.

Take tofu. My knowledge of how to best prep and cook it has taken many twists and turns over the years, especially when it comes to the one thing that seems to be so vexing: how, why and whether to get extra moisture out of it.

Long ago, I used to press. You may know the drill: If you don't have a special device, then it's a matter of balancing plates and maybe a heavy can to squeeze the tofu for a half-hour or so. The reason? To make room for a marinade to penetrate, theoretically adding flavor to each millimeter of the interior. But in my experience, those marinades don't ever penetrate all that well, even when the tofu is pressed. More often, I just focus on the power of a glaze or sauce to add so much flavor to the exterior that it provides a nice contrast to (or compensates for) the neutral interior.

Instead of worrying about getting too much moisture out of the tofu, you can focus on just getting it off the tofu. By drying the outside, you set it up for better pan-frying, getting the exterior firm and a little chewy-crisp, while leaving the interior creamy. (Shatteringly crisp tofu, on the other hand, happens only when you dredge it in a starch before frying, and for that you don't even need to dry it, because the moisture helps the starch adhere.)

Since I'm always on the lookout for new tofu methods, I was intrigued by one I read about in J. Kenji Lopez-Alt's comprehensive new book, "The Wok." He calls for you to slice the tofu and pour boiling water over it, writing that the hot water "will actually cause the tofu to squeeze out more moisture." When I tried it in Lopez-Alt's recipe for Korean-Style Spicy Braised Tofu, though, the tofu never felt "slightly tacky and dry to the touch" as promised. I



TOM McCORKLE/For The Washington Post

Patting your tofu dry before making this Korean-style spicy braised dish yields crispy, chewy results.

patted it dry, moved right along, and loved the dish that resulted: A quick pan-fry gets the tofu wonderfully crisp-chewy, then it quickly simmers in a spicy soy sauce that becomes a glaze.

Korean-Style Spicy Braised Tofu

Ingredients

For the tofu

One (14- to 16-ounce) block firm tofu, drained and cut into 1/2-inch slabs

2 tablespoons peanut, rice bran or other neutral oil

For the sauce

1/4 cup water

3 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce

1 tablespoon gochugaru (Korean chile flakes), or to taste (may substitute crushed red pepper flakes or Aleppo pepper)

2 teaspoons granulated sugar

2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil

1 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds, plus more for serving

2 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed

1 scallion, trimmed and thinly sliced

Directions

Make the tofu: Pat the tofu dry with a clean dish towel. If you'd like, wrap the tofu slices in the towel and microwave on HIGH for 1 minute. (Alternatively, you can sprinkle the tofu slices on each side with 1/4 teaspoon of fine salt and let sit for 10 minutes before patting dry.)

Heat a wok over high heat until lightly smoking. Reduce the heat to medium, add the oil and swirl to coat. Add the tofu, one piece at a time, in a single layer and cook, occasionally swirling the pan gently, until crisp and dark golden brown on the first side, 3 to 5 minutes. Slide the tofu out of the wok onto a large plate and return the wok to medium heat.

Flip the tofu pieces (pry them apart if they're stuck together on the edges), then return them to the wok and cook on the other side, swirling the pan gently, until crisp on the second side, 3 to 5 minutes. Slide the tofu back out onto a plate and set aside.

Make the sauce: In a small bowl, whisk together the water, soy sauce, gochugaru, sugar, sesame oil, sesame seeds, garlic and scallion until the sugar dissolves.

Reduce the heat to medium-low, add the sauce and the tofu to the wok and cook, turning the tofu occasionally, until the sauce reduces to a syrupy glaze that coats each piece, about 2 minutes. Sprinkle with additional sesame seeds and serve.

Serves 4.

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

The secret to being organized

Here are some tips to tackle overconsumption, the real reason you can never find what you need

BY NICOLE ANZIA
For The Washington Post

Home organization has been turned into an art form by social media influencers who share beautifully curated images of pantries arranged by color or linens tucked neatly into labeled baskets. There is a full-blown American obsession with organizing. But all of this ignores the root of the problem. It's not that we need to organize our junk to make it prettier. It's that we need to buy less stuff to begin with. People seem to be shopping constantly, buying whatever appeals to them without a second thought, whether it's clothes, home accessories, kitchen gadgets, makeup or sports equipment. It's common for people to have so much that they forget or can't find what they have, so they buy more, only to discover the duplicate later. It's a vicious cycle. Here are some tips to help you break up with overconsumption:

What is all this stuff?

I frequently go into clients' homes, and as they show me around, they'll usually open a few closets and say: "I have no idea what's in here." Or they'll explain that they couldn't find the box of printer paper they bought last month, or their hammer or stapler, so they bought another one. This seems harmless, but when it becomes routine, it creates organization problems.

Begin by taking a look around to see what you have, what you need, what you like and what you can get rid of. Periodically taking a basic inventory and purging will help you make more informed shopping decisions and will help eliminate repeat purchases. You don't have to inventory your entire household at once; break it into manageable categories, such as kitchen appliances or winter clothes, then identify what you use regularly and what can go.

Also consider which belongings bring you joy and which ones you wouldn't miss if they were gone. Do clothes and shoes make you happy, or do you prefer the items you brought back from a trip or inherited from a family member? Are your books your most prized possessions? Knowing the answers to these questions will help you set priorities and stay focused when shopping.

Shop with intention

Our shopping habits are complex. Some people buy items because they're on sale or come highly recommended. Other people think it's necessary to stock up on



almost everything "just in case," or because they're not sure whether they own something already. And other people shop because it makes them happy. Whatever the reason, the excitement usually doesn't last long. New items make people happy momentarily, then they become part of the mountain of stuff we find overwhelming.

Shopping mindfully — instead of impulsively or compulsively — will save you money and liberate you from the time required to organize, clean and manage the constant churn of items coming into and going out of your home. Deciding to buy something may not require much mental energy, but deciding what to do with unwanted items can be stressful and take up considerable time. Avoid buying pieces "just because," and commit to being a more conscious consumer.

Some people limit accumulation by following a "one-in, one-out" rule: If they buy a new pair of jeans, for example, they donate a pair of old ones. Or, if they need a new desk, they make a plan to sell or donate their old one. Although that's a good philosophy, it would be even better if we asked ourselves whether we really needed a new desk or pair of jeans. Maybe the existing desk could still work if it were positioned differently or if you made better use of the space around it. You could also paint it for an updated look.

Before you buy something, consider where you will keep it. It sounds obvious, but haven't we all made purchases — perhaps of bulk paper goods — then brought the items home and wondered where to put them?

Consider long-term effects

Mindless shopping has costs beyond the price and how clutter affects our mental health. It also teaches children how to value — or not — their belongings, and it makes each item seem less special.

It's understandable for parents to want to give their children new and interesting toys, but less is usually more, in terms of what kids want to play with and their ability to keep their items tidy.

Our consumption habits also affect the environment. Buying less, considering where and how pieces are made and shopping locally are all ways to help protect the planet. Avoid purchasing items with the mindset that you can return them if they don't work out. Returns require attention, money and energy. The manufacturing, shipping and disposal of the goods we're all churning through are draining increasingly scarce resources.

Shopping for new items can be fun, and it's natural to want to have everything you need for you and your family to live comfortably. But many of us have gone too far. How many wine glasses, tablecloths, sweaters, pairs of shoes and beauty products do we really need? Most of us only regularly use a small percentage of what we own. Reaching a state where we spend less time organizing our belongings and more time enjoying them starts with purchasing fewer of them. Doing so will benefit us, the next generation and our planet.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

‘Unexpected life’ with 600 animals

Laurie Zaleski talks about her ‘Funny Farm’ rescue and sanctuary, the memoir it inspired

BY AMY S. ROSENBERG
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Even if you’re prepared, making the turn into Funny Farm Animal Rescue, where the speed limit drops to 1 mile per hour, is like entering another, better, world.

Let’s just say, the usual rules, boundaries, fears, assumptions and hierarchies do not apply.

Laurie Zaleski long learned that those conventions are false idols, embodied most dramatically in her father, a Camden County college professor whose persistent violence drove her mother into the woods of Turnersville, N.J., to collect animals, people and peace of mind, in a crowded ramshackle home but with space to breathe.

In her new memoir, “Funny Farm: My Unexpected Life with 600 Rescue Animals,” Zaleski, 53, a graphic designer who shares the Mays Landing farm in New Jersey with those animals, spares little of the tough backstory that led her to open the inspirational Funny Farm Rescue.

She includes the stories of many of her rescue animals — goats, llamas, cats, dogs, pigs, cows, bulls, roosters, ducks and turkeys — mostly as codas to the chapters, but the real gut punch of her story is about the humans.

She writes about her mom’s post-divorce boyfriend Barney, another difficult figure in their lives, though more generously portrayed than her father: “Both Mom and Barney were lonesome and disappointed by love, so they tied their lives together like rafts adrift at sea, and towed the kids along in their wake.”

Like her mom, Annie Zaleski, the book is never far from a laugh or a heartwarming story about a rescue animal, their unusual personalities and under-

dog arcs: Ricky the peacock, slated for euthanasia because of a spinal cord injury, sits today on the roof of a shed. Cooper the alpaca still hovers around his best friend, Yogi, the 1,200-pound calf. Connor the emu, newly graduated from a cage on the kitchen table, walks around like the big bird on campus. Canyon, the one-eyed horse, entertains young visitors. Lorenzo the llama does that llama thing where he will kiss you on the lips.

Zaleski has used the animals to teach children about bullying and disabilities, but just being around them is a nourishing reset of anyone’s anxieties.

“As always,” Zaleski writes of her mom, “her motto, ‘The more you cry, the less you pee,’ always got a laugh, and seemed to dispel the blues, at least a little bit.”

In all, on the 25-acre farm, she inventories, “11 dogs, 20 goats, 15 horses, a skunk, four alpacas, two llamas, I can’t even tell you how many geese or chickens off the top of my head, 24 pigs, 200 cats, and a 2,500-pound red Angus steer.”

In her house, Nemo the goat sneaks in off the porch like he owns the place, and Bradley the blind lamb is wearing a diaper, looking like he walked in from a nursery rhyme. Various chickens roam (their presence ended Zaleski’s last relationship). Eleven dogs sleep in her bedroom, though not all in the bed. Most of the non-dog animals behave like they’re dogs.

Is this the way we all should be living, surrounded by other species, everybody walking around in one big minestrone soup of existence?

“I wouldn’t suggest this for everybody,” Zaleski says, wiping up after Nemo in the kitchen. “It’s not conducive to relationships.”



PHOTOS BY JOSE F. MORENO, THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER/TNS

Laurie Zaleski, owner of Funny Farm Rescue & Sanctuary, interacts with one of her llamas at her farm in Mays Landing, N. J., on March 1. The farm has around 600 animal rescues.

Still, it makes you wonder.

It’s mating season at the Funny Farm, and Cherry the turkey is trying to mate with Buddy the dog. It’s par for the course for the noisy animal chaos that envelops visitors and keeps volunteers coming back. The roosters are crowing, the pigs are snoring, the dogs are barking, and it all seems to revolve around Zaleski, dressed this day in her signature red cowboy boots, fringe jean jacket, cowboy hat and lipstick.

Even if you want to stipulate that Cherry accept a platonic bond, Zaleski says the friendships between animals are legit.

Do they really have personalities, or is that a creation of her active social media volunteer, who, unlike Zaleski, likes to pretend the animals are the ones speaking in videos?

“Oh my god,” she says. “They do. Even the chicken and the ducks. Some of the ducks I just don’t know as well. All the turkeys have distinct personalities.”

The book tells of Zaleski’s determination to set up a real rescue farm for her mother beyond the informal one that built up in the woods of Turnersville.

The Funny Farm stands in memory of her mom and her spirit, with her mom’s ashes buried beneath an old wagon. None of her mom’s animals are



Zaleski holds one of her turkeys at her farm March 1.

still alive. The Rescue Farm has been open to the public since about 2012, gaining a devoted following on social media. Since the book’s release, which landed Zaleski in People magazine, donations have increased about 30%, she says.

Although she once envisioned herself living an urban artist lifestyle and she’s built a successful design and photography business contracting with the FAA’s Tech Center in nearby Egg Harbor Township, Zaleski says she’s content. As any dog owner knows, the animals have a way of

drowning out most of life’s turmoil, and the lessons of these rescue creatures are many. They leave little time for introspection.

“People say when they come here and make the turn, your troubles melt away,” Zaleski says. “One girl who was suicidal said ‘When I had no voice, I had it for the animals.’”

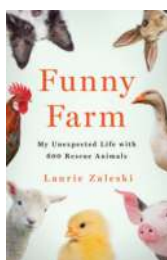
She’s not worried about the animals escaping.

“The gate’s open,” Zaleski says. “People are like, ‘Don’t they leave?’ And I said, ‘If you’re an animal, would you go? Who would leave?’”

‘Funny Farm’ a bit horrifying but mostly heartwarming

BY LAURIE HERTZEL
(Minneapolis) Star Tribune

I was trying to explain the gist of Laurie Zaleski’s memoir, “Funny Farm,” to my husband the other day and as I spoke I realized that I was making it sound dire. Father is sociopathically abusive; mom and three small children flee, set up housekeeping in an unheated shack deep in the woods; mom takes on multiple menial jobs; dad tracks down the family and sneaks over repeatedly to cut the power lines, slash the tires, kill the dogs, shoot



the horse. But wait! This book is charming, funny, inspiring and hugely entertaining. (“Yeah, right,” says my husband. But it is.)

Once established in their ramshackle home, Laurie’s mother, Annie, starts bringing home animals from the humane society where she cleans cages.

“Look what followed me home,” she’d

say, walking in the door with a skunk, or a goat, or a sheep. “Can I keep him?”

Zaleski’s memoir hops around in time from childhood to young womanhood to the present, which keeps the dire stuff manageable — we read about the sociopathic dad but only in small bits. Much of the book is about the animals that first Annie, and then Laurie, rescue — dogs that are going to be put down, chickens that escaped the slaughterhouse, horses, pigs, geese, rabbits. (Laurie now runs a big nonprofit animal rescue in New Jersey

called Funny Farm, funnfarmrescue.org.)

She writes about the connections the animals forge with the humans and with each other — the duck that befriends the blind kitten, for instance, or the llama and the mini-donkey, who are inseparable.

Annie and Laurie both have a lot of grit, chutzpah and energy, and this book is an ebullient and often funny read. Yes, it covers tough ground, but the women’s pluck more than makes up for the sadness. That, and, of course, all those wonderful animals.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Right: Olivia Rodrigo
Bottom right: Gayle

TNS photos



MANY

F'S

GIVEN

For young female pop stars, dropping choice F-bombs in songs proves liberating and profitable

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

Gayle was 6 years old when CeeLo Green released the gleefully profane “F— You” in 2010 — old enough to be thrilled by the song’s signature four-letter obscenity, young enough to think she might get away with performing it at an elementary school talent show.

“I told my mom I wanted to do it, and she looked it up and was like, ‘Oh my God — no,’” the singer, now 17, says with a laugh.

A decade and change later, Gayle (born Taylor Gayle

Rutherford) is the one setting off parents’ alarm bells with “abcdefu,” her gloriously caustic grunge-pop smash in which she tells a feckless ex, “F— you and your mom and your sister and your job / And your broke-ass car and that s— you call art.” Inescapable over the last few months on TikTok and Instagram, the song reached a new peak of No. 3 last week on Billboard’s Hot 100; since it came out in August, it’s racked up more than half a billion streams on Spotify and YouTube.

As cleverly as it deploys its harsh language, “abcdefu”

SEE F-BOMBS ON PAGE 33



WEEKEND: MUSIC

F-bombs: Cursing becomes more common as digital streaming supplants Top 40 radio

FROM PAGE 32

is just the latest in a series of big pop songs to brandish the F-word, including Olivia Rodrigo's "Drivers License" and "Good 4 U," both of which hit No. 1 last year, and Billie Eilish's "Happier Than Ever," which will compete against "Drivers License" for record of the year and song of the year at next month's Grammy Awards. In November, Taylor Swift topped the Hot 100 with a 10-minute rerecording of her old song "All Too Well" that features a conspicuous F-bomb. And Demi Lovato just teamed with Winnetka Bowling League for a collaborative single called "Fiimy" — short for "F— it, I miss you."

Curse words are nothing new in pop music, of course. Says Winnetka Bowling League's Matthew Koma, who duets with Lovato in "Fiimy" and has written songs for Zedd and 5 Seconds of Summer: "Every few years, I think the idea to say something really bluntly feels original again, so everyone feels like they have a license to do it." (Koma himself remembers being struck by folk-punk singer Ani DiFranco's use of the F-word in her 1996 song "Untouchable Face.")

What is new is who's dropping the F-bombs: young female artists whose speech has historically been far more tightly policed than that of their freewheeling male counterparts. Beyond the A-listers scoring platinum plaques and Grammy nominations with foul-mouthed bangers, Spotify's popular Teen Beats playlist showcases explicit tunes by up-and-comers including Nessa Barrett's "Dying on the Inside," Lexi Jayde's "Drunk Text Me," Cat Burns' "Go" and "Fast Times" by Sabrina Carpenter, the former Disney Channel star said to have played a role in the real-life romantic drama behind Rodrigo's "Drivers License."

Each uses the F-word to different ends: In Carpenter's breezy soul-pop jam, it's a way to get across her excitement about a new romance; in Barrett's throbbing disco-goth track, the word underlines the pain of an eating disorder. Yet all of them reach for a level of intensity that rockers and rappers have had access to for decades.

"I knew that 'abc' had the possibility of offending people," says Gayle, who was born in Dallas and now lives in Nashville. "I didn't think it was offensive. But I know that a teenage girl being very comfortable in her emotions and in her anger and not being apologetic about it — that can be jarring to some people."

Gayle recalls playing "abcdefu" for her grandmother for the first time. "And obviously I was nervous about what she was gonna say." After the song, her grandmother "looked at me and was like, 'You get to say all the things that I wasn't able to at 17.' Kind of put everything into perspective."

So what's enabling these young women to find an audience without censoring themselves? Gayle points to the rise of digital streaming, which has largely supplanted Top 40 radio as the place where pop hits are made — minus the moderating hand of programmers nervous about falling afoul of the Federal Communications Commission.

"On the radio you can't curse," she says. "Spotify and TikTok and all these other platforms started bringing eyes to songs that didn't necessarily have to follow the old rules."

Adds Kara DioGuardi, the veteran pop songwriter and former "American Idol" judge who signed Gayle to her Arthouse label: "Streaming allows artists to tell their story in the way they want."

For Spotify, that promise of creative freedom has led to trouble involving the platform's relationship with its star podcaster, Joe Rogan, who critics say has spread COVID-19 misinformation on his show. Yet Sulinna Ong, Spotify's global head of editorial, says streaming technology "allows women to reclaim their agency" in a culture that still treats "women's expression of anger and frustration as the ultimate taboo."

"There's no philosophical difference between the Kid Laroi and Gayle other than sexist expectations," Ong says, referring to the 18-year-old Australian singer and rapper with a massive streaming hit in his album "F— Love."

But if streaming has facilitated the use of the F-word, with its punchy hard-consonant ending, why are artists and listeners increasingly drawn to it in the first place? According to Ong, the "vast majority" of Spotify users opt for an explicit version of a given song even when a clean version is available. "abc (Nicer)," an edited take on Gayle's hit, has 6 million plays versus the original's 473 million. Small wonder, then, that none of the execs the singer works with "were ever like, 'Do you think you say 'f—' one too many

"If I could've used the (F-)word back when I was writing, I totally would have."

Kara DioGuardi

pop songwriter and former "American Idol" judge who signed Gayle to her Arthouse label

times?" Gayle says with a laugh.

Cultural observers lament an overall coarsening of our verbal discourse — see the pearl-clutching over Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's ultra-raunchy "WAP" and the outrage over former President Trump's often-impolite language. (Until recently, The Times rarely allowed four-letter words to even be rendered with em dashes.) In DioGuardi's view, the proliferation of F-bombs is merely bringing pop into alignment with how kids talk in real life (and on social media). "If you're thinking that teenagers don't use those words," she says, "then you're not really being honest with yourself."

