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Jordan Spieth might be ready to complete career Grand Slam

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Precautions still a priority

Federal health officials say a third of US should be considering masks

BY ZEKE MILLER AND MIKE STOBBE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — COVID-19 cases are increasing in the United States — and could get worse over the coming months, federal health officials warned Wednesday in urging areas hardest hit to consider reissuing calls for indoor masking.

Increasing numbers of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations are putting more of the country under guidelines issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that call for masking and other infection precautions.

Right now, about a third of the U.S. population lives in areas that are considered at higher risk — mostly in the Northeast and Midwest. Those are areas where people should already be considering wearing masks indoors — but Americans elsewhere should also take notice, officials said.

“Prior increases of infections, in different waves of infection, have demonstrated that this travels across the country,” Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the CDC director, said at a White House briefing with reporters.

For an increasing number of areas, “we urge local leaders to encourage use of prevention strategies like masks in public indoor settings and increasing access to testing and treatment,” she said.

Officials were cautious about making concrete predictions, however, saying how much worse the pandemic gets will depend on several factors, including to what degree previous infections will protect against new variants.

SEE PRECAUTIONS ON PAGE 9

Federal health officials are suggesting areas of the U.S. consider reissuing orders for indoor masking.

MATT ROURKE/AP



NAVY SUICIDES

Top enlisted sailor says service has 5-week wait for mental health care

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — It takes more than a month for sailors struggling with thoughts of suicide to get a mental health appointment, the Navy's top enlisted leader told House lawmakers Wednesday.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith was speaking from experience when he addressed the issue during a subpanel hearing of the House Appropriations Committee.

“For those who are on the precipice of suicide, appointment times average five weeks,” Smith told members of the subcommittee on military construction, veterans affairs and related agencies. “I can personally attest to this as I sought care last year and we had to use a private provider at my own expense — something our sailors should never have to endure.”

Smith did not elaborate on his personal experience, but he said the coronavirus “pandemic exacerbated an already critical need for greater mental health care capacity.”

Smith's comments come as the Navy copes with the suicides of seven sailors assigned to the USS George Washington. All the sailors took their own lives since 2019 when the aircraft carrier began an overhaul in Newport News, Va.

Four of the suicides took place in the past year, with three happening during one week in April, the Navy has said.

A five-week wait is unacceptable for a mother of a George Washington sailor who she said survived a suicide attempt last week. Her son is now awaiting a spot in an in-patient treatment facility because many are full, she said.

Stars and Stripes is not naming the moth-

SEE MENTAL HEALTH ON PAGE 6



Smith

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Nearly 270 salmonella cases from chocolate eggs

Associated Press

STOCKHOLM — European health officials say that 266 confirmed cases and 58 suspected cases of an outbreak of salmonella infection linked to chocolate Easter eggs have now been reported throughout Europe and in North America, the vast majority in children.

The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control said that 86.3% of the cases were among children aged 10 or younger, and for all cases in Europe with infor-

mation available, 41.3% of them were hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.

Cases have been reported in 14 European countries, Canada and the United States.

The European Union agency still suspects a Belgian factory. Its closure in April, the global recall and withdrawal of their products from the shelves "have reduced the risk of exposure, but new cases may occur due to the long shelf life and possible storage of products at home," the agency said.

In early April, food authorities in several European countries said that Italian company Ferrero has recalled specific batches of Kinder chocolate products due to suspicions of a connection between the products and an outbreak of salmonella.

The two outbreak strains which both are multidrug-resistant, were identified in 10 of the 81 salmonella-positive samples taken in the Belgian plant in December and January, including in buttermilk, semi-finished and finished products.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (May 20)	\$1.03	Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
Dollar buys (May 20)	0.9236	Britain (Pound)	1.2487
British pound (May 20)	\$1.22	Canada (Dollar)	1.2802
Japanese yen (May 20)	126.00	China (Yuan)	6.7263
South Korean won (May 20)	1242.00	Denmark (Krone)	7.0475
		Egypt (Pound)	18.2789
		Euro	0.9468
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8474
		Hungary (Forint)	364.03
		Israel (Shekel)	3.3817
		Japan (Yen)	127.22
		Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3063
		Norway (Krone)	9.7426
		Philippines (Peso)	52.21
		Poland (Zloty)	4.40
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7506
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3814

South Korea (Won)	1270.65
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9717
Thailand (Baht)	34.45
Turkey (NewLira)	15.8466

(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	4.00
Interest Rates Discount rate	1.50
Federal funds market rate	0.08
3-month bill	1.04
30-year bond	3.07

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

Army captain jailed after assault of soldier

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Army officer who put his head between a soldier's breasts during her promotion in Jordan was convicted by a court-martial of two related charges, documents provided Wednesday by the service show.

Capt. Billy Crosby pleaded guilty to conduct unbecoming an officer and assault consummated by battery, according to a summary of the trial provided to Stars and Stripes. A third charge for abusive sexual contact was dropped.

Crosby was sentenced to 30 days confinement, a plea agreement signed in November said.

The plea agreement resulted in no fines, reduction in rank or reprimands for Crosby, who was not re-

quired to register as a sex offender.

The Army released the court documents after an image of the findings emerged recently on Reddit, along with speculation as to what occurred.

"(Capt.) Crosby's behavior was not in line with the Army values," Maj. Jessica Rovero, spokeswoman for the 1st Theater Sustainment Command, said in a statement.

"Multiple soldiers immediately reported the behavior, and Crosby pled guilty at trial," the statement added. "Throughout the court-martial, all parties were treated with dignity and respect."

Crosby served as a company commander in the Louisiana National Guard and as a senior officer at an austere base in Jordan, as



Crosby

part of U.S. efforts to fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, court documents said.

After Crosby found out that a soldier under his command was to be promoted to sergeant, he announced twice in front of a witness that he would "motorboat" her at her promotion ceremony, court documents said.

The term "motorboating" refers to the act of placing one's head in between someone's breasts and moving one's face from side to side.

Promotion ceremonies, especially to sergeant, are a major event in many careers. Sometimes

they include a light punch at the rank on a newly promoted service member's chest by their peers or by loved ones.

However, the future sergeant declined Crosby's offer to stage a promotion ceremony, the documents said.

After the rejection, Crosby entered the sergeant's workplace last May and ordered the soldier to stand up. He placed her new rank in front of her chest, leaned in to grab the rank with his teeth and put his face into her chest without her consent, court documents said.

A witness said the captain had expressed a long-term interest in the soldier and had said he "liked looking" at her chest prior to the assault, evidence provided to the court said.

Defense lawyers for Crosby said

the prosecution was trying to use gossip to portray the captain as a "creepy old guy."

A military judge declined the defense's request for a witness, a retired first sergeant, to testify to the captain's good sense of humor in difficult circumstances while deployed to Panama in 1989.

Crosby has completed his prison sentence. He retired from the Louisiana National Guard on March 31, Crosby told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday.

"I was accused of a lot more than I done, and I pled guilty to what I did," Crosby said.

Jordan hosts about 3,000 American troops, a recent Congressional Research Service report said.

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Busy agenda awaits Biden on presidential trip to S. Korea, Japan

By DAVID CHOI
AND ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

South Korea has a plan to protect President Joe Biden in case the North tests a nuclear weapon or ballistic missile during the initial leg of his first presidential trip to Asia, according to the White House.

Biden is meeting with the leaders of key allies in the Indo-Pacific region to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to security there, as global attention and NATO resources flow into Ukraine to counter the 3-month-old Russian invasion.

"We think this trip is going to put on full display President Biden's Indo-Pacific strategy, and that it will show in living color that the United States can at once lead the free world in responding to Russia's war in Ukraine and at the same time chart a course for effective, principled American engagement and leadership in a region that will define much of the future of the 21st century," national security adviser Jake Sullivan said at a White House media briefing Wednesday.

Biden was to depart from Washington, D.C., on Thursday for South Korea. From there he'll continue to Tokyo to huddle with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida ahead of a Quad summit next week, a meeting of allied Indo-Pacific leaders from the U.S., Japan, Australia and India.

In South Korea, Biden is scheduled to meet President Yoon Suk Yeol, inaugurated May 10, who campaigned on a pledge to strengthen military ties with the U.S. and

improve relations with Japan.

Biden "will highlight the truly global nature" of the U.S.-South Korea alliance, "from climate and energy and technology to economic growth and investment," Sullivan said.

"He will see American and Korean troops standing shoulder-to-shoulder in defense of our collective security and consult on the challenge posed by [North Korea's] nuclear and missile program," he said.

Biden will not visit the Demilitarized Zone, the fortified border between North and South Korea, said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre at the briefing. That includes the Joint Security Area, where President Donald Trump met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in June 2019.

U.S. intelligence agencies indicate a "genuine possibility" of a North Korean weapons test during Biden's visit to Seoul and Tokyo, Sullivan said.

Another missile test may be "imminent," Kim Tae-hyo, first deputy director of the South Korean National Security Office, said Wednesday at a press briefing in Seoul. North Korea has fired 15 short- and long-range tactical and ballistic missiles off its eastern coast so far this year.

A "relatively low" probability exists the North may test a nuclear weapon this week, Kim said.

In either event, U.S. and South Korean authorities have coordinated for Biden's safety, Kim said. He did not elaborate on those plans.

In Japan, Biden and Kishida



GEMUNU AMARASINGHE/AP

President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden board Air Force One at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., on Tuesday to travel to Buffalo, N.Y.

will discuss economic and security issues in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond, Sullivan said.

He said Biden will announce a "new, ambitious economic initiative for the region, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework." The framework is meant to set rules for a digital economy, manage energy transitions and improve global supply chains, Sullivan said.

"And we believe that the U.S.-Japan alliance at this moment under these two leaders is at an all-time high," he said.

From a military standpoint, Japan is spending a record amount on its defense budget, acquiring a fleet of F-35 Lightning II stealth fighters from the U.S. and meeting Chinese aircraft probes of its air defense identification zone with record numbers of its own fighter sorties.

It's also concerned with North Korea's missile tests, which fall in or just short of Japan's maritime economic exclusion zone.

"Japan's contributions as a security partner are rightly growing as the regional security picture becomes more challenging and dynamic," Sullivan said.

Biden's arrival coincides closely with the expected departure of the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan for its summer patrol, and the expected arrival of the carrier USS Abraham Lincoln for a port call at Yokosuka Naval Base.

A slim chance remains that the president may personally return a "good luck" heirloom flag to the family of a World War II Japanese service member. U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley of Oregon wrote Biden in late April on behalf of the Obon Society, which has helped repatriate hundreds of

such flags taken by U.S. service members as battlefield souvenirs.

"For the President of the United States to carry and deliver a yosegaki hinomaru to a Japanese family would be a powerful cultural touchstone and we strongly encourage you to include this act in your upcoming trip," the senators wrote on April 27.

The White House has not replied to the senators' request, Hank Stern, a Wyden spokesman in Portland, Ore., told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday. Obon Society co-founder Rex Ziak in an email Thursday said the White House had denied the request but a source he declined to identify said the society may see an "11th hour miracle."

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PACIFIC

K-pop star with US Army wins S. Korea competition

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — A South Korean pop star serving his compulsory military service is among Eighth Army's Best Warriors after a six-day trial that tested competitors' physical and mental limits.

Pfc. Kang Young Hyun, 28, a South Korean soldier serving as a human resource specialist for Eighth Army's Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, won the command's Best Warrior Competition in the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army, or KATUSA, category from May 8-13.

Kang is a member of DAY6, a pop rock band represented by JYP Entertainment, a South Korean record label that debuted K-pop groups like Wonder Girls.

Other competition categories include best soldier, noncommissioned officer, officer and warrant officer. U.S. soldiers who were crowned best warrior and best squad will advance to U.S. Army

Pacific's three-day competition starting July 19.

Forty-nine U.S. and KATUSA soldiers competed for the title of Best Warrior and Best Squad by going through events like a water survival skills test, small arms qualification, land navigation and obstacle courses, an eight-mile march, knotting assessments and military knowledge tests.

Kang said he was encouraged to compete by a noncommissioned officer in April.

"I made the decision that night," he told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday. "Because my only goal in the Army was to have a healthier body, just to build a better one, because I feel like I haven't been taking care of [it] before."

Kang was raised in South Korea but studied in Canada for four years. While living in Toronto and Vancouver, British Columbia, he honed his English by studying and practicing music from artists like Maroon 5 and Coldplay.

Kang's group, DAY6, spent 15

weeks in Billboard's K-Pop 100 category in 2020, with songs like "Zombie" and "You Were Beautiful."

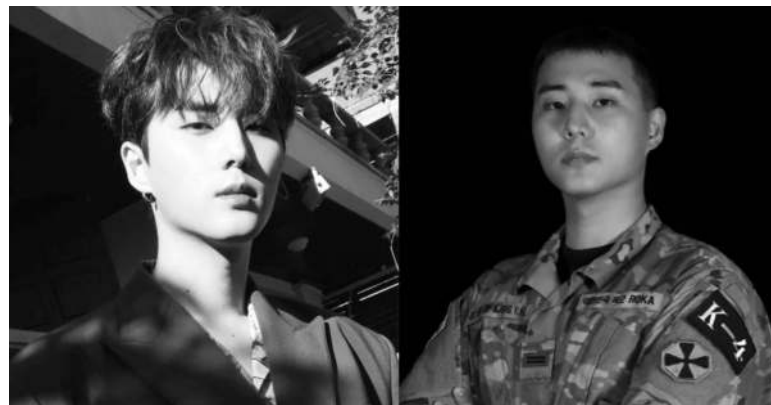
As a South Korean man, Kang was required to serve in his country's military before age 29. He returned to South Korea and applied to become a KATUSA soldier through a highly selective process.

"I knew I had to come into the army one day," Kang said. "I knew I was going to stay here in Korea, and I knew I was going to serve."

KATUSA applicants are required to meet a certain score in several internationally recognized English knowledge and speaking tests, have no criminal record and pass a physical fitness test.

"I realized being a KATUSA is something very special," Kang said.

Prior to his military service, Kang said he focused on his music career and the albums he planned to release. He learned during his military training the value of introspective thinking and to occasionally "look into myself" and to "take



KANG YOUNG HYUN/U.S. Army

K-pop star Kang Young Hyun, a member of the group Day6, before and during his military service as a KATUSA soldier in Eighth Army.

care of myself."

Kang said the cardio events were the most difficult of the Best Warrior competition.

"I was not a good runner compared to the others," he said, smiling. "Thankfully, because I was physically very, very tired, I fell asleep right away."

Despite struggling through some trials, Kang said he endured after "seeing the other competitors ... all very dedicated and competing hard against each other."

"I think what I got out the most was the experience itself," he said. "I feel like I am never going to have this experience ever in my life anywhere else."

Kang said he knew he "wasn't going to be the fastest one" among the

competitors, but noted his "goal was to hit every single obstacle."

"There were hiccups," he said. "There were times when I almost fell down but being able to overcome my limits ... gave me more confidence in myself — believing in myself — and thinking I can do other things, too."

An Eighth Army spokesman said Kang received no preferential treatment during the competition.

"We treat Pfc. Kang exactly as we treat all of our soldiers," Army Lt. Col. Neil Penttila told Stars and Stripes. "He won this competition purely on his own hard work and effort."

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DODEA teacher, nurse jailed for cannabis possession on Okinawa

By MARI HIGA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A teacher and school nurse at Defense Department schools on Okinawa were arrested by Japanese police this week for alleged cannabis possession.

John R. Gouldman, 59, and Holly A. Gouldman, 57, were taken into custody around 7 a.m. Tuesday at their home in Chatan, a spokes-

man for the Okinawa Police Station told Stars and Stripes by phone on Thursday.

Local police searched the couple's home after receiving information from the Naval Criminal Investigative Service that they were suspected of using cannabis. Police found an unspecified amount of dried cannabis in two jars and a plastic bag, the spokesman said.

John Gouldman is a teacher at Kadena Middle School on Kadena Air Base, according to his LinkedIn page and the Department of Defense Education Activity-Pacific; Holly Gouldman is a nurse at Kubasaki High School at Camp Foster, according to the school directory and DODEA.

The couple was still in custody Thursday and being questioned further "to see the whole picture,"

the police spokesman said. The couple "admitted to possessing the cannabis" following their arrest, he said.

The Gouldmans are considered absent without leave from their jobs, according to an email Thursday from DODEA-Pacific spokeswoman Miranda Ferguson.

"While DoDEA will not discuss details of personnel matters publicly, officials will take appropriate

action," she wrote.

Cannabis possession can bring up to five years in prison under Japan's Cannabis Control Act. Five cases so far this year involving Marines smuggling the drug onto Okinawa by mail, however, drew fines and suspended sentences of two to three years.

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Marine base road, site of fatal crashes, is one of Okinawa's most deadly

By MARI HIGA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Two more vehicular crashes recently occurred at a spot near this Marine Corps base where two earlier incidents claimed two lives.

The four collisions took place on a stretch of Route 58 in Chatan that an Okinawa highway spokesman said is among the most dangerous in the prefecture.

The site is "one of the top five accident-prone spots" on Okinawa, a spokesman for the South National Highways Office told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday.

"It is of the places on the island where accidents frequently occur," Okinawa police said Monday. "The road looks straight, but it isn't."

Most recently, a car driven by "a person related to the U.S. military" collided with a local taxi around 1 a.m. Sunday, a spokesman for the Okinawa Police Station said Tuesday. Police suspect the individual of drunken driving but did not make an arrest, the spokesman



FRANK ANDREWS/Stars and Stripes

Okinawa police said a Marine was killed Saturday after veering off Route 58 and crashing outside Camp Foster, Okinawa.

said.

A Marine with the 3rd Maintenance Battalion, 3rd Marine Logistics Group, headquartered at Camp Kinser, was involved in a collision around that time, spokeswoman LaDonna Davis of Marine Corps Installations

Pacific said by email Wednesday. She provided no further information, citing an ongoing investigation.

The driver cooperated with the investigation and the Okinawa police "did not take this person into custody," the police spokesman said. Government spokespeople in Japan customarily speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

The taxi driver, a man in his 60s, was treated for neck and shoulder pain at a local hospital, the Okinawa Times reported Tuesday.

Early Saturday, a Marine corporal whom the service has yet to identify was killed in the same area. His car veered off the highway around 4:50 a.m. and struck a light pole and a pedestrian fence, police said.

Around 5 p.m. that day, a vehicle bearing a Y plate, which designates it is registered to someone affiliated with the U.S. military, crashed into the center median, an Okinawa police spokesman said by phone Monday. No further information was available on that incident, which took place about 80 yards north

of the fatal accident scene.

On May 8, a vehicle driven by a Marine left the roadway at nearly the same site, continued onto the sidewalk and killed a 61-year-old pedestrian. Police questioned but did not detain Lance Cpl. Joshua David Siegel. Alcohol was not a factor in the crash, police said.

A "wet road surface" is one reason for the series of accidents, according to the police spokesman. "Please be careful when driving, especially during the rainy season," he said.

The highway office has been applying a non-slip finish to Route 58 around Chatan crossing since 2009 and plans to extend those improvements this fiscal year to the area where the recent accidents occurred, the highway office spokesman said.

"We are working on the improvement of the road condition, but I would like to request drivers continue to be careful and do their part to prevent these accidents," he said.

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MILITARY

Marine expo aims to curb drownings

By FRANK ANDREWS
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Drowning claims more U.S. service members' lives on Okinawa than any other cause of accidental death, and the Marine Corps aims to beat it.

Thirty-nine American troops have drowned along the Okinawa coast since 2000, according to Marine Corps records. Nine have perished since 2020, including five deaths in 2021.

In April, drowning claimed a naval officer and a young Marine on Hawaii in unrelated incidents. Countless other swimmers have been rescued from near drowning.

To stem the tide of drowning deaths at its island duty stations, Marine bases on Okinawa and Hawaii plan Ocean Safety Expos this month to educate people on the hazards of their islands' coastlines. The goal is to get the safety message to at-risk children and service members ages 18 to 26.

Okinawa can be particularly deadly for off-duty service members drawn to the water.

"There's been zero COVID deaths but nine drownings," Shawn Curtis, safety director for Marine Corps Installations Pacific, told Stars and Stripes by phone May 5. "And you've seen how much emphasis we've placed on protecting our population in the COVID environment, and sometimes we lose sight of what our greatest threat is here, which is the ocean."

"Drowning is the number one cause of accidental death on Okinawa," he said in an email Monday.