Said Rodrigo last year in an interview with Nylon: "I have a dirty mouth."

Ruby Ryan, a 12-year-old middle-school student from Los Angeles, was surprised the first time she heard "Drivers License" — in which Rodrigo sings, "I still f— love you, babe" — because she'd seen the singer and actress on Disney's "High School Musical: The Musical: The Series," "and I never heard her talk like that on the show," Ryan says. (Indeed, for kiddie-TV veterans like Rodrigo and Carpenter, a choice F-bomb can provide a kind of rhetorical bridge to adulthood.)

"But obviously," Ryan adds, "the song wasn't the first time I heard the word."

Ryan's dad, Brandon, who's 49 and works in product marketing at the Roland musical-instrument company, says he doesn't fear his daughter's exposure to rough language in a musical context: "It's not like she's gonna melt into a puddle."

For Brandon, it's about "whether or not the word serves the artist's vision," which Ruby thinks has generally been the case in songs about how young women navigate a world defined by instant, unfiltered communication. Incorporating the occasional cuss, Ruby says, "makes the music feel more modern."

The F-word also has a unique emotional value. Koma says there's "a weight to it" that's crucial to the story he and Lovato tell in "Fiimy" about lovers reconnecting despite their misgivings. "You're building up this whole narrative to basically say, 'Regardless of all this other s—, I miss you,'" he explains. "It doesn't have that same we've-arrived-at-this feel when you can't say the word."

In "abcdefu," DioGuardi says, Gayle is singing from the point of view of "a very reasonable person who tried to give her boyfriend the benefit of the doubt and take the high road, and he was not doing the same by her. And in that moment, she's like, 'You don't get to do that to me. F— you!'"

"I mean, how else would you put it?" DioGuardi asks. "If I could've used the word back when I was writing" — her hits from the early 2000s include Ashlee Simpson's "Pieces of Me" and Christina Aguilera's "Ain't No Other Man" — "I totally would have."

At least one female pop superstar used the word back in 2011: Pink scored a No. 2 hit with "F— Perfect," a feel-good empowerment jam about the illusory nature of perfection. But Pink was in her early 30s when "F— Perfect" came out, not a teenager like Gayle or the recently turned 19-year-old Rodrigo. And in the pre-streaming age, the curse-free radio edit of Pink's song was likely more ubiquitous than the unexpurgated version available to buyers of CDs and MP3s; today, YouTube and Spotify playlists, the latter of which Ong says rarely feature clean edits, are the radio for millions of listeners.

Which isn't to say the clean edit is a thing of the past — or that pop acts no longer care about Top 40 radio.

"I look at radio as being sort of that tipping point where what you find at Spotify becomes mainstream and multigenerational," DioGuardi says. Koma acknowledges he's prepared a censored take on "Fiimy" in case the song takes off on streaming and starts attracting interest from programmers.

That's what happened with "abcdefu," which months after topping Spotify's Global Top 50 chart reached No. 1 last week — albeit with Gayle telling her ex, "Forget you" — on Billboard's national airplay tally.

The singer, who's set to release a new EP on March 18, is philosophical about having to make an old-school concession — the same one, as it happens, that CeeLo made to get "F— You" on the airwaves in 2010.

"Would I love to be able to say 'f—' on the radio? Yes," Gayle says. "But [at 17] I don't know what it's like to be driving my kids to school at 7 a.m. and then hear this super-vulgar song and not be able to control it. So I understand the rules and regulations."

"Even if 'Forget you' hurts my heart a little bit."



AP

Singer Dionne Warwick, who is nominated for the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, said she doesn't care if she is enshrined.

Warwick doesn't care about Hall

BY KARU F. DANIELS
New York Daily News

The Queen of Twitter couldn't care less about joining the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Dionne Warwick, a nominee for the class of 2022, said she doesn't give a hoot about the prestigious honor.

During her March 13 appearance on Bravo's "Watch What Happens Live," the Grammy Award-winning chanteuse participated in a game called "Does Dionne Give a Damn?" in which fellow guest Chris Redd (of "Saturday Night Live") guessed whether Warwick gave a damn about what host Andy Cohen referred to as "pop culture items du jour."

While she did say she gave a damn about Will Smith winning at the Oscars, Britney Spears being free from her conservatorship and Rihanna's pregnancy, the "Do You Know the Way to San Jose?" singer shocked everyone when she revealed that being inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame was not for her.

Warwick said that she believes the "Rock and Roll" modifier seems like something that doesn't apply to her.

"I'm not rock and roll," the 81-year-old Orange, N.J., native explained.

"I've been interviewed on this subject many times. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as I grew to know it many, many years ago was specially for rock and roll acts."

She furthered: "I feel now, especially when I hear that Dolly Parton's being nominated, which I am thrilled for her about, they should rename Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and call it the Music Hall of Fame, and now that they bring so many other genres into it, why not?"

Parton, also among the 17 nominees announced for inclusion last month, echoed Warwick's sentiments when she announced Monday that she "must respectfully bow out" from consideration for the annual honor.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Tale wags the dog

Netflix's 'Rescued by Ruby' tells of a problematic pooch, once at risk of being euthanized, who now works as a K-9

By WILLIAM J. KOLE
Associated Press

This is the story of a mischievous mutt who turned out to be a very good girl. Such a good girl, in fact, that she saved a life.

Ruby, an Australian shepherd and border collie mix, ended up in a Rhode Island animal shelter as a pup because of persistent behavioral problems. Five families adopted her in turn, only for each family to return her because she was just too rambunctious.

"She was a total knucklehead," said shelter volunteer and dog trainer Patricia Inman, who repeatedly intervened to keep Ruby from being euthanized. "She jumped and bit her leash. She wouldn't sit or lie down. She just never stopped moving. She was special, and she needed a special person."

Enter state police Cpl. Daniel O'Neil, who needed a search-and-rescue dog. In 2011, he was taken by an eight-month-old Ruby's irrepressible energy and intelligence, and after Inman vouched for her, she was trained as a police K-9.

Fast-forward to October 2017, when this tale takes an incredible twist: A teenage boy got lost for 36 hours while hiking, and Ruby succeeded where a human search party failed — she found the boy, who was unconscious and in grave medical condition. He turned out to be Inman's son.

"Rescued by Ruby," which premiered March 17 on Netflix, tells the story of a problematic pooch who just needed another shot.

"Ruby was given a chance at life and ended up saving a life," the American Humane Hero Dog organization said in a 2018 citation naming her the nation's "Search and Rescue Dog of the Year."

In yet another twist, Ruby is played by a canine actor, Bear, another former shelter dog who was saved by the movie's dog trainers from being put down.

"It's a true underdog story," O'Neil, 41, said in an interview at his office at the Rhode Island State Police, where he now oversees an 18-dog K-9 unit.

"It's like divine intervention. She was given a chance and she's been doing everything she can to pay it back," he said. "You have this dog that was given up on, and she's changed so many people's lives."

O'Neil knew adopting a shelter dog written off as unmanageable was a gamble. Police dogs typically are bred for their work and trained from birth. Most state police K-9s cost \$7,500 and come from Europe.

But O'Neil recalls being impressed by Ruby's determination and focus, and she graduated at the top of her class. And as someone with dyslexia and hyperactivity,

he identified with Ruby.

"We both kind of know where each other's coming from," he said.

On the afternoon of the boy's rescue, Ruby led O'Neil straight to the teen, who had tumbled into a ravine. O'Neil's radio and GPS were out of range, but Ruby's repeated barking drew authorities to the scene. The youth, who has since recovered, declined to be interviewed.

When O'Neil knocked on the door of the boy's home to deliver the good news, he found himself face to face with Inman: "I said, 'Pat, this was her thank you for saving her life — she saved your boy's life.' And we both started to cry."

Later, as it all sank in, Inman found herself wondering: What if?

What if O'Neil hadn't taken a chance? What if Ruby had been put down?

"I was so grateful. I was beside myself and overwhelmed," she said. "So many things had to fall into place for this to

happen the way it did. The universe works in mysterious ways."

O'Neil, who's played in the Netflix film by "The Flash" actor Grant Gustin, said he hopes people will consider adopting a shelter dog.

"If you show them love and

compassion and you give them a certain type of stability, they'll show their true colors," he said.

Partners for 11 years, O'Neil and Ruby have teamed up on numerous successful rescues and helped convict two murderers based on evidence Ruby sniffed out. They've also shared some rough days: In 2020, a drunk driver slammed into their cruiser. Ruby escaped unscathed; O'Neil broke five ribs.

Underscoring the dangers of the work, Massachusetts last month enacted a new law to let first responders treat police dogs injured in the line of duty. "Nero's Law" was named for the K-9 partner of Yarmouth police Sgt. Sean Gannon, fatally shot in 2018 while serving an arrest warrant. Nero also was shot but state law didn't allow EMTs to treat him. He recovered and now lives with Gannon's widow.

Meanwhile, Ruby being Ruby, there's still the occasional misadventure.

Three years ago, she bolted near a state park, prompting a 19-hour search before turning up safe and sound. More recently, after O'Neil let her out to relieve herself, she returned with a live skunk writhing — and spraying — in her jaws.

"We should've known. Ruby's a down-home girl, not a Hollywood celeb," wrote Rhode Island Monthly, which featured Ruby and O'Neil in a cover story for its "Rhode Islanders of the Year" edition. "She represents something true and beautiful: We can achieve great things, no matter where we started out in life."

"Ruby was given a chance at life and ended up saving a life."

American Humane Hero Dog organization for 2018 "Search and Rescue Dog of the Year"



PHOTOS BY CHARLES KRUPA/AP

Ruby, a working K-9 for the Rhode Island State Police and a former shelter dog, holds in a down-stay outside the state police barracks in North Kingstown, R.I., on Feb. 16. The Australian shepherd and border collie mix inspired Netflix's "Rescued by Ruby."



Rhode Island State Police Cpl. Daniel O'Neil poses with his partner, Ruby, outside the state police barracks in North Kingstown, R.I., on Feb. 16.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



NETFLIX/TNS

Toni Collette, left, and Bella Heathcote in a scene from “Pieces of Her,” adapted from the 2018 novel by bestselling author Karin Slaughter (far right). Collette plays a mother in witness protection whose anonymity is threatened. Heathcote plays her daughter.

‘Pieces of Her’ comes to TV

Author Slaughter’s mature female characters finally given due with new streaming series

BY RODNEY HO

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

A decade ago, Atlanta bestselling author Karin Slaughter was in talks to have one of her books turned into a possible TV series.

“I was in the room talking to the decision-makers and everybody seemed really excited,” she said. Later, though, her agent said, “‘Nah. They passed.’ They told my agent that the story was too ‘female centric.’”

“Scandal” had not yet debuted on ABC. Netflix was just starting to stream original dramas and “Orange Is the New Black” was a year away from airing. HBO’s “Big Little Lies” was five years away from fruition.

But once those shows got traction, interest in Slaughter’s books, which focus on strong, mature, resourceful women battling inner demons and terrible men, started to ratchet up in Hollywood. She finally found the right partners: Netflix, showrunner and executive producer Charlotte Stoult (“Fosse/Verdon,” “The Morning Show”) and the female-run production company Made Up Stories, to name a few.

The result: Netflix has adapted her 2018 thriller “Pieces of Her” starring Oscar-nominated Australian actress Toni Collette, 49, as Georgia speech therapist Laura Oliver, who escaped a murderous cult

in her youth and has been in the witness protection program for 30 years. A jarring, very public incident endangers her anonymity and shakes the foundation of her 30-year-old daughter, Andy (Bella Heathcote).

“Suddenly, middle-aged female actresses are having this heyday on streaming,” Slaughter said, citing recent shows like Hulu’s “Nine Perfect Strangers.” “Streaming services figured out there are people who want to see women who aren’t idiots or grandmothers at age 40.”

Slaughter, who has 21 books to her name with more than 40 million sold worldwide, also gives credit to the successful 2014 film “Gone Girl” for featuring a damaged, complicated lead woman based on the Gillian Flynn novel of the same name.

“It’s a fantastic book and hit at the right time to become a movie,” she said. (Flynn provides Slaughter a return salute on the current soft-cover version of “Pieces of Her,” dubbing her “one of the best thriller writers working today.”)

Slaughter has nothing but praise for how the TV producers adapted her book.

“It totally captures the writing in a way that doesn’t dumb it down,” Slaughter said. At the same time, “they understood how to frame a mystery. They followed the structure of my story really well. But they made changes to streamline things. For

example, in my book, Andy drives to multiple states. They cut that down.”

Seeing her words transformed onto a screen was surreal, she said.

“I’m watching Andy carry a blue suitcase I made blue in the book because I don’t like the color red,” she said. “She goes to a storage facility in Carrollton, Ga., called Get-Em-Go, which was a placeholder name in my book that I never changed.”

While Slaughter didn’t adapt the script, she was given the opportunity to provide notes, and she was queried about her characters’ motivations.

“They made me feel included,” she said.

Although the bulk of the series was shot in Australia, a handful of scenes were done in Georgia, including at a Shell station in Brunswick and a bar and motel in Jasper.

“There’s a scene where Andy is on a bicycle,” Slaughter said. “At the beginning of the scene, she’s in Brunswick. The house she arrives at is in Australia. That is officially the longest bike ride ever!”

And the author herself makes a brief appearance in the background of a scene shot at Underground Atlanta.

“I walk by Andy leaving the bookstore,” she said. “That’s my claim to fame!”

The small town in the book called Belle Isle near Savannah where Andy and Laura live in the beginning of the series is fic-

tional.

“I made that up,” she said. “I hate when I get letters where people complain that you can’t take a left on this particular road, so I just make up names a lot of the time. Anyone who knows Savannah knows what I’m doing.”

At the beginning of the book and the series, Andy is a 911 dispatcher and entirely lost. She has no love life or career she cares about, and she’s saddled with student debt for a college degree she never got. In a weird way, the revelations about her mom and family give her a sense of purpose for the first time.

The series in part focuses on how Andy finds her groove while playing detective.

“It made her jump out of her complacency,” Slaughter said. “She is feeling a level of betrayal and gullibility. It’s like she had been catfished for 30 years.”

Heathcote as Andy expresses that bewilderment on her face and in her words time and time again during the series.

“Every time I think I get closer to knowing her, she slips away,” Andy says about her mom, adding later, “It’s like the flying monkeys carried off my childhood.”

Slaughter isn’t done with Andy. She is currently working on a sequel to “Pieces of Her” in which Andy becomes a U.S. Marshal. It could be the basis of another season of the show.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

BY MATT FUCHS

For The Washington Post

Remember those kids at summer camp who seemed to enjoy nothing more than jumping into a freezing pool with reckless abandon?

That wasn't me. I dipped my toe while praying for a thunderstorm to force us all back inside. As an adult, I continued to find the idea of subjecting myself to icy water about as appealing as walking in front of a moving car.

Yet I kept hearing wellness pundits rave about "cold immersion." They made it sound fairly simple. You pop into a really cold lake, ice bath or shower; stay there for some extended period of time; reemerge, shivering and bluish; and magically reap a wide range of supposed health benefits, such as more energy, better metabolic health and happier moods. Cold showers seemed slightly better than submerging myself in ice, and the concept was intriguing, if not exactly tempting.

But I became more interested in trying it this past winter. I'd begun to feel vaguely depressed, with the sunless skies, the pandemic marching on like an evil Energizer Bunny and my occasional overwhelm from adjusting to a new career path — all while trying to cut back on my coffee addiction. I needed a boost.

Before I tried to conquer my fear of chilly water, I spoke with experts to see if it was worth it. One of them was David Sinclair, a Harvard biologist and leading researcher of longevity whose "metabolic winter" hypothesis would explain why cold immersion supports long-term health. His hypothesis, he said, is based on the fact that, for tens of thousands of years "our status quo was being cold." That was because our ancestors lived outdoors in seasonally cold temperatures, endured the ice age and migrated to colder climates. Human metabolism, therefore, was designed to adapt to uncomfortable weather (hot temperatures may have had the same effect). But these days we live almost entirely in climate-controlled luxury. The new status quo derails our health because it eliminates the biological challenges our bodies had adapted to.

Sinclair's hypothesis draws from a principle, well accepted by biologists, called hormesis: Some amount of pain is good for us. In addition to cold-water immersion, other examples of hormesis include exercise and dietary fasts.

Another expert I spoke to, Anna Lembke, a Stanford professor and psychiatrist, prescribes various forms of hormesis including cold-water immersion instead of pills to some of her patients suffering from addictions.

"It helps them tolerate with-



iStock

People participate in the annual polar bear swim in the Bay of Fundy in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada. Cold-water plunges are a rite of passage for many, and some doctors think they can have positive effects on overall health such as more energy, better metabolic health and happier moods.

Thrill of the chill

Reporter tests popular theory that 'cold immersion' boosts mood, energy and metabolism, improves long-term health

drawal," she told me. "The body responds to cold water by up-regulating feel-good molecules like dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine, as a way to compensate."

These theories sounded plausible. Missing my usual caffeine bump and feeling especially lethargic one cloudy afternoon, I turned my shower handle to its coldest setting, took a deep breath and stepped in.

I gasped. Then I screamed and quickly stepped out.

"Are you OK?" my 6-year-old asked from the hallway.

"I don't know," I said, before reassuring him — and myself — that it was just cold water.

Take two: I turned the handle to a saner, more inviting temperature, and got back in the shower. For about six minutes, I brought the pain gradually, turn-

ing the handle in increments, allowing my body to adjust. That is, until the handle would turn no longer and the showerhead unleashed its deepest chill. I screamed again and reached out for the handle like a drowning man grabbing a rope, shutting off the water.

Never again, went the refrain in my head. But as I got dressed, cranked up the heat in my house and stood next to my space heater, a profound sense of relief spread through me, a rebound effect that lasted several hours.

Even so, I remained skeptical. I'd just finished reading "Suggestible You," Erik Vance's book about the placebo effect. Beyond theoretical explanations and my own subjective take, what did scientific experiments actually reveal about the benefits of cold water?

I talked with Heather Massey, a physiologist in the Extreme Environments Research Group at the University of Portsmouth in Hampshire, England. Research on cold immersion is "an emerging field," she said. "There's a desperate need for more studies" and funding to do them.

A handful of studies do show a link between cold exposure and upticks in various brain chemicals associated with well-being. For example, one study found that immersion in cold water — 57 degrees, to be exact — raised people's blood levels of the neurotransmitters noradrenaline (by 530%) and dopamine (by 250%).

Some research suggests that noradrenaline helps counter anxiety and depression, and dopamine plays a key role in feelings of motivation and re-

ward. Other research indicates that higher levels of noradrenaline could reduce inflammation.

Sinclair mentioned to me that enduring cold temperatures may also increase so-called "brown fat," which is associated with lower body fat percentage. Notably, this research involved cold air, not water. Other studies suggest that cold water immersion can buffer the immune system.

The anecdotal evidence, however, has been enough for some scientists to take the plunge themselves:

Massey swims outdoors in cold-weather months. Before the pandemic, Sinclair dunked himself regularly in 39-degree water for five minutes at his gym.

Kenneth Kishida, a Wake Forest neuroscientist and dopamine researcher, told me that he likes to take rugged camping trips in state parks, subjecting himself to frigid showers and other hormetic stressors. He returns from these trips in higher spirits.

Wendy Suzuki, an NYU neuroscientist, takes cold showers every morning.

"I can tell the difference when I forget to do it," she told me. "It's just generally activating. I feel so alive."

I've gotten into a rhythm of taking cold showers two or three times per week, usually after lunch. At first, I couldn't stand the shock of the coldest temperature — 48 degrees, according to my thermometer — for more than a few seconds. With more of these showers, though, my endurance has improved; I can now persist through the worst pain for several minutes.

"That tracks with the research," Massey told me. "Cold shock" is the body's natural response to sudden cooling of the skin, involving faster breathing and heartbeat, she said. But as you expose yourself more, these defense mechanisms start to relax, research suggests. "You can extend your time in the water because you have far less discomfort."

Recently, my thoughts have even drifted to random subjects, as they do during warm showers, rather than obsessing over the pain. But I last longest when focusing on the boost I'll get afterward — a strategy backed by research. Plus, longer cold exposure seems to intensify the benefits.

I asked my wife if she's noticed any changes in my mood lately.

"Possibly," she replied, very diplomatically.

Hoping for a more definitive answer, I asked my 6-year-old the same question.

"Not really," he said. But then he added, "I have noticed, when I look over at you, sometimes you're just smiling at me."

I shouldn't need cold showers to make that happen. But if they do the trick, the pain is worth it.

A handful of studies do show a link between cold exposure and upticks in various brain chemicals associated with well-being. For example, one study found that immersion in cold water — 57 degrees, to be exact — raised people's blood levels of the neurotransmitters noradrenaline (by 530%) and dopamine (by 250%).

WEEKEND: FAMILY



iStock

Parenting styles and ideas aren't always going to be in sync, but the differences don't have to drive parents apart.

United we will parent

Experts say parenting styles often differ, offer tips for acting as a team

By **TONILYN HORNING**
For *The Washington Post*

“Don’t email the teacher yet,” my husband said. Our 8-year-old was having trouble at recess and I was just about ready to disguise myself as a student and sneak onto the playground to help. Right in the middle of my explanation about how a hands-on approach was the greatest idea ever, my husband jumped in and said why our kid needed space to figure this one out on his own.

We stood on opposite sides of our kitchen island, but I felt like we were on opposite sides of the world. As we discussed the situation, we weren’t moving any closer to being the tight-knit team our son needed. In fact, I felt a disconnect growing.

Ever feel like you’re parenting alone when parenting with your partner? Katie Smith, a licensed clinical and child psychologist, says it’s not uncommon to have opposite outlooks when parenting.

“No two people think through situations in the exact same way,” Smith says. The problem is when the conflict becomes more about who’s wrong and who’s right, and not the parenting issue at hand, Smith says.

According to psychologist Supatra Tovar, this is the exact mindset that can lead parents to an even greater divide.

“This conflict can become so severe, if communication is not present, and differences go unchecked, it can lead to separation or divorce,” Tovar says.

Why are we so attached to our parenting methods, especially when we can agree on other important issues? Tovar explains these styles evolve for many reasons, and some are deeply ingrained in us over time.

“It comes down to cultural factors, what were your parents’ parenting styles and then society’s expectations,” she says.

It’s normal for parents to disagree. But there are ways to make use of those differences as a team instead of letting them drive you apart:

Make your differences work for you

“My husband and I have different parenting styles,” says Erin Quill, the mother to a 9-year-old son. “It’s just a thing we know.” She describes her method as an “empathetic explainer” while her husband skews to the stricter side.

While differing viewpoints can be frustrating, Quill

says they don’t stop her and her husband from making decisions about their son’s life. To work together constructively, they set a boundary.

“We have a rule that we don’t undermine each other’s parenting,” Quill says.

This agreement keeps the two connected, and it’s a system Tovar encourages in her clients.

“I stress it is of the utmost importance to become a ‘united parenting front,’” Tovar says.

Becoming a parenting team shifts your attention to the common goal of raising emotionally resilient children. This is where Shawna Tooman, the mother of two girls ages 8 and 23 months, is scoring points.

Between Tooman’s laid-back style and her husband’s more authoritative approach, the couple is in discussion about how to set healthy limits for their kids. She says it’s hard negotiating two viewpoints, but when they focus on finding a balance between their differences, communication improves.

“Most people, when they have a disagreement, have a particular communication style,” Tovar says. “Often times it’s dysfunctional, and that’s the main reason arguments come up — because each person is trying to get their point across.”

Know when to take a break and listen

When defenses rise, it’s time to call a timeout. Both Tooman and Quill said they take time away from escalating decisions when needed.

“Parents often feel a solution has to be reached immediately, but when emotions are high, that’s not the best time to make decisions,” Smith says. When you’re ready to reenter the conversation, Tovar suggests taking turns listening without judgment. Listening objectively can bring validation which goes a long way toward forging a solution and lessens those feelings of frustration and resentment.

Parenting differences have benefits when both parties recognize the value, so keeping in mind that there’s no one correct way to parent can take the pressure off choosing one style over another. Try seeing your partner’s different parenting style as an asset, not a weakness.

“Parents can define different responsibilities based on their strengths according to what their child needs,” Smith says. This can look like the laid-back parent helping their more nervous child with homework pressures. Playing to your parenting strengths can be helpful for your kids.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



A different conversation: War and military families

“Dad, are your military friends in crisis mode because of the war in Ukraine?” our 24-year-old daughter Anna asked. She was home from her fashion job in New York City for the weekend, and was sewing a vest in the colors of the Ukrainian flag. She planned to auction the vest online and donate the proceeds to a Ukrainian relief fund.

Obviously, war was on her mind.

“What do you mean?” said my husband, Francis, who retired from the Navy five years ago.

Anna clarified her question. “Aren’t military people getting briefed on the war, making preparations, flying overseas, marching around, deploying, or whatever?”

“Well, not necessarily,” Francis said. “It depends upon their area of responsibility. Every military person is assigned to a command that covers a specific area of the world. Only those commands assigned to the areas affected by the Ukraine War would be involved. Make sense?”

Anna’s brown eyes darted as scenes played out in her head. She seemed stressed, emotional, trying to contemplate that which is incomprehensible.

It occurred to me that our kids have no concept of modern war. There hasn’t exactly been worldwide peace since 9/11, but Putin’s invasion of Ukraine has been the first highly visible war in decades.

It also occurred to me that we, as parents, may not be equipped to help our young adult children understand it all.

I searched for advice on how parents should talk to children about the war in Ukraine. The suggestions in the articles I read made sense: Limit children’s exposure to potentially frightening media. Ask children to share what they’ve heard and seen. Give facts and context. Offer a safe space to share their feelings. Talk about bad decisions, but not bad people. Read positive stories about people helping. Reassure them that it is your job to protect them.

However, one guide stated that, depending on the child’s age, there may be no need bring the topic of war up, “unless they have a family member in the military.”

Ah, there’s the catch.

Talking about war is different for military kids, because they know certain things about military life. They know that, when fights happen in faraway places, sometimes military parents are called upon to help. They know that parents might have to go away for months at a time. They know that parents’ military jobs might put them in danger. They’ve heard stories about military parents who never came home.

When searching for advice specifically geared toward military children, I found “Talking to Children About Armed Conflict” (2015) by Family Science Specialist, Sean Brotherson, Ph.D., stating that addressing military children’s reactions to news of war “is particularly important because these issues directly relate to their military family life.” I contacted Professor Brotherson to pick his brain.

“Children in military families grow up in a unique context that makes their experiences different from other peers,” he told me, because acts of violence create a compounded sense of uncertainty, fear and insecurity in children with military parents. “In times of war or conflict, taking the extra time needed to listen to one’s children and allow them to share their feelings can do much to reassure them. Also, connecting with other military families who have kids that understand can help them feel reassured ... Finally, try to find small ways that your children might get involved in helping those affected by war, whether sending cards or gathering items needed for humanitarian assistance. Being proactive and reassuring in small ways can help children feel more in control when things around them seem out of control.”

Anna is understandably anxious about this new war, and is seeking ways to cope. She’s back in New York, determined to finish her Ukrainian flag vest, and do what she can to help.

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com, and in Lisa’s book, *The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com*. Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

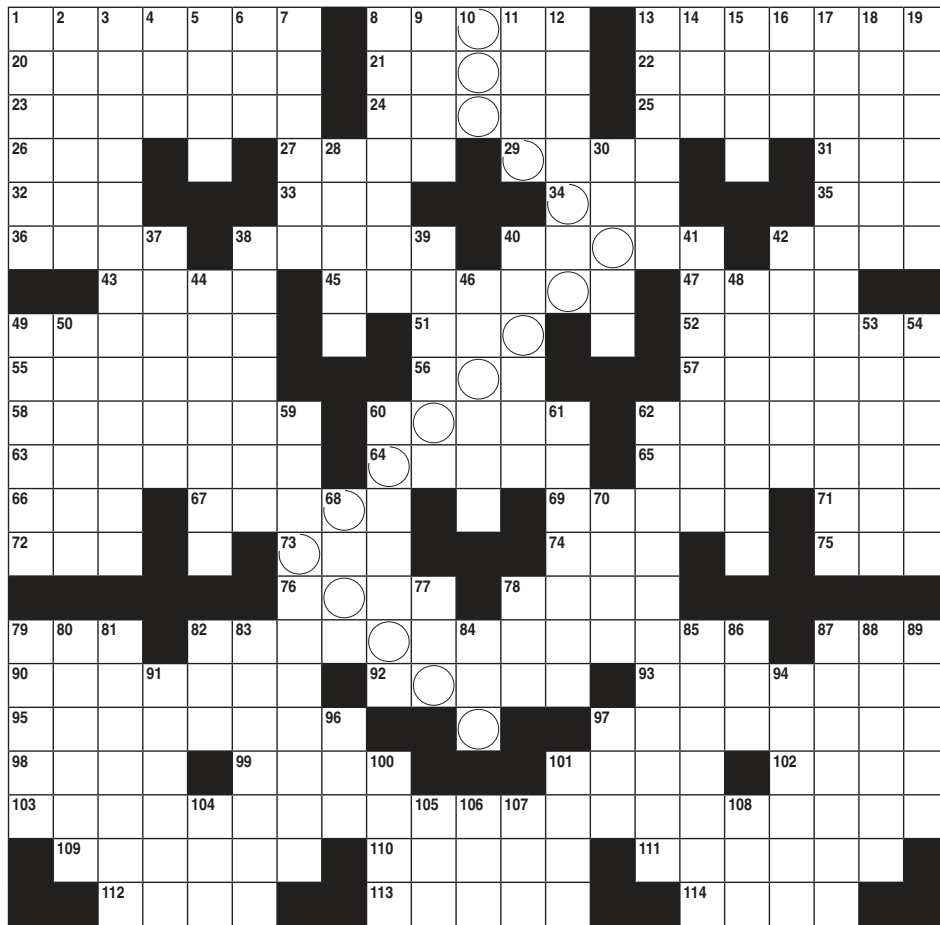
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

PARLOR TRICK

BY MATTHEW STOCK AND WILL NEDIGER / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Matthew Stock works for a math-education nonprofit in East St. Louis, Ill. Will Nediger, of London, Ontario, is a professional crossword constructor. As fans of each other's work, they connected via the online "puzzleverse." They still have not met or even spoken together over video. The original idea for this puzzle was Matthew's. Together they developed the theme via Twitter direct messages, then exchanged grids back and forth until they got one they were both happy with. — W.S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 "Bon ____!"
 - 8 "See ya later!"
 - 13 It covers more than 30 percent of the earth's surface
 - 20 Donna ____, member of Bill Clinton's cabinet
 - 21 Klein who wrote the best seller "This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate"
 - 22 Desert whose soil has been compared with that of Mars
 - 23 Biting writings
 - 24 Breakfast treat
 - 25 Persuades a customer to pay more
 - 26 "Or so"
 - 27 Much of a delivery person's income
 - 29 Makes a choice
 - 31 Hoppin'
 - 32 Rearranged
 - 33 Suffix with official
 - 34 Nickel found in a pocket, say
 - 35 Actor Barinholtz of "The Mindy Project"
 - 36 Classic Camaro
 - 38 ____ K. Smith, poet who won a Pulitzer for "Life on Mars"
 - 40 Cosmetic that can be applied with a brush
 - 42 Neighbors of exclamation marks
 - 43 "La Dolce ____"
 - 45 Stuffed one's face
 - 47 Bump on a frog
 - 49 Question regarding a mic
 - 51 Hubbub
 - 52 One of the Blues Brothers
 - 55 Above criticism
 - 56 Question from the befuddled
 - 57 Syrian city with a historic citadel
 - 58 What "10" can mean
 - 60 Extra
 - 62 Rolled one's r's, say
 - 63 Linguistic unit
 - 64 Giraffe's closest living relative
 - 65 Deb ____, secretary of the interior starting in 2021
 - 66 Opposite of 'neath
 - 67 Regarding
 - 69 Exams for some future clerks: Abbr.
 - 71 Cold open?
 - 72 Hang out on a line
 - 73 U.K. award bestowed by the queen
 - 74 West Coast news inits.
 - 75 Blunder
 - 76 They cast lots
 - 78 "Love covers a multitude of ____": I Peter 4:8
 - 79 Lawn material
 - 82 Something's essential aspect . . . or what's spelled out by letters in this puzzle's eight "cups"
 - 87 Comedian Margaret
 - 90 2011 film for which Octavia Spencer won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar
 - 92 It takes blades to blades
 - 93 Deal
 - 95 Like the consonants "t" and "d"
 - 97 Eject forcefully
 - 98 Records request inits.
 - 99 ____ history
 - 101 Utah's state flower
 - 102 Org. that sets permissible exposure limits
 - 103 Karaoke instruction . . . or what to do starting at 10-Down
 - 109 P.R. consultant on "Ted Lasso"
 - 110 Start playing for pay
 - 111 Into really small pieces
 - 112 Scott who sued for his freedom
 - 113 Afford, casually
 - 114 Add salt to, say
 - 4 Name that's 6-Down backward
 - 5 Save it for a rainy day!
 - 6 La Corse, par exemple
 - 7 Brewery employee
 - 8 Comb through
 - 9 Bubs
 - 10 Worker's "on vacation" inits.
 - 11 "Actually, I disagree"
 - 12 Rococo painter of "Allegory of the Planets and Continents"
 - 13 They might be pregnant
 - 14 Organic energy compound, for short
 - 15 "Mi ____ es su ____"
 - 16 Part of a cold compress
 - 17 Become clear . . . or make like the object represented by the circled letters
 - 18 "So then my response was . . ."
 - 19 Hereditary divisions
 - 28 Physicist Newton
 - 30 Loyalty that's pledged
 - 37 Lemonlike fruit
 - 38 Big rigs
 - 39 "Well, fine then"
 - 40 Age beautifully, informally
 - 41 Cuss out
 - 42 Big Brother's creator
 - 44 Pink pad on a paw, in slang
 - 46 The Lord, in the Hebrew Bible
 - 48 Start of a simple request



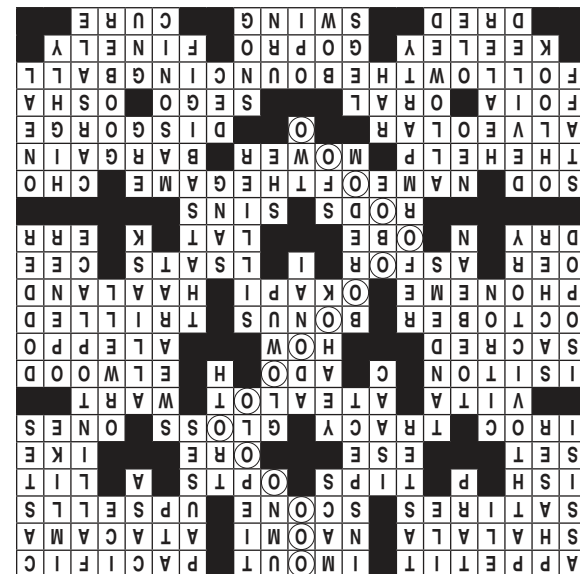
- 49 Roly-poly, scientifically
- 50 ____ torte (Austrian cake)
- 53 Warm-up act
- 54 Move shakily
- 59 Ross Perot founded it in 1995
- 60 Lack of engagement
- 61 More wacky
- 62 "You're just assuming"
- 68 It's blown in the winds
- 70 Showed off one's pipes
- 77 Airport with a Harvey Milk terminal: Abbr.
- 78 Harry Styles tune about a woman who "lives in daydreams"
- 79 Lines of notes
- 80 Sight line?
- 81 Cooked with hot seasoning
- 82 Prefix with -lithic
- 83 Not against the rules
- 84 It's under @ on a keyboard
- 85 ____ lodge
- 86 Rowing machine, informally
- 87 Event for moving vehicles
- 88 Super
- 89 Actress Tatum
- 91 Folk medicine practitioner
- 94 Foolish sort
- 96 Sports fan's cheer
- 97 Universal Human Rights Mo.
- 100 Ability to sustain long-term interest
- 101 Kiss, in Kent
- 104 Sports fan's cheer
- 105 Gift wrapper's final touch
- 106 Nail-polish brand
- 107 Buffet table item
- 108 Zoo animal whose name rhymes with "zoo"

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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2 years into COVID, has Congress learned nothing?

BY LEANA S. WEN

Special to The Washington Post

Two years into the pandemic, Congress is poised to repeat what will almost certainly be a deadly mistake: waiting until it's too late before investing in prevention.

The United States is experiencing a relative lull in COVID-19 infections. This is the ideal time to prepare for the next surge, which is what the Biden administration is trying to do. It has asked Congress for a reasonable \$22.5 billion to purchase treatments, secure boosters and ensure that there is sufficient testing in case of new variants. This is a tiny fraction of the nearly \$6 trillion allocated thus far on pandemic relief and will surely pay for itself many times over.

The White House's request was negotiated down to \$15.6 billion in Congress, but even that compromise amount was stripped from the omnibus spending package last week after objections from both Republicans and Democrats. A standalone bill for supplemental funding has been introduced in the House, but it currently lacks the support to pass both chambers.

This is a devastating turn of events with immediate consequences. The most directly impacted are the 7 million Americans who are moderately or severely immunocompromised and millions more who are elderly with underlying medical conditions. The pathway out of the pandemic for these individuals is prompt diagnosis and early treatment, so that contracting the coronavirus no longer needs to be a potential death sentence.

That's precisely what's at risk if Congress does not provide supplemental funding. The White House has said that it cannot purchase additional oral antiviral pills including Paxlovid, the promising treatment from Pfizer that

reduces the rate of hospitalization and death by about 90%. Monoclonal antibodies are another effective COVID-19 treatment, but the administration's own fact sheet states starkly that "the federal government has no more funding for additional monoclonals, including a planned order for March 25." Beginning next week, it will have to ration the already limited supply and cut state allocations by more than 30%.

Immunocompromised patients have another lifeline, AstraZeneca's Evusheld, which essentially provides antibodies to people who can't make enough of their own. In studies of vulnerable individuals, Evusheld reduces the risk of developing COVID-19 infection by 77%. Yet the Biden administration has been able to purchase only enough to fully treat 850,000 people. It had plans to move forward with another allotment later this month but won't be able to do so without the requested funding.

Congressional inaction means that millions of vulnerable citizens will be left to fend for themselves. Many of these individuals have done everything right and, like everyone else, just want to get back to doing the things they love. But it seems lawmakers are willing to relegate them to continued fear and prolonged isolation. What an indictment on our society it would be if our leaders allow those with the greatest need to suffer instead of funding treatments that would dramatically reduce their risk of severe illness and death.

I can't help but wonder if Congress would be so slow to approve funding if we were still in midst of the omicron surge. Perhaps legislators are waiting for another crisis before committing resources. That kind of thinking reflects a total misunderstanding of how public health works. By the time a new worrying variant arises, our window for prevention will be

closed. A new surge could see us scrambling to reestablish testing sites that shuttered without sustained resources. It takes months to contract with manufacturers and ramp up testing and treatment.

And that doesn't even begin to address the possibility that we might need more vaccines. Right now, the federal government doesn't have the funding to purchase fourth doses for all Americans, much less to develop and distribute variant-specific boosters if they are needed.

The next surge might not be too far off. Britain, Germany and some other European countries are seeing a worrisome uptick in cases. The refugee crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine could lead to outbreaks in Eastern Europe. China is just beginning its omicron wave and is already recording its highest case counts since the pandemic began. And although reported infections continue to decline in the United States, the early detection system of wastewater surveillance is raising flags with more than a third of sites seeing increases.