FRANK ANDREWS/Stars and Stripes

Lifeguards keep an eye on people visiting Araha Beach in Chatan, Okinawa, on Thursday.

The six-hour expos at Marine Corps Base Hawaii and Torii Station on Okinawa will feature competitive events that reinforce knowledge of ocean safety risks.

The Okinawa event is scheduled 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Green Line buses will run to and from Camp Schwab and Hansen to Torii Beach at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

At Marine Corps Base Hawaii, the event runs from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. May 27 at Pyramid Rock Beach. Surfers Makua Rothman, Kalani Vierra and Kainoa McGee are scheduled to attend.

"We're going to give out lots of swag items to participants and those who can answer safety questions," Curtis said.

Already this year two service members drowned on back-to-back Sundays in the ocean off Marine Corps Base Hawaii. First was Navy Lt. j.g. Aaron Fowler, 29, who became unresponsive at a training event in Kaneohe Bay and was pronounced dead at a hospital on April 17.

Seven days later, Marine Pfc. Isaac Romero, 22, drowned while swimming in the ocean near the base, the service said April 27.

In October, four service mem-

bers snorkeling north of Camp Schwab, Okinawa, were caught in a rip current. One escaped the current and the remaining three spent 3½ hours in the water until the Japan Coast Guard came to their rescue.

"If those service members weren't so fit, I'm not sure we would be having the same conversation we're having now," Curtis said May 5.

The summer months historically yield an increase in recreational mishaps for U.S. service members worldwide.

But on Okinawa, October is the deadliest month for drownings, according to Marine Corps statistics. Curtis attributes the fall to seasonal southern winds switching to northerly winds.

"Mother nature is an indiscriminate killer and those who feel the safety net of calm-looking conditions are making inaccurate assessments," Curtis said. "We're always looking for ways that we can prevent mishaps through education for folks to make informed decisions."

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Senators agree on health care and benefits for exposure to burn pits

By SARA SAMORA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee announced Wednesday that they have reached an agreement that would expand eligibility for health care and benefits to all veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxins.

Sens. Jon Tester, D-Mont., chairman of the committee, and Jerry Moran of Kansas, the ranking Republican on the committee, called the legislation historic and said the bill will provide long overdue health care services and benefits for all veterans exposed to toxins.

The legislation seeks to provide an easy path to health care and benefits for veterans who served near open-air burn pits, which were used throughout the 1990s and the post-9/11 wars to burn garbage, jet fuel and other materials. Veterans diagnosed with cancer, respiratory issues and lung disease at young ages have blamed exposure to the toxic fumes, but the Department of Veterans Affairs contended for years that there wasn't sufficient evidence to support their claims.

The bill also would improve the VA's workforce, health care facilities and claims processing

to speed up efforts to meet the needs of veterans. Additionally, the bill would expand health care eligibility to post-9/11 combat veterans and add 23 conditions related to burn pits and other toxic exposures to the VA's list of service presumptions.

It will also expand presumptions related to Agent Orange exposure to include Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Guam, American Samoa and Johnston Atoll, strengthen federal research on toxic exposure, and improve the VA's resources and training.

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IG: Army officer in Trump trial faced retaliation

By DAN LAMOTHE
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Army Col. Yevgeny Vindman, who along with his twin brother raised alarm about President Donald Trump's actions toward Ukraine, precipitating the first of two impeachments, suffered a "swift" reduction in responsibilities advising the White House and probably was punished for speaking out, according to the findings of an investigation released Wednesday.

The Defense Department inspector general's office determined it is "more likely than not" that Vindman, an Army officer who in 2019 was assigned to the National Security Council, "was the subject of unfavorable personnel actions and that these were in reprisal for his protected communications" with superiors.

The subject of Vindman's concern was a call in which Trump implored Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to have the government in Kyiv open a corruption investigation of Trump's political rival Joe Biden, who as vice president under President Barack Obama led much of the administration's outreach to Ukraine and made numerous trips to meet with its leaders.

The inspector general's office recommended no action be taken in Vindman's case, noting that Army officials promoted him to his current rank last year and removed an unfavorable performance review that Trump administration officials had issued.

Vindman and his brother, Alexander Vindman, were among those dismissed from their jobs by national security adviser Robert O'Brien in February 2020 shortly after Trump's first impeachment trial ended with a Senate acquittal. Trump stood accused of abusing his authority, by seeking to withhold military aid intended for Ukraine when Zelenskyy declined to direct an investigation of

Biden, and then obstructing Congress's efforts to investigate those claims.

Vindman said in a phone interview Wednesday night that he was gratified by the inspector general's decision, but would like to see U.S. officials consider action against those cited in the report. His career was adversely affected by the situation, he said. He suggested that a review of whether they should keep security clearances might be one option.

"What happened to me and my brother is an outrage — one of many committed by the former president and his staff," Vindman said.

The inspector general's findings are a remarkable declaration that the Trump administration's treatment of whistleblowers was inappropriate. A separate Army investigation cited in the watchdog's report found that NSC attorneys John Eisenberg and Michael Ellis, who issued Yevgeny Vindman a harsh performance appraisal, lacked objectivity and that it "would be difficult to justify" their negative assessment.

Eisenberg attorney William A. Burck said in a statement that the inspector general "stacked the deck" against his client "to reach the conclusion they desired rather than one dictated by facts." Inspector general investigators did not interview Eisenberg, the statement says, because no agreement was ever reached on what would be asked.

"Mr. Eisenberg acted professionally and lawfully and the defamatory allegations by the IG are politically motivated fiction," the statement said. "It's a sad and dangerous day when government investigators pursue politics instead of facts."

Ellis attorney David W. Butler said in a separate statement that the report released Wednesday was "based on a biased and incomplete investigation."

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MILITARY

USAF proposal would give facial hair room to grow

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

Airmen aspiring to mustachioed greatness, your time may have finally come.

Draft guidance would allow Air Force members to grow their mustaches a quarter-inch past the corners of their lips, loosening a current policy that requires mustaches to be close-cropped and fit within the width of the top of the mouth.

The grooming policy has been lambasted for years by some airmen, particularly ones with small mouths, as too limiting. A draft memo of the proposal surfaced on the popular Amn/NCO/SNCO Facebook page Tuesday.

The memo indicated that the changes are ready for senior enlisted leader review.

"These are the internal, working draft policy documents that may change upon final approval," Air Force spokeswoman Tech. Sgt. Deana Heitzman said in an email to Stars and Stripes, adding

that the service is working on updates "in the near term."

Screenshots of the memo drew more than 260 comments on the Facebook page, many in enthusiastic support.

"No portion of the mustache will go beyond a horizontal line extending across the corners of the mouth," the memo states.

That would seem to rule out handlebar mustaches, though a commenter or two proposed ways to make that happen without running afoul of the proposed rule.

The mustache update would follow other recent hair-related Air Force revisions, one allowing men to have bulkier hairstyles and another letting women wear longer braids, ponytails and bangs.

Some pointed out that the mustache update, while welcome, falls short of the common plea for the Air Force to finally authorize full beards.

Others looked at the bright side of gaining a quarter-inch of hair on each side of their mouth.

"We are a half inch closer to beards boys!" one commenter said.

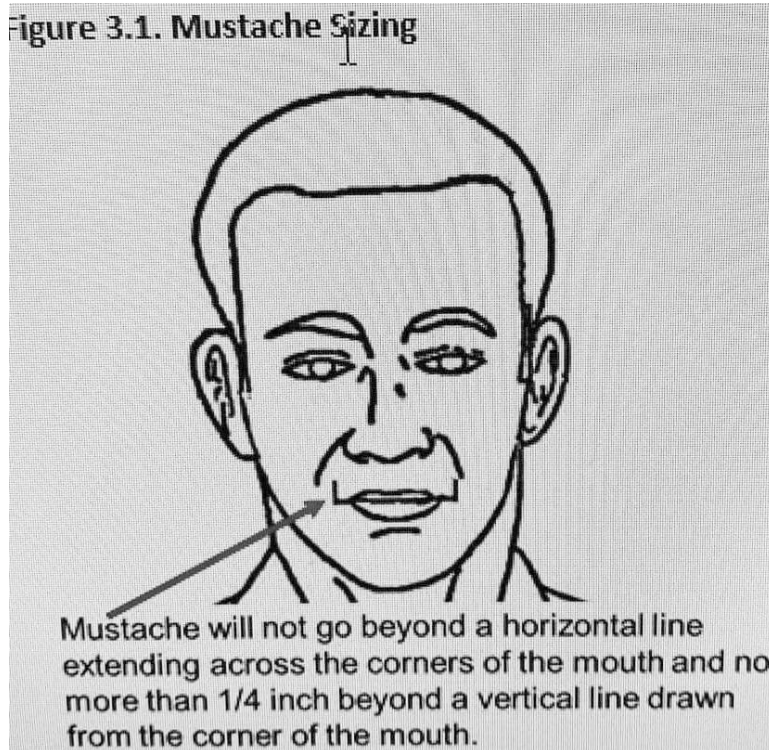
Beards have been a no-go for decades in the military services, which have cited the need for a proper seal on gas masks or in-flight breathing equipment. However, the Pentagon has made exceptions for medical and religious purposes.

Most recently, Marine Capt. Sukhbir Singh Toor, an active-duty artillery officer, sued the Marine Corps over his demand to keep his beard, which he said he considers "a core tenet of the (Sikh) faith."

The Air Force has granted full beard waivers before, as in the case of Staff Sgt. Garrett Sopchak, an aerospace ground equipment craftsman with a belief in Norse heathenism, which embraces gods like Odin and Thor.

The service confirmed that the document is genuine but has remained tight-lipped about whether the changes will happen as

Figure 3.1. Mustache Sizing



FACEBOOK

A draft Air Force graphic illustrating the widest allowable width for mustaches for male airmen.

written.

Mustaches are a tradition for many airmen, who commemorate World War II and Vietnam War triple-ace fighter pilot Brig. Gen. Robin Olds with annual "mustache march" celebrations.

The pilot sported a legendary mustache while flying combat

missions, though it flouted longstanding regulations. His facial hair has become iconic for airmen, many of whom hold light-hearted mustache-growing competitions in his honor.

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Navy setting up operations center in Italy

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The Navy is planning a four-story operations center at the home of 6th Fleet, which oversees naval forces in Europe and Africa.

The structure at Naval Support Activity Naples is envisioned to have two stories above ground level and two below.

The facility would include offices, conference rooms and administrative areas, said Lisa Woodbury Rama, a spokeswoman for the facilities and engineering command at Navy Region Europe Africa Central.

It would be built in the space occupied by a former barracks on the southwest side of the base's Capodichino site, Woodbury Rama said.

"The project may be submitted for next fiscal year funding based on the progress of the design phase," she said.

A timeline and planning considerations still are in development, said Cmdr. Richlyn Ivey, a spokeswoman for U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa.

Fleet officials did not discuss specifics, but Ivey said the project would "support the future operational requirements of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa."

Planning for the facility is happening amid a Navy proposal to decommission 6th Fleet flagship USS Mount Whitney in 2026, according to the service's 2023 budget documents.

That would save \$179.7 million, and the



ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

The Navy is proposing to build a new fleet operations facility at its Naples Capodichino site seen here.

functions of Mount Whitney could be handled by ashore staff, the Navy said.

Mount Whitney also serves as the command ship for Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO. It has sailed multiple times in the Black Sea as a symbol of NATO strength and overseen dozens of naval exercises.

Mount Whitney, one of only two Blue Ridge-class amphibious command-and-control ships in the Navy, was deployed last month to the Middle East-based U.S. 5th Fleet as part of Combined Task Force 153.

Replacing the ship's political presence will be challenging, Sebastian Bruns, a Fulbright scholar in residence at the U.S. Naval Academy and maritime expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said last month.

The Mount Whitney offers the deck space needed to host diplomatic receptions during international exercises, he said, adding that the only alternative in that regard is a San Antonio-class landing platform dock ship.

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Mental health: Navy investigating suicides, command climate on carrier

FROM PAGE 1

er and sailor due to privacy concerns.

Smith said it's not just access to mental health care that's contributing to the problem — keeping sailors aboard the ship for long periods of time while it's in the shipyards hurts morale.

For example, hundreds of the George Washington's 2,700-person crew were living aboard the ship earlier this year as its overhaul was scheduled to end. However, the schedule changed and the ship's time in Newport News was extended to March 2023. The crew was eventually moved off the aircraft carrier again last month after the string of suicides made headlines.

The Navy mother said her son can attest to the ship's harsh living conditions, which he told her included with power outages leading to hot water shortages and no air conditioning in the stuffy ship.

"The way he was treated, he would much rather be at boot camp than to be on the ship — and he's like, 'And no, I'm not putting [the difficulty of] boot camp lightly, Mom,'" she said. "So that's a bold statement."

Another reason driving the spike in suicides is sailors receive disappointing job assignments during maintenance periods unrelated to their Navy specialties, Smith said.

"Everybody who's there have those jobs [that are] not, frankly, what they were paid to do," he said.

When House lawmakers asked Smith what the Navy can do to address the issue, the master chief was blunt — those jobs are necessary for the carrier to remain in service.

"The pragmatic answer is to be honest

with [sailors] and acknowledge and validate as they're feeling the frustration ... while still telling them that if [they're] not willing to do what they do, the George Washington doesn't have another 25 years of life to defend this nation," Smith said.

The master chief on April 22 visited the ship where, during a speech to the crew, he made insensitive comments comparing their living situations to those of service members in combat, according to a Navy transcript.

"What you're not doing is sleeping in a foxhole like a Marine might be doing," Smith said during his speech to the George Washington crew. "What you are doing is going home at night, most nights, unlike the [USS] Harry S. Truman."

The Harry S. Truman, another aircraft carrier, is now deployed to the Mediterranean Sea to support NATO allies during Russia's war on Ukraine.

Smith also expressed pessimism about finding a way to end suicides in the Navy during the speech, saying "beating suicide is like beating cancer," according to the transcript.

The Navy has two investigations into the George Washington suicides and command climate of crews on ships undergoing overhauls, which Smith told House lawmakers Wednesday might reveal new answers.

In the meantime, most George Washington sailors have moved off the ship and into other facilities in the area, he said. Still, about 184 sailors chose to live on the carrier, which he attributed to an easier commute.

EUROPE

Senate passes \$40 billion Ukraine aid bill

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Thursday overwhelmingly approved a \$40 billion military and humanitarian aid package to Ukraine, overcoming Republican obstruction to reinforce the embattled country in its fierce fight against Russia.

The legislation will be sent to President Joe Biden for his signature just as his ability to transfer weapons from U.S. stockpiles runs out. Pentagon officials warned Congress last week that it urgently needed additional funding to keep arming Ukrainian forces.

House lawmakers passed the spending bill swiftly last week but an attempt by Sen. Rand Paul, R-

Ky., to hinge the aid on the creation of a special inspector general to oversee it stymied efforts to move the bill quickly through the Senate. Senators on Thursday groused over the delay but celebrated the bill's long-awaited passage.

"This is a large package and will meet the large needs of the Ukrainian people as they fight for their survival," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said on the Senate floor. "As [Ukrainian President Volodymyr] Zelenskyy has said, the Ukrainians are caught up in a fight for democracy... It's a fight we should not and cannot turn away from."

The Senate approved the measure 86-11, with all "no" votes coming from Republicans. Nearly 60

Republican members of the House voted against the bill last week.

"Aid for Ukraine goes far beyond charity," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said Thursday on the floor. "The future of America's security and core strategic interests will be shaped by the outcome of this fight."

Congress raised the size of the package from the initial \$33 billion requested by the White House last month to \$40 billion, bringing total aid for Ukraine to more than \$50 billion since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February. Lawmakers last approved \$13.6 billion in assistance for the war effort in March.

The latest tranche of funds will allow Biden to transfer up to \$11 billion in American weaponry and equipment to Ukrainian fighters. A previous \$3.5 billion allowance for drawing from U.S. stockpiles is down to the last \$100 million, according to the Pentagon.

The supplemental assistance also allocates \$8.7 billion to replenish inventory of weapons already sent to Ukraine.

Nearly half the spending package is earmarked for the Pentagon, providing funding for intelligence support, training and other defense assistance to Ukrainian forces in addition to weaponry. U.S. European Command will receive \$3.9 billion to cover operating costs and hardship pay for troops

in Europe, where forces ballooned from 80,000 to 100,000 this year.

Non-military aid will largely flow to the State Department, which will add \$13.9 billion to an economic support fund helping prop up Ukraine's government and \$5 billion for addressing global food insecurity exacerbated by the war. Another \$900 million is dedicated to helping Ukrainian refugees with housing, English language classes and other support services.

The Senate on Wednesday night unanimously confirmed the appointment of Bridget Brink to serve as U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, ending a three-year vacancy in the post on the same day the U.S. embassy in Kyiv reopened.

Ukrainian troops surrendering at Mariupol registered as POWs

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Hundreds more Ukrainian fighters who made their stand inside Mariupol's bombed-out steel plant surrendered, bringing the total to over 1,700, Russia said Thursday, amid international fears about the fate of the prisoners in Moscow's hands.

The Red Cross worked to register the soldiers as prisoners of war in a step toward ensuring their humane treatment under the Geneva Conventions.

Meanwhile, in the first war crimes trial held by Ukraine, a captured Russian soldier testified that he shot an unarmed Ukrainian civilian in the head on an officer's orders and asked the victim's widow to forgive him. Sgt. Vadim Shishimarin, a 21-year-old member of a Russian tank unit, pleaded guilty earlier in the week, but prosecutors presented the evidence against him in line with Ukrainian law.

In Mariupol, the nearly three-month siege that has turned the strategic port city into a symbol of the war's horrors drew ever closer to an end as the fighters in the last bastion of resistance continued abandoning the Azovstal steel plant on orders from above to save their lives.

The Russian military said a total of 1,730

Ukrainian troops at the steelworks have surrendered since Monday. At least some were taken by the Russians to a former penal colony in territory controlled by Moscow-backed separatists. A separatist official said others were hospitalized.

It was not clear how many fighters were left in the maze of tunnels and bunkers at the plant. Russia in recent weeks had estimated that it had been battling some 2,000 troops at the steelworks.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said that it has registered hundreds of POWs from the plant under an agreement between Russia and Ukraine. It did not say whether it had visited the prisoners.

While Ukraine said it hopes to get the soldiers back in a prisoner swap, Russian authorities have threatened to investigate some for war crimes and put them on trial, branding them "Nazis" and criminals.

The defense of the steel mill has been led by Ukraine's Azov Regiment, whose far-right origins have been seized on by the Kremlin as part of its effort to cast its invasion as a war against Nazi influence in Ukraine.

Those threats and accusations have raised fears of Russian reprisals against the cap-



BERNAT ARMANGUE/AP

Residents stay in the city subway of Kharkiv, in eastern Ukraine, on Thursday.

tured fighters.

Amnesty International had pushed for the Red Cross to be given access to the troops, citing lawless executions allegedly carried out by Russian forces in Ukraine and saying the Azovstal defenders "must not meet the same fate."

The emptying of the plant would allow Russia to claim complete control of Mariupol, a long-sought victory but one that holds

largely symbolic importance at this point.

Still, it would be a clear win in a war that has seen Moscow suffer a series of setbacks in the face of unexpectedly stiff Ukrainian resistance. Kyiv's troops, bolstered by Western weapons, thwarted Russia's initial goal of storming the capital and have tied down Moscow's forces in the Donbas, the eastern industrial region that President Vladimir Putin now has his sights on capturing.

US, allied military bosses in Brussels to chart path for NATO in east

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Top U.S. generals and other NATO defense chiefs are meeting in Brussels to discuss what Russia's war on Ukraine will mean for their militaries as the alliance looks for ways to bulk up forces along its eastern flank.

U.S. European Command's Gen. Tod Wolters and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley were among the officials taking part in a meeting of the NATO Military Committee, the alliance's highest military authority.

"The question now is what will our posture look like in the mid-

term and the long term," said Adm. Rob Bauer, the Dutch chairman of the committee, on Thursday as talks got underway.

The war in Ukraine has presented allies with a "a new strategic dilemma and reality" that is forcing NATO to adapt, he said.

"There is one thing we can say with certainty: Time is no longer our friend," Bauer said. "It is our adversary who determines the timeline, and it is up to us as a defense alliance (to ensure) that we are always ready."

The meeting brings together defense chiefs from the 30-nation alliance as well as officials from

Sweden and Finland, which applied this week for NATO membership over concerns about Russian aggression. Ukraine also is taking part in the talks.

The session comes one month ahead of NATO's summit in Madrid, where President Joe Biden and other heads of state are expected to approve a range of recommendations for bolstering the eastern flank.

While Bauer didn't detail what possibilities are under review, the defense chiefs are prepared to give their "unfettered" military advice to NATO's political leaders, he said.

Both Wolters, who also serves as NATO's supreme allied commander in Europe, and Milley have indicated that they see a need for more forces to shore up defenses in the east.

In April, Milley endorsed the idea of building new permanent American bases in Eastern Europe, filled by rotational forces, to deter Russia. He said NATO allies are "very, very willing" to build and pay for permanent U.S. bases along the alliance's eastern flank.

The Baltic states, Poland and Romania have been especially vocal about their desire for more NATO forces in their respective

countries.

Since Russia launched its full-fledged invasion of Ukraine in late February, the U.S. has sent an additional 20,000 troops to Europe, putting the overall American force number on the Continent at just over 100,000.

As military commanders review force posture plans, Bauer said, the aim is to ensure that "we are prepared to expect the unexpected in any domain from any potential aggressor in any part of the euro-Atlantic area."

EUROPE

Turkey's leader says 'no' to new NATO bids

Associated Press

ISTANBUL — Turkey will oppose Sweden and Finland joining NATO, the country's president flatly stated in a video released Thursday.

"We have told our relevant friends we would say 'no' to Finland and Sweden's entry into NATO, and we will continue on our path like this," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told a group of Turkish youth in the video for Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day, a national

holiday.

Turkey's approval of Finland and Sweden's application to join the Western military alliance is crucial because NATO makes decisions by consensus. Each of its 30 member countries has the power to veto a membership bid.

Despite the objections, the military alliance's top official said Thursday he expects the issue to be resolved and the two Nordic nations to become members soon.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said he was "confi-

dent that we will come to a quick decision to welcome both Sweden and Finland to join the NATO family."

Stoltenberg told reporters in Copenhagen, Denmark that "we are addressing the concerns that Turkey has expressed."

Erdogan has said Turkey's objection stems from grievances with Sweden's — and to a lesser degree with Finland's — perceived support of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and an armed group in Syria that

Turkey sees as an extension of the PKK. The conflict with the PKK has killed tens of thousands of people since 1984.

Turkey also accuses Sweden and Finland of harboring the followers of Fethullah Gulen, a U.S.-based Muslim cleric whom the Turkish government blames for 2016 military coup attempt.

A full recording of Erdogan's conversation with the youth for the holiday that marks the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence in 1919 was expected to

be released Thursday night. It was not immediately clear when the conversation took place.

In the remarks made available earlier Thursday, Erdogan accused the two prospective NATO members and especially Sweden of being "a focus of terror, home to terror." He accused them of giving financial and weapons support to the armed groups, and claimed the countries' alleged links to terror organizations meant they should not be part of the trans-Atlantic alliance.

US military cites Arctic benefits with NATO adds

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Navy and Marine Corps officials said Wednesday that the potential inclusion of Finland and Sweden in the NATO alliance would boost U.S. military activity in the Arctic and the Baltic Sea.

The Nordic countries have long trained with the U.S. and other NATO members but their bid to join the alliance in the wake of Russia's war in Ukraine would be a boon to security in the increasingly contested Arctic, officials told House lawmakers. Russia and China have growing ambitions in the region as climate change opens new opportunities for transit and exploration.

"I look forward to the prospect of Sweden and Finland joining NATO," Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro told the House Appropriations Committee during a hearing on the Navy's budget. "I foresee a day when we're actually increasing our maritime operations in the Baltic Sea."

Finland and Sweden handed in their applications for NATO membership on Wednesday, breaking with decades of neutrality and defense doctrine. Their entry into the alliance would leave Russia as the only non-NATO member of the Arctic Council, an organization that tackles issues raised by the eight countries with Arctic territory.

Gen. David Berger, commandant of the Marine Corps, said the formal addition of two militaries with extensive cold-weather experience would be a boon for training in the region. Norway, a founding member of

NATO since its inception in 1949, has shown U.S. troops how to fly and perform maintenance on helicopters in subzero temperatures, for example.

"Norway, Finland, Sweden — they're the best in the world in operating in that environment persistently," Berger said. "It's not learn by doing, it's learn by listening to the Norwegians."

Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-Calif., said it was helpful to consider the potential impact of new NATO allies on future training possibilities. The U.S. is one of 30 alliance countries that will weigh in on the applications of Finland and Sweden.

American sailors and Marines train with Norway at least every other year and a U.S. ship goes into the High North region or the Arctic Circle almost every month, said Adm. Michael Gilday, chief of naval operations.

The U.S. aggressively ramped up its presence in the area following a "watershed moment" in 2018 when a U.S. carrier strike group traveled above the Arctic Circle for the first time since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, he said.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February prompted the Navy to deploy small units of destroyers to the High North "to put pressure on Russia and make sure that they know we're there with capable platforms," Gilday said.

"I think we're in an upward trajectory with respect to the Arctic and I don't think we're going to turn back," he said.

Berger predicted Wednesday that the



ELIZABETH MACPHERSON/U.S. Army

A Finnish soldier enjoys a moment of reprieve from simulated combat during the multinational Exercise Arrow 22 at Niinisalo Training Area, Finland, on May 5.

Marine Corps will scale up rotations to the region and to Alaska in the coming years, deploying small units for two to four weeks at a time.

"You do large exercises to learn big lessons and send big messages but smaller units more frequently, on a more enduring basis has a lot of return on investment too," he said.

Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., suggested there might be more opportunities for the U.S. military to leave its mark on the Arctic.

The Pentagon should consider sending

northern National Guard units to train and acclimate to the weather, she said, and the Navy needs to think about how it can use ice breaker ships to assert dominance.

"I am laser-focused on the fact that we need to be working with the Coast Guard but we also need to be looking at the Department of Defense and the U.S. Navy projecting power," McCollum said. "I'm glad we're looking at this because Russia and China are looking to make inroads."

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Russia touts new laser weapons, but Ukraine and US are skeptical

The Washington Post

A senior Russian official told state media on Wednesday that a state-of-the-art laser weapons system has been deployed for active use in Ukraine, a claim that U.S. defense authorities and military experts say has not been substantiated and that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has mocked.

In an interview with the state-controlled Channel One, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yury Borisov said the country's latest laser

weapon, dubbed "Zadira," is now used by military units fighting in Ukraine.

The equipment is capable of incinerating targets up to three miles away within five seconds, he added, and is more advanced than the Peresvet, another laser system unveiled by Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2018.

"If Peresvet blinds an object, the new generation of laser weapons physically destroys the target. It is burned up," Borisov said in the interview.

A senior Pentagon official told reporters during a news briefing on Wednesday that the United States has not seen any evidence to corroborate Borisov's claim.

In his nightly address to the nation, Zelenskyy mocked the notion of Zadira's use and compared it to "wunderwaffe," or wonder weapons. The term was coined during World War II by Nazi war propagandists who boasted the lethality of modern military equipment such as cruise missiles, even though historians now say these

weapons were far less effective than advertised.

"All this clearly indicates the complete failure of the invasion," Zelenskyy said Wednesday evening. "But again, this also shows that they are afraid to admit that catastrophic mistakes have been made at the highest state and military levels in Russia."

Mick Ryan, a retired Australian army major general, who has been studying the Russian invasion, told The Washington Post that weapons like Zadira could take

down reconnaissance drones or Ukrainian artillery. It could also be used to blind Ukrainian soldiers, a tactic that is banned under international convention, he added.

Ryan cautioned against taking Russia's words at face value in the absence of evidence to support Moscow's assertions.

Since the start of the war, Russia has repeatedly tried to "awe the Ukrainians and the West with their supposed superiority," Ryan said.

NATION



JAE C. HONG/AP

People wait in line for a COVID-19 test in Los Angeles in January.

Precautions: Some experts fear US is in 6th wave of coronavirus

FROM PAGE 1

Last week, White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha warned in an interview with The Associated Press that the U.S. will be increasingly vulnerable to the coronavirus this fall and winter if Congress doesn't swiftly approve new funding for more vaccines and treatments.

Jha warned that without more funding from Congress, the virus would cause "unnecessary loss of life" in the fall and winter, when the U.S. runs out of treatments.

He added the U.S. was already falling behind other nations in securing supplies of the next generation of COVID-19 vaccines and said the domestic manufacturing base of at-home tests is already drying up as demand drops off.

Jha said domestic test manufacturers have started shuttering lines and laying off workers, and in the coming weeks will begin to sell off equipment and prepare to exit the business of producing tests entirely unless the U.S. government has money to purchase more tests, like the hundreds of

millions it has sent out for free to requesting households this year.

That would leave the U.S. reliant on other countries for testing supplies, risking shortages during a surge, Jha warned. About 8.5 million households placed orders for the latest tranche of 8 free tests since ordering opened on Monday, Jha added.

The pandemic is now 2½ years old. And the U.S. has seen — depending how they're counted — five waves of COVID-19 during that time, with the later surges driven by mutated versions of the coronavirus. A fifth wave occurred mainly in December and January, caused by the omicron variant.

The omicron variant spread much more easily than earlier versions.

Some experts are worried the country is now seeing signs of a sixth wave, driven by an omicron subvariant. On Wednesday, Walensky noted a steady increase in COVID-19 cases in the past five weeks, including a 26% increase nationally in the last week.

Hospitalizations also are rising, up 19% in the past week, though they remain much lower than during the omicron wave, she said.

In late February, as that wave was ebbing, the CDC released a new set of measures for communities where COVID-19 was easing its grip, with less of a focus on positive test results and more on what's happening at hospitals.

Walensky said more than 32% of the country currently live in an area with medium or high COVID-19 community levels, including more than 9% in the highest level, where the CDC recommends masks and other mitigation efforts be used.

In the last week, an additional 8% of Americans were living in a county in medium or high COVID-19 community levels.

Officials said they are concerned that waning immunity and relaxed mitigation measures across the country may contribute to a continued rise in infections and illnesses across the country. They encouraged people — particularly older adults — to get boosters.

Biden speeds production of baby formula

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden invoked the Defense Production Act to speed production of infant formula and authorized flights to import supply from overseas, as he faces mounting political pressure over a domestic shortage caused by the safety-related closure of the country's largest formula manufacturing plant.

The Defense Production Act order requires suppliers of formula manufacturers to fulfill orders from those companies before other customers, in an effort to eliminate production bottlenecks. Biden is also authorizing the Defense Department to use commercial aircraft to fly formula supplies that meet federal standards from overseas to the United States, in what the White House is calling "Operation Fly Formula."

Supplies of baby formula across the country have been severely curtailed in recent weeks after a February recall by Abbott Nutrition exacerbated ongoing supply chain disruptions among formula makers, leaving fewer options on store shelves and increasingly anxious parents struggling to find nutrition for their children.

"I know parents across the country are worried about finding enough formula to feed their babies," Biden said in a video statement released Wednesday by the White House. "As a parent and as a grandparent, I know just how stressful that is."

The announcement comes two days after the Food and Drug Administration said it was streamlining its review process to make it easier for foreign manufacturers to begin shipping more formula into the U.S.

In a letter Wednesday to the Department of Health and Human

Services and the Department of Agriculture, Biden directed the agencies to work with the Pentagon to identify overseas supply of formula that meets U.S. standards over the next week, so that chartered Defense Department flights can swiftly fly it to the U.S.

"Imports of baby formula will serve as a bridge to this ramped-up production," Biden wrote.

Regulators said Monday that they'd reached a deal to allow Abbott Nutrition to restart its Sturgis, Mich., plant, the nation's largest formula plant, which has been closed since February due to contamination issues. The company must overhaul its safety protocols and procedures before resuming production.

After getting the FDA's OK, Abbott said it will take eight to ten weeks before new products begin arriving in stores. The company didn't set a timeline to restart manufacturing.

"I've directed my team to do everything possible to ensure there's enough safe baby formula and that it is quickly reaching families that need it the most," Biden said in the statement, calling it "one of my top priorities."

Abbott's voluntary recall was triggered by four illnesses reported in babies who had consumed powdered formula from its plant. All four infants were hospitalized with a rare type of bacterial infection and two died.

After a six-week inspection, FDA investigators published a list of problems in March, including lax safety and sanitary standards and a history of bacterial contamination in several parts of the plant. Under Monday's agreement, Abbott must regularly consult with an outside safety expert to restart and maintain production.

More Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More Americans applied for jobless aid last week, but the total number of Americans collecting unemployment benefits is at a 53-year low.

Applications for unemployment benefits rose by 21,000 to 218,000 for the week ending May 14, the Labor Department reported Thursday. First-time applications generally track the number of layoffs.

The four-week average for claims, which smooths out some of the weekly volatility, rose 8,250 from the previous week to 199,500.

The total number of Americans collecting jobless benefits for the week ending May 7 fell again from the previous week, to 1,317,000. That's the fewest since December 27, 1969.

American workers are enjoying historically strong job security two years after the coronavirus

pandemic plunged the economy into a short but devastating recession. Weekly applications for unemployment aid have been consistently below the pre-pandemic level of 225,000 for most of 2022, even as the overall economy contracted in the first quarter and concerns over inflation persist.

Earlier this month, the government reported America's employers added 428,000 jobs in April, leaving the unemployment

rate at 3.6%, just above the lowest level in a half-century. Hiring gains have been strikingly consistent in the face of the worst inflation in four decades, with employers adding at least 400,000 jobs for 12 straight months.

Inflation may be the only thing hotter than the U.S. job market. Last week, the government reported that U.S. producer prices soared 11% in April from a year earlier, a hefty gain that indicates

high inflation will remain a burden for consumers and businesses in the months ahead.

Also last week, the government reported that inflation at the consumer level eased slightly in April after months of relentless increases but remained near a four-decade high. Consumer prices jumped 8.3% last month from a year ago, just below the 8.5% year-over-year surge in March, which was the highest since 1981.

NATION

Spy agencies work to fix diversity issues

BY NOMAAN MERCHANT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The peril National Security Agency staff wanted to discuss with their director didn't involve terrorists or enemy nations. It was something closer to home: the racism and cultural misunderstandings inside America's largest intelligence service.

The NSA and other intelligence agencies held calls for their staff shortly after the death of George Floyd. As Gen. Paul Nakasone listened, one person described how they would try to speak up in meetings only to have the rest of the group keep talking over them. Another person, a Black man, spoke about how he had been counseled that his voice was too loud and intimidating. A third described how a co-worker addressed them with a racist slur.

The national reckoning over racial inequality sparked by Floyd's murder two years ago has gone on behind closed doors inside America's intelligence agencies. Publicly available data, published studies of its diversity programs, and interviews with retired officers indicate spy agencies have not lived up to years of commitments made by their top leaders, who often say diversity is a national security imperative.

People of color remain underrepresented across the intelligence community and are less likely to be promoted. Retired officers who spoke to The Associated Press described examples of explicit and implicit bias. People who had served on promotion boards noted non-native English speakers apply-

ing for new jobs would sometimes be criticized for being hard to understand — what one person called the “accent card.”

Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, the first woman to serve in her role, has appointed diversity officials who say they need to collect better data to study long-standing questions, from whether



La Rue

the process for obtaining a security clearance disadvantages people of color to the reasons for disparities in advancement. Agencies are also implementing reforms they say will promote diversity.

“It's going to be incremental,” said Stephanie La Rue, who was appointed this year to lead the intelligence community's efforts on diversity, equity and inclusion. “We're not going to see immediate change overnight. It's going to take us a while to get to where we need to go.”

La Rue has hired several data analysts and plans for her office to issue annual report cards on diversity for each intelligence agency. She acknowledges advocates have to break through enduring skepticism inside and outside government that diversity goals undermine the intelligence mission or require lower standards.

“The narrative that we have to sacrifice excellence for diversity, or that we are somehow compromising national security to achieve our diversity goals, is ridiculous,” she said.



JIM WEBER, SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN/AP

Firefighter Ryan Le Baron with the Elk Creek fire department out of Colorado watches the fire blaze across a ridgeline near the Taos County line as firefighters from all over the country converge on Northern New Mexico to battle the Hermit's Peak and Calf Canyon fire on May 13.

Fire crews slow New Mexico fires, brace for dangerous conditions

BY SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN
Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — More than 2,000 firefighters battling the largest U.S. wildfire dug back-up fire lines and rearranged fire engines around homes in northeast New Mexico on Wednesday in anticipation of a return to windy, dangerous conditions in the days ahead.

After a break in the weather allowed for significant progress on the ground and from the air in recent days, forecasters issued warnings for high fire danger from southern Nevada through parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado starting Thursday.

“The next three days are going to be the giddy-up days,” fire behavior analyst Dennis Burns said Wednesday.

“Crews are out there working as hard as they can to get in line as quickly as possible,” he said dur-

ing an afternoon briefing at the fire east of Santa Fe stretching northeast toward Taos.

Most of the large fires so far this spring have been in Arizona and New Mexico. The largest has raced across more than 471 square miles of forest that many fire managers have described as “ripe and ready to burn” due to a megadrought that has spanned decades and warm and windy conditions brought on by climate change.

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has said damage estimates for homes and structures could reach more than 1,000 by the time all the assessments are done.

On Wednesday, no new evacuations were ordered and some were relaxed. Burns said the biggest new concern was that thunderstorms packing lightning and strong down-draft winds would fuel the fire again Thursday.

Bulldozers and hand crews

were building contingency lines near the town of Angel Fire east of Taos to make sure the flames don't reach U.S. Highway 64 within about 25 miles of the Colorado line.

“If we are fortunate enough to dodge that bullet, the cloud cover will actually shade out the fuels and moderate the fire behavior a little bit, which is a good thing,” Burns said Wednesday. “But tomorrow will be the day to tell.”

While the fire encompasses an area more than 1.5 times the size of New York City, fire managers said there are pockets of green within the perimeter that could still burn.

“We're trying to go all the way around the edge of the fire and we want to keep the fire where it is right now,” Jayson Coil, an operations chief assigned to the blaze, said Wednesday of using bulldozers to cut wide lines that can block flames.

New ‘disinformation’ board paused amid free speech questions

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Department of Homeland Security on Wednesday paused a new and controversial board's work on disinformation and accepted the resignation of its leader, capping weeks of concerns about impinging on free speech rights and frenzied conspiracy theories about the board itself.

Former Disinformation Governance Board director Nina Jankowicz told The Associated Press hours after resigning Wednesday that the wave of attacks and violent threats she's fielded since the board's launch will not stop her

from speaking out about disinformation campaigns pulsing through the social media feeds of Americans.

“We need to have a grownup conversation about how to deal with threats to our national security and that's not what happened here,” Jankowicz said. “I'm not going to be silenced.”

What remains to be seen is how the board's disastrous rollout and ensuing criticism around it will damage ongoing U.S. efforts to counter disinformation used as a weapon by Russia and other adversaries. Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas acknowledged the

board's controversy had become a distraction to the department's other work, which includes safeguarding U.S. elections, two officials familiar with his decision said.

While the board has not formally been shuttered, it will be reviewed by members of a DHS advisory council that's expected to make recommendations in 75 days. The Washington Post first reported the board's pause.

Federal and state agencies treat disinformation as a national security threat. In a statement announcing its launch, DHS said the new initiative would coordinate efforts

around threats of Russian disinformation campaigns aimed at the U.S. and false claims that encourage migrants to travel to the U.S.-Mexico border.

The new board was hampered from the start by questions about its purpose, funding and work that Mayorkas struggled to answer even as he appeared in front of lawmakers on Capitol Hill earlier this month.

Mayorkas made the decision to pause the board after the negative reaction and growing concerns that it was hindering DHS' other work on disinformation, according to two department officials who

spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

“The Board has been grossly and intentionally mischaracterized: it was never about censorship or policing speech in any manner,” the department said in a statement. “It was designed to ensure we fulfill our mission to protect the homeland, while protecting core Constitutional rights.”

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre noted the board had never met and neither the department nor Jankowicz had any power to censor or remove content labeled as disinformation.

NATION



CHRIS O'NEARA/AP

A Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey clown does a somersault during a 2017 performance in Orlando, Fla.