I still believe it was the right call to lift mask mandates and allow individuals who can to enjoy this period of relative calm. But leaders are supposed to use this lull to prepare for what's next, because we know it's only a matter of time before the next emergency arrives. And we've already seen what happens when we don't prioritize preparedness and prevention.

Nearly 1 million Americans have already died from COVID-19. How many more must die before Congress heeds the lessons learned?

Leana S. Wen, a Washington Post contributing columnist who writes the newsletter The Checkup with Dr. Wen, is a professor at George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health.

The private sector can help solve our doctor shortage

BY SALLY C. PIPES

Special to the Chicago Tribune

The pandemic has laid bare a crisis we've ignored for far too long — our chronic doctor shortage. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, the United States faces a shortfall of up to 124,000 physicians over the next decade.

This is a supply problem, as the demand for care will only go up. So we must create more doctors — by expanding medical school capacity and increasing the number of residency slots where budding doctors can complete their training.

The causes of this looming shortage are many. Over half of doctors in this country are 55 or older and heading for retirement. Our aging population is increasing the overall demand for medical care. Burnout is also becoming a bigger problem. Even before the pandemic, long hours, stifling bureaucracy and a lack of autonomy had been causing many doctors to hang up their stethoscopes early. The horrors and stresses of COVID-19 pushed many more out of active practice.

We're in this mess, in part, because of policies that ensued from a flawed, four-decade-old federal government report. In 1981, the Graduate Medical Education National Advisory Committee concluded that America would have a large surplus of physicians. The committee said that medical school enrollment had increased too much during the '60s and '70s. The report is one reason why no new

M.D.-granting medical schools were established until after the new millennium.

By 2006, the Association of American Medical Colleges issued its own report claiming that new medical schools were needed to avoid an impending doctor shortage.

Today, we're graduating far too few doctors. Only 36.2% of those who apply to medical school end up matriculating, according to AAMC data from 2021-22. The U.S. cuts a sorry figure in the data for medical graduates per 100,000 people among developed countries. In 2019, Ireland topped the list with 24.8 medical graduates for every 100,000 inhabitants. That year, the United States had just 8.1 per 100,000 people. Italy, Slovakia, Belgium and the Czech Republic all had twice as many medical graduates per capita in 2019 as we did.

Med school admissions are, of course, supposed to be competitive. But how many people are denied the chance to become doctors simply because there aren't enough desks — not because they wouldn't make great physicians?

Med school applications have been increasing for decades — by two-thirds since 2005. Last year, a record 62,000 prospective students applied. Acceptance rates are stunningly low, with only 7 of every 100 applicants admitted on average. At Harvard, the figure is 2.8. There's no escaping it — more slots are desperately needed.

Money is targeting student enrollment. The University of Utah will use a \$110 million donation to increase each class' size from 125 to 155, as well as to raise the number of residency

slots it offers to finish training doctors.

There's more. UMass Medical School received a "transformational" \$175 million gift from the Morningside Foundation. Western Michigan University's Medical School has received gifts totaling \$300 million that could lead to a transformational growth in its student body.

Rowan University in New Jersey recently received an \$85 million donation for a new osteopathic school of medicine. Belmont University in Tennessee got \$10 million from its board of trustees chair to bolster its med school, and Wake Forest secured \$25 million from the Howard R. Levine Foundation to go toward a new medical school in Charlotte.

We could also use more residency slots, the postgraduate sites where medical graduates complete their training. This past December, the federal government committed to fund 200 new slots per year over five years through Medicare. It's the largest increase in Medicare-funded residencies in more than a quarter-century. Private philanthropists and other organizations dedicated to improving health care should seriously consider augmenting efforts like this one by funding residencies themselves.

Given the scope of the doctor shortage, we need many more actors to join the fight. This is a crisis we can stop.

Sally C. Pipes is president, CEO, and Thomas W. Smith fellow in health care policy at the Pacific Research Institute. Her latest book is "False Promise, False Promise: The Disastrous Reality of Medicare for All."

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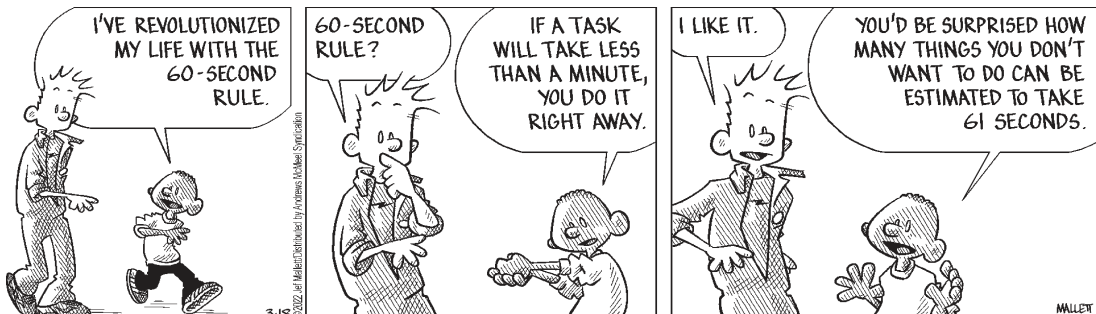
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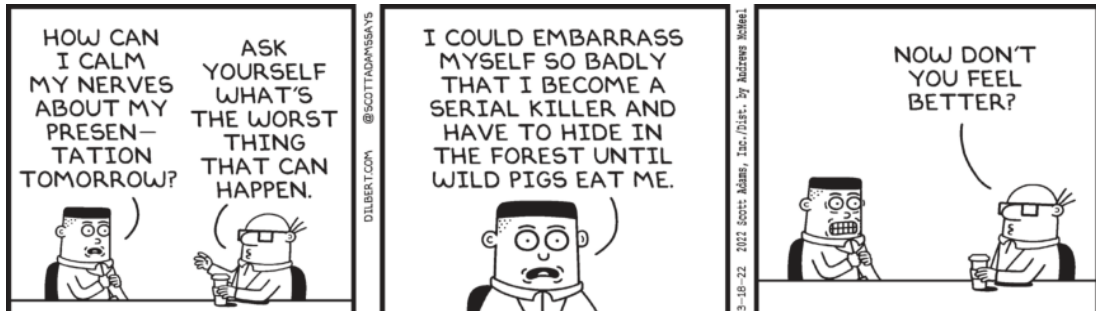


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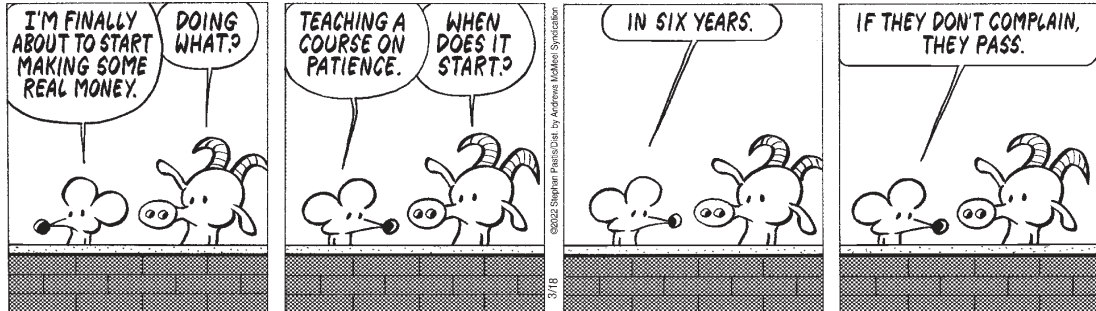
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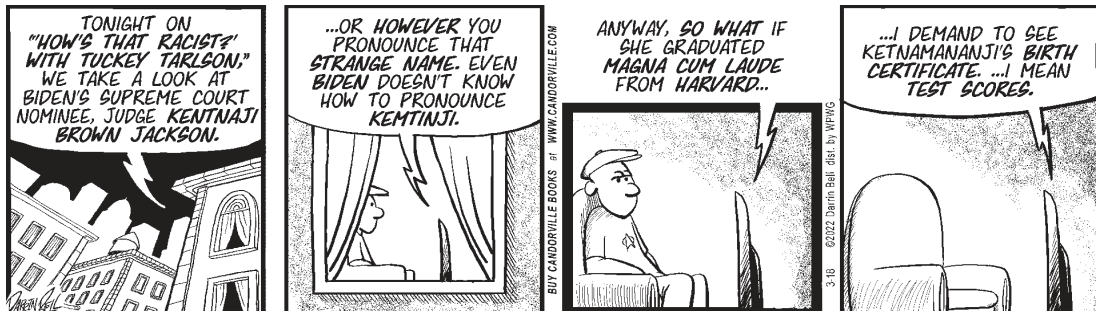
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



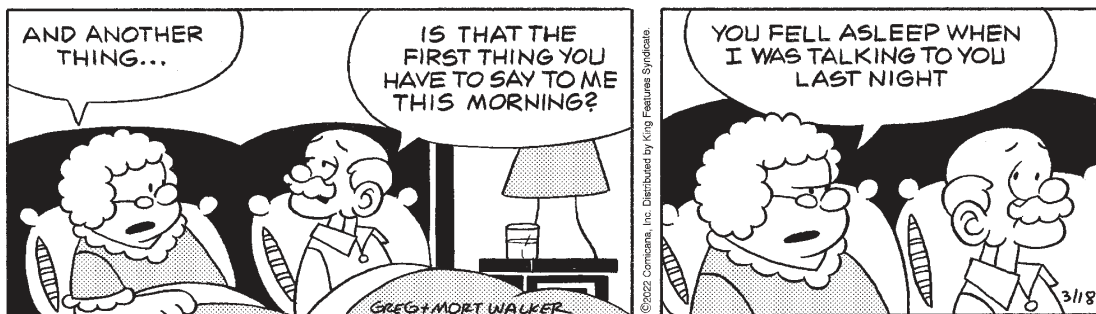
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Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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53						54				55		

ACROSS

- 1 "NCIS" aier
- 4 Run-down area
- 8 Libya neighbor
- 12 Spanish gold
- 13 Wife of Zeus
- 14 Vagrant
- 15 Big star
- 17 Letter extras (Abbr.)
- 18 Aches (for)
- 19 Guitar's kin
- 21 Slugger Mel cutter
- 22 Lumber mill
- 26 Slow tempo
- 29 Lustrous black
- 30 Ecol. watchdog
- 31 Rainbow
- 32 Abolish
- 33 Swiss peaks
- 34 Mayo ingredient
- 35 Pants part
- 36 Per Franklin, a certainty
- 37 Villainous
- 39 "Bali —"
- 40 Alphabet end
- 41 "Stop already!"
- 45 — salad
- 48 Hid from view
- 50 Sweet sandwich
- 51 Schnozz
- 52 Busy insect
- 53 Sketched
- 54 Former mates
- 55 Bk. after Exodus

DOWN

- 1 New Jersey Senator Booker
- 2 Jane Fonda in "Klute"
- 3 Pop
- 4 Japanese faith
- 5 Minimal
- 6 Ornate vase
- 7 Ripened
- 8 Incubator sound
- 9 Sweetie
- 10 Jackson 5 hit song
- 11 Two, in Acapulco
- 16 Pirates' potables
- 20 Tool set
- 23 Actress Ward
- 24 Calendar entry (Abbr.)
- 25 Cleanse
- 26 Property claim
- 27 Golden Fleece ship
- 28 Diana of "The Avengers"
- 29 Springy dance
- 32 Football field area
- 33 Vowel group
- 35 Actress Myrna
- 36 Does the tango
- 38 River bend
- 39 "Siddhartha" author
- 42 Russian river
- 43 Actor Hackman
- 44 RCA purchase
- 45 Massachusetts cape
- 46 Bobby of hockey
- 47 Quilters' get-together
- 49 Jury enclosure

Answer to Previous Puzzle

M	A	C	H	S	A	F	E	P	H	O	
A	L	O	E	K	N	O	X	O	O	H	
C	A	M	B	R	I	D	G	E	R	O	M
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3-18

CRYPTOQUIP

URHUQAFRI MQLWQP BUAK DG
 QHHAULL GDA QRX KQPU
 HFAUMBDA DG Q MQKJWL
 KFPFBQAX IADWJ: JQJQ ADBM.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT WHEN MAFIA MEMBERS WANT SOUP, THEY ARE QUITE FOND OF MOBSTER BISQUE?
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals P

Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



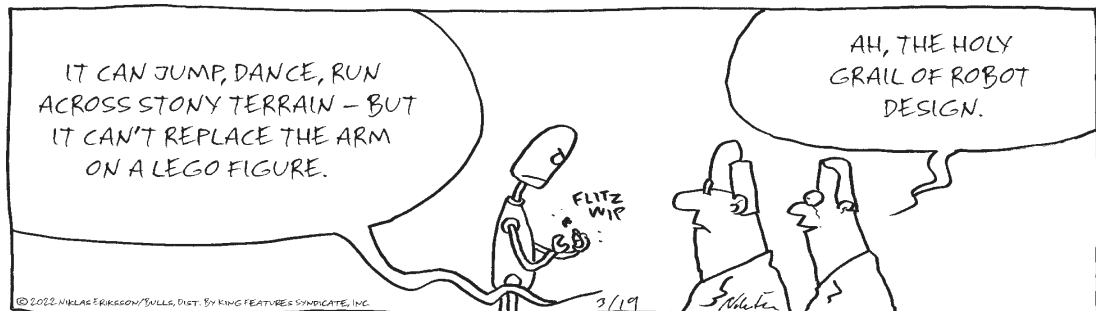
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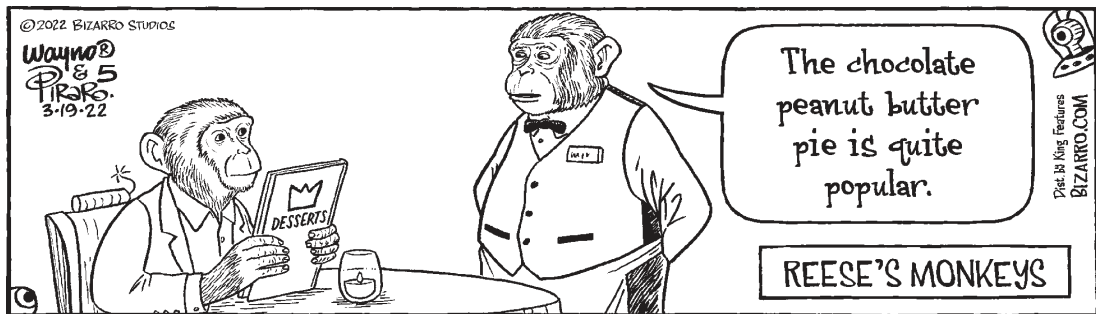
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54							55					
56							57					

ACROSS

- 1 Knee support
- 6 Winter head warmer
- 12 Spanish dish
- 13 Turkish officials
- 14 Cream-filled pastry
- 15 Knight suits
- 16 Thunder god
- 17 Blanchett of "Elizabeth"
- 19 Drenched
- 20 Sir's partner
- 22 "This Is Us" network
- 24 Nightwear, for short
- 27 Supermodel Sastre
- 29 Throat clearer
- 32 Races of just over 13 miles
- 35 Old radio part
- 36 Former Italian money
- 37 Triumphed
- 38 Swab the decks
- 40 Six-pack units
- 42 Norm (Abbr.)
- 44 Miami team
- 46 "Clumsy me!"
- 50 Ancient German
- 52 Corsage flower
- 54 Pacific current

- 55 Olympic swimmer Rowdy
- 56 Some black teas
- 57 In progress

- 18 Actress Ferrera
- 21 Goal
- 23 "Humbug!"
- 24 Prof's degree
- 25 — alai
- 26 Sure thing
- 28 1777 battle site
- 30 Rock's Brian
- 31 AOL rival
- 33 "Alice" waitress
- 34 Light brown
- 39 Give a ring
- 41 Prefix with "logical"
- 42 Dance move
- 43 Far (Pref.)
- 45 Seth's son
- 47 "It can't be!"
- 48 Artist Mondrian
- 49 Radical '60s gp.
- 51 Uncle, to Pedro
- 53 U.K. military fliers

DOWN

- 1 One of the three B's
- 2 Move, in Realtor-speak
- 3 Warning sound
- 4 Roman 151
- 5 Auditory passage
- 6 Lovers' quarrel
- 7 Singer Carpenter
- 8 Doctrine
- 9 Curly-tailed dog
- 10 Bern's river
- 11 Whispered "Hey!"
- 12 Favorite

Answer to Previous Puzzle

C	B	S		S	L	U	M		C	H	A	D	
O	R	O		H	E	R	A		H	O	B	O	
R	E	D		G	I	A	N	T		E	N	C	S
Y	E	A		R	N	S			U	K	E		
				O	T	T		R	I	P	S	A	W
L	A	R		G	O		J	E	T		E	P	A
I	R	I		S		R	I	D		A	L	P	S
E	G	G		L	E	G		D	E	A	T	H	
N	O	G		O	O	D		H	A	I			
				X	Y	Z		E	N	O	U	G	H
C	O	B		B		O	B	S	C	U	R	E	D
O	R	E		O		N	O	S	E		A	N	T
D	R	E		W		E	X	E	S		L	E	V

3-19

CRYPTOQUIP

MSGN TWDSN QYO EGJJ
 MPWNNYOY POUQPNI GFQVN
 UWNESOPITGXWYD WJJODGJ
 TQNWQYI? FGJXWYD UGUOPI.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ENDEARING CASUAL
 TERM OF ADDRESS FOR ANY MALE DIRECTOR
 OF A CAMPUS MILITARY GROUP: PAPA ROTC.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: D equals G

SCOREBOARD/SKIING

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Men's NCAA Tournament

FIRST FOUR
Tuesday, March 15
At Dayton, Ohio
Texas Southern 76, Texas A&M-CC 67
Indiana 66, Wyoming 58
Wednesday, March 16
At Dayton, Ohio
Wright St. 93, Bryant 82
Notre Dame (24-9) vs. Rutgers 87, 20T
EAST REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 17
At Fort Worth, Texas
Baylor (26-6) vs. Norfolk St. (24-6)
North Carolina (24-9) vs. Marquette (19-12)
At Portland, Ore.
Saint Mary's (Cal.) (25-7) vs. Indiana (21-13)
UCLA (25-7) vs. Akron (24-9)
At Indianapolis
Murray St. (30-2) vs. San Francisco (24-9)
Kentucky (26-7) vs. St. Peter's (19-11)
Friday, March 18
At Milwaukee
Texas (21-11) vs. Virginia Tech (23-12)
Purdue (27-7) vs. Yale (19-11)
Second Round
Saturday, March 19
At Fort Worth, Texas
Baylor-Norfolk St. winner vs. North Carolina-Marquette winner
At Portland, Ore.
UCLA-Akron winner vs. Saint Mary's (Cal.)-Indiana winner
At Indianapolis
Kentucky-St. Peter's winner vs. Murray St.-San Francisco winner
Sunday, March 20
At Milwaukee
Purdue-Yale winner vs. Texas-Virginia Tech winner
SOUTH REGIONAL
First Round
Friday, March 18
At San Diego
Arizona (31-3) vs. Wright St. (22-13)
Seton Hall (21-10) vs. TCU (20-12)
At Pittsburgh
Houston (29-5) vs. UAB (27-7)
Illinois (22-9) vs. Chattanooga (27-7)
Ohio St. (19-11) vs. Loyola Chicago (25-7)
Villanova (26-7) vs. Delaware (22-12)
Thursday, March 17
At Indianapolis
Colorado St. (25-5) vs. Michigan (17-14)
Tennessee (26-7) vs. Longwood (26-6)
Second Round
Sunday, March 20
At San Diego
Arizona-Wright St.-Bryant winner vs. Seton Hall-TCU winner
At Pittsburgh
Illinois-Chattanooga winner vs. Houston-UAB winner
Villanova-Delaware winner vs. Ohio St.-Loyola Chicago winner
Saturday, March 19
At Indianapolis
Tennessee-Longwood winner vs. Colorado St.-Michigan winner
MIDWEST REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 17
At Fort Worth, Texas
Kansas (28-6) vs. Texas Southern (19-12)
San Diego St. (23-8) vs. Creighton (22-11)
At Buffalo, N.Y.
Iowa (26-9) vs. Richmond (23-12)
Providence (25-5) vs. S. Dakota St. (30-4)
Friday, March 18
At Milwaukee
LSU (22-11) vs. Iowa St. (20-12)
Wisconsin (24-7) vs. Colgate (23-11)
At Greenville, S.C.
Southern Cal (26-7) vs. Miami (23-10)
Auburn (27-5) vs. Jacksonville St. (21-10)
Second Round
Saturday, March 19
At Fort Worth, Texas
Kansas-Texas Southern winner vs. San Diego St.-Creighton winner
At Buffalo, N.Y.
Providence-S. Dakota St. winner vs. Iowa-Richmond winner
Sunday, March 20
At Milwaukee
Wisconsin-Colgate winner vs. LSU-Iowa St. winner
At Greenville, S.C.
Auburn-Jacksonville St. winner vs. Southern Cal-Miami winner
WEST REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 17
At Portland, Ore.
Gonzaga (26-3) vs. Georgia St. (18-10)
Boise St. (27-7) vs. Memphis (21-10)
At Buffalo, N.Y.
UConn (23-9) vs. New Mexico St. (26-6)
Arkansas (25-8) vs. Vermont (28-5)
Friday, March 18
At San Diego
Alabama (19-13) vs. Notre Dame (23-10)
Texas Tech (25-9) vs. Montana St. (27-7)
At Greenville, S.C.
Michigan St. (22-12) vs. Davidson (27-6)
Duke (28-6) vs. Cal St.-Fullerton (21-10)
Second Round
Saturday, March 19
At Portland, Ore.
Gonzaga-Georgia St. winner vs. Boise St.-Memphis winner
At Buffalo, N.Y.
Arkansas-Vermont winner vs. UConn-New Mexico St. winner
Sunday, March 20
At San Diego
Texas Tech-Montana St. winner vs. Alabama-Rutgers-Notre Dame winner
At Greenville, S.C.
Duke-Cal St.-Fullerton winner vs. Michigan St.-Davidson winner