Ringling Bros. announces return tour; no animal acts

Associated Press

MIAMI — “The Greatest Show on Earth” is making a comeback featuring extraordinary humans and no animal acts five years after shutting down its three-ring circus, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey announced Wednesday.

Talent teams have already conducted auditions in Argentina, Mongolia, Ethiopia, France and the United States, with more than 1,000 performers applying to join a 50-city North American tour starting in September 2023, and international dates to follow, according to the owner of the historic circus, Feld Entertainment.

“For us, Ringling is about bringing the world’s talents to people’s hometowns,” chief operating officer Juliette Feld Grossman told The Associated Press in an interview. “We are entertainment for everyone and it’s important that everyone who comes to the show finds something and someone that they can really connect and relate to.”

The company heard from many fans after ending its 146-year run five years ago following intense criticism over its use of circus animals, and has considered their comments while re-imagining how to “keep the franchise fresh and alive,” she said.

In the new production, audiences will become “co-collaborators” with the performers, bringing them closer to the action and creating a different experience with every show, she said.

Ringling also wants to “tell the personal stories of the performers,” she said.

“Our performers dedicate their lives to doing oftentimes risky, very technically challenging and athletic performances, and they do it because they are passionate about it,” she said. “And we want our audience to know more about them to understand how they trained, where they came from, what inspired them to create and develop this particular skill.”

Massachusetts man reports rare US case of monkeypox

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Massachusetts on Wednesday reported a rare case of monkeypox in a man who recently traveled to Canada, and health officials are looking into whether it is connected to small outbreaks in Europe.

Monkeypox is typically limited to Africa, and rare cases in the United States and elsewhere are usually linked to travel there. A small number of confirmed or suspected cases have been reported this month in the United Kingdom, Portugal and Spain.

U.S. health officials said they are in contact with officials in the U.K. and Canada as part of the investigation. But “at this point in time, we don’t have any information that links the Massachusetts case to cases in the U.K.,” said Jennifer McQuiston of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Though it’s the only U.S. case

the CDC is aware of, “I do think we are preparing for the possibility of more cases,” she said.

The U.S. case poses no risk to the public, and the Massachusetts resident is hospitalized but in good condition, officials said.

The case is the first in the U.S. this year. Last year, Texas and Maryland each reported a case in people who traveled to Nigeria.

Monkeypox typically begins with a flu-like illness and swelling of the lymph nodes, followed by a rash on the face and body. In Africa, people have been infected through bites from rodents or small animals, and it does not usually spread easily among people.

Monkeypox comes from the same family of viruses as smallpox. Most people recover from monkeypox within weeks, but the disease is fatal for up to 1 in 10 people, according to the World Health Organization.

US warns abortion ruling could increase violent extremist acts

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The leak of a draft Supreme Court opinion striking down the constitutional right to abortion has unleashed a wave of threats against officials and others and increased the likelihood of extremist violence, an internal government report says.

Violence could come from either side of the abortion issue or from other types of extremists seeking to exploit tensions, according to a memo directed to local government agencies from the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis.

It’s an added element to what is already a volatile environment in the United States, where authorities have warned repeatedly over the past two years that the threat posed by domestic extremists, such as the gunman who committed the racist attack over the weekend in Buffalo, has surpassed the danger from abroad. The memo, dated May 13 and obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press, seeks to differentiate between illegal activity and the intense but legal outpouring of protests that are all but guaranteed when the Supreme Court issues its

ruling at the end of its term this summer, regardless of the outcome.

“DHS is committed to protecting Americans’ freedom of speech and other civil rights and civil liberties, including the right to peacefully protest,” the agency said in a written response to questions about the memo.

Those protests could turn violent. The memo warns that people “across a broad range of various ... ideologies are attempting to justify and inspire attacks against abortion-related targets and ideological opponents at lawful protests.”



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WORLD

Taliban order Afghan female TV anchors to cover their faces

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghanistan's Taliban rulers ordered all female presenters on TV channels to cover their faces on air, the country's biggest media outlet said Thursday.

The order came in a statement from the Taliban's Virtue and Vice Ministry, tasked with enforcing the group's rulings, as well as from the Information and Culture Ministry, the TOLONews channel said in a tweet. The statement called the order "final and non-negotiable," the channel

said.

The statement was sent to the Moby Group, which owns TOLONews and several other TV and radio networks, and the tweet said it was being applied to other Afghan media as well.

An Afghan local media official confirmed his station had received the order and was told it was not up for discussion. He said the station has no other option. He spoke on condition he and his station not be identified for fear of problems with the authorities.

Several female anchors and

presenters posted their photos on social media showing them with their faces covered with face masks during presenting programs. One prominent TOLO presenter, Yalda Ali, posted a video of herself putting on a face mask with a caption: "a woman being erased, on orders from the Virtue and Vice Ministry."

On one station, Shamshad TV, implementation of the order was mixed: One woman anchor appeared with a face mask Thursday, while another later in the day went without, showing her face.



RAHMAT GUL/AP

Basira Joya, 20, presenter of the news program sits during recording at the Zan TV station (women's TV) in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2017.

German intel shows spying like Cold War

Associated Press

BERLIN — The head of Germany's domestic intelligence service said Thursday that levels of espionage are as high as during the Cold War, or even higher.

Thomas Haldenwang, president of the BfV intelligence agency, also warned of the increased risk of sabotage against the backdrop of Russia's war in Ukraine. Germany has exposed a number of Russian spies operating in the country in recent years.

"Today, we assess the level of espionage against Germany at least at the level of the Cold War — if not significantly higher," Haldenwang said at an event in Berlin.

He predicted that "in a world of open hostilities and drastic sanctions, the inhibition threshold for espionage, sabotage and illegitimate influence will continue to fall."

Germany's top security official, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of stoking the idea of "Russophobia" since launching the war in Ukraine.

Japanese man gambles COVID funds mistakenly sent

Associated Press

TOKYO — The money was supposed to be COVID-19 assistance for low-income households in a small Japanese town, but it was mistakenly wired to a bank account of a resident who refused to return it and spent most of it on online gambling, police

said.

Sho Taguchi, a 24-year-old jobless resident in the town of Abu in western Japan, was arrested on Wednesday, Yamaguchi prefectural police said.

Police said Thursday he admitted to spending most of the \$360,000 of taxpayers' money on

gambling. According to Kyodo News agency, only \$530 is left in his bank account after he withdrew the money 34 times in just over 10 days after the town made the mistake.

The funds were COVID-19 subsidies that were deposited into his bank account in April. Each of

the 463 low-income households in Abu, population 3,372, was supposed to receive \$780. But a town official mistakenly submitted to a financial institution a single transfer request of the total amount to Taguchi, whose name was the first on the list of recipients, Kyodo News reported.

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WEEKEND



Lovett feeling fine on latest album

Page 28



Looking to the future

'A New Era' dawns for the aristocratic Crawleys and their servants in second 'Downton Abbey' film

Pages 15-16



Focus Features photos

Elizabeth McGovern, left, and Laura Carmichael in "Downton Abbey: A New Era."

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

The end of an era

Iconic iPod is gone but never forgotten

BY CHRIS VELAZCO
The Washington Post

For a generation of people who lived, worked and grew up in the 2000s, the word “iPod” was synonymous with music. Escaping the sight of those white earbuds was nearly impossible. And despite the speed with which smartphones took over our lives, Apple kept making its digital media players without much fuss.

Not anymore.

In a statement May 10, the company said it would continue selling the 7th generation iPod touch “while supplies last” — a quiet confirmation that the age of the iPod may finally be over.

The move, while bittersweet for techies of a certain age, didn’t come entirely by surprise. For years, Apple has slowly culled its line of portable media machines: the last iPod with the classic click-wheel was discontinued in 2014, and the once-popular iPod nano followed suit three years later.

“Today, the spirit of iPod lives on,” said Apple Senior Vice President Greg Joswiak. “We’ve integrated an incredible music experience across all of our products, from the iPhone to the Apple Watch to HomePod mini, and across Mac, iPad and Apple TV.”

Right now, the thought of a single-purpose device like the iPod can feel hopelessly passe. And to an extent, Apple felt the same. The original models only played music we purchased, ripped and pirated, but they were followed by versions that played videos and, eventually, the touch-screen models that persisted up to this month.

But even though iPods were eventually (and completely) overshadowed by the iPhone, it’s hard to understate the impact they had on the company — and the people who used them.

These days, Apple is worth more than

\$2 trillion and directs its attention to everything from computer processor design to Oscar-worthy movie production. In the years leading up to the original iPod’s release, however, Apple was only just emerging from what iPod creator Tony Fadell called a “death spiral” in his new book.

After a string of not-quite-right leaders, prodigal CEO Steve Jobs returned to the company and shook up its computer lineup with a slew of cheap, colorful iMacs in 1998. Then came similarly cheery iBooks a year later.

But it was arguably the first iPod, unveiled in October 2001, that set a revived Apple down a different path — one that cemented its place in people’s pockets, not just on their desks.

In the past, Apple had dabbled with other super-portable gadgets in the past, like some ill-fated digital cameras and the early PDA whose lasting legacy was a throwaway joke on *The Simpsons*. But according to Leander Kahney, author of the book “The Cult of iPod,” the company’s first MP3 player was different.

“It really was a marvelous gadget,” he said. “So easy to use and the source of so much joy and pleasure — because of the music it contained, of course. And it was the product that totally transformed Apple, laid the groundwork for the iPhone and kick-started massive growth.”

Over the two decades that followed, Apple collectively released more than two dozen iPod models, not including the variants with different amounts of storage space. And during the iPod’s tenure, countless tech trends have come and gone — here’s looking at you, netbooks and 3D TVs.

That’s just how it goes in an industry where a company is only as good as its next product.

But even though the last iPods Apple ever plans to make are on sale right now,



iStock

Apple stated May 10 that it was discontinuing its iconic iPod and will sell the 7th generation Touch while supplies last. Pictured: a model with the classic click-wheel.

it seems unlikely that those devices will completely disappear from the cultural consciousness any time soon.

“I didn’t have an iPod growing up,” said Bee Shipinski, a 19-year old student in Boise, Idaho, born after Apple’s first iPod announcement. “They were really expensive.” But a tendency toward tinkering — plus frequent childhood exposure to those dancing silhouette commercials — helped turn Shipinski into a fan of dedicated music machines.

“With an iPod, all it does is play music. It doesn’t care about an Internet connection, it doesn’t care about a license,” Shipinski, who identifies with the pronouns they/them, said. “It looks for the files, reads them, and it’s like, ‘Okay, here’s what we’re gonna do. We’re gonna play your music, and we’re gonna play it really damn well.’”

Rather than venture into the calculated slickness of an Apple store, Shipinski

bought their first iPods in a thrift store in 2019, and eventually decided to crack open the newer one for fun. With help from a repair guide from a YouTuber called DankPods — who has amassed a following of more than a million subscribers interested in iPods and other early 2000s music players — Shipinski made their first modifications, or “mods.”

Shipinski isn’t alone, either. They’re one of a growing flock of people who have begun repairing, and in some cases, upgrading old iPods to work better than they ever could have before. Rather than old, relatively delicate hard drives, these tweaked models have been modified to read music off cheap, roomy SD cards.

So, yes, Apple’s announcement does officially mark the end of an era. But judging by the many models currently on sale on eBay, it may be a while — if ever — before people finally have to move on from their precious iPods.

GADGETS

Key organizer also provides digital storage, port access

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

The Yubico Keyport Pivot 2.0 organizer is something you think you don’t need until you use it, and then you wonder how you have lived without it.

It holds up to eight keys and can add more with an extension kit. The modular key organizer has a black anodized 6061 aluminum finish and measures 3.2 inches long and 0.6 inches wide, making it easy to carry in a pocket, purse or neck lanyard. Both organizer pieces are connected with a rubber connection on one end and a threaded screw system on the other.

Once the screw end is disassembled, keys and other accessories can be added. Everything will stay flush with the organizer and quickly rotate out individually when needed.

In addition to your keys, security keys can be added for accessing USB ports and other digital storage and two-factor authentication. Keys with USB-A, USB-C, Lightning and NFC ports are available.

Bulky car keys can be added to the D ring attached to the rubber end of the organizer.

Online: yubico.com; \$25 for the Keyport Pivot 2.0 organizer; module prices vary



Yubico/TNS

The Yubico Keyport Pivot 2.0 organizer

than 0.23 inches thick makes falling asleep in all positions, including on one’s side.

I’ve tried many earbuds for nighttime comfort, and these are the best I’ve experienced.

A key to petite construction is relocating the electronics, typically in the in-ear earbud, to a small compartment, which stays behind your head on the cable connecting the earbuds. This includes a 100mAh battery for up to 14 hours of battery life.

While sleeping, monitoring technology with sensors worked well to fade the audio in real time

Kokoon

Nightbuds are a dream come true for those striving to become sound sleepers.

The sleep-monitoring Bluetooth 5.0 earbuds from Kokoon, a London-based sleep technology company, are designed to provide a comfortable solution for sleeping with earbuds in your ears throughout the night. The Nightbuds’ thin profile of less

and transition to white noise while working to keep outside disturbing noises to a minimum.

Users can use the MyKokoon app (developed by sleep scientists) to manage sleeping habits, accessing relaxation audio, including meditations, soundscapes and binaural beats.

The app is designed to be a personal sleep coach to ensure solid sleep.

The app can set schedules and wake-up alarms to specific audio choices and save your nightly sleeping data, including sleep efficiency and the average sleeping hours per night.

The \$260 Nightbuds include a lifetime device warranty, a two-year membership and access to the MyKokoon App.

An annual membership is \$170.99 for the Nightbuds and access to the MyKokoon App. Both have a 30-day trial.

Online: uk.kokoon.io

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Q & A

Dragging 'Downton' into the 20th century

Series creator, screenwriter discusses film sequel 'A New Era' and his TV series 'The Gilded Age'

By MARK MESZOROS

The News-Herald (Willoughby, Ohio)

"I was looking for an invasion of Downton by the 20th century in a fairly indigestible way — not just some character turning up for lunch, but something that overturned order."

Julian Fellowes, the creator of the beloved TV series "Downton Abbey" and the writer of the film of the same name released in theaters in 2019, says this during a recent video interview to promote its new sequel, "Downton Abbey: A New Era."

He's been asked what inspired the storyline in which a Hollywood film crew in the late 1920s comes to Downton Abbey — the Yorkshire estate home to the fictional Crawley family and their servants — to film a silent movie.

Early on in the production of "The Gambler," the decision is made to turn it into a "talkie," meaning dialogue will need to be recorded not only for scenes yet to be filmed but also for those that have been. This leads to numerous challenges, including for a leading lady — Laura Haddock's Myrna Dalglish — whose stardom has come from being seen but not heard.

Fellowes says the idea came after a conversation with a colleague, who told Fellowes of his grandfather's experience

working on the 1929 Alfred Hitchcock film "Blackmail," originally intended to be a silent picture.

"In the middle (of production, the crew) got this message from the studios that they had to change it to sound, and they had the invasion of the sound man," Fellowes says.

Among the ramifications was the need to dub the dialogue of the film's leading lady, Anny Ondra, who was said to have a strong Czech accent.

"Because they didn't (yet have) looping and dubbing, they had to have another actress standing on the set saying the lines while (Ondra) moved her mouth," says Fellowes, who in "A New Era" gives that task to Michelle Dockery's Lady Mary, who by now is in charge of the estate.

"I was telling this story of Mary adjusting to the 20th century and finding she could fit in and the fact that she could, you know, do the job to keep this thing going," he says. "She is learning to live with the 20th century without being too inhibited by it."

The movie's other major storyline sends a handful of "Downton" characters to France, but Fellowes says it was important they not stay away for too long.

"For me, the house is a pretty major character in the whole setup. And I don't really like when they take a television show and they put the characters on a

cruise or something," he says. "It doesn't quite work for me. I want them to get back to the setting of the series, and I didn't want people to feel they've been deprived of Downton the house."

In this conversation — which has been edited for length and clarity — Fellowes speaks about his long journey with "Downton Abbey," as well as his new series "The Gilded Age," set in the cut-throat social scene of 1880s New York City. The show debuted in February on HBO and has just gone into production on its sophomore season.

The News-Herald: Congratulations on both the movie and "The Gilded Age" finally coming to TV after a delay. Were you working on both of them simultaneously, or were you able to get "The Gilded Age" completed for that first season and get back into "Downton Abbey"?

Julian Fellowes: You probably know that when you write a script, you never stop writing different bits of it until the last edit is looped and the last thing is in the can. You know, you're still fiddling with this and that at the beginning of every week's filming.

But I enjoyed both shows. I think they're quite different in tone and different in sort of texture, which I enjoy. I think I'm a lucky boy.

You were ultimately happy with how "The Gilded Age" came together for its first season?

Oh, yes, I was very happy. I thought, "Once again, we've got a fantastic cast." And that was very thrilling. I mean, right down [to] the supporting cast. They were absolutely marvelous, as they are in "Downton." You're very, very cast-dependent in these things. You can have the funniest script or the most brilliant cinematographer, but if you haven't got the right cast, it just doesn't happen. And so it's very exciting when you do get a really good one.

I'm very pleased with "Gilded Age." It's quite nice to be writing this more sort of bitter, more angry, more driven drama. Funny, too. And romantic — it has those elements. But in the end, "Gilded Age" is about a great game, and there were great stakes to play for — and they played for them.

And I think it was a period in which Americans, unconsciously perhaps, were preparing themselves for the century that they would dominate because the 20th century would be the American century. We can say that now because it's finished. ... They were the decisive voice at the end of the First World War, even though they only fought in it for a (brief) period.

SEE DOWNTON ON PAGE 16



BEN BLACKALL/Focus Features

Downton Abbey series creator and screenwriter Julian Fellowes on the set of "Downton Abbey: A New Era." Fellowes said that the house is a "pretty major character" in the series.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW

Dawn of 'A New Era'

'Downton Abbey' sequel delivers best kind of fan service

By MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN
The Washington Post

Shameless fan service seems to be the defining characteristic of this summer's biggest franchise films, with "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness" setting a high (or is that low?) bar in its effort to cater to die-hard fans of the Marvel Cinematic Universe at the expense of more casual viewers. The long-delayed sequel "Top Gun: Maverick," which opens May 27, will follow suit in its desire to give devotees of the 1986 original exactly what they crave: naked emotionalism and fighter jets.

Similarly, this week's "Downton Abbey: A New Era" — the second movie spinoff to the long-running TV soap about the ups and downs, romantic and otherwise, of a family of British aristocrats and their servants — opens with a double-wedding scene that sets the tone for several crowd-pleasing couplings that will soon follow. We are brought up to speed with the marriage of former chauffeur and widower Tom Branson (Allen Leech) to lady's maid Lucy Smith (Tuppence Middleton), and the marriage of footman Andy Parker (Michael Fox) to cook's assistant Daisy Mason (Sophie McShera).

These unions between sentimental-favorite characters will come as no surprise to anyone who saw the last film. And for those who didn't, there's a helpful prologue that accompanies "A New Era," courtesy of footman-turned-schoolteacher Mr. Molesley (Kevin Doyle), who efficiently summarizes the events of the tumultuous 2019 drama, in which a visit by the king and queen of England caused all manner of commotion, upstairs and down-

stairs, at the titular Downton. (All sequels should be so — there's no other word for it — considerate of their audience.)

But these introductory love stories are mere appetizers to the main course of romantic intrigue on the menu of this savory, 1928-set soufflé, which concerns the possibility of a week of passion, some 60 years earlier, between everybody's true favorite, matriarch Violet Crawley, aka the Dowager Countess of Grantham (Maggie Smith), and a mysterious French marquis. No sooner has Molesley dispensed with his preamble than the Crawley family's lawyer (Jonathan Coy) arrives at Downton with the revelation that the countess has been bequeathed a villa on the French Riviera by a recently deceased nobleman, apparently someone once besotted with Lady Grantham in the early days of her marriage.

Speculation runs rampant as to the nature and extent of this secret relationship, and whether the dowager countess' son Robert (Hugh Bonneville) might really be — quelle horreur! — half French. This bombshell precipitates a trip to the South of France by most of the Crawleys; it's an utterly preposterous plot contrivance by series creator Julian Fellowes — necessary only as an excuse to vary the scenery. (And, by that measure, it's a smashing success.)