Women's NCAA Tournament

FIRST FOUR
Wednesday, March 16

At Columbia, S.C.
Howard 55, Incarnate Word 53
At Ames, Iowa
Dayton 88, DePaul 57
Thursday, March 17
At Raleigh, N.C.
Longwood (21-11) vs. Mount St. Mary's (16-12)
At Baton Rouge, La.
Missouri St. (24-7) vs. Florida St. (17-13)
GREENSBORO REGIONAL
First Round
Friday, March 18
At Columbia, S.C.
South Carolina (29-2) vs. Howard (21-9)
Miami (20-12) vs. South Florida (24-8)
At Ames, Iowa
Georgia (20-9) vs. Dayton (26-5)
Iowa St. (26-6) vs. Texas-Arlington (20-7)
At Iowa City, Iowa
Colorado (22-8) vs. Creighton (20-9)
Iowa (23-7) vs. Illinois St. (19-13)
Saturday, March 19
At Tuscon, Ariz.
North Carolina (23-6) vs. Stephen F. Austin (28-4)
Arizona (20-7) vs. UNLV (26-6)
Second Round
Sunday, March 20
At Columbia, S.C.
South Carolina-Howard winner vs. Miami-South Florida winner
At Ames, Iowa
Iowa St.-Texas-Arlington winner vs. Georgia-Dayton winner
At Iowa City, Iowa
Iowa-Illinois St. winner vs. Colorado-Creighton winner
Monday, March 21
At Tuscon, Ariz.
Arizona-UNLV winner vs. North Carolina-Stephen F. Austin winner
WICHITA REGIONAL
First Round
Friday, March 18
At Louisville, Ky.
Louisville (25-4) vs. Albany (NY) (23-9)
Nebraska (24-8) vs. Gonzaga (26-6)
At Waco, Texas
Mississippi (23-8) vs. South Dakota (27-5)
Baylor (27-6) vs. Hawaii (20-9)
Saturday, March 19
At Knoxville, Tenn.
Oregon (20-11) vs. Belmont (22-7)
Tennessee (23-8) vs. Buffalo (25-8)
At Ann Arbor, Mich.
BYU (26-3) vs. Villanova (23-8)
Michigan (22-6) vs. American (23-8)
Second Round
Sunday, March 20
At Louisville, Ky.
Louisville-Albany (NY) winner vs. Nebraska-Gonzaga winner
At Waco, Texas
Baylor-Hawaii winner vs. Mississippi-South Dakota winner
Monday, March 21
At Knoxville, Tenn.
Tennessee-Buffalo winner vs. Oregon-Belmont winner
At Ann Arbor, Mich.
Michigan-American winner vs. BYU-Villanova winner
SPOKANE REGIONAL
First Round
Friday, March 18
At Stanford, Calif.
Stanford (28-3) vs. Montana St. (22-12)
Kansas (20-9) vs. Georgia Tech (21-10)
At College Park, Md.
Virginia Tech (23-9) vs. Florida Gulf Coast (29-2)
Maryland (21-8) vs. Delaware (24-7)
At Austin, Texas
Utah (20-11) vs. Arkansas (18-13)
Texas (26-6) vs. Fairfield (25-6)
Saturday, March 19
At Baton Rouge, La.
Ohio St. (23-6) vs. Missouri St.-Florida St. winner
LSU (25-5) vs. Jackson St. (23-6)
Second Round
Sunday, March 20
At Stanford, Calif.
Stanford-Montana St. winner vs. Kansas-Georgia Tech winner
At College Park, Md.
Maryland-Delaware winner vs. Virginia Tech-Florida Gulf Coast winner
At Austin, Texas
Texas-Fairfield winner vs. Utah-Arkansas winner
Monday, March 21
At Baton Rouge, La.
LSU-Jackson St. winner vs. Ohio St.-Missouri St.-Florida St. winner
BRIDGEPORT REGIONAL
First Round
Saturday, March 19
At Raleigh, N.C.
NC State (29-3) vs. Longwood-Mount St. Mary's winner
Washington St. (19-10) vs. Kansas St. (19-12)
At Norman, Okla.
Notre Dame (22-8) vs. UMass (26-6)
Oklahoma (24-8) vs. IUPUI (24-4)
At Bloomington, Ind.
Kentucky (19-11) vs. Princeton (24-4)
Indiana (22-8) vs. Charlotte (22-9)
At Hartford, Conn.
UCF (25-3) vs. Florida (21-10)
UConn (25-5) vs. Mercer (23-6)
Second Round
Monday, March 21
At Raleigh, N.C.
NC State-Longwood-Mount St. Mary's winner vs. Washington St.-Kansas St. winner
At Norman, Okla.
Oklahoma-IUPUI winner vs. Notre Dame-UMass winner
At Bloomington, Ind.
Indiana-Charlotte winner vs. Kentucky-Princeton winner
At Hartford, Conn.
UConn-Mercer winner vs. UCF-Florida winner

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League
BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Agreed to terms with RHPs Chris Ellis and Conner Green on minor league contracts.
BOSTON RED SOX — Placed LHP Chris Sale and LHP James Paxton on the 60-day IL. Agreed to terms with LHP Jake Diekmann on a two-year contract.
KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Acquired LHP Amir Garrett from Cincinnati in exchange for LHP Mike Minor and a conditional cash consideration. Signed RHP Zack Greinke to a one-year contract. Placed RHP Tyler Zuber on the 60-day IL.
LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Agreed to terms with C Kurt Suzuki and INF Matt Duffy on one-year contracts. Placed RHPs Chris Rodriguez and Griffin Canning on the 60-day IL.
NEW YORK YANKEES — Agreed to terms with INF/OF Phillip Evans, INF Ronald Guzman and OF Ryan LaMarre on minor league contracts.
OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Acquired RHP Gunnar Hoglund, LHPs Zach Lohue, Kirby Sneed and INF Kevin Smith from Toronto in exchange for 3B Matt Chapman. Claimed INF Sheldon Neuse off waivers from Los Angeles Dodgers.
SEATTLE MARINERS — Agreed to terms with OF Steven Souza Jr., C Chance Sisco and 1B Mike Ford on minor league contracts.
TEXAS RANGERS — Agreed to terms with RHPs Greg Holland and Dan Winkler on minor league contracts.
National League
ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Agreed to terms with RHP Ian Kennedy on a one-year contract.
ATLANTA BRAVES — Agreed to terms with OF Eddie Rosario on a two-year contract. Agreed to terms with OF Alex Dickerson on a one-year contract. Placed RHP Mike Soroka on the 60-day IL. Signed RHP Tyler Thornburg to a non-guaranteed one-year contract. Placed RHP Kirby Yates on the 60-day IL.
CHICAGO CUBS — Agreed to terms with RHP David Robertson on a one-year contract. Placed RHP Codi Heuer on the 60-day IL.
COLORADO ROCKIES — Agreed to terms with INF Jose Iglesias and RHP Chad Kuhl on one-year contracts.
MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Agreed to terms with OF Andrew McCutchen on a one-year contract.
PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Agreed to terms with OF Odubel Herrera on a one-year contract.
PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Claimed RHP Adonis Medina off waivers from Philadelphia.
SAN DIEGO PADRES — Agreed to terms with RHP Nick Martinez on a one-year contract. Placed LHP Adrian Morejon on the 60-day IL.
WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Agreed to terms with LHP Sean Doolittle. Placed RHP Joe Ross on the 60-day IL.
BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
TORONTO RAPTORS — Signed G Armoni Brooks to a 10-day contract.
Women's National Basketball Association
INDIANA FEVER — Waived F Jantel Lavender.
NEW YORK LIBERTY — Named Olaf Lange, Roneeka Hodges and Zach O'Brien assistant coaches, Adam Wolf director of player care, Joelle Muro physical therapist, Emily Zalere head strength and conditioning coach and Ohemaa Nyanin assistant general manager.
FOOTBALL
National Football League
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Re-signed TE Maxx Williams to a one-year contract. Signed CB Jeff Gladney to a two-year contract. Released DT Jordan Phillips.
ATLANTA FALCONS — Signed OT Jake Matthews to a 3-year contract extension.
BALTIMORE RAVENS — Agreed to terms with S Marcus Williams on five-year contract. Agreed to terms with T Morgan Moses on a three-year contract.
CAROLINA PANTHERS — Re-signed WR Brandon Zulstra to a one-year contract.
CHICAGO BEARS — Signed LS Patrick Scales and OL Lachovious Simmons to one-year contracts. Released LB Danny Trevathan.
CINCINNATI BENGALS — Signed LS Clark Harris to a one-year contract.
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Acquired WR Amari Cooper and 2022 6th round pick from Dallas for a 2022 5th and 6th round picks. Traded LB Mack Wilson to New England for DE Chase Winovich. Agreed to terms with DT Taven Bryan, WR Jakeem Grant, T Chris Hubbard and LB Anthony Walker Jr.
DENVER BRONCOS — Signed OLB Malik

DEALS

Reed to a tendered contract. Signed DT D.J. Jones to a three-year contract. Signed TE Eric Tomlinson to a one-year contract.
DETROIT LIONS — Waived TE Charlie Taumoepeau. Released OLB Trey Flowers.
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Signed LB Zaire Franklin, T Matt Pryor and DE Tyquan Lewis to contract extensions. Acquired a 2022 2nd and 3rd round draft pick, a 2023 3rd round draft pick from Washington for QB Carson Wentz and a 2022 2nd and 7th round draft pick. Traded CB Rock Ya-Sin to Las Vegas for DE Yannick Ngakoue.
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Signed CB Darious Williams to a three-year contract.
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Re-signed QB Chad Henne to a one-year contract.
LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Signed DL Bilal Nichols to a two-year contract. Signed WR Mack Hollins.
LOS ANGELES RAMS — Signed LB Travin Howard to a tendered contract.
MIAMI DOLPHINS — Re-signed LB Sam Eguavoen. Re-signed S Sheldrick Redwine to a one-year contract.
MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Signed P Jordan Berry. Agreed to terms with DT Harrison Phillips, G/C Austin Schlottmann and TE Johnny Mundt.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Signed CB Terrance Mitchell to a one-year contract.
NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Signed DT Shy Tuttle to a tendered contract.
NEW YORK GIANTS — Re-signed CB Jarren Williams to a one-year contract.
NEW YORK JETS — Signed K Eddy Pineiro to a tendered contract. Re-signed OL Dan Feeney to a one-year contract. Signed DE Tim Ward, WR Jeff Smith and CB Javelin Guidry to tendered contracts. Re-signed LS Casey Kreiter.
PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Signed QB Dwayne Haskins to a one-year, restricted free agent tendered contract.
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Tendered contracts to LB Azeem Al-Shaair and OL Daniel Burnskill.
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Signed CB Artie Burns to a one-year contract. Signed OLB Uchenna Nwosu to a two-year contract. Traded QB Russel Wilson and a 2022 4th round pick to Denver for a 2022 1st, 2nd and 5th round pick and a 2023 1st and 2nd round pick along with TE Noah Fant, DE Shelby Harris and QB Drew Lock.
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Re-signed CB Carlton Davis III and WR Breshad Perriman to one-year contracts.
WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Released Ss Landon Collins and Deshaun Everett, OL Ereck Flowers and DL Matthew Ioannidis.
HOCKEY
National Hockey League
BOSTON BRUINS — Reassigned C Marc McLaughlin to Providence (AHL) on loan. Recalled C Jack Studnicka from Providence.
BUFFALO SABRES — Reassigned F Mark Jankowski to Rochester (AHL).
DETROIT RED WINGS — Reassigned D Seth Barton from Grand Rapids (AHL) to Toledo (ECHL). Signed LW Cross Hanas to a three-year, entry-level contract.
EDMONTON OILERS — Reassigned D Philip Broberg to Bakersfield (AHL) on loan.
FLORIDA PANTHERS — Signed D Zachary Uens to a three-year, entry-level contract. Acquired a fourth-round selection from the New York Rangers in exchange for F Frank Vatrano. Acquired D Ben Chiarot from Montreal in exchange for C Ty Smilanic, a fourth-round pick in 2022 and a first-round pick in 2023.
LOS ANGELES KINGS — Reassigned D Christian Wolanin to Ontario (AHL) on loan.
MONTREAL CANADIENS — Reinstated G Jake Allen from injured reserve.
NEW YORK RANGERS — Acquired Frank Vatrano from Florida for a 2022 4th round draft pick.
PHILADELPHIA FLYERS — Recalled LW Max Willman from Lehigh Valley (AHL) from loan.
TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Signed D Declan Carlisle to a two-year, entry-level contract.
VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Reassigned D Noah Juulsen, RW Sheldon Rempal to Abbotsford (AHL) on loan.
WASHINGTON CAPITALS — Re-signed F Joe Snively to a two-year contract.
WINNIPEG JETS — Reassigned D Ville Heinola to Manitoba (AHL).
SOCCER
Major League Soccer
MLS — Found Kansas City MF Roger Espinoza in violation of simulation/embellishment in a match on Mar. 12 against Colorado and fined him an undisclosed amount. Found Charlotte FC in violation of mass confrontation in a match on Mar. 13 against Atlanta United and issued an official warning for the club's first violation.
MINNESOTA UNITED — Announced D Chase Gasper has voluntarily entered the substance abuse and behavioral health program.

Shiffrin wins 4th World Cup

Associated Press

COURCHEVEL, France — Mikaela Shiffrin won skiing's overall World Cup title for the fourth time on Thursday, fueled by speed races that turned her expected duel with Petra Vlhová into a runaway success.

Shiffrin finished second in the super-G at the World Cup Finals — one day after a surprise victory in the downhill — to put more pressure on Vlhová for the overall title.

The Slovakian skier had to finish no worse than seventh to stop Shiffrin from extending her lead in the standings beyond 200 points with only their specialty slalom and giant slalom races left over the weekend.

The defending champion finished 17th, outside the top 15 scoring places, to trail Shiffrin by 236 points.

Shiffrin sat in the snow watching her rival's run, shielding her eyes behind sunglasses, and smiled in her moment of victory. Ragnhild Mowinckel of Norway won the race and was the first to greet Shiffrin with a long hug.

Shiffrin's boyfriend, Norwegian skier Aleksander Aamodt Kilde, was at the top of the slope preparing to race in the men's super-G. He is the champion in that discipline.

Shiffrin earned her fourth giant crystal globe trophy after winning three straight overall titles from 2017-19, and one month after struggling at the Beijing Olympics.

American skier Lindsey Vonn also won four overall titles in her career, trailing behind only Austrian great Annemarie Moser-Pröll's six titles in the 1970s.

In the super-G, Shiffrin finished 0.05 seconds behind Mowinckel. Michelle Gisin of Switzerland was third, 0.13 behind.

The season-long super-G title had already been secured by Federica Brignone of Italy, who placed 19th on Thursday.

Olympic champion Lara Gut-Behrami missed a gate and did not finish.

After enduring one of the toughest months of her career at the Olympics, winning no medals in six events, Shiffrin rested and trained for what proved to be a standout March.

Shiffrin and Vlhová started the month tied in the standings.



Shiffrin

TENNIS

BNP Paribas Open

Wednesday
At Indian Wells Tennis Center
Indian Wells, Calif
Purse: \$8,584,055
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Men's Singles
Round of 16
Taylor Fritz (20), United States, def. Alex de Minaur (29), Australia, 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5).
Miomir Kecmanovic, Serbia, def. Matteo Berrettini (6), Italy, 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-4.
Nick Kyrgios, Australia, def. Jannik Sinner (10), Italy, walkover.

Rafael Nadal (4), Spain, def. Reilly Opelka (17), United States, 7-6 (3), 7-6 (5).
Grigor Dimitrov (33), Bulgaria, def. John Isner (23), United States, 6-3, 7-6 (6).
Andrey Rublev (7), Russia, def. Hubert Hurkacz (11), Poland, 7-6 (5), 6-4.
Carlos Alcaraz (19), Spain, def. Gael Monfils (26), France, 7-5, 6-1.
Cameron Norrie (12), Britain, def. Jensen Brooksby, United States, 6-2, 6-4.
Women's Singles
Quarterfinals
Simona Halep (24), Romania, def. Petra Martic, Croatia, 6-1, 6-1.
Iga Swiatek (3), Poland, def. Madison Keys (25), United States, 6-1, 6-0.

NHL/NFL

Trade deadline looming

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
Associated Press

Don Waddell's phone is not ringing much right now. The seasoned NHL executive expects that to change this weekend.

"It always does," he said.

Waddell's Carolina Hurricanes are among the many contenders with limited salary cap space that could wait until much closer to the trade deadline Monday to stockpile before the stretch run to the playoffs. The combination of jumbled standings in the Western Conference and a salary cap that hasn't gone up in two years because of the pandemic has things mostly quiet now but could set up for a chaotic weekend and deadline day.

"Between the cap, between the cost — all those things, the standings — it adds up," Edmonton general manager Ken Holland said. "For the most part, it usually happens the last day or two by the deadline. There's the odd time somebody moves early to get a deal done. But most times the action happens on the Sunday or the Monday."

A couple of dominos fell Wednesday, with the Florida Panthers acquiring defenseman Ben Chiarot from Montreal after clearing cap space by trading Frank Vatrano to the New York Rangers and the Seattle Kraken sending forward Calle Jarnkrok to the Calgary Flames.

There's much more to come.

Reigning Vezina Trophy-winning Chicago goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury, longtime Philadelphia captain Claude Giroux and Seattle defenseman Mark Giordano are among the players who could get traded before 3 p.m. EDT Monday. Others, like Nashville forward Filip Forsberg and Dallas defenseman John Klingberg and goalie Braden Holtby and are less likely to be on the move because the Predators and Stars are in the hunt in the West.

Calgary and fellow Western Conference titan Colorado got a jump on the teams below them in the standings.

A month before getting Jarnkrok, Calgary acquired forward Tyler Toffoli, and Colorado earlier this week got defenseman Josh Manson from Anaheim.

The Avalanche also may not be done dealing. Avalanche GM Joe Sakic cleared \$1.275 million in cap space Tuesday by sending Tyson Jost to Minnesota for Nico Sturm in a one-for-one swap of forwards.