Meanwhile, back at home, Robert's daughter Mary (Michelle Dockery) is left to oversee a movie crew that has rented out Downton for filming, in exchange for a fee that will cover repairs to the manor's leaky roof. This also affords director Simon Curtis the opportunity for some comic relief: Minor characters wander onto



Focus Features/AP

Hugh Bonneville, left, with Elizabeth McGovern in "Downton Abbey: A New Era."

the set as the camera is rolling, and the gorgeous leading lady (Laura Haddock) is discovered to have the squawking Cockney speaking voice of an Eliza Doolittle when the production switches gears from a silent film to a talkie. Flirtations occur between certain members of the Crawley family and staff and two members of the film crew: its handsome director (Hugh Dancy) and the debonair leading man (Dominic West). The action of the story switches back and forth between the two locales, Downton and France.

The film's subtitle refers most explicitly to the advent of talkies, which were just becoming a thing in the late 1920s. But "A New Era" has multiple other meanings as well, including the film's message of gay tolerance (arguably somewhat anachronistic for the time). To the gay butler Thomas Barrow (Robert James-Collier),

whose storyline of unrequited love featured prominently in the last film, comes, at long last, the prospect of bliss. "I wish you all the happiness this cruel world can afford," Lady Mary tells him, without acknowledging that she's not really saying a lot.

But there are other dramatic closures, too, that signal not just the dawn of a new age but, inevitably, the end of an old one. The subtitle refers not only to the twilight of the 1920s but to a changing of the guard in this entertainment franchise as well.

In that sense, maybe "Downton Abbey" isn't really giving its fans what they want, but what they have always needed to accept in this epic saga: that time doesn't stand still.

"Downton Abbey: A New Era" is rated PG for suggestive references, strong language and mature thematic elements. Running time: 124 minutes.

Downton: Fellowes would be 'delighted' to write more Crawley scripts

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And so this wasn't a society in decline. I mean, a lot of "Downton" is about the general, gentle sort of taking in of the 20th century, hanging onto what can be hung onto but otherwise making adjustments as things settle now differently. There's none of that about "The Gilded Age." This is about a group of gunmen arriving in town and shooting it up, really. And I like the difference in the energy of the two shows.

Moving to "Downton Abbey: A New Era," what did you learn from making the first "Downton Abbey" movie that you were able to apply to this sequel?

I don't know, really. We were nervous with the first film because you never know when you take something and turn it into a different medium. You take a TV show, turn it into a film; you take a film, turn it into a play; you take a film and turn it into a ballet — whatever it is, there's always a fear that that won't work, that transition. And sometimes it doesn't, so it's not a fear based on nothing. We've all seen moments where it didn't quite work. And so when we realized there was an audience for "Downton" in film form, that was a very happy moment.

I enjoyed (making it). I enjoyed this one. It's funny to be working on something for so long. ... It's extraordinary that here we still are, calling each other by the same names and going on with the same story. It's been extraordinary.

With both movies, you have many characters to juggle, and I'm wondering about trying to find that sweet spot where you give everyone at least a little something. How difficult is that for you, the writer?

I think if you choose this form, this kind of multi-narra-



BEN BLACKALL/Focus Features

Actor Elizabeth McGovern and screenwriter Julian Fellowes confer on the set of "A New Era."

tive, multi-arc story, some of the arcs are the main stories, so they have people with lots to do. And some of them are much more modest stories, and there are really two or three scenes. Nevertheless, I think you're absolutely correct that the difference between a film and television is that in television, (a character) can have a decent story once every three or four episodes, and the other episodes, you're just there sort of peeling the sprouts and getting on with it. And that's fine. And the actors know that in an episode or two, they'll be given something else.

That isn't fine in a film; everyone in the film has got to have a reason for being there — they've got to have their story. And so that is what you're trying to do.

I think all jobs have difficult areas that you have to deal with ... so I don't feel we have to be particularly sorry for screenwriters because they are faced with this challenge. And I think that is the challenge of screenwriters and particularly when you're working with so large a cast. I hope, you know, we brought it off. I can't really say more than that, but I think the actors are quite happy, so I think perhaps we did.

I have my guesses, but are there two or three characters whom you've always enjoyed writing for the most?

I never normally answer this because I love them all — I made them all. And honestly, we have gone uphill and down dale so many times with all of them by this stage — I've cried at their woes and given birth to their babies.

Of course, there's fun when you write a line that could be funny ... if the actor can get the laugh. And that is always a source of relief when you're sitting in the cinema and they do get the laugh and you think, "Oh great!" Sometimes they make it work better than you thought.

Lastly, I assume if it's up to you, we won't have seen the last of the Crawley family?

I don't know. I never know the answer to this, although as you can imagine, I get asked a lot. Well, I keep thinking it's probably the end, and I like to write it (in a way allowing) that if it is the end, that's OK. But if they want more, then I'm sure we'd be delighted to give it to them.

So, you know, that's not really an answer. Anyway, that's the best I can give.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS



DISNEY ENTERPRISES/AP

Chip, voiced by John Mulaney, center, and Dale, voiced by Andy Samberg, right, in a scene from "Chip 'n Dale: Rescue Rangers." In the movie Dale gets surgery to become 3D while Chip remains his 2D self.

'Chip 'n Dale' reunited

Meta reboot full of nostalgia for kids who grew up in era of original show

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

If you must reboot a more than 30-year-old Disney Channel cartoon like "Chip 'n Dale: Rescue Rangers," you could do much worse than looking to "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" for inspiration. But it is a high bar and though "Chip 'n Dale" might not reach the heights of that Robert Zemeckis film, it is still a pleasant surprise stuffed to the brim with pop culture references that children of the "Chip 'n Dale" era may enjoy.

Now, wait, you may be thinking: Aren't children of the "Chip 'n Dale" era in their 30s and 40s at this point? And was "Chip 'n Dale" even that beloved enough to warrant a reboot? The answers are yes and no, but the minds behind this movie know that and aren't pretending otherwise. In fact, they lean heavily into the "who cares?" note by establishing a world where Chip (John Mulaney) and Dale (Andy Samberg) are actors who were once on the real television show that was canceled in 1991. They're also animated in the real world, which is full of both toons and humans. So, not only is it Roger Rabbit-esque, but it has shades of a PG-rated "BoJack Horseman" as well.

This script comes from "How I Met Your Mother" veterans Dan Gregor and Doug Mand, and it's directed by Akiva Schaffer, a member of The Lonely Island with Samberg and the director of the cult favorite satire "Popstar:



DISNEY+/AP

Kiki Layne in a scene from "Chip 'n Dale" as human cop Ellie.

Never Stop Never Stopping." With those kind of credentials, in addition to the voice talent involved which includes BoJack himself Will Arnett, Seth Rogen, J.K. Simmons, Dennis Haysbert and Eric Bana, it is not surprising that "Chip 'n Dale" is clever. Someone also had fun packing every frame with inspired background gags (many of which are movie posters that we won't spoil here), that may find audiences wanting to pause, rewind and rewatch, which will be especially easy since this film is going straight to Disney+ instead of theaters. Clearly they had full access to Disney's vast catalogue of intellectual property (and some other studios) and are not afraid to be playfully unsparing.

They also made the delightful choice to cast Tress MacNeille as Gadget. If you're unfamiliar with MacNeille, who voiced the original Gadget and Chip, Dot Warner, Daisy Duck and Charlotte Pickles, to name a few, you might

have fun poking around her IMDB and Wikipedia pages. There are not many animated properties she hasn't contributed to in the past three decades.

The premise is that Chip and Dale are childhood friends who made their way to Hollywood and found brief success with a show bearing their name. But by the time the show was canceled, Chip and Dale had grown apart. In the present, they're estranged. Chip is working a regular white-collar job and Dale is coasting on his fame, which is dwindling, and lingering hopes for another moment in the spotlight. Dale has even gotten surgery to make him 3D, while Chip is still his classic 2D self.

They find themselves together again, though, when a friend from the old television show, Monterey Jack (Bana), goes missing.

Lots of toons have disappeared lately — there is a mob boss and a bootlegging operation afoot — and a human cop, Ellie (the always delightful Kiki Layne), asks Chip and Dale for their help.

The plot is, perhaps, beside the point, which is the biggest failing of "Chip 'n Dale." Roger Rabbit, by contrast, managed to be both referential and meta within a framework of a compelling mystery. This mystery is simply a vehicle for the gags and observations, which are enjoyable, but it stops it short from being a great movie by itself.

"Chip 'n Dale: Rescue Rangers" is rated PG for mild action and rude/suggestive humor. Running time: 97 minutes. Now streaming on Disney+.

'Firestarter' remake fails to ignite interest

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

For a movie about a girl with pyrokinetic powers, "Firestarter" is lacking a certain spark.

This new adaptation of Stephen King's 1980 novel is not scary or thrilling, nor is it emotionally resonant or particularly moving. No, this outing is a dull slog, even with its cool, synth John Carpenter score and the should've-been-inspired decision to cast Zac Efron as the father of the flame-throwing preteen.

But "Firestarter" might not have had much to live up to in the first place. The 1984 film, which starred Drew Barrymore and David Keith as the daughter-father pair, was not exactly well-received. Roger Ebert wrote that its "crucial flaw is the lack of a strong point to the story. A little girl has her dangerous power, some government agents want to examine her, others want to destroy her, and things catch on fire. That's about it." The original source material isn't one of King's most beloved, either.

Why anyone would want to resurrect this particular property is a bit of a mystery, beyond the fact that some might have a misplaced fondness for it because they saw it at an impressionable age. One of the best things that can be said about this iteration, written by Scott Teems and directed by Keith Thomas, is that it neither adds nor subtracts anything from "Firestarter's" lackluster history (though it does jettison the pedophile undertones of a crucial character). But on the whole, it just once again takes something that should be creepy and thrilling and makes it dreary.

Ryan Kiera Armstrong takes on the role of Charlie, who is a bit of an introvert and a social outcast in her school. She's not allowed to have a phone or the internet, and she's been told by her father to simply repress her scary fire-starting powers. But questions are rising (hormones

too) and there's jerks and bullies around, and the fire comes out at inopportune times. The mom, Vicky, played by Sydney Lemmon (who is Jack Lemmon's granddaughter), thinks it'd be better to teach the kid how to use the powers instead of abstaining completely, but she's overruled and pretty soon, it's just Andy (Efron) and Charlie on the run.

Andy and Vicky aren't just befuddled parents of a fire-starting 11-year-old, either: They have personal experience, too. A grainy reel at the start informs us that they were subjected to some secret government testing while in college and came out with powers of their own. And it's these officials, led by Captain Hollister (played by Gloria Reuben, who is given the worst lines in the script), who are interested in acquiring Charlie. So Hollister calls a former test subject, Rainbird (Michael Greyeyes), to go find her.

Armstrong has a great scream and a nice presence, but she isn't given much of a character to work with. Based on how pristine her inexplicably barrel-curved hair looks for most of the film, though, it seems that those in charge might have been more concerned with the aesthetics than the performance.

The same could be said for the rest of the movie, which feels like mummified homage. There is nothing to latch on to that might make us care even the tiniest bit about the plight of this family, the poor souls caught in the crossfire, or even the bureaucrats who fancy themselves the good guys.

Perhaps we've just seen too many better homages at this point, "Stranger Things" among them. There wasn't a great reason to take another shot at "Firestarter." Besides, even if it's lacking in originality, it's also lacking something more important: A personality.

"Firestarter" is rated R for violent content. Running time: 96 minutes.



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/TNS

Ryan Kiera Armstrong plays a girl with strange powers in "Firestarter."

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Pitched battle

FIFA and EA Sports go head to head in soccer's new video game rivalry

FIFA 22 is one of the last video game collaborations between the international soccer governing body and EA Sports.

EA Sports

By **ROB HARRIS**
Associated Press

The name FIFA can bring to mind images of the World Cup and soccer's greatest players, like Pele, Zinedine Zidane or Lionel Messi. The acronym for the sport's governing body may also remind some of shameless bribery and corruption.

For many, though, it's the video game that is synonymous with FIFA.

For three decades, the Switzerland-based soccer body has enjoyed a flourishing, mutually beneficial relationship with EA Sports. The annual edition of the video game, alongside related products, has raked in billions of dollars and has proven to be so lucrative that FIFA thinks it can be making even more on its own.

FIFA severed the licensing deal partnership with Electronic Arts Inc. this month, making FIFA23 the last new EA game with the involvement of both sides.

They are now becoming opponents.

EA will continue to make soccer games with best players and biggest teams, they will just be stripped of the FIFA brand and instead called EA Sports FC.

Confusingly, perhaps, FIFA24 should also be on the shelves next year because the soccer body is determined to go ahead with its own launch.

EA has already begun to highlight its advantages over the FIFA game, given it has the rights to show 19,000 players from more than 700 teams in more than 30 leagues playing in 100 stadiums. Manchester United, Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain will still be there, along with their best players.

"That is the only place that you can have an authentic, famous and fully representative football experience," David Jackson, vice president of brand for EA SPORTS FIFA, told The Associated Press. "I do think that there is an element of potential confusion in the marketplace."

The hyperbole from FIFA is already trying to undercut EA's marketing by claiming it is in talks with multiple rival

gaming companies and has plans to enter the metaverse.

"I can assure you," FIFA President Gianni Infantino said, "that the only authentic, real game that has the FIFA name will be the best one available for gamers and football fans."

How that will be achieved is unclear, although FIFA does hold the rights to the biggest soccer show on earth. The World Cup will disappear from the EA game.

"The FIFA name is the only global, original title," Infantino said. "FIFA 23, FIFA 24, FIFA 25 and FIFA 26, and so on — the constant is the FIFA name and it will remain forever and remain the best."

That kind of bombastic talk puts pressure on FIFA to deliver on Infantino's vision for a game that usurps the EA fran-

"If you ask a young football fan what FIFA is, they're more likely to say a video game than they are the global governing body, but that value lives with us, I believe. We are the predominant voice in the world of football from an interactive entertainment perspective, and we don't see a world where that changes."

David Jackson

vice president of brand for EA SPORTS FIFA

chise despite not having the rights to feature leagues such as the Premier League — and the teams that play in them.

"New entrants would face a steep licensing curve to compete with EA," said Andrew Marok, a digital media analyst at investment bank Raymond James.

Soccer gaming is big business for EA. The annual report issued this week showed revenue of \$6.19 billion.

"We've just had our biggest year — ever — for EA SPORTS FIFA games," EA Sports CEO Andrew Wilson said.

A huge part of the revenue comes from the Ultimate Team mode, where customers buy extra content in EA sports games. That generated \$1.623 billion in 2021.

"We have historically derived a significant portion of our net revenue from sales related to our largest and most popular game, FIFA, annualized versions of which are consistently one of the best-selling games in the marketplace," EA told investors.

Brand loyalty will be key starting next year. Will gamers stay with EA's rebranded product, or jump to the rival being launched by FIFA?

It's already a competitive market with eFootball, the former Pro Evolution Soccer game produced by Japanese firm Konami. That game has a partnership

ceived security risks, could negatively impact our financial results to a disproportionate extent," EA said in its annual report.

EA should get an edge over FIFA by retaining its 300 license partners, 30 leagues and federations, 700 teams and 19,000 athletes, JPMorgan analyst David Karnovsky said in a client note.

"While it's difficult to think there won't be at least some impact from the brand shift to sales, the \$150 million available from the absence of a license fee to FIFA provides ample room for marketing to drive awareness around EA Sports FC," Karnovsky wrote.

Untangling itself from the world of soccer politics has its benefits for EA. Tensions between regional confederations have led to European body UEFA and South American counterpart CONMEBOL circumventing FIFA to launch their own meeting of champions. The debut of the Finalissima will see Italy and Argentina meet at Wembley Stadium in London on June 1. It would seem incongruous for EA to promote its FIFA game at the match.

"What name would we put on a perimeter board in a UEFA-CONMEBOL event? It's really tough for us to put FIFA on there," said Jackson, EA's vice president of brand. "What has previously been a springboard for our brand, and an accelerant to it many years ago, has just become less valuable to us over time."

EA might just have saved the FIFA brand as well. The fond association with the video game by so many fans has balanced against the toxicity of Sepp Blatter-era organization after the opening of sprawling criminal investigations into soccer corruption in 2015.

"If you ask a young football fan what FIFA is, they're more likely to say a video game than they are the global governing body, but that value lives with us, I believe," Jackson said. "We are the predominant voice in the world of football from an interactive entertainment perspective, and we don't see a world where that changes."

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Humble devotion in Montenegro's bay

South of Bosnia and Herzegovina is yet another nation that emerged newly independent from the ashes of Yugoslavia: Montenegro. During my travels through this region, my punch-drunk passport has been stamped, stamped and stamped again. While the unification of Europe has made most border crossings feel archaic, here the breakup of Yugoslavia has kept them in vogue. Every time the country splintered, another border was drawn. The poorer the country, it seems, the more ornate the border formalities. By European standards, Montenegro is about as poor as it gets. It doesn't even have its own currency. With just 600,000 people, the nation seems to have decided, "Heck, let's just use euros."

For me, Montenegro, whose name means "Black Mountain," has always evoked the fratricidal chaos of a bygone age. I think of a time when fathers in the Balkans taught their sons that "your neighbor's neighbor is your friend" in anticipation of future sectarian struggles. Back then, for generation after generation, So-and-so-ovich was pounding on So-and-so-ovich, so a secure mountain stronghold like this was worth all of that misery.

A recent visit showed me that this image is now dated. The country is on an upward trajectory. Many expect to see Montenegro emerge as a sunny new hot spot on the Adriatic coastline. International investors (mostly from Russia and Saudi Arabia) are pouring money into what they

hope will become their very own Riviera.

Unfortunately, when rich people paste a glitzy facade onto the crumbling infrastructure of a poor country that isn't ready for it, you get a lot of pizzazz with no substance. I stayed at a supposedly "designer" hotel that was a comedy of horrible design. I felt like I was their first guest ever.



Rick Steves

A huge thunderstorm hit with enough fury to keep the automatic glass doors opening and closing on their own. Nothing drained — a torrent cascaded down the stairs and through the front door. The rain also brought a backed-up sewage smell that drove me out of my room.

Eventually the rain stopped, the clouds parted and I went out to explore. My first stop was the Bay of Kotor, where the Adriatic cuts into steep mountains like a Norwegian fjord. At the humble waterfront town of Perast, young guys in swim trunks edged their boats near the dock, jockeying to motor tourists out to the island in the middle of the bay. According to legend, fishermen saw the Virgin Mary in the reef and began a ritual of dropping a stone on the spot each time they sailed by. Eventually the island we see today was created, and upon that island the people built a fine little church.

I hired a guy with a dinghy to ferry me out to the island, where I was met by a young woman who gave me a tour of the



Rick Steves

According to legend, the land the island church sits on was supposedly formed as fishermen dropped one stone at a time into the middle of Montenegro's bay.

church. In the sacristy hung a piece of embroidery — a 20-year-long labor of love made by a local parishioner 200 years ago. It was exquisite, lovingly made with the finest materials available: silk and the woman's own hair. I could trace her laborious progress through the line of cherubs that ornamented the border. As the years went by, the hair of the angels (like the hair of the devout artist) turned from dark brown to white. Humble and anonymous as she was, she had faith that her work was worthwhile — and two centuries later, it's appreciated by a steady parade of travelers from distant lands.

I've been at my work for more than three decades now and my hair is also getting a little gray. I have a faith that it — my work, if not my hair — will be appreciated after I'm gone. That's perhaps less humble than the woman was, but her work reminds me that we can live on through our deeds. Her devotion to her creation (as well as to her creator) is an inspiration to do both good and lasting work. While

traveling, I'm often struck by how people give meaning to their lives by contributing what they can.

I didn't take a photograph of the embroidery that day. For some reason, I didn't even take notes. At the time, I didn't realize I was experiencing the highlight of my trip.

The impression of the woman's tenderly created embroidery needed time to breathe — like a good red wine. That was a lesson for me. I was already moving on to the next stop. When the power of the impression did open up in my mind, it was rich and full-bodied — but I was long gone.

If travel is going to have the impact on you that it should, you have to climb into those little dinghies to discover those experiences. The best encounters won't come to you. And you have to let them breathe.

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.

Cheaper ticket to ride opens up German summer train travel

Since learning of its government's plans to offer a reduced price on the cost of train tickets during the summer of 2022, residents of Germany have been eagerly awaiting the details of the offer to come. Although some of the technicalities have yet to be hammered out, the homepage of German Rail now provides us with insight as to what form the discount will take.



Karen Bradbury

From June 1 to Aug. 31, a new form of ticket will be available at a cost of just 9 euros. It will allow travel over the course of one calendar month.

These tickets, which are being offered as part of a plan to study the effects of reducing the costs of public transportation, will be valid for journeys on regional trains throughout the country, as well as on public buses and local transportation networks. They will be good for travel only in the second-class cars.

While bringing along a bicycle will be possible in theory, the German Rail website seems to be attempting to dampen enthusiasm toward this idea somewhat by noting the trains are likely to be very full during the time of the offer, and the carriage of cycles may be subject to a surcharge.

Children under the age of 6 can travel with their parents without tickets of their own, whereas youth 6 and older must have their own tickets.

The 9-euro tickets can be purchased online in advance of travel or from one of the counters or automated machines at the stations. Online: bahn.de

Suitably armed with your discounted ticket, where



iStock

Monthly tickets that cost just 9 euros will make travel by rail cheaper throughout Germany this summer.

within Germany will you go? Here are a few events you might find worthy of investigation.

Fränkisches Bierfest: What makes Nuremberg's Franconian Beer Festival so special is its setting: the now-dry moat surrounding the city's castle. Here, some 40 brewers of the region serve up more than 100 delicious types of beer as the bands play. The fest takes place June 15-19, and entry is free. Online: bierfest-franken.de

Schützenfest: The world's largest festival centered around the skill of shooting takes place in Hannover, where marksmen engage in competitions as visitors look on and drink the festival's signature beverage, a mix of

beer and grain alcohol. One of the program highlights is a parade made up of some 12,000 costumed marchers. The fest runs July 1-10. Online: schuetzenfest-hannover.de

Annafest: The city of Forchheim, located in the part of Bavaria known as Franconia, is known far and wide for a fest that takes place in a forested setting known as the Kellerwald. In the shadows of ancient oaks, the crowds gather to take in beers brewed by 18 different breweries of the region. Tasty local specialties and a variety of attractions round out the offerings. The Annafest takes place between July 22 and Aug 1. Online: forchheim-erleben.de

Stuttgarter Sommerfest: The lush gardens of a centrally located palace make an elegant backdrop to this fest that's all about dressing up, sipping wines and sampling the specialties of dozens of the city's top restaurateurs beneath white tents. Some 25 bands on stage provide the soundtrack. Mark diaries for Aug. 4-7. Online: stuttgarter-sommerfest.de

Rheingauer Weinwoche: For 10 days, Wiesbaden is transformed into what is billed as the world's longest wine bar as more than 100 winemakers from the highly rated Rheingau region set up their stands in and around the city's market square and live music plays late into the night. The event takes place Aug. 12-21. Online: rhein-gau.de

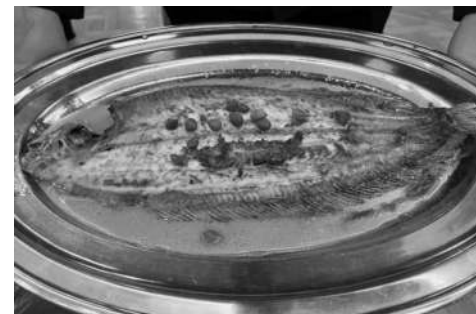
Museumsufer Festival: The banks of the Main River in Frankfurt am Main are transformed into a massive festival scene at which music, cultural events and the chance to try food and drink from around the world are the orders of the day. The festival is slated for Aug. 26-28. Online: museumsuferfest.de

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



PHOTOS BY JESS FLEMING/St. Paul Pioneer Press

A presentation at Madrid Fusión by chef Santiago Lastra of KOL restaurant in London was all about using local London ingredients to re-create the tropical flavors of Mexican cuisine. Madrid Fusión is a multi-day culinary expo featuring many of Europe's top chefs.



Filet of sole was just one of the decadent dishes the author sampled from Lhardy restaurant in Madrid.



Hake in piquillo sauce from Casa Ciriaco, originally a wine cellar in Madrid.

A taste of Madrid

Sipping and nibbling through Spain's capital

By JESS FLEMING
St. Paul Pioneer Press

Since I was a teenager, Spain was among the top places I wanted to visit.

I studied the language in high school and college, and the history and beauty of the country had always fascinated me.

Life happens, but a few decades later, I finally got my wish.

When Spain's tourism office asked if I wanted to visit Madrid this spring, I was elated.

The visit was to check out Madrid Fusión, a giant culinary expo, but I would also have some time to explore on my own and eat at some of Madrid's finest restaurants in the evenings.

In a too-short week, I got a real taste of Spain's beautiful, bustling capital, and I can't wait to return.

If you've ever been to a food and wine event, imagine that on steroids, and you have Madrid Fusión.

The three-day event occupied two floors of the enormous convention center IFEMA in the northern part of Madrid. Many of Europe's top chefs attend, and this year, I heard talks on everything from using local London ingredients to re-create the tropical flavors of Mexico to making kombucha with artichokes. It was mostly in Spanish, which challenged my rusty skills, and it wasn't until day two that I discovered headsets that offered translation into English. Still, food is a universal language, and it was easy to discern what the chefs were talking about by what they were cooking on stage.

A large part of each expo floor was dedicated to cocktails and wine. Because I was alone in a foreign country, I was hesitant to drink any hard liquor. Wine tasting was more my speed.

Though I wouldn't be able to buy most

of the wines I was trying, I learned about how verdejo grapes can be transformed into three wildly different wines, depending on fermentation and aging methods, and sipped some really special riojas.

Spain's olive oil contingent also had a prominent showing, and I enjoyed sampling the sharp, peppery versions along with the more mellow, blended varieties.

Regions of the country offered coursed lunches to special guests, and though I missed most of a day because of a (quickly solved because of Spain's excellent health-care system) medical issue, I did get a fabulous sit-down lunch from the region of Andalusia in the south of Spain. Because it is a coastal region, the lunch consisted of a lot of seafood — much of it raw. I ate everything from scallops to the largest langoustines I've ever seen to beautiful, fresh-caught shrimp.

In all, Madrid Fusión was a big, brash celebration of modern Spanish — and all European — cuisine, but was lacking what I really wanted to see and taste, which was history.

Luckily, the tourism office of Madrid had evening plans for us to dine at some really excellent restaurants, a few of which have been in operation for a century or longer.

One of those restaurants, Lhardy, opened its doors in Madrid's city center in 1839. There's a pastry shop when you enter the doors; the opulent dining rooms reside on the second floor.

There are a handful of dining areas, including several intimate private dining rooms, and each has its own decor. A hallway connecting them has giant hooks that an employee explained were used to hang the muddy jodhpurs of patrons who had ridden through the dirt streets to arrive at the restaurant.

Most of the artwork in the restaurant was created by the original proprietor,



Suckling pig at Restaurante Botín, a Guinness world record holder for oldest continuously operating restaurant in the world, in Madrid.

Agustín Lhardy, who was a well-known impressionist at the time.

The menu is old-school Spanish, and our group sampled a variety of dishes, from pickled partridge to young duck to clams and a filet of sole. All were decadent and mostly prepared well. My favorite parts of the meal, though, resided at the beginning and end. Each diner starts with a small glass of rich chicken stock, enriched with a dash of aged sherry. Warming, comforting and packed with flavor, it was the perfect palate cleanser. And because Lhardy is well-known for its pastries, we sampled a smattering of the dessert menu and loved each of them equally — from an eggy, custardy torrijas (sort of like French toast here) to a sublime baked-Alaska-type dessert with homemade ice cream that was set aflame tableside.

After a very special tour of the kitchens of the Royal Palace (more on that later), we descended to the caves below Casa Ciriaco, a restaurant which was originally a wine cellar that began operating in 1887.

The restaurant, which has been serving traditional Spanish dishes since 1929, served some of my favorite dishes of the trip, including fluffy croquettas (breaded and fried potato puree studded with bits of

jamón), hake in piquillo sauce and a fricassee chicken that had our entire party wanting to lick the plate.

When I had a day of free time, I opted for dinner at Restaurante Botín, which is, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, the oldest continuously operating restaurant in the world.

Its rustic wood beams, shutters and light fixtures, as well as traditional Spanish tiling, really make it feel like you're stepping back in time. And the restaurant's famous suckling pig is still prepared in an ancient wood-burning stove.

I had the standard three-course meal, which included a delicious, fresh gazpacho, that tender, crisp-skinned pig and a perfectly executed flan. And of course, a half-bottle of richly fruity Rioja.

The group was also treated to a multi-course meal at Corral de la Morería, which has been serving dinner and fantastic flamenco shows to patrons since 1959. Photos of celebrities who have enjoyed dinner and a show here line the walls — Benecio del Toro, Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban, Pelé, Harrison Ford, Rock Hudson and many more.

SEE MADRID ON PAGE 21

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



PHOTOS BY JESS FLEMING/St. Paul Pioneer Press

A wood-burning stove in the kitchen of the Royal Palace in Madrid.

Madrid: A delicious tour of the culinary treasures of Spain

FROM PAGE 20

The show was absolutely amazing, with expressive, graceful dancers and a world-class guitarist holding our attention until well after midnight, but the nine-course dinner before it, paired with sherries from the restaurant's incredible 1,200-plus-bottle collection, was equally as magical. I sampled sherries that ranged from 14 years to (just a few sips of) a sherry that was 150 years old. It was almost sticky sweet because of evaporation, but also intensely flavorful, with notes of dried fruit. I learned that I really, really like sherry, especially when I have a guide as magnificent as the sommeliers at Corral de la Morería.

As I yawned on the bus back to my hotel, I felt like the luckiest person in the world.

Perhaps my favorite part of the trip was a tour of the basement of the Royal Palace.

The basement, which extends throughout several wings of the enormous structure, contains the kitchens. You might not think a kitchen tour would be that special, but no one has lived in this palace, which is still considered the official home of the Spanish monarchy, since 1931. The kitchens remain largely the way they were when the royals moved out.

Room after room, from a pastry kitchen with a stove and oven from 1914, to a medieval-looking prep kitchen to the cavernous room where the main dishes were prepared, utterly fascinated me.

It's hard to say what was most impressive. Possibly the giant wood-burning stoves, or maybe the copper pastry molds the size of a toddler. Or maybe the six-foot-tall iron warming cabinets from 1861, which kept the food warm before it traveled up a dumbwaiter to the service staff. My imagination ran wild, thinking of what it must have been like for the chefs back then, slaving over giant, wood-fired equipment in the freezing cold basement.

Although Madrid Fusión featured some of Madrid's best chefs, I was eager to see some modern Spanish cuisine in its natural habitat.

The easiest way to see that in a short time was a



Lhardy restaurant opened its doors in Madrid's city center in 1839. The bottom floor is a pastry shop, and the second level features opulent dining.

visit to Galería Canalejas, a gorgeous, modern food hall that will eventually be the bottom floor of a very swank mall full of high-end fashion boutiques. Cartier and Hermès are already there — the rest of the stores are set to open later this year.

As for the food hall, the strikingly modern design is eye-catching at every turn. There are 13 full-service restaurants. Some of the highlights: A burger joint from a Michelin-starred chef, a Mexican/Japanese fusion spot, a restaurant focused entirely on octopus and the Chinese eatery where I ate, which focuses on high-end dim sum. Most of the dumplings that were served to me in a towering bamboo steamer were fairly traditional, except the last, which was stuffed with the elements of a Spanish tortilla and topped with a fried quail egg. It was all delicious.

There are also 20 stalls, which are serving tapas, pintxos (small snacks), poke bowls, sushi, smoothies and much more.

It's unlike any food hall I have seen anywhere in the United States, not only in its stunning design, but also in the breadth and depth of quality food being served. As I revisit those delicious days in my memory, I can almost taste it all over again.

Forbidden spoils

Seemingly innocent items TSA doesn't want in your carry-on

BY EVAN SANTIAGO
The Charlotte Observer

Going through the TSA line at U.S. airports comes with little to no trouble for most experienced travelers.

However, those who are inexperienced are at risk of making packing mistakes that could delay their trip.

There are a number of prohibited items that travelers often bring without knowing they are restricted from traveling with them. One of the more obvious of these items is a firearm.

Security at Charlotte Douglas International Airport found a record-breaking 106 firearms in the bags of passengers last year, The Charlotte Observer reported.

It's common knowledge to most travelers that bringing a weapon through TSA could result in citations or even detainment. But there are seemingly harmless items that are also prohibited by the U.S. Transportation Security Administration.

Here are nine items you probably didn't know were prohibited by the TSA.

Christmas Crackers

Much to the dismay of British travelers, English Christmas crackers are prohibited by the TSA.

The small, popular party favor is used to celebrate Christmas and other special occasions. When popped, it creates a "bang" sound with the help of a minuscule amount of gunpowder stored inside.

Ink and toner cartridges

According to the U.S. Transportation Administration, ink and toner cartridges that are more than 16 ounces in weight pose a risk to air travel security and are banned from both carry-on and checked baggage.

Most sports equipment

Sports equipment like baseball bats, hockey sticks and golf clubs can be used as bludgeons and are prohibited in the cabin of airplanes. If you wish to travel with these items, they must be stored and transported in checked baggage.

Aerosol insecticide

As long as they aren't labeled "hazardous material," aerosol insecticides can be transported in checked baggage. However, you could have your can of bug spray swiftly confiscated if you try to bring it through TSA.

Bang Snaps

The highly entertaining (and rather annoying) childhood toys known as Bang Snaps, Bang Pops or TNT Pop-Its are strictly prohibited in both checked and carry-on baggage. This is most likely due to the small amounts of explosive silver fulminate stored inside of each tiny pouch of fun.

Cooking spray

Although it's highly unlikely you would ever be traveling with a can of Pam, you should know that it is considered a restricted item according to TSA's standards. Cooking spray cannot be transported by air travel in checked or carry-on baggage.

Foam toy swords

If you're traveling to or from a certain fairytale-themed amusement park, be sure to explain to your young prince and princess that their foam swords must travel separately in a checked bag.

Wrapped gifts

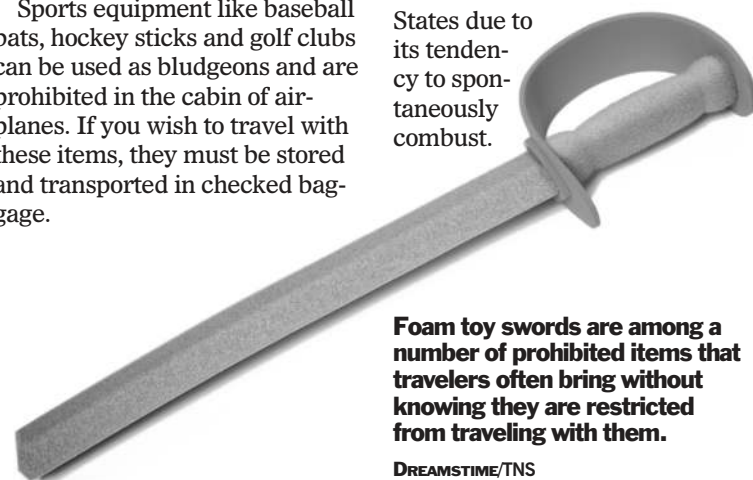
One way TSA could ruin your holiday mood is by unwrapping a gift you spent time packaging. Unless you want your gifts to be unwrapped and reconstructed with TSA tape, you may want to wait until arriving at your final destination before wrapping presents.

Samsung Galaxy Note 7

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration, all Samsung Galaxy Note 7 smartphone devices are banned from air travel in the United States due to its tendency to spontaneously combust.

Foam toy swords are among a number of prohibited items that travelers often bring without knowing they are restricted from traveling with them.

DREAMSTIME/TNS



WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY NANCY MONTGOMERY/Stars and Stripes

Looking out to the street of Venice's Jewish ghetto from the small alley used to access it. The ghetto served as the center of Jewish culture and at one time housed as many as 5,000 people within its 1.25-acre space.

Haven behind prison gates

Former ghetto in Venice still exalts the Jewish way of life

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

Tucked away in a corner of Venice's Cannaregio district is what was once both a thriving center of Jewish life and a prison.

In 1516, its ghetto became one of the first places in Europe where people were forcibly segregated because of their religion. The gates of the Jewish quarter were locked at night.

But the Venice ghetto also served for centuries as a center for Jewish culture as Jews from Spain, Germany, France, the Levant and southern Italy fled even worse conditions: expulsion, forced baptism and the Inquisition.

At its height in the 17th century, the ghetto was home to 5,000 people living in an area of 1.25 acres.

The gates are gone now, torn down by Napoleon in 1797. Few Jews still live there. But the Jewish quarter remains, along with kosher restaurants, bakeries, a museum and five Renaissance-era synagogues, unprepossessing from the outside yet majestic within, where the various original nationalities worshipped.

Exploring the synagogues — German, Levantine, Spanish, Canton and Italian — requires being part of a guided tour, which costs 10 euros and is provided by the Jewish museum, the Museo Ebraico.

But when I arrived on a recent weekday, I learned that the museum and all but one synagogue were closed for restoration. Our group, as well as a number of school groups, bought tickets for the 40-minute tour anyway.

First we walked around the Campo del Ghetto Nuovo, the area's main plaza, where our guide described the history of the ghetto, its inhabitants' relationship to other Venetians and its five synagogues.

Jewish merchants and others were allowed outside the gates in the daytime, but they had to wear identifying yellow hats, he said. Highly prized Jewish doctors, some of whom ministered to royalty and popes, wore black hats, he explained.

The temples were built on the top floors of tenements to align with rules that synagogues be the tallest buildings in a given area, the guide said. They were plain on the outside so as not to draw attention to themselves.

On the QT

Address: Campo di Ghetto Nuovo, 2902, b, Venice, Italy

Cost: 10 euros

Hours: Museum ticket office and bookshop, Sunday through Friday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; guided tours in English: 11 a.m., 12 p.m., 2 p.m., 3 p.m.

Contact information: +39 041715359; Online: museoebraico.it/en/museum

Nancy Montgomery

By the time German troops occupied the city in 1943, about 1,200 Jews were living in Venice. Between Nov. 9, 1943, and Aug. 17, 1944, 205 people were deported to extermination camps; eight returned, according to the Virtual Jewish Library.

Our guide surmised that many Venetian Jews were spared from the Nazi death camps because Mussolini's mistress was a Venetian.

But according to Yad Vashem, Italy's Jews received comparatively more protection from their Italian neighbors than their counterparts in other countries.

They were also helped by the fact that by 1943, the Allies were already fighting and winning on Italian soil, according to Yad Vashem. What's more, one story is that beloved, secular Jewish doctor Giuseppe Jona helped save Venetian Jews by destroying lists of patients and committing suicide before the Nazis could interrogate him.

Also, Mussolini's mistress was Roman, according to historians.

Near the end of the tour, we ventured into the Levantine synagogue, a nondescript yellow stone building. Its top-floor temple was bathed in the glow of candelabra, with red-curtained windows, a marble floor, an ornate ceiling and dark, finely carved woodworking.

Founded in 1541, it was the first in the ghetto that was a new building and not an adaptation of a preexisting structure.

It was rebuilt more grandly in the 17th century to compete with the Spanish synagogue, and according to our guide, it is the most beautiful of the five.



The ornate cabinet or ark inside the Levantine synagogue in Venice's Jewish ghetto is used to enshrine the sacred Torah scrolls used for worship.



Inside the Levantine synagogue in Venice. It's hushed and glowing from natural light and a candelabra reflecting off the dark, intricate woodworking. The synagogue is one of five located in the city's former Jewish ghetto.



The German synagogue in Venice's Jewish ghetto, right, was built by Ashkenazi Jews in 1528. Now closed for restoration, it is the oldest of five temples in the ghetto, and despite its shabby, unremarkable outward appearance is said to be lovely inside.



The Holocaust is commemorated in the main plaza in Venice's Jewish ghetto. Created in 1980 by the artist Arbat Blatas, it consists of bronze panels depicting the 205 Venetian Jewish victims of the Nazi deportation. Of those, eight survived.

It was an interesting way to spend time in the city, one I'd be happy to repeat when the restorations are complete.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Falafel-ly delicious

The burgers are fine, but there's something better at Frankfurt's Hamburger am Turm

By MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes

The last time I was at Hamburger am Turm in Frankfurt, I ordered a falafel with hummus sandwich. The lady across the counter asked if I wouldn't rather have a falafel plate. I said no, sandwich was fine, and when it was ready, I sat at an outside table and quite enjoyed it.