Sakic is working the phones with the Avalanche sitting on a 12-point cushion atop the West and are just ahead of Florida, which is loading up to try to knock off defending champion Tampa Bay.

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference						
Atlantic Division						
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Florida	60	41	13	6	88	248 175
Tampa Bay	60	39	15	6	84	204 172
Toronto	60	38	17	5	81	223 181
Boston	61	37	19	5	79	184 165
Detroit	60	24	29	7	55	175 228
Buffalo	60	20	32	8	48	162 212
Ottawa	60	21	34	5	47	158 198
Montreal	60	16	36	8	40	150 230
Metropolitan Division						
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Carolina	59	41	13	5	87	198 139
N.Y. Rangers	60	38	17	5	81	184 157
Pittsburgh	61	36	16	9	81	198 164
Washington	61	33	18	10	76	201 172
Columbus	61	31	27	3	65	203 223
N.Y. Islanders	57	24	24	9	57	155 161
New Jersey	61	22	34	5	49	185 220
Philadelphia	59	18	30	11	47	148 206
Western Conference						
Central Division						
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Colorado	61	43	13	5	91	236 170
St. Louis	59	34	17	8	76	211 165
Minnesota	59	35	20	4	74	222 195
Nashville	60	35	21	4	74	194 167
Dallas	58	32	23	3	67	170 173
Winnipeg	61	28	23	10	66	189 190
Chicago	61	22	30	9	53	162 210
Arizona	60	20	36	4	44	159 216
Pacific Division						
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF GA
Calgary	60	37	16	7	81	210 146
Los Angeles	62	33	21	8	74	178 176
Edmonton	60	33	23	4	70	200 192
Vegas	62	32	26	4	68	195 190
Vancouver	61	30	24	7	67	179 177
Anaheim	63	27	25	11	65	183 201
San Jose	59	26	25	8	60	156 185
Seattle	62	18	38	6	42	160 224

Wednesday's games

Columbus 4, Ottawa 1
Minnesota 4, Boston 2
Calgary 6, New Jersey 3
Tampa Bay 4, Seattle 1

Thursday's games

Carolina at Toronto
Dallas at Montreal
N.Y. Islanders at N.Y. Rangers
Nashville at Philadelphia
Washington at Columbus
Pittsburgh at St. Louis
Buffalo at Edmonton
Detroit at Vancouver
San Jose at Los Angeles
Florida at Vegas

Friday's games

Philadelphia at Ottawa
Washington at Carolina
Boston at Winnipeg
Buffalo at Calgary
Florida at Anaheim
Colorado at San Jose

Saturday's games

Chicago at Minnesota
Dallas at N.Y. Islanders
New Jersey at Edmonton
Los Angeles at Vegas
Pittsburgh at Arizona
St. Louis at Columbus
Ottawa at Montreal
Toronto at Nashville
N.Y. Rangers at Tampa Bay
Calgary at Vancouver
Detroit at Seattle

Sunday's games

N.Y. Islanders at Philadelphia
Dallas at Washington
N.Y. Rangers at Carolina
Arizona at San Jose
Winnipeg at Chicago
Buffalo at Vancouver

Scoring leaders

Through Wednesday						
	GP	G	A	PTS		
Connor McDavid, EDM	59	33	52	85		
Jonathan Huberdeau, FLA	60	19	65	84		
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	60	39	44	83		
Johnny Gaudreau, CGY	60	27	52	79		
Auston Matthews, TOR	56	45	32	77		
Kirill Kaprizov, MIN	58	32	43	75		
Nazem Kadri, COL	58	22	51	73		
J.T. Miller, VAN	59	24	49	73		
Alex Ovechkin, WSH	59	37	35	72		
Kyle Connor, WPG	61	38	34	72		
Artemi Panarin, NYR	55	16	55	71		
Matthew Tkachuk, CGY	60	28	43	71		
Mikko Rantanen, COL	58	29	42	71		
Roman Josi, NSH	58	17	52	69		
Patrick Kane, CHI	57	19	49	68		



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

After winning the second Super Bowl ring of his career last month, outside linebacker Von Miller left the Los Angeles Rams for Buffalo. Miller got a six-year deal from the Bills.

After Super Bowl season, Miller leaves LA for Bills

By **BARRY WILNER**
Associated Press

Russell Wilson to Denver, Carson Wentz to Washington, Amari Cooper to Cleveland.

Chandler Jones to Las Vegas, Khalil Mack and J.C. Jackson to the LA Chargers, Brandon Scherff to Jacksonville.

So what if it's old news? Here's some brand new news: Super Bowl champion linebacker Von Miller is leaving Los Angeles for Buffalo.

And star receiver Julio Jones is looking for work.

On Wednesday, teams could come clean after all the recent leaks made those moves — and dozens of others — common knowledge throughout the NFL.

Yes, the 2022 business year has begun, and with it come the official announcements of who is going where for what and how much.

Miller's move across the country was the headline grabber Wednesday. He is getting a six-year deal from the Bills and will pursue winning a third NFL title with a third franchise. He got a ring with Denver in 2015 and last season with the Rams.

The biggest star released Wednesday was wideout Julio Jones by Tennessee. He lasted only one injury-filled year with the Titans. The 33-year-old Jones will be designated as a post-June 1 release with the Titans carrying the cap hit until then.

The Titans traded for Jones last June but he started only 11 games, counting the postseason. Jones



WADE PAYNE/AP

The Tennessee Titans released veteran wide receiver Julio Jones after one injury-filled season.

finished with a career-low 31 catches for 434 yards and one touchdown.

By far the biggest blockbuster — at least until Houston finds a team for quarterback Deshaun Watson — is Wilson moving from the Seahawks to the Broncos. Seattle gets, hold your breath, two first-round draft picks, two second-rounders, a fifth-rounder, and three players: quarterback Drew Lock, tight end Noah Fant and defensive tackle Shelby Harris. All could be starters, although the Seahawks likely prefer a different No. 1 QB.

"Russell has been a tremendous player, leader, and member of our organization since the day we drafted him in the third round in 2012," said Seattle general manager John Schneider. "His tireless

work ethic has helped make him one of the most successful QBs in NFL history and we thank him for his many contributions on the field and in the community.

"When it became evident that Russell was interested in playing elsewhere, we used that opportunity to explore the market, allowing us to acquire three quality players, tremendous draft capital, and create salary cap flexibility. We have a clear vision about the direction of this team, and this is an exciting time for our organization."

As for Wilson's new home: "I want to win three to four more Super Bowls. That's the plan, that's the goal, that's the mission, that's the vision," he said.

While Denver filled its need behind center, as did Tampa Bay when Tom Brady ended his 40-day retirement — yes, really he did — and Aaron Rodgers stayed put in Green Bay with a three-year megadeal, several other teams are scrambling to find their passer. Some of those, including Carolina, New Orleans and Cleveland, have been in discussions with Watson, who will not be criminally charged after 22 women accused him of sexual assault or harassment. Watson sat out last season and still faces civil lawsuits and perhaps an NFL suspension.

Pittsburgh, which hasn't had a QB opening since Ben Roethlisberger was drafted in 2004, signed Mitchell Trubisky away from Buffalo, where he backed up Josh Allen, to compete for that spot.

MLB

Lindor has a plan to slow game down

By **BILL WHITEHEAD**
Associated Press

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — In an effort to improve on a tough first season in New York, Mets star Francisco Lindor has a plan in place to help the game slow down for him.

“Life was a little faster for me last year,” the switch-hitting shortstop said Tuesday at the club’s spring training complex. “I tried to give it my best, gave it my best and I just wasn’t as productive as I wanted to be.”

Traded to New York by Cleveland along with pitcher Carlos Carrasco in January 2021, the Puerto Rican star said he wanted to embrace his new home and be embraced in return, but boos resonated at Citi Field after his at-bats produced a .182 batting average through April. He managed just .204 in May and .160 in August, and finished with his lowest batting average of his seven-year career: .230.

“I didn’t feel like I was slumping. I wasn’t hitting and, obviously, the numbers weren’t there. I felt like I was having good days, but I was just inconsistent,” Lindor said.

Lindor’s 10-year, \$341 million contract with the Mets starts this season. He had a \$22.3 million, one-year deal for 2021.

The second-year Met said he likes new manager Buck Showalter, saying he reminded him of “Tito” — Cleveland’s Terry Francona.

Showalter gave the four-time All-Star some simple, Francona-like advice.

“I’m not big on putting all these sayings up around, you know, (like by) Mark Twain. They read them one time and they’re wall space,” Showalter said. “But if I had one to put up, it would be ‘play better.’”

Lindor said he has a plan to do just that.

“I think this year — I know this year — all I did during the offseason with my workouts was making sure I had time to separate my workouts, and be with my wife and baby, and recover,” he said. “Last year, everything blended together.”

Part of putting last season behind him was moving on from his May 7 altercation with double-play partner Jeff McNeil in a tunnel leading to the Citi Field clubhouse.

As the Mets returned to the dugout after the top of the seventh inning, a number of players, including Michael Conforto and Dominic Smith, sprinted down the tunnel to break up the situation. Lindor had become visibly upset with the second baseman’s play in the shift, and the tension may have dated back to a series two weeks earlier at Wrigley Field.

“Me and McNeil, we have been good ever since then,” Lindor said. “We continue to play the game as hard as we can. Ultimately, we’re two competitors who want to win and do whatever it takes for us to win.”

He added that he and Showalter hadn’t discussed the incident: “There’s nothing to address.”

McNeil laughed off the fracas and agreed with Lindor’s assessment: “100%. It was behind us last year,” the second baseman said. “I love playing with him.”

A two-time Gold Glove winner, Lindor has no regrets locking himself into a decade of wearing blue and orange.

“I felt like I had success last year,” he said. “We need to make it to the playoffs. We were right there, and then in the last month-and-a-half, I couldn’t help the team enough to make the playoffs.”

“I’ve still got 10 more years.”



AARON GASH/AP

Francisco Lindor is hoping to improve in his second season with the Mets after finishing last season with the lowest batting average of his seven-year career: .230.



PHOTOS BY MATT YORK/AP

Above: Giants shortstop Brandon Crawford, 35, is coming off his fourth Gold Glove and third All-Star season. Below: Third baseman Evan Longoria says it’s unusual to see so few new faces at spring training. After winning the NL West last season, the Giants haven’t made many changes.

Giants hope unchanged lineup leads to success

By **THERESA SMITH**
Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — MLB lineups are changing at a rapid pace with free-agent signings and trades. Among the teams that have not dramatically changed their makeup: the defending NL West champion San Francisco Giants.

“One of the things that helped us win a couple World Series earlier in my career (2012 and 2014) was keeping the same guys around,” veteran shortstop Brandon Crawford said Tuesday. “I feel like we kind of knew what success looked like and we can build off that success from last year, with most of the group back, at least from the lineup standpoint.”

Crawford, 35, is coming off his fourth Gold Glove and third All-Star season, posting an .893 OPS, and .298 batting average, including 24 home runs as the Giants went 107-55 to end the Dodgers’ eight-year consecutive run of NL West Division titles.

“The more you play with guys, the more comfortable you’re going to be, whether it’s ground balls or shallow pop ups, you have a pretty good idea of where they are going to be,” Crawford said.

Third baseman Evan Longoria said it’s unusual to see how few people are new at spring training, which he said “can go a long way.”

“You’re not feeling like you have to learn a ton of new people ... you’re not having to build camaraderie. Camaraderie is a huge part, I think, of a winning team,” Longoria said. “We had great relationships last year, everybody really meshed together, and I think that’s why we were able to be so good.”

That familiarity and camaraderie extends to third-year manager Gabe Kapler, who replaced longtime skipper Bruce Bochy.

“We are getting more and more comfortable with Kap and that leads to even more communication,” Crawford said.

Of the position-player group, Kapler said: “They have a really good understanding of how we run our



offense and how we use our bench, and how we try to get guys off their feet. That familiarity is a feather in our cap and something we can lean on going into the season.”

Off the field, the group is tight, too. Several players live in the Scottsdale area in the offseason.

“We spend birthdays together,” Longoria said.

When the 99-day lockout prohibited access to the Giants’ facilities, Crawford and Longoria ramped up their hitting in Longoria’s backyard cage.

“I’ve felt good the last few days ... with where my swing is,” Crawford said. “I had a pretty good foundation to go back to. I think we simplified things so much the past few years, it was easy to go back to.”

When asked if Crawford is set for another season well above his career averages of .727 OPS and .254 batting average, Kapler said, “with Craw and the rest of our players, we really want to focus on the things we want to control, things like, how we practice, how we plan and prepare for the moments that are difficult in the season. And having a plan in place for when times get tough.”

“We really trust that those things will lead to good statistical outcomes and good win/loss outcomes, and good chasing postseason outcomes.”

MLB

Angels' Ohtani aims higher after MVP season

Japanese star had best two-way season since Ruth

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. Baseball had seen nothing like Shohei Ohtani's unanimous AL MVP season in more than a century.

With the new season arriving quickly for his Los Angeles Angels, Ohtani is eager to make more history.

"I feel like I can't be doing the same thing as last year, to have the same stats as last year," Ohtani said Tuesday through his interpreter at the Angels' spring training complex. "I need to get better and keep on improving, so that's the plan."

Ohtani's stats were absolutely daunting in 2021: A 9-2 record with a 3.18 ERA and 156 strikeouts over 130 innings on the mound, and a .965 OPS with 46 homers and 100 RBIs at the plate.

Even after the most impressive two-way season since Babe Ruth's heyday, Ohtani remains unsatisfied.

"Obviously, skills-wise, there's room for improvement," Ohtani said. "But physically, I already feel a lot stronger than last year, so I think we're on a good start."

Ohtani wants to do more in every area, and he's hoping that pro-

duction will translate into more team success for a franchise that hasn't had a winning season since three years before he arrived stateside. He hasn't made as many significant additions to his offseason training regimen as he did before last season, justifiably feeling that what he has been doing is still working well.

"Nothing is really going to change personally just for having one good year," Ohtani said. "I feel like the key is to continue having success for a lot of years to come. As long as we can do that, I feel like our team is in a good spot."

Los Angeles manager Joe Maddon sees one particular area where Ohtani might be able to expand his game, even though he has zero complaints about last season.

"It's hard to imagine he's going to do more this year than he did last year," Maddon said. "I'll take a repeat performance, adding maybe several more innings as a pitcher. But he's just a different animal. He's a good man that happens to be a really good baseball player."

Ohtani made 23 starts last season in the Angels' six-man rotation, and that number isn't likely to rise by more than a couple of starts. Los Angeles bolstered its starting rotation in the offseason



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

Los Angeles Angels' Shohei Ohtani (17) stands on second after he hit an RBI single during a game in 2021. He had 46 homers and 100 RBIs at the plate and was 9-2 with a 3.18 ERA to earn MVP honors.



MATT YORK/AP

Ohtani waits to hit during the teams' spring training baseball workouts, Monday in Tempe, Ariz.

with the additions of Noah Syndergaard and Michael Lorenzen, but the Angels are still counting on Ohtani to excel on the mound.

Ohtani hopes to improve his control this year, particularly early in the season. He seems likely to be Los Angeles' opening day starter on the mound April 7, although Maddon won't confirm it yet.

"There is a part of me that would like to start opening day, but it's not what I'm really thinking about," Ohtani said. "Whether I'm hitting or pitching on opening day, I just want to get off to a good start."

Ohtani and interpreter Ipppei Mizuhara met with Maddon on Tuesday morning to renew their connection. Maddon believes he has a good system in place with Ohtani and Mizuhara, and he intends to keep the same constant dialogue this season, paying par-

ticular attention to the health of Ohtani's legs because any weakness could lead to overcompensation in other areas.

In fact, the biggest obstacle of Ohtani's offseason might have arisen when baseball owners imposed their lockout: Mizuhara had to resign from his position as an Angels staff member or he wouldn't have been able to stay in daily contact with Ohtani as a team employee.

Mizuhara, who grew up in Japan before attending high school and college in the Los Angeles area, has been Ohtani's right-hand man since their days with the Nippon-Ham Fighters. The Angels immediately rehired Mizuhara after the lockout ended.

Ohtani's long-term future with the team isn't settled. He is under team control through next season, but he doesn't sound interested in talking about potential contract

extensions during the season.

"There's a really good vibe in the clubhouse right now," Ohtani said. "All the new guys seem like they're really great guys. I'm excited to play with this team. ... As long as we can all stay healthy, I feel like we have a really good shot at the postseason."

If Los Angeles ends its seven-year playoff drought, Ohtani is likely to be a big reason. There's another way in which Ohtani is hoping to contribute even more: After several significant rule changes were included in the recent collective bargaining agreement, the Angels would love it if baseball figured out a rule alteration to allow Ohtani to stay in games as a designated hitter after he is pulled as a pitcher.

"I'm hoping it happens," Maddon said. "And the American League West is hoping it does not, if I had to guess."

Orioles' Mullins explains handling of Crohn's diagnosis

By RICH DUBROFF
Associated Press

SARASOTA, Fla. — Cedric Mullins' outstanding 2021 statistics for the Baltimore Orioles appear even more impressive after learning of the offseason surgery he had to overcome.

Mullins underwent intestinal surgery in November 2020 after a diagnosis of Crohn's Disease. He was diagnosed during the season and waited until it ended before having the surgery.

"It was a shock for me to have to go through that," Mullins said. "My main concern was being ready for the season and not missing any time and luckily I was able to



Mullins

do that and build my body back up through the season."

In 2021, Mullins became the first player in Orioles history to hit 30 home runs and steal 30 bases in the same season. He was also the starting center fielder for the American League in the All-Star Game and hit .291, batting left-handed exclusively after abandoning switch-hitting.

Mullins shared the news of his Crohn's diagnosis with Baltimore's front office and a few close friends, including first baseman/

designated hitter Trey Mancini, who had missed the 2020 season after colon cancer surgery and undergoing chemotherapy.

Mancini's recovery was the big story in Orioles' camp last year, and Mullins chose not to reveal his illness to allow Mancini to share his story.

"My situation wasn't life or death," Mullins said. "It was something I knew I was going to be able to come back from, and Trey was coming back from his chemotherapy, and for me, all the support needed to go to him. For him to do what he did, come back and play a full season, regardless of how he tired he was. He showed up every single day and performed really well. I thought it was

important for him to get that recognition.

"His accomplishment certainly outweighs mine."

Mullins texted Mancini to tell him of his surgery and ask for his advice.

"The surgery was very similar, and he asked about coming back, and what did I do to ramp up?" Mancini said. "Obviously, it was a little bit of a different situation because I had chemo following my surgery. You need to take a lot of time after that."

"That's a huge shock to the body. I told him you have a lot of time to catch up. Don't rush into anything. You've got a lot of time to get back and be yourself. You saw what he did. He did just fine."

MLB

Source: Freeman agrees to deal with Dodgers

By BETH HARRIS
Associated Press

Freddie Freeman is headed home to Southern California and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The first-time free agent and the Dodgers have agreed to a \$162 million, six-year contract, according to a person familiar with the deal. The person spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity late Wednesday night because the move had not yet been announced by the team.

Freeman was the 2020 National League MVP. The first baseman helped the Atlanta Braves to their fourth straight NL East title last season and their first World Series championship since 1995.

It was assumed that Atlanta would try to lock up Freeman, who had never played for another club. But a deal didn't get done before the labor lockout began in early December and then the Braves traded for All-Star first baseman Matt Olson from Oakland and signed him to a \$168 million, eight-year deal this week, signaling the end of Freeman's long tenure in Atlanta.

Now the 32-year-old five-time All-Star will be playing not far from where he grew up in Orange County. He already lives in the area in the offseason.

Freeman is from Fountain Valley, where he rooted for the Los Angeles Angels as a kid.

Adding Freeman gives the Dodgers an even more imposing lineup. He'll join former MVPs Mookie Betts and Cody Bellin-



JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

Five-time All-Star Freddie Freeman, 32, has reportedly agreed to a \$162 million, six-year contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

ger, along with Trea Turner, Max Muncy and Justin Turner. The lineup already was among the National League's best last year with 237 home runs and 5.12 runs per game to go with 612 walks and an OPS of .759.