A couple of minutes later, she walked by with an absolutely delicious-looking plate of falafel and hummus and an assortment of salads and said dryly, "This could have been yours."

I knew I had made a good choice — my sandwich was scrumptious — but it wasn't the best choice. Next time, I thought.

The Hamburger am Turm, which gets its name from the nearby Eschenheimer Turm, a defensive tower that was once part of the city's medieval fortifications, is best described as a fast-food restaurant.

You order at the counter and either eat at the tables outside or take the food to go.

There is a big selection: hamburgers, hot dogs, pizza, doner kebab, salads and the aforementioned falafel. And the ubiquitous German fast-food favorite, sausage, is offered in the form of bratwurst, currywurst and rindswurst.

My next time to eat there was on a recent evening with my wife. She scanned everything on the menu and settled, of course, on the falafel plate with hummus and various salads.

We always try never to order the same thing, so gentleman that I am, I let her have the falafel and I looked for something else.

Seeing that it is a hamburger restaurant, I went with the bacon cheeseburger with fries.

It was what I would call an old-fashioned cheeseburger, not one of those piled-high gourmet burgers that need a skewer to stay intact and that you can't eat with two hands.

It came with lettuce, tomato, pickle, onions, mustard and ketchup. And it was delicious. The only negative was that with a 3.5-ounce patty, all you can get is a well-done burger. I like my burgers more on the pink side.

The fries were to my taste, crunchy on the outside, firm on the inside.

The vegetarian falafel plate with hummus and salads looked as mouth-watering as it did the previous time. The dish also includes potato salad, an apple-beet salad and a lentil salad.

White beans, various vegetables and a horseradish-beet cream were among the other things served with this delectable



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

The vegetarian falafel plate with hummus and salads as served at the Hamburger am Turm in Frankfurt, Germany. Among the salads were potato, apple and beet, and lentil. White beans, various vegetables and a sharp horseradish-beet cream were among the other things served with this delicious dish, along with flatbread.

Hamburger am Turm

Location: Eschenheimer Anlagen, 60318 Frankfurt, on the corner with Eschersheimer Landstrasse. Closest parking garage is MyZeil; a short walk away is Boerse. Closest subway stop is Eschenheimer Turm.

Hours: 11 a.m.-4 a.m. daily, and depending on business, until 6 a.m. on Saturday and Saturday mornings

English menu: No, but there are photos of most dishes.

Prices: Burgers start at 6 euros, hot dogs at 4.50 euros; a falafel sandwich costs 6 euros; pizzas are from 6 euros to 9.50 euros. The vegetarian falafel plate with hummus and salads is 11.50 euros; a cheeseburger with fries and a soft drink is 11.75 euros.

Information: Online: hamburgeramturm.de

Mike Abrams

dish, along with unleavened flatbread.

My wife let me taste the falafel. It was very good, mildly piquant, with a delicate whiff of many spices.

We washed it all down with a local Binding beer.

It had been ages since I'd eaten a hot dog, so even though I was no longer hungry, I decided to give one a try. I ordered the classic. It came with ketchup, mustard, roasted onions and pickles, and it too was yummy.

I liked the crunch of the onions and the texture of the dog. It was coarser than most, not ground to a pulp. The only thing missing, to me, was pickle relish.

I also appreciated that the buns for both the dog and the burger were toasted. I like the flavor, and toasting the buns helps to keep them from getting too soggy.

It was a delicious meal, and we strolled away thoroughly satisfied. Next time, I am for sure having the falafel plate.

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The bacon cheeseburger with fries at Hamburger am Turm came with lettuce, tomato, pickle, onions, mustard and ketchup, but was a little overcooked.



The classic hot dog at the Hamburger am Turm is served with ketchup, mustard, roasted onions and pickles. They also offer it with other toppings like kraut or chili and cheese.



Hamburger am Turm is open daily until 4 a.m. and depending on business until 6 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. It's a great place to grab a bite to eat before or after going out on the town.



The Hamburger am Turm restaurant gets its name from the Eschenheimer Turm, a defensive tower that was once part of Frankfurt's medieval fortifications. Behind it is the 443-foot-tall Nextower.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



A display of an Iron Man Infinity Gauntlet at Toy Sapiens.



PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

Toy Sapiens is the Hot Toys Tokyo flagship store in Shibuya ward. Established in 2000, Hot Toys is a high-end brand of collectibles with uncanny likenesses.

Wonderland of nerdy treasure

Find high-end collectibles, action figures aplenty at Hot Toys Tokyo

By KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

A treasure trove of action figures and collectibles that will set any nerd's heart afire lies in Shibuya ward in the heart of Tokyo.

Toy Sapiens is the Hot Toys Tokyo flagship store. Established in 2000, Hot Toys is a high-end brand of collectibles with uncanny likenesses.

The store window is an immediate eye-catcher. It's filled with toys and action figures from a variety of mythical venues, from "Ghostbusters" to "Star Wars." Customers are greeted upon entering the building by a large statue of Iron Man.

Inside, Toy Sapiens resembles

a museum more than a retailer. A massive collection of items fills the shelves, each figure made with incredible detail. The store also permits visitors to photograph its merchandise.

That merchandise is a bit pricey. A Red Infinity Gauntlet from the Marvel superhero movie "Avengers: Endgame" will drain your pockets of 80,000 yen, or just shy of \$620. At that price, the infinity stones do light up.

Realistic but scaled-down versions of Marty McFly and Einstein, Doc Brown's dog, from the movie "Back to the Future" retail for 35,000 yen.

Toy Sapiens sells merchandise

On the QT

Location: Toy Sapiens, Ichigo Jingumae Bld, 1F, 6-25-16, Jingumae, Shibuya city, Tokyo 150-0001

Directions: A 10-minute walk from Harajuku Station. Follow signs for Omotesando and use the East Exit.

Hours: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily

Cost: Free to enter.

Information: Online: toysapiens.jp

Kelly Agee

across a variety of studios and productions, including well-known mythical and commercial powerhouses like Marvel, DC and Disney. Movie franchises have their own sections. You can

SEE HOT TOYS ON PAGE 25

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL



KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

Realistic versions of Marty McFly and Einstein from the movie "Back to the Future" retail for about \$270 at Toy Sapiens in Tokyo.

Hot Toys: Feels more like a museum than a toy store

FROM PAGE 24

wander from "The Fast and The Furious" to "Tom and Jerry" and "Gremlins" to "Star Wars."

In the "Back to the Future" section, one of my favorites, customers will also find Lego action figures of their favorite characters, including Marty and Doc Brown, or a model of the DeLorean, the sleek and stylish time-traveling car from the film.

At the back of the store is a display case of costumes from Marvel movies, including outfits worn by Loki, the God of Mischief, and Captain America.

A shelf dedicated to the father of Marvel, the late, great Stan Lee, has figurines of Lee. Toy

Sapiens also has a variety of the famous comic book artist's action figures to choose from.

DC Comics fans will find a selection of figures based on the old-school versions of Batman villains, the Joker, Penguin and Riddler among them, and bobbleheads of the new generation of evildoers.

Another shelf is dedicated to "Harry Potter" and "Fantastic Beasts." Here you'll find a model of Hogwarts, and plush versions of Hedwig, the owl from "Harry Potter," and other creatures. An assortment of wands is available, but remember, "avada kedavra" is unforgivable.

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Successful pest control

Tokyo crow population wanes as measures bite

By KOTARO SHIBUYA

Japan News

Measures to tackle crow-related problems in central Tokyo are paying off. The once ubiquitous bird — often considered a pest — is being seen less frequently following efforts by the Tokyo metropolitan government and other parties. Over the past 20 years, the capital's crow population has fallen by two-thirds.

The decline of the notorious scavengers has been linked with improvements in the way the capital handles its refuse. Ichiro Ozeki, 64, who runs a variety store in Tokyo's Ginza district, recalled the situation in the area in the late 1990s, saying: "Garbage bags generated by restaurants and other establishments were raided [by the birds] every morning. They would scatter leftovers all over the roads, making it difficult for people to get around on foot." These days, food-related establishments use covered trash bins, garbage is collected at 2 a.m., and crows are rarely seen in the district.

The urban crow population began increasing in the 1980s and peaked around 2000. In fiscal 2001, the Tokyo metropolitan government received 3,754 complaints about the birds, including concerns about scattered waste, loud cawing and attacks.

In September 2001, then Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara tasked a project team with finding ways to deal with the ravenous corvids. After investigating nest numbers in 40 locations across Tokyo, the team estimated that about 36,400 crows were living in the capital.

The Tokyo government began catching them with traps, and called on municipalities to collect crow-targeted garbage in the early hours of the morning. As part of the measures, the Sugunami Ward Office introduced opaque yellow garbage bags to help conceal food waste, while a company sold trash bags that were coated with a spicy-fla-



Japan News-Yomiuri

Crows scavenge for food among the trash bags in Shibuya Ward, Tokyo, in late April.

vored substance that crows quickly grew to dislike.

Crows have not always been so prevalent, however. In a survey conducted by the Tokyo metropolitan government from 1973 to 1978, they were not counted in significant numbers and their "bad behavior" was not seen as a particular problem.

As more garbage was generated in the capital, so grew the numbers of crows. According to a book covering the 100-year history of Tokyo's cleaning and waste disposal services, about 3.97 million tons of waste were collected in Tokyo's 23 wards in fiscal 1985, jumping nearly 20% to about 4.8 million tons in fiscal 1990.

"As a result of economic growth, large volumes of food waste were placed on central Tokyo roadsides for collection as garbage," said the bird society's Koichi Karasawa. "Since crows were able to eat as much as they liked, they grew in number."

With the wide adoption of bird-thwarting nets and covered trash bins, "edible waste" has decreased. Tokyo's crow population is expected to decline still further if measures are implemented more thoroughly.

However, there is a potential downside if numbers fall too drastically: Crows consume small animal carcasses and disseminate plant seeds via droppings. Without these avian "services," there could be an uptick in unsanitary roads, as well as effects on the local ecosystem.

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WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE



PHOTOS BY TERRA FONDRIEST/For The Washington Post

From left, Mary Virginia, Jack, Whitman, Annalise and mother Adriana Stacey play a game at their home in Fayetteville, Ark. None of the kids are allowed to have smartphones.

A better call

These parents refuse to give their kids smartphones even though the majority of teens, tweens have them

BY ELLEN MCCARTHY
The Washington Post

For Adriana Stacey, it's very simple: "I'll never buy a smartphone for any of my children," she says.

It's a personal stance born of professional experiences. Stacey is a psychiatrist who works primarily with high school and college students in Fayetteville, Ark., and in her practice she routinely asks new patients to swipe open their phones and show her how much screen time they're clocking per day.

"I rarely find one that's under nine hours," she says. "So, these teenagers are spending more time on their phone than they are sleeping."

She often urges those patients to delete just one app. Baby steps. But to some young people who land in her office, the thought of not keeping up a Snapchat streak is almost unfathomable.

"I've said, 'We can't go any further with your treatment until you get your phone use down,' and they just don't come back," she says. "That's how strong the pull is for these devices."

So Stacey, a mother of four, made a decision: Not her kids.

"If they want one when they turn 18 and they have a job and they can afford it, that's their choice," she says.

Stacey is a hard-liner in a war being waged in homes everywhere as grown-ups attempt to limit smartphone use that they believe can be harmful to kids, even as

they struggle to establish healthy habits with their own phones. And, big surprise, the parents aren't winning. Because it's not just their children they're up against, but also a tech industry pushing products that insiders say are designed to be addictive and a society that has largely capitulated to the norms, urges and expectations all those phones and apps have created.

Even when it comes to kids. Fifty-three percent of American children have a smartphone of their own by age 11, according to a 2019 report by Common Sense Media. By the time they're 16, 89% of kids have one. An earlier report by Common Sense Media found that 50% of teenagers felt addicted to their smartphones and that 59% of their parents thought that was the case. All of this has coincided with a startling increase in mental health challenges among adolescents, which some psychologists believe might be tied to the adverse effects of social media use.

As Stacey sits with young patients who are grappling with anxiety or depression or lack of focus and can't fathom cutting back their smartphone use, a single thought tends to run through her head: "This is so stupid, that these little devices are controlling these kids."

The psychiatrist can't force her patients to give up their smartphones. But she's making darn sure her own kids don't have them.

By the end of eighth grade, Annalise Stacey was the only one in her class with-



Annalise Stacey, 15, right, stretches before a hip-hop dance class. Annalise says that she quit dance for a year because she had trouble making friends: Before competitions she felt alone since teammates would be preoccupied with their phones.

out a smartphone. And her mom's spouts about how bad the devices are for kids' brains didn't make that much easier.

If her friends decided to hang out after school or on a weekend, they would make plans via group text. When she went to sleepovers, she often ended up watching other girls scroll on their phones. Annalise, who is now 15, sometimes didn't know what her classmates were talking about because gossip had been exchanged over text or social media.

"I was frustrated just because I'm more of a shy person, so I felt like I was definitely getting left out of things and I didn't really know how to get included," she says during a Zoom interview from her room, where gauzy fabric forms a canopy above her bed.

Dance competitions were the worst. In middle school, Annalise danced on a com-

petitive team that included girls from different schools. The girls had lots of downtime during competitions while they waited their turn to perform. In another era, this might have been an opportunity to chat or goof around. But Annalise was trapped in that era by herself.

"I'd try to talk to people, but they'd just kind of go on their phones or on Snapchat or whatever," she says. Not that she blamed them. They were being social — online, with people they already knew.

Annalise learned to bring a book along to competitions. She'd spend more time stretching on her own. She still loved dance, but the dynamic wasn't much fun.

"That was one of the reasons I actually quit dance for a year," Annalise says. "It was hard for me to make friends on the team."

SEE SMARTPHONES ON PAGE 27

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Smartphones: Some say benefits outweigh social challenges

FROM PAGE 26

Adriana Stacey knows how rough it's been for Annalise.

"It's sort of a double-edged sword," she says. "I can see it with my kids and how it affects them and their relationships."

But she's convinced that for all the challenges of going without a smartphone in adolescence, the toll of having one would be worse.

For Wendy Herlich's 13-year-old daughter, Vera, being barred from owning a smartphone means a lot of things, none of them good. First, there's the practical issues. Vera has been in classes where the teacher asks students to take a photo of the notes with their phones. She can't do it. At Hebrew school, the sessions often begin with a quiz game that requires answering via smartphone. She can't do it. Sometimes her friends will pity Vera and hand her one of their phones, saying she can borrow it for a little while. She really hates that.

Beyond the practical, Vera feels like not having a smartphone is an indication that her parents don't trust her. And like they don't care about her feelings. How could they understand what it means to be 13 and phoneless? Smartphones weren't even a thing when they were kids.

Vera's parents do let her have a phone — if you could even call it that. It's a stripped-down device called a Light Phone that can make calls and send text messages. She's so embarrassed by it that she almost never brings it out around other kids, especially ones she doesn't know well.

"It's, like, really dorky," she says. "And there's a lot of kids who judge me. Like I'm someone who's not responsible enough to have something everyone else has."

Wendy Herlich does, in fact, care about her daughter's feelings. The 47-year-old copywriter says she and her husband agonized over the smartphone dilemma. Then Wendy heard about "Wait Until 8th," a nonprofit that encourages parents to collectively decide to keep smartphones out of their kids' hands until the last year of middle school so as to limit the effects of obsessive phone use without creating too much isolation. There was no mass movement among Herlich's parent cohort to sign the pledge, but it sounded like a great idea in theory.

"Part of what makes me uncomfortable with this whole thing is that it just feels like there's no choice," says the mother. "Because everyone feels like the world is just going this way."

Herlich's philosophical opposition to allowing phones at that age was tested when their family moved from Manhattan to New Jersey mid-pandemic and Vera was forced to start at a new middle school. She would have to make all new friends, and wouldn't be able to connect with them the way they often connected with each other — through their phones.

"There have definitely been a handful of tearful conversations where she really expresses her frustration" about not being allowed to own a smartphone, Herlich says. "Because she's the only one."

Emily Cherkin occasionally quakes with anger when she talks about the impact smartphones have had on kids. She spent 12 years as a seventh-grade English teacher



Whitman Stacey, younger brother to Annalise Stacey, reads a graphic novel after school. Whitman and his twin sister — both 12 — are aggressively asking for smartphones.

in Seattle. When she started out, in 2003, only a few of her students had flip phones and they often seemed embarrassed about them; owning a phone meant you had overprotective parents. By the time she left the classroom, in 2015, the opposite was true.

Cherkin now works as an activist and coach, part of a burgeoning new field of consultants aiming to help parents who are struggling with the impact of their kids' excessive screen time.

It's a hard dilemma for anyone to manage gracefully. Smartphones can expose kids to all kinds of toxic stuff online — cyberbullying, porn, bad information, the

Aaron Zicherman, who runs a recovery clinic for adolescents at Stanford Children's Health.

Zicherman often uses the same techniques, including family therapy sessions and interviews designed to help patients find a motivation to change, in treating both disorders.

"It's maybe even more challenging than some substance abuse issues," he says, because technology is so ubiquitous. Unlike drug or alcohol abusers, smartphone addicts have to learn to self-regulate their use, not abandon it entirely. And some of his patients have had unfettered access to screens for most their lives. By the time

"What really troubles me is that we are giving devices and products and apps that are designed to be addictive to children. And then we're expecting them to self-regulate and getting upset when they do stupid things."

Emily Cherkin

consultant who advises other parents about screen time; former seventh-grade English teacher

mind-warping artifice of social media — and yet the devices are so interwoven with modern life that depriving their kids of one doesn't even seem like an option.

"What really troubles me is that we are giving devices and products and apps that are designed to be addictive to children," Cherkin says, referring to whistleblower accounts of algorithms devised to maximize user attention. "And then we're expecting them to self-regulate and getting upset when they do stupid things. Middle school was a safe place, for the most part, for kids to screw up and learn how not to do it again the next time. We've just taken away the safety net of messing up without being blasted or shamed across a digital platform."

For some parents, things have gotten so bad that they don't call a consultant. They call a doctor.

Smartphone addiction mimics substance abuse in the way it triggers dopamine responses in the brain, says Bradley

have their smartphones within reach.

"I do everything on my phone," says Cherie Garcia, a single mother of two who owns a kitchen and bathroom design firm outside of Denver. "I live on my phone."

Garcia says she needs the device so she can be reachable by clients, but feels the negative impact it has on her life and emotions. She wanted to ensure her sons' brains weren't shaped by the same forces while they were still developing. She'd read that Silicon Valley executives didn't give their kids certain devices, and if the people who invented this stuff didn't trust it, then why should she?

It was an unpopular decision in the family. Garcia's eldest son, Trevor, remembers missing a few get-togethers with friends because he wasn't on a group chat. Her mother, Trevor's grandmother, even tried to skirt Garcia's rules and buy Trevor a smartphone. ("Don't you dare!" Garcia remembers telling her.)

Aimée Lykins Lawson and her kids were in it together, at first. But when she realized she was missing messages about school, she reluctantly bought herself a smartphone. Before long, she found herself unconsciously scrolling through news apps and reflexively responding to notifications.

"It's like we're doing this mass experiment on the human brain," says Lawson, a French tutor.

Her resistance to letting her two youngest kids, 13-year-old Lucien and 12-year-old Sophia, own smartphones has been complicated by the fact that the family is now temporarily living in Abu Dhabi, where her husband works as a professor. They wanted phones to communicate with their American friends back home, Lawson says, and to connect with other teens in their new neighborhood.

When Lawson's husband upgraded his smartphone, he gave his old one to Lucien. Lawson remained wary and laid out strict rules about when it could be used. When Lawson caught Lucien checking the phone late one night, she took action.

"She chucked it into the pool," the son recalls. That was the end of that argument.

As for the Staceys, in Fayetteville, Adriana's 15-year-old daughter, Annalise, has begun to appreciate her mother's hard-line stance as her younger brother and sister — 12-year-old twins — have aggressively lobbied for smartphones of their own.

She has seen her friends agonize over drama that took place through text or social media.

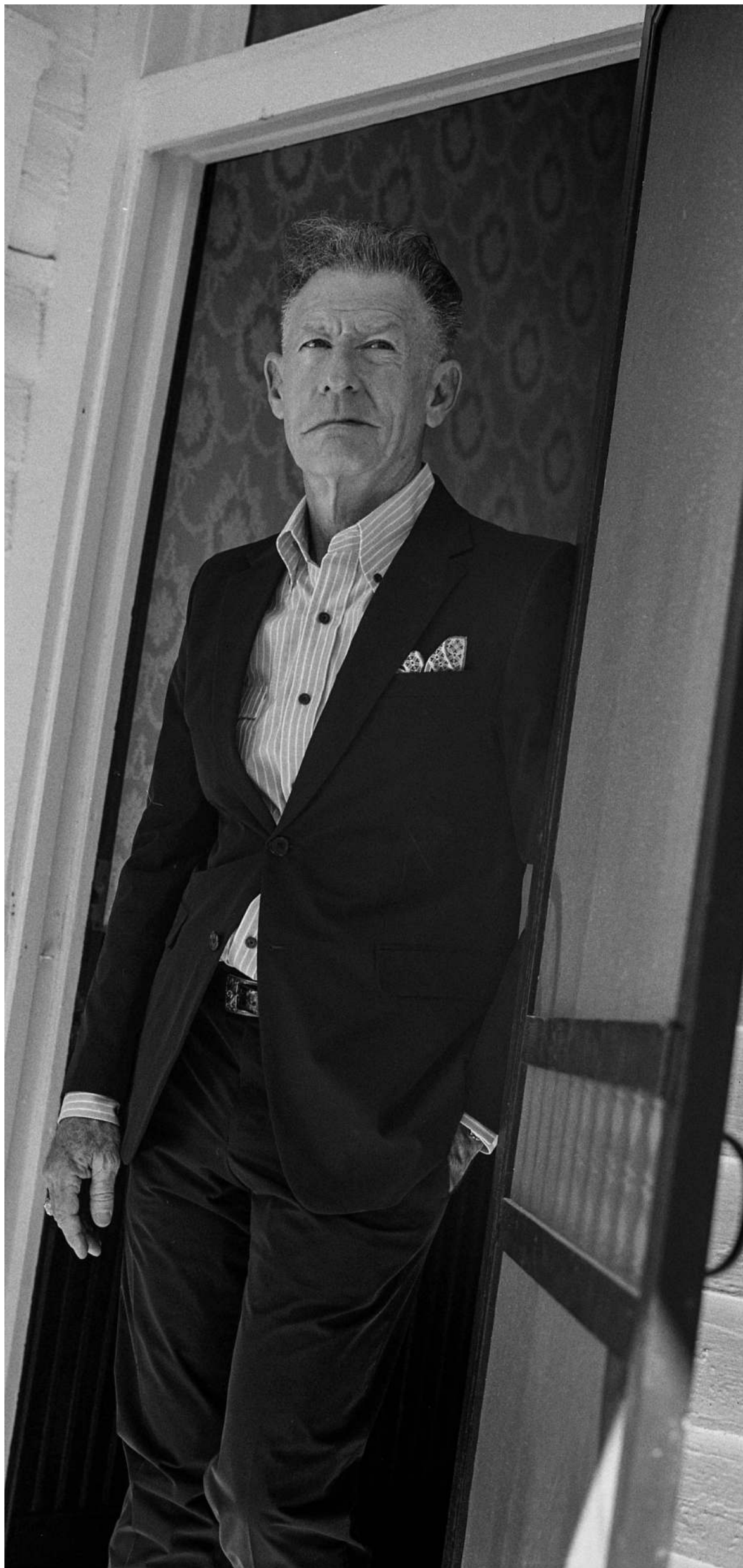
"And I'm kind of glad I'm not a part of it," Annalise says. "It's so much extra stress on my life that I don't need."

Last year she got a simple device called a Gabb phone that can call and text. And though she knows she'll get a smartphone someday, she's glad she's had so much time without one. It's made her more outgoing, she thinks. And more aware of how the phones can change people's behavior. When she's hanging out with friends, she says, they'll sometimes spend hours trying to capture a perfect photo for social media.

"They just want to take pretty pictures so everyone on Instagram can see how happy they are," she says. "And I find it strange because I'm like, 'Can't we just enjoy what we're doing?'"

Some parents feel almost required to

WEEKEND: MUSIC



ODE *to* JOY

Lyle Lovett on fatherhood, fame and his first album in a decade

BY JEFF GAGE

Special to The Washington Post

Lyle Lovett needs some extra time before his interview — for good reason. Something more important came up: a chance to take a call with the elementary school he and his wife, April, are trying to get their twin children into. “You got bumped for a kindergarten interview,” Lovett says with a chuckle, when he finally calls from his home in Klein, Texas, outside Houston.

Until about five years ago, this wasn’t the way the singer, songwriter and actor was accustomed to spending his Monday mornings. Then again, Lovett never expected to become a first-time father when he was nearly 60 years old, with a daughter and son born in June 2017.

“It’s wonderful. I mean, I’m so grateful to have had this experience at all,” says Lovett, 64, his warm, gravelly drawl beaming from the other end of the line. His parents were less than half his age when they had him, but at the same point in his own life, Lovett poured everything into getting his music career off the ground. “I always imagined having children,” he insists. “But I had absolutely no idea how much I would enjoy it.”

That joy is stamped on the cover of Lovett’s new album, “12th of June,” which takes its title from his children’s birthday. It’s his first collection of songs



since 2012, when his longtime contract that he first signed with Curb Records in the 1980s came to an end. “I always knew I want-

SEE JOY ON PAGE 29

Lyle Lovett’s new album, “12th of June,” is his first collection of new music since 2012.

Michael Wilson

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEW

Halestorm

Back From the Dead (Atlantic)

Lzzy Hale, the lead singer and guitarist for the heavy metal band Halestorm, is that rare breed of wild child whose path you cross at your own peril, and her aggressiveness soaks through her music.

The band's new album, "Back From the Dead," is not for the faint of heart, or anyone with even a trace of a headache: it's a full-on sonic assault of screams, wailing guitars, pounding drums and booming bass.

And yet Hale manages to pull it off with a deft songwriting touch and a surprising sense of melody that belies the bombast.

The title track begins with a roar (as many of Hale's songs do.) She's got a great scream, and she's not afraid to use it, multiple times, on most songs. Yet she has a beautiful singing voice that can tend to get overlooked amid the shrieks. The ballads "Terrible Things" and "Raise Your Horns" feature her tender, sultry vocals 180 degrees from many of her other vocals, particularly those on "Wicked Ways."

"The Steeple" is an infectious anthem/ode to the fans, a made-for-the-concert-hall sing-along with lines like "This is my church, and these are my people."

And try as I might not to see it, Hale looks a LOT like Twisted Sister's Dee Snider on cover of an album that will definitely be in the running for the best hard rock/metal album of the year.

— Wayne Parry
Associated Press



Jimmy Fontaine

Joy: Lovett was happy to wait for the right record deal to appear

FROM PAGE 28

ed to record again," he says. But he was more than happy to bide his time, stockpiling songs and waiting for the right deal to come along, which it finally did in the shape of an offer from Verve Records.

"It was nice. If somebody called up and asked for me to sing a harmony with them on a record, I didn't have to ask anybody's permission," he says of the intervening years.

Much of "12th of June," released May 13, was recorded in Nashville in the fall of 2019, but the pandemic delayed its release — and for the first time in more than 35 years, took him away from regular touring with the Large Band, his aptly named 15-piece band. That meant getting nearly two years of uninterrupted time with his children, taking on parenting duties with April with virtually no outside help, as they kept a careful distance even from his 92-year-old mother, who lives next door on the family property. "I've written these songs, but I'm not sitting around reflecting on what it's like being a dad," Lovett says. "I'm being a dad."

The influence of fatherhood on the album can perhaps be most clearly seen in the comedic turn of a song like "Pants is Overrated," inspired by Lovett's children and written with a playful, adolescent sensibility. "That's just something I started singing to them as I was trying to convince them to wear pants," he says. Similarly, "Pig Meat Man" came from his son's love for eating bacon. The singer takes clear enjoyment in learning to see the world through his kids' eyes. "These are the two most interesting people I've ever met," he says proudly.

Russ Kunkel, the Large Band's drummer for more than 30 years, says that his boss seems "fulfilled" in a whole new way since becoming a father. "I feel that he's always wanted to have a family and for his family to grow and to go on, for there to be a lineage there," Kunkel says. That lineage is strong, too: Klein, the unincorporated town where Lovett grew up and has lived most of his life, was named for his great-

great-grandfather, Adam Klein. As an only child, he says his cousins are like brothers and sisters to him.

The title track of "12th of June," in particular, explores notions of fatherhood and tradition with scenes pulled straight from the family reunions that have taken place for generations in East Texas. The Saturday before this interview, in fact, he and 60 or so of his kin congregated at the usual gathering spot — the family cemetery in San Jacinto County, north of Houston, near a creek they've dubbed "the Branch," which gets name-checked in the song. "It's like a picnic. Everybody brings a covered dish," says Lovett, adding a quaint touch to the macabre setting.

Given the 10-year gap between albums, Lovett was that much more concerned with writing "from the perspective of a person my age," he says. Songs like "Her

Elsewhere, Lovett leaves the statements to others. Shining a spotlight on the members of his Large Band is standard fare for Lovett, according to Kunkel. "He surrounds himself with really talented people. Some artists would be hesitant to do that, because maybe their egos are too fragile," Kunkel says. That attitude engenders loyalty among his players. His long-time backup singer Francine Reed, for instance — who's also recorded with Willie Nelson and Delbert McClinton — has been with him ever since she got called into a recording session for his debut album, "Lyle Lovett," released in 1986.

"When I first heard him singing, I said, 'Oh yeah, he's on his way,'" she says. "And I didn't know that I was going to be going with him."

Three of the new album's tracks are showcases for duets with Reed, each

Though Lovett was embraced by the country music world, he never fit neatly into any one box. If he were coming up today, he'd likely be considered Americana — a genre that he and Griffith played an indelible part in carving a niche for.

Lovett, reared by an era where singer-songwriters like Joni Mitchell, James Taylor and John Denver ruled the airwaves, was attracted to a certain musical spirit more than anything. "I was drawn to people who could perform a song in a complete way just with their guitar," he remembers. There was plenty of that to be found in his home state, particularly in Austin, where some of his heroes like Guy Clark and Townes van Zandt lived.

He also eagerly read and reread Jan Reid's "The Improbable Rise of Redneck Rock," a 1974 chronicle of the nascent outlaw country movement. "There was something exciting to me that it wasn't mainstream music, but it was really good," he says. "It was, like, our own secret music in Texas. And it was immensely popular [there]."

Throughout his career, Lovett has assumed a number of different roles — literally, in some cases. Thirty years ago he made his first serious attempt at acting in Robert Altman's "The Player," which kicked off an unlikely stint as a Hollywood star and introduced him to his first wife, Julia Roberts, to whom he was married for two years. "I didn't have any ambition to act," he admits, referring to his career as "accidental."

Most recently, he's made cameos in two episodes of the CBS police drama "Blue Bloods," including one that aired in January.

Now, with "12th of June" available, Lovett can look forward to getting back to his element: on the road with the Large Band. If life, and the outside world, have slowed him down in recent years, he's nowhere near stopping.

"Not many people in their lives get to do something their whole life that they love to do," he says. "And I'm grateful for that."

"The clearest thing I can communicate is the world around me, from my point of view. That's the way I've always approached writing, really. But I wasn't trying to make a grand statement. I was just trying to say what I can say."

Lyle Lovett

Loving Man" and "Are We Dancing" are touching portraits of lived-in devotion that echo the bond he shares with April.

(They've been together for 25 years, and married for the past five.) "The Mocking Ones" is a rumination on friendships and the ways that people grow apart over time.

"The clearest thing I can communicate is the world around me, from my point of view. That's the way I've always approached writing, really," Lovett observes. "But I wasn't trying to make a grand statement. I was just trying to say what I can say."

crackling with an easy, sure-footed chemistry. Lovett, sensing that her time on the road was winding down, wanted to commemorate some of the pop and jazz standards they've sung together onstage. "He's such a gentleman. He still calls me Miss Reed," says Reed, 74, who has duly decided to retire from touring.

As he gets older, Lovett has dealt not only with the loss of players but of friends. Just last year, he lost fellow singer Nanci Griffith, 68, a close companion and mentor who played a crucial role in his early career.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

BY SCOTT GREENSTONE
The Seattle Times

For the past few years, scammers and corporate con men and women (but especially women) who tricked America's elites have captured headlines. But in the past few months, the most prominent ones got the Hollywood treatment from major streaming sites: swindler-socialite Anna Sorokin in Netflix's "Inventing Anna," famous fraudster Elizabeth Holmes in Hulu's "The Dropout," and WeWork's culty co-founders Adam and Rebekah Paltrow Neumann in Apple TV+'s "WeCrashed."

There's too much of this content out there for any one person to take in, unless you're me and you're obsessed with so-called "girlbosses," a term born in the Sheryl Sandbergian "Lean In" moment for women succeeding in the corporate world. It became a joke when many of the so-called girlbosses turned out to be as bad as the boy bosses, including, allegedly, the "Nasty Gal" founder who popularized the phrase. It's been zombified into a running internet joke in this post-Elizabeth Holmes moment and is usually half-aspirational and half-tongue-in-cheek.

This final crest in the media wave of these stories, which happened before COVID-19 hit, comes as America's richest men have made billions during a pandemic that saw millions of women lose jobs.

I watched all of these shows and binge-consumed the journalism that birthed them.

Here are my thoughts on the big three, whether you should watch them and whether you should believe them — because these shows, like the girlbosses they're about, tend to bend the truth.

'Inventing Anna,' Netflix

Is it good? No.

Is it factual? No.

Does it girlboss? Yes.

"Inventing Anna" is heavily invented itself: Each episode starts with a tagline/disclaimer saying "This story is completely true. Except for the parts that are totally made up." TV super-creator Shonda Rhimes ("Grey's Anatomy") leaves it up to you to decide whether this is referring to the lies Anna Sorokin (Julia Garner, "Ozark") tells New York's elites as she convinces them she's a German heiress, or to the show itself.

But it's a double-entendre. Though the story follows the rough shape of Sorokin's young life, many characters are amalgams of real people or spun from whole cloth — most notably, the co-lead, journalist "Vivian Kent" of "Manhattan magazine" (Anna Chlumsky, "Veep") based on Jessica Pressler of New York magazine (this is the second time this has happened to Pressler, who wrote the article inspiring the 2019 movie "Hustlers" and Julia Stiles played a fictional version of her). This allows Chlumsky's character to do things an ethical journalist wouldn't do — tell Anna's lawyer (Arian Moayed) she's on their side, or break in to Anna's parents'



NETFLIX/TNS

Julia Garner gives a dead-on but un inventive portrayal of Anna Sorokin in "Inventing Anna." Sorokin lied to convince New York's elite that she was a German heiress.

Girlbosses with the Hollywood treatment

Evaluating the authenticity and entertainment value of 'Inventing Anna,' 'The Dropout' and 'WeCrashed'



AppleTV+

Jared Leto and Anne Hathaway appear in a scene from "WeCrashed."

home in Germany — and the cumulative effect is worse when she does things Pressler actually did, like buy Anna clothes for court.

But where "Inventing Anna" insists on fidelity to real life, it's annoying, such as in Garner's un inventive portrayal of Anna. It's a dead-on impression of Sorokin, according to Pressler and others who know the real Anna, but it makes for a dead-on-arrival performance. A good impression never equals good acting, and because Anna isn't a public figure, we can't tell how good the impression is anyway.

This results in a show that works hard to make Anna, who could be one of the more sympathetic girlbosses on the list because of her ambitious outsider status, seem as unsympathetic as possible.



Hulu/TNS

Amanda Seyfried as Elizabeth Holmes appears in a scene from "The Dropout."

'The Dropout,' Hulu

Is it good? Yes.

Is it factual? Mostly.

Does it girlboss? Yes.

I can't say much about "The Dropout" that hasn't been said better — critics liked it the most out of any of these shows, it's fairly true to its namesake podcast and John Carreyrou's book "Bad Blood," and Amanda Seyfried balances an OK Elizabeth Holmes impression with a thoughtful interpretation of the woman who wanted to be the next Steve Jobs.

But I think this show falls short of truly great TV, and much of that faltering comes from showrunner Elizabeth Meriwether ("New Girl") and her team's propensity to amp up true-life details in hard-

to-believe ways, in the service of dramatic effect.

In the end, when Holmes' company comes crashing down, she's chased from its empty headquarters by her former counsel (Michaela Watkins) telling her she hurt people over and over. It's over the top and falls flat, because Watkins' character — a fictional amalgam of several lawyers — was right there at Holmes' side through all of it.

Carreyrou's book, by contrast, ends with Holmes' presentation at a chemistry conference, where she wows with her characteristic persuasiveness but at the end, a lone voice in the crowd yells "You hurt people."

These blown-up details are for pointing out how much damage Holmes did, but the show is lighter on the corporate and media culture that failed to catch her for so long and rewarded her false narratives.

'WeCrashed,' Apple TV+

Is it good? Not in the classic sense.

Is it factual? Sure.

Does it girlboss? Right through the glass ceiling.

If you want a fine show anchored by a good performance, you can stop reading — "The Dropout" is that show. But sue me: Despite the fact "WeCrashed" starts poorly, ends iffy and isn't well-written, I was more entertained.

This has everything to do with the two leads, Jared Leto and Anne Hathaway, as Adam Neumann and Rebekah Paltrow Neumann, respectively. The internet has had a lot of fun hating on Leto in the last year, from his fat suit Super Mario impression in "House of Gucci" to his starring role in "Morbius," the most widely mocked superhero movie in years.

But in playing Neumann — a deeply un-self-aware man who reportedly wanted to become "president of the world" and aspired to live forever — Leto's maximalist tendencies work. After all, we're talking about an actor who is sort of a cult leader himself. Rebekah in this show has enough girlboss energy for them both, allegedly firing employees for "bad energy" and declaring that she herself is "the soul of the company."

Leto and Hathaway are not doing good impressions of the Neumanns: They are riffing, and watching their shared psychosis as their unicorn company's fake valuation soars into the billions feels like more of a spiritual condemnation of laissez-faire capitalism than a corporate comedown story.

I think one of the reasons we're obsessed with girlboss scammer TV is much the same reason audiences in decades past loved to see supposedly "promiscuous" women murdered in slasher movies, or in centuries past, burned at the stake for being witches: America loves to see a woman punished for grasping at power. In TV and often in reality, women are given less room to mess up in the corporate world anyway: "The Dropout" in particular spends some time focusing on how Holmes' fraud will make it even harder for women in Silicon Valley. But it feels like the show blames Holmes for that.

"WeCrashed" is different. These two essentially get away with a lot of money — though the show tries to convince you otherwise with an 11th-hour twist that ends its finale really poorly — because it's convincing you that the actual problem here is not the people. It's the system that rewards them.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

HBO documentary traces the life of George Carlin

A documentary on the controversial comic George Carlin premieres on HBO this weekend. The show, titled "George Carlin's American Dream," will also stream on HBO Max. Carlin's comedy was so on-target that it still resonates today. The documentary will chronicle his upbringing in New York, his confrontation with drugs, battles with the law and his 36-year marriage to his first wife.

When I spoke with Carlin shortly before his death in 2008, he told me, "I began to realize how I do this (comedy) and got way, way better at it ... I began to realize that the problem for most comedians was that by making fun of segregationists or racists they were placing themselves at the center of the problem. I realized that he (the comedian) had a side to take, that he was against that, so he was FOR something."

"I saw it in myself. The solution is to really be outside this thing, because if you think there's a solution, you're still part of problem. I say if you say 'there are no solutions,' you can get outside of it by maybe 100,000 light years and view it and say, 'Isn't this a delightful comic dance!' People like to think of it as a human tragedy. It's a joke, folks, 'cause we're here for absolutely no reason."

Attenborough documentary prowls our prehistoric planet

Naturalist David Attenborough will not be stalking the steamy jungle or the tracing the icy wastes of the North Pole; this time he'll be where every 10-year-old boy would love to be. Attenborough will be traveling back 66 million years to see what life was like when dinosaurs ruled the Earth. "Prehistoric Planet" is the latest animated documentary to explore the ancient world. Viewers will meet two new dinosaur species and learn more about these exotic creatures that prowled this long-ago terrain. The series premieres next Monday on Apple TV+ and will stream each night through May 27.

Composer Hans Zimmer, known for his soundtracks for "The Lion King," "Rain Man," "The Dark Knight" and "Dune," will once again trace the proceedings