Freeman gives the Dodgers a left-handed bat in the middle of the order to replace Corey Seager, who signed with the Texas Rangers as a free agent.

Muncy, a left-handed-hitting first baseman, can move to second base or serve as the designated hitter, which becomes permanent in the NL this season.

A career .295 hitter, Freeman has surpassed 20 homers eight times with a career-high 38 in 2019. He has a pair of 100-RBI seasons on his résumé, and three other years when he drove in more than 90 runs.

He has three Silver Slugger awards and a Gold Glove for his defensive work.

Freeman won his MVP award in the pandemic-shortened 2020 season, hitting .341 with 13 homers and 53 RBIs in 60 games — a remarkable performance after he endured a bout with COVID-19 that left him worrying whether he would survive.

Atlanta won a postseason series for the first time since 2001 — two of them, in fact — before squandering a 3-1 lead and losing to the Dodgers in the NL Championship Series.

Bouncing back from that disappointment, the Braves won their fourth straight division title in 2021 and went on to capture their first World Series championship in 26 years by beating the Houston Astros.

Freeman had another stellar season, leading the league in plate appearances (695) and runs (120) while batting .300 with 31 homers and 83 RBIs. Appropriately enough, he caught the final out of the World Series on a throw from shortstop Dansby Swanson.

As the Braves celebrated their championship at Minute Maid Park, Freeman made it clear he wanted to stay in Atlanta.

"This is a crazy game, a crazy business," he said. "But everyone knows this is where my heart is."

"I've been here since I was 17 years old, almost half my life I've been in this organization," he went on. "It means everything to put that Braves uniform on every day."

Now, he'll be putting on Dodger blue.

SPRING TRAINING ROUNDUP

Unvaccinated players remain an obstacle for league

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — The cardboard cutouts are long gone. Same with all that phony, pumped-in stadium noise. For players, there's no more face masks in dugouts or clubhouses. Far less spitting into testing cups, too.

Yet, amid COVID-19 restrictions in Canada and New York, one thing has become clear over the past week while baseball speeds toward the 2022 season:

"Life is not back to normal yet," Yankees reliever Zack Britton said Wednesday.

Fans of the Yankees and Mets were shaken Tuesday by confirmation from New York City that the same private employer vaccine mandate that has sidelined NBA star Kyrie Irving for Brooklyn Nets home games would also apply at the outdoor baseball parks in the Bronx and Queens.

That concern ratcheted to another level after Yankees star Aaron Judge took a hard side-step when asked Tuesday if he was vaccinated.

"I'm still focused on just getting to the first game of spring training," Judge said from the team's Florida training complex. "So I think we'll cross that bridge after the time comes. But right now, so many things could change. So I'm



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Yankees outfielder Aaron Judge smiles during spring training on Monday in Tampa, Fla. Judge refused to directly answer a question about his vaccine status Tuesday amid New York City requirements that every private sector employee be inoculated against COVID-19.

not really too worried about that right now."

The Mets also could be seriously affected. Last year, they were among six teams that did not reach the 85% vaccination rate among on-field staff, including players, necessary for relaxed virus protocols under Major League Baseball's health and safety plan.

The union and league agreed as part of a new labor contract settled last week that unvaccinated players won't receive pay or service time if they miss games in Toronto against the Blue Jays due to Canada's vaccine requirement for entry. The border issues have led to speculation about an unusual homefield advantage for the Jays.

The Boston Red Sox are better prepared for that after several players were vaccinated this offseason, including Xander Bogaerts and Christian Arroyo. The club failed to reach 85% vaccination last year and was hit hard by the virus late in the season.

Ace left-hander Chris Sale said Wednesday he has chosen to remain unvaccinated, but he'll miss Boston's first visit to Toronto from April 25-28 anyway because of a stress fracture in his rib cage.

The league is maintaining an ability to move games if the public health situation in an area deteriorates and will "postpone games only if necessary to protect the health and safety of club personnel, players and umpires." The COVID-19 injured list remains, but players with a positive test can exit with two negative tests.

"It's good to have things feel more normal," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "And it definitely feels that way."

Adding to the flock: The star-studded Blue Jays added a three-time Gold Glove winner to their infield, acquiring third baseman Matt Chapman from the payroll-shedding Oakland Athletics.

A five-year veteran, Chapman hit .201 with 27 home runs and 72 RBIs in 151 games for the Athlet-

ics last season. He was a first-time All-Star in 2019.

From Far East to North Side: The Chicago Cubs and star Japanese outfielder Seiya Suzuki have agreed to an \$85-million, five-year deal, a person familiar with the situation told the AP, speaking on condition of anonymity because the deal was pending a physical.

The 27-year-old Suzuki was a five-time All-Star and Gold Glove winner over nine seasons with the Hiroshima Toyo Carp of Japan's Central League. He batted .317 with 38 home runs and 88 RBIs in 132 games last season and had nearly as many walks (87) as strikeouts (88). He is a career .315 hitter with 182 homers and 562 RBIs for Hiroshima.

Doubling up: Major League Baseball has scheduled 30 additional doubleheaders to make up some of the 91 games postponed by the lockout that delayed opening day until April 7.

MLB released a revised schedule Wednesday, extending the last day of the regular season by three days to Oct. 5. The first game of the season will be the New York Yankees hosting the Boston Red Sox at 1:05 p.m., the first matchup of the rivals to open a big league schedule since 2005.

NBA/WNBA

Curry hurt in loss to Celtics

By JANIE MCCAULEY
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Stephen Curry went down with a left foot injury late in the first half and Golden State coach Steve Kerr didn't like Marcus Smart's lunging move at the reigning NBA scoring champ.

Smart got an earful from Kerr, then they chatted again after the Boston Celtics beat the Warriors 110-88 on Wednesday night.

"I thought it was a dangerous play. I thought Marcus dove into Steph's knee," Kerr said. "That's what I was upset about. Lot of respect for Marcus, he's a hell of a player, gamer, competitor. I coached him in the World Cup a few summers ago. We talked after the game. We're good. I thought it was a dangerous play, just let him know."

Curry was injured with 4:19 remaining in the second quarter along the sideline while scrambling for a loose ball as Smart made a diving lunge on the play and landed on the reigning scoring champion's leg. Curry grimaced in pain and got up but hobbled along before exiting on the next dead ball moments later.

That came when Smart made another aggressive play, receiving a Flagrant 1 foul 4:09 before half-time when he leapt and caught his leg on Klay Thompson's shooting arm.

Kerr said Curry, who had three points on 1-for-4 shooting, was having an MRI exam. Rookie Moses Moody also injured his right shoulder.

Warriors forward Juan Toscano-Anderson said Smart wanted the ball but might have been able to use more caution.

"I don't think it was a dirty play," Toscano-Anderson said. "... We all know that's Marcus Smart, though, that's how he plays, he's gritty."

Draymond Green was whistled for a technical for arguing a foul called on Thompson against Smart at the 1:48 mark, with Green throwing his arms up in the air in disgust and yelling.

Jayson Tatum had 26 points and 12 rebounds to lead Boston, while Jalen Brown scored 14 of his 26 points in the first half. Smart wound up with 20 points on 8-for-12 shooting and had eight assists.

The Warriors couldn't keep up in their fourth straight home defeat to the Celtics and sixth of seven matchups in the Bay Area.

Boston's stingy, top-rated defense held Golden State to a cold 29.3% in the first half and 37.2% overall as the Warriors were limited to 19 assists. Jordan Poole was 1-for-8 but recovered to score a team-high 29 points.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	42	26	.618	—
Boston	42	28	.600	1
Toronto	39	30	.565	3½
Brooklyn	36	34	.514	7
New York	29	40	.420	13½
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	46	24	.657	—
Charlotte	35	35	.500	11
Atlanta	34	35	.493	11½
Washington	29	39	.426	16
Orlando	18	52	.257	28
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	44	26	.629	—
Chicago	41	28	.594	2½
Cleveland	39	30	.565	4½
Indiana	23	47	.329	21
Detroit	18	51	.261	25½
Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	48	22	.686	—
Dallas	43	26	.623	4½
New Orleans	28	41	.406	19½
San Antonio	27	43	.386	21
Houston	17	52	.246	30½
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Utah	43	26	.623	—
Denver	42	28	.600	1½
Minnesota	41	30	.577	3
Portland	26	42	.382	16½
Oklahoma City	20	49	.290	23
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Phoenix	56	14	.800	—
Golden State	47	23	.671	9
L.A. Clippers	36	36	.500	21
L.A. Lakers	29	40	.420	26½
Sacramento	25	46	.352	31½

Tuesday's games
 Memphis 135, Indiana 102
 Brooklyn 150, Orlando 108
 Miami 105, Detroit 98
 Phoenix 131, New Orleans 115

Wednesday's games
 Charlotte 116, Atlanta 106
 Denver 127, Washington 109
 Philadelphia 118, Cleveland 114
 New York 128, Portland 98
 Dallas 113, Brooklyn 111
 Phoenix 129, Houston 112
 Minnesota 124, L.A. Lakers 104
 San Antonio 122, Oklahoma City 120
 Utah 125, Chicago 110
 Boston 110, Golden State 88
 Milwaukee 135, Sacramento 126
 Toronto 103, L.A. Clippers 100

Thursday's games
 Detroit at Orlando

Friday's games
 Dallas at Philadelphia
 Denver at Cleveland
 L.A. Lakers at Toronto
 Memphis at Atlanta
 Portland at Brooklyn
 Washington at New York
 Indiana at Houston
 Oklahoma City at Miami
 New Orleans at San Antonio
 L.A. Clippers at Utah
 Boston at Sacramento
 Chicago at Phoenix

Saturday's games
 Milwaukee at Minnesota
 Dallas at Charlotte
 Detroit at Cleveland
 L.A. Lakers at Washington

Sunday's games
 Memphis at Houston
 Portland at Indiana
 New Orleans at Atlanta
 Oklahoma City at Orlando
 Phoenix at Sacramento
 Utah at New York
 Boston at Denver
 San Antonio at Golden State
 Toronto at Philadelphia

Calendar
April 10 — Regular Season ends.
April 12-15 — NBA Play-In Tournament.
April 11 — Rosters set for NBA Playoffs.
April 12-15 — Play-In Tournament.
April 16 — NBA Playoffs begin.
May 17 — NBA Draft Lottery.
May 17-18 — Conference Finals begin (possible move up to May 15-16).
June 2 — NBA Finals begin.



CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP

The United States' Brittney Griner continues to be detained in Russia after being arrested in February after a search of her luggage revealed vape cartridges allegedly containing oil derived from cannabis, which could carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

Russian media: Griner has detention extended

By DOUG FEINBERG
Associated Press

A court near Moscow has extended the detention of WNBA star Brittney Griner until May 19, according to the Russian state news agency Tass.

Griner was detained at a Moscow airport, reportedly in mid-February, after Russian authorities said a search of her luggage revealed vape cartridges allegedly containing oil derived from cannabis, which could carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. The case of the 31-year-old Griner, one of the most recognizable players in women's basketball, comes amid heightened tensions between Washington and Moscow over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The court granted the request of the investigation and extended the period of detention of the U.S. citizen Griner until May 19," the court said, according to Tass.

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow did not immediately return calls from The Associated Press seeking comment.

The U.S. State Department has been "doing everything we can to support Brittney Griner to support her family, and to work with them to do everything we can, to see that she is treated appropri-

ately and to seek her release," spokesman Ned Price said Tuesday at a briefing. He cited privacy considerations in not giving out more details.

Ekaterina Kalugina of the regional Public Monitoring Commission, a state-backed panel in Russia that monitors prisoners' conditions, told Tass that Griner was sharing a cell with two other female detainees accused of narcotics offenses.

Griner's cellmates spoke English and were helping her to communicate with staff at the pre-trial detention facility and to obtain books, Kalugina said.

"The only objective problem has turned out to be the basketball player's height," Tass quoted Kalugina as saying of the 6-foot-9 Griner. "The beds in the cell are clearly intended for a person of lesser height."

Griner has won two Olympic gold medals with the U.S., a WNBA championship with the Phoenix Mercury and a national championship at Baylor. She is a seven-time All-Star. The WNBA season opens May 6.

She was one of a dozen WNBA players who played in Russia or Ukraine this past season. All except Griner have left since Russia invaded Ukraine.

Griner has played in Russia for the last seven years in the winter, earning over \$1 million per season — more than quadruple her WNBA salary. She last played for her Russian team UMMC Ekaterinburg on Jan. 29 before the league took a two-week break in early February for the FIBA World Cup qualifying tournaments. She was arrested in Moscow upon returning to Russia.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton joined a growing contingent of family, friends and officials calling for her release with a "Free Brittney" tweet Wednesday.

It's unclear how much progress was being made in the case because Griner's group has been trying to work quietly for her release and declining to talk publicly since her arrest was made public earlier this month.

Griner's wife, Cherelle, thanked everyone for their support but also has said little else on social media.

"Everyone's getting the strategy of say less and push more privately behind the scenes," WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert told the AP on Wednesday. "It's the strategy you get from the State Department and administration. It's our No. 1 priority in talking with her agent and strategists."

NCAA TOURNAMENT

De Sousa returns with Chattanooga

Ex-Kansas standout finds way back to dance

BY TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

Former Kansas standout Silvio De Sousa has been to the NCAA Tournament and told his new Chattanooga teammates just how much fun playing in the postseason can be.

Now the Mocs are about to find out firsthand.

For De Sousa, it has been a tumultuous trek back to the tournament. He is a big reason the 13th-seeded Mocs will be playing No. 4 seed Illinois on Friday night in Pittsburgh in the South Region, and he is also a big reason why the Jayhawks are still in NCAA limbo.

"I think the very first practice I remember saying in the locker room, 'You think playing ball is fun? Just make it to the NCAA Tournament, you'll have a lot more fun,'" De Sousa recalled telling his Chattanooga teammates. "I just hope they will get to enjoy it, and just have the fun I once told them about. It's a great experience."

It's taken De Sousa some time to get here again.

His recruitment to Kansas was part of a federal investigation into corruption in college basketball, tying Kansas, Arizona and Louisville — among others — to possible NCAA violations.

The Kansas case is among a handful still making its way through the Independent Accountability Resolution Process (IARP), created out of proposals from the commission led by former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2018 to reform the sport.

De Sousa was ruled ineligible for the rest of the 2019 season and the 2019-20 season before getting a year of eligibility back in May 2019 on appeal.

The 6-foot-9 forward made headlines in

January 2020 for his part in a brawl late in Kansas' 81-60 over Kansas State. De Sousa sent DaJuan Gordon sprawling and stood over him, triggering both benches to empty. De Sousa picked up a stool at one point and held it over his head before an assistant grabbed it away.

That earned De Sousa a 12-game suspension from the Big 12. De Sousa opted out of the 2020-21 season, ending his career at Kansas.

After the long, winding road, De Sousa graduated from Kansas last May. In July, he decided to continue playing at Chattanooga, a Southern Conference program with its own proud NCAA Tournament history.

This is the Mocs' 12th NCAA Tournament berth and first since 2016. Kansas also is back in a customary spot as a No. 1 seed for the first time since 2018, this time in the Midwest Region. The only way De Sousa would face his former team would be if Chattanooga gets to its first Final Four.

Self is happy for De Sousa.

The coach told The Associated Press recently that he texted with De Sousa after Chattanooga won the Southern Conference Tournament championship in overtime. De Sousa scored 17 points and grabbed 14 rebounds in the title game after averaging 11.1 points a game this season.

"It was so good to see him end on a high note and have a good taste in his mouth leaving college basketball as opposed to not having that if he didn't get to," Self said.

Chattanooga coach Lamont Paris is happy to have De Sousa on his roster.

Paris has a team capable of pulling off an upset — or two — in the tourney.

AP basketball writer Dave Skretta contributed to this report.



KATHY KMONICEK / AP

Chattanooga forward Silvio De Sousa dunks against Furman during the championship game of the Southern Conference tournament on March 7 in Asheville, N.C.



BRAD TOLLEFSON/AP

Texas Tech coach Mark Adams, 65, got his dream job when he was promoted from assistant coach after Chris Beard left.

Dream becomes reality for Adams

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

Mark Adams describes himself as an old West Texas farm boy who grew up on the cotton field and dreamed of being Texas Tech's head basketball coach.

He has done it, though it was a decades-long journey that rarely got too far away from home for the 65-year-old Adams. There were times he gave up on his dream; he even spent seven seasons out of college coaching when he started a minor league hockey franchise.

"When I look back, I guess God had a plan all along," Adams said.

The 1979 Tech graduate, who as a student constantly observed coach Gerald Myers, got his dream job after Chris Beard left last April for bitter rival Texas, his alma mater. Adams was on Beard's staff over a five-season span when the Red Raiders made the national championship game in 2019, a year after getting to the NCAA Elite Eight.



Crowder

The 12th-ranked Red Raiders (25-9), a No. 3 seed in this year's NCAA Tournament, play Montana State on Friday. They went 18-0 at home and swept two games each against the Beard-coached Longhorns and defending national champion Baylor. They lost in double overtime at Kansas while getting a regular-season split with the Jayhawks, a No. 1 NCAA seed like Baylor.

Beard wanted his top assistant to go with him to Austin, but Adams stayed in Lubbock with no guarantee about his future at his alma mater.

"This is home, and I love Texas Tech," Adams said. "The first three or four days, I was kind of on an island thinking, what am I going to do if I don't get this job?"

Adams already had 554 wins in 23 seasons as a head coach at small Texas schools.

His résumé included an NAIA title game appearance with Wayland Baptist and, after his coaching hiatus, a national junior college championship at Howard College with a team led by current NBA player Jae Crowder.

Adams has spent only one basketball season in his life outside of Texas. All but five others were within driving distance to attend Tech games.

Howard went 33-2 for the national title in 2009-10 when Crowder was junior college player of the year in his only season before going to Marquette.

"He definitely gave me the DNA, he gave me this foundation of having that defensive mindset. Now obviously once we won it, it was like OK, this is what it takes to win championships," said Crowder, now in his 10th NBA season. "You could feel it when you're around that he loves basketball. As a player, that's what you want to be around, a coach who really loves the game."

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Arizona coach has been perfect fit in 1st season

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — Tommy Lloyd has an unpretentious manner forged during formational years in rural southern Washington and professional years in Spokane.

Thoughts, words and decisions are measured, the emotional tides of more mercurial coaches a waste of energy to him. Credit is deflected, attention for someone else.

This outwardly easygoing nature masks an undercurrent of confidence, determination and an attention to detail that has fueled No. 2 Arizona's accelerated ascension under its first-year coach.

"He knew what he wanted to do and came in with a plan," Arizona associate head coach Jack Murphy said. "Every step of the way, when any of us — myself or anyone on the staff — wanted to kind of speed things up or jump steps, he was always the voice of reason and was sticking to his plan."

The scoffing could be heard from Tucson



Lloyd

outward when Lloyd was hired last year.

Arizona needed the right person to steer the program after Sean Miller was fired amid FBI and NCAA investigations into questionable recruiting practices.

Lloyd had proven himself as a recruiter and top assistant, helping Mark Few create a national powerhouse in 22 years at Gonzaga. He had just never been a head coach.

Those who know basketball and Lloyd saw him as the perfect fit. They were right.

Lloyd brought many of the same principles and systems that had been so successful at Gonzaga, added tweaks of his own and stormed through one of the best first-year seasons in college basketball history.

Unranked in the preseason and picked to finish fourth in the Pac-12, the Wildcats went 31-3 to sweep the conference regular-

season and tournament titles. Lloyd joined Indiana State's Bill Hodges in 1979 and North Carolina's Bill Guthridge in 1998 as the only first-year coaches to earn a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

Arizona opens the West Region on Friday in San Diego against Wright State in its bid to reach the Final Four for the first time since 2001.

"My only objective has been to pour into these guys everything I've got," Lloyd said after Arizona beat UCLA in the Pac-12 title game. "That's how I've attacked it on a daily basis."

Arizona lost four of its top six scorers from a year ago, but the ones who stuck around have been a perfect fit for the systems Lloyd has employed in the desert.

The returning core of Benedict Mathurin, Azoulas Tubelis, Christian Koloko, Dalen Terry and Kerr Kriisa have high basketball IQs and make good decisions. Transfers Justin Kier, Pelle Larsson and Oumar

Ballo fit a similar mold.

There's also been a collective buy-in, the players believing in their affable coach's plan being their best chance for success.

"He's a players' coach — he does everything for his players," Koloko said. "He's a very detail-oriented coach, goes into the detail to really teach you the game."

Part of what has made Gonzaga so successful is its player development. Since he arrived in the desert, Lloyd has fast-tracked Arizona's player development.

Terry has made perhaps the biggest leap. Arizona's ninth-leading scorer last season, the athletic 6-foot-7 guard has done all the little things the Wildcats have needed this year, even assuming point guard duties in the Pac-12 Tournament after Kriisa sprained his ankle in the quarterfinals.

"Did the pieces fit? Yeah, they fit well, but he molded them and developed them in the framework of our system and his team," Murphy said. "That's been incredible."

Badgers' Davis rises to stardom

By STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

MADISON, Wis.— Wisconsin guard Johnny Davis drives to the basket with the ferocity he used to show while running over defenders as a high school quarterback.

Davis' emergence as the Big Ten player of the year and a likely NBA lottery pick has been one of college basketball's biggest surprises this season. The 6-foot-5 sophomore believes his football experience made him a better basketball player.

"Playing football and taking shots, as a quarterback especially, it just prepares you for that physicality and allows you to get knocked down and get back up real quick," Davis said.

Davis has averaged 19.7 points and 8.2 rebounds to earn Associated Press All-America first-team honors and help Wisconsin win a share of the Big Ten title. Davis' Badgers (24-7) are seeded third in the NCAA Midwest Region and play Friday against Colgate (23-11) in Milwaukee.

"I think people give him a lot of credit for being an incredible scorer, but he's an incredible basketball player," teammate Brad Davison said. "He does everything. Defensively. Rebounding. He's not out there (just) trying to score. He's trying to win."

Johnny Davis and his twin brother — reserve guard Jordan Davis — are Wisconsin basketball teammates who played football together at La Crosse (Wis.) Central High School. Johnny was the quarterback while Jordan played receiver.

They played football at the suggestion of their father, Mark, who had a 31-game stint with the Milwaukee Bucks in 1988-89 and played 13 seasons of professional basketball. He wanted his kids to play plenty of sports rather than specializing in one.

Mark Davis says Jordan originally was the more physical basketball player while Johnny relied on finesse. Football helped Johnny learn to relish contact.

"Even when we tried to tell him to take some slides in football and run out of bounds, he would still be willing to (say), 'Hey, if we need that yard, I'm going to run that guy over and get that yard,'" said Tony Servais, his high school football coach.

That attitude eventually carried over to basketball.

"Football taught him to be tougher," Mark Davis said. "That's why, when he drives to the basket, the contact means nothing to

him. He's going to play through it."

That approach can have its drawbacks.

Davis injured his left ankle during Wisconsin's regular-season finale when he landed awkwardly on a drive after taking a shot to the face from Nebraska's Trey McGowens. Davis returned for the Big Ten Tournament but shot 3-for-19 in a quarterfinal loss to Michigan State.

Davis says the ankle feels fine now.

The Davis twins aren't the only Wisconsin basketball players with football experience. Davison and D'Mitrik Trice — who played at Wisconsin from 2016-21 — were high school quarterbacks. Reserve forward Carter Gilmore was a wide receiver.

While football improved Davis' toughness, his desire was never an issue. That was evident from his elementary-school days, when he and his twin brother raced home to play one-on-one each day.

"I'd end up with a bloody nose, or he'd end up with a bloody nose, or cuts on our knees or something like that," Jordan Davis said.

His confidence became more apparent after he helped USA Basketball win gold at the FIBA U19 World Cup last summer. Davis had averaged 7 points, 4.1 rebounds and 24.4 minutes on Wisconsin's senior-laden team last season. After getting selected for that World Cup team, Davis returned to campus knowing he could make a much bigger impact.

"Not that he ever probably didn't think he was the best player in the gym, but you could see it on his face the first day he came back," Wisconsin coach Greg Gard said. "It was like, 'Whoa. OK.' The confidence was the biggest thing, just the swagger he came back with."

Even so, Davis didn't anticipate this level of success. Neither did his dad.

"I was expecting maybe a 15-point scorer," Mark Davis said. "We'd probably end up fifth, sixth, seventh in the Big Ten and him having a good season to where we'd be like, 'Here's what we've got to do to concentrate on the draft for next season, probably coming out after his junior year.'"

Davis instead is a probable top-10 selection in this year's draft.

The Maui Invitational served as the catalyst. Davis averaged 23.7 points in victories over Texas A&M, Houston and Saint Mary's.

"Playing three games in three days is a grind and really makes you bond together as a team," Davis said. "I felt that was a turning point for the whole season."



Wisconsin guard Johnny Davis' emergence at the Big Ten player of the year and a likely NBA lottery pick has been one of the biggest surprises in college basketball this season.

ANDY MANIS/AP

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Contender: Houston has become tournament regular under Sampson

FROM PAGE 56

ries in December to win both the American Athletic Conference regular-season and tournament championships. It is the fourth time in school history that Houston has swept both conference titles and the first since the 1991-92 season.

“It just feels great, especially after how we felt in December after hearing that Marcus and Tramon would no longer be playing with us,” forward Josh Carlton said. “With the amount of doubt that people had about us and how we would finish the season, and just to finish up the conference champion winners in the regular season and the tournament is great.”

This success was almost unthinkable when Sampson returned to college coaching to revive a career that was derailed by NCAA violations regarding impermissible calls to recruits at both Oklahoma and Indiana. Those violations resulted in a five-year show cause order from the NCAA that kept Sampson, who took Oklahoma to the 2002 Final Four, out of college coaching until he was hired at Houston.

Immediately upon arriving at the campus just south of downtown Houston, Sampson got to work building his staff, focusing on recruiting and campaigning to the administration to improve the woefully inadequate facilities.

“We had no chance when we got here,” Sampson said. “If you divided this league in halves, we were in the bottom half of the bottom half as far as what we had and what they had.”

By 2015 the university’s Board of Regents had approved a \$60 million project to renovate the Hofheinz Pavilion, a project helped by a \$20 million donation

by billionaire Tilman Fertitta, a Houston alum and the owner of the Houston Rockets.

The newly designed arena was reopened on Dec. 1, 2018, as the Fertitta Center, giving Sampson the facilities he needed to keep moving the program forward.

Sampson remembers the players who stuck with him in his first season when Houston was 13-19 and just 4-14 in conference play. The Cougars won 22 games in Sampson’s second year for the first of seven consecutive 20-win seasons.

In 2018, they returned to the tournament for the first time since 2010 and the following season they won the conference title, reached the regional semifinals and finished with a school-record 33 wins.

The 66-year-old Sampson was selected AAC coach of the year in both those seasons and captured the honor again this year. His 196-69 record in seven seasons at Houston makes him the winningest coach in school history.

“Coach Sampson is a Hall of Fame coach, so he’s always going to keep you held accountable, he’s going to hold you accountable with everything you do,” star forward Fabian White Jr. said. “If you mess up, you’re going to hear it. If you do good, you’re going to hear it. He always makes sure we’re in the right mind space and just wants the best out of us.”

And although Sampson and the Cougars are no longer the scrappy underdogs they once were, that mentality is still in his bones as this team looks to make another deep run in the tournament.

“It’s really humbling for me,” Sampson said. “Because coaches tend to not forget where (they) came from.”



JUSTIN REX/AP

Houston head coach Kelvin Sampson celebrates cutting the net after the Cougars became AAC regular-season champions on March 3.



Boilermakers guard Jaden Ivey

AP photos

Iveys in league of their own

Mother and son have unique basketball bond

BY MICHAEL MAROT

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Notre Dame coach Niele Ivey figured out how to balance basketball and motherhood decades ago.

The challenge this season was splitting her time adequately between keeping the Fighting Irish’s resurgent season on track and playing the role of proud mother for son Jaden, a star guard for Purdue.

For the Iveys, it’s been a busy year — filled with the joy, disappointment and mysteries that so often clutter the minds of coaches and players. But in their world, mother and son have a basketball bond in their blood.

“I love coaching and mentoring and I love my child, so it’s a fun balancing act,” Niele Ivey said. “It’s sometimes very challenging because I have so much going on. I feel like sometimes, I can’t be there for him. So I try to find ways to be there for him — even when I can’t be there.”

She was there last weekend in Indianapolis when her son helped put the Boilermakers in position to win their first Big Ten Tournament title since 2009. And she was there again when her dejected son blamed himself for the championship game loss to Iowa on Sunday.

Through it all, the postgame hugs and private conversations helped this basketball family cope with life’s larger lessons.

“This is for real home,” Jaden Ivey said after a win last week in Indianapolis at the recently re-

branded Gainbridge Fieldhouse. “Obviously my mom, she’s been here, played with the (WNBA’s Indiana) Fever, and as a young boy, I can remember coming here. It’s just a great atmosphere to be in.”

Niele Ivey hasn’t forgotten much, either.

“I started exposing him to high-level training and better teams, so he could receive the best coaching and training around,” she said. “I didn’t do much (coaching), just making sure he had access to gyms and facilities. I’d rebound a little bit, but I was always that voice in the background.”

They didn’t just grow up with basketball. They blossomed together, too.

When Niele accepted her first head coaching job last season, big things were expected. She played a prominent role on Notre Dame’s 2001 national championship team, spent 12 seasons there as an assistant coach before spending one season on the bench with the NBA’s Memphis Grizzlies.

But that first, COVID-19 season as Muffet McGraw’s successor didn’t go according to script. They finished 10-10 and missed the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1995.

Meanwhile, Jaden was dealing with the tough transition from high school star to college newbie. It didn’t take him or the other freshmen long to make an impression in West Lafayette, but then came a first-round NCAA Tournament loss to North Texas and suddenly both Iveys headed into the



Notre Dame coach Niele Ivey

offseason filled with motivation.

They responded like champs.

Notre Dame went 22-8 and regained its status as a regular member of the Top 25. About 100 miles away, Jaden Ivey was emerging as one of nation’s top young guards, an All-American candidate and a possible lottery pick in June’s NBA Draft as he helped Purdue go 27-7.

And this weekend, they will share their excitement yet again — separated by nearly 900 miles.

The Boilermakers open tourney play Friday against 14th-seeded Yale (19-11), the Ivy League champ. Then Saturday, the fifth-seeded Irish will face 12th-seeded UMass (26-6), the Atlantic 10 champ, in the women’s tournament.

“It’s a big week for us,” Jaden Ivey said. “Obviously, we get to play the game we love and do it at a high level. I think she’s focused on trying to win and lead her team, and so am I.”

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Engaging Tshiebwe thriving on, off court

By GARY B. GRAVES
Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — An engaging Oscar Tshiebwe has won over Kentucky basketball fans with his record-breaking play on the court and affable personality off of it.

The 6-foot-9 native of the Democratic Republic of the Congo anchors the No. 7 Wildcats' attack with his tenacity on the court, including rebounding skills not seen at Kentucky in a generation. He feels blessed to be in this position and it seems he never stops smiling.

"I just spend more time to do better the things that I'm able to do, like the rebounding and running the floor," said Tshiebwe, a junior who transferred last spring after 1½ seasons at West Virginia. "The rest of the things are coming. ... My offense is getting better, my passing ability's getting better.

"It's about doing what you do best, (and) keep getting better."

And he is truly enjoying the journey.

Tshiebwe fulfills nearly every autograph and selfie request almost to a fault, which can jeopardize any schedule he tries to keep.

He recently appeared at a Lexington church, where his accommodation of photo-seeking fans upon arrival delayed the service and his sermon about 30 minutes. A Wildcat teammate once chided him for running late as he signed autographs outside the dormitory as they were boarding the team van bound for Rupp Arena.

"That just tells you right there that he really cares for every single fan," guard Sahvir Wheeler said. "He wants every single fan to feel like they've had an impact, or he can make their day with a smile or a picture. And that tells you who he is as a person before a basketball player."



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

Kentucky forward Oscar Tshiebwe celebrates during the team's game against Vanderbilt in the SEC tournament on March 11. Tshiebwe has had a double-double in 15 straight games.

"The things that he's doing hadn't been done for 50 years."

John Calipari
Kentucky coach

Tshiebwe the person may one day be leading a congregation, not a basketball team. His late father, Mbuyi, was a pastor, and Kentucky's big man often speaks of his faith and recalls a childhood spent in the church.

Last month Tshiebwe attended a service at Broadway Baptist Church, where he spoke for 15 minutes with its growing African congregation. Pastor Daniel Ausbun saw a passion in the player that he

said revealed a calling to ministry.

"He genuinely wanted an opportunity to preach and feedback on how he could be a better preacher," said Ausbun, who added that Tshiebwe spent 40 minutes afterward greeting people.

"It's like basketball. Coach (John) Calipari has talked about how hard he works in the gym and in practice," the pastor said. "He did the same in preaching."

On the court, Tshiebwe isn't the only reason Kentucky (26-7) is in the mix to win a ninth national championship. The Wildcats, seeded No. 2 in the East Region, have perhaps their best mix of experience since the 2012 title team led by freshman Anthony Davis.

Kentucky's backcourt trio features veterans Wheeler and Kellan Grady— both transfers — and freshman TyTy Washington Jr.,

while the frontcourt boasts junior holdover Keion Brooks Jr. and Tshiebwe. All five starters average at least 10.0 points per contest, giving the Wildcats the scoring depth needed to go deep in the NCAA Tournament.

But Tshiebwe is the clear-cut anchor.

He is averaging 17.0 points and a nation-leading 15.1 boards per game. Tshiebwe has had a double-double in 15 straight games. He has a season total of 27 double-doubles — breaking Dan Issel's Kentucky record of 26 set in the 1969-70 season — and is tied with Utah Valley's Fardaws Aimaq for the most in the country.

"The things that he's doing hadn't been done for 50 years," Calipari said. He has "done some good stuff, I can tell you that. I'm proud of him."

Despite his physicality —

Tshiebwe has muscled his way to 58 steals and 53 blocks, both team highs — he has fouled out of a game just once this season.

"Sometimes I just can't believe what I'm doing because I never had a dream of doing everything I'm doing right now," Tshiebwe said. "I think God is helping me and I'm so grateful for everything."

Tshiebwe has already been named SEC player of the year by The Associated Press and conference coaches, who also chose him to the all-defensive team. He's a leading candidate for every national player of the year honor.

Tshiebwe wasn't thinking about individual accolades as he sat out last spring and watched Kentucky stumble to a 9-16 record and miss the NCAA Tournament. In 2021, he was seeking a reset after a falloff from a promising freshman season in which he led WVU in scoring and rebounding.

Tshiebwe said in a virtual news conference last April that he was not happy in Morgantown and things were not working. His mood became more upbeat as he looked forward to how his game could flourish at Kentucky.

"He's so relaxed and so comfortable and loves it at Kentucky," said Rick Mancino, who was Tshiebwe's coach at Kennedy Catholic High School near Pittsburgh. "And, he loves the people."

Tshiebwe's enthusiasm clearly has rubbed off on teammates.

"He just has really great energy," Washington said, "but like, sometimes it's OK to be a little bit mad. So, I try my best, you know, to rough him up, try to crack jokes on him."

"None of that works. He's still going to be Oscar."

Football-crazed Alabama has four teams in field

By JOHN ZENOR
Associated Press

While no Alabama school was able to bring home a football national championship, four teams from the Heart of Dixie are chasing basketball glory.

No. 2 seed Auburn is the lone Alabama school in the field that counts as anything more than a huge longshot to win it all heading into the NCAA Tournament. Still, it's the first time four teams from Alabama have shared the tournament field.

The regular-season Southeastern Conference champion Tigers face in-state team Jacksonville State Friday in Greenville, S.C.

"I'm always pulling for in-state teams. I was pretty excited when I saw them come up on the board because they deserve it," Auburn point guard Zep Jasper said. "They worked super hard this year. Another team I was looking forward to seeing was UAB."

"Those guys are also a great Alabama team. It's just exciting to see Alabama teams in it together."

Alabama stumbled down the stretch with

three straight losses but landed an at-large bid as a No. 6 seed. The Crimson Tide face No. 11 seed Notre Dame on Friday.

Conference USA champion UAB is the 12th seed and faces Houston on Friday.

Jacksonville State won the regular season ASUN Conference title and grabbed the league's automatic bid because tournament champion Bellarmine isn't eligible after making the move from Division II.

It all gives a state known mostly for football something to celebrate.

Teams from Alabama have produced some March runs, but it's been a while since multiple teams have.

Auburn made its first Final Four in 2018-19. Alabama and UAB both advanced through the first weekend in 2004, making the Sports Illustrated cover with a headline "Sweet Alabama."

That Tide team went to the Elite Eight but Alabama has now made the field in back-to-back seasons for the first time since 2005.

"I think people around here need to be reminded it's been an unbelievable season,"

Alabama coach Nate Oats said. "Let's not forget that we're at a place that's changing the culture of men's basketball."

The Blazers have made the Sweet 16 three times, twice under Gene Bartow. He took UAB to the NCAA Tournament every season from 1981-87.

Andy Kennedy's UAB team set a season record with 27 wins and won their first Conference USA Tournament title since 2015.

"The Gene Bartow Standard is this," Kennedy, who starred for the Blazers under Bartow, said after that game. "It's when guys have pieces of a net in their hats."

Auburn and Jacksonville State haven't played since 2013. But coaches Bruce Pearl of Auburn and Ray Harper of Jacksonville State are familiar foes from their Division II days as rivals starting in the 1990s. Pearl was at Southern Indiana and Harper at Kentucky Wesleyan.

Hoop fans in the state this year have options when choosing who to support in the NCAA Tournament.

"There were a lot of good college basket-



LM OTERO/AP

UAB coach Andy Kennedy holds up the net after winning the Conference USA tournament title.

ball teams that made it," Pearl said. "So, it was a good year for college basketball, so far, in the state of Alabama."

Just how good a year remains to be seen.

SPORTS



World Cup winner
Shiffrin wins overall title for fourth time » **Skiing, Page 46**

NCAA TOURNAMENT



LM OTERO/AP

Houston coach Kelvin Sampson holds up the trophy after his team defeated Memphis 71-53 to win the AAC Tournament championship in Fort Worth, Texas, on Sunday.

Transformative effect

Head coach Sampson has taken Houston from afterthought to contender

BY KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

HOUSTON — When veteran coach Kelvin Sampson took over at Houston in 2014, the Cougars had made the NCAA Tournament just once since 1992.

“There was no success. There was no hope. There was no aspirations,” Sampson said Tuesday, recalling the culture he inherited. “No, there was a lot of just empty words.”

Now in his eighth season, Sampson has transformed the program into a tournament mainstay as the fifth-seeded Cougars prepare to open March Madness on Friday

DID YOU KNOW?

Kelvin Sampson, 66, was selected AAC coach of the year again this year after also winning the honor in 2018 and 2019. His 196-69 record in seven seasons at Houston makes him the winningest coach in school history.

SOURCE: Associated Press

against UAB.

Houston is making its fourth straight NCAA appearance, the school’s longest streak since the Phi Slama Jama teams led by Hakeem Olajuwon and Clyde Drexler also went four years in a row from 1981-84.

And these Cougars likely would have been making their fifth consecutive trip if the 2020 event hadn’t been scrapped because of the pandemic.

They return to the tournament after losing to eventual champion Baylor last year in their first Final Four appearance since those Phi Slama Jama teams reached three straight in the 1980s.

The Cougars entered the season having lost four starters from that Final Four team and withstood losing stars Marcus Sasser and Tramon Mark to season-ending injuries.

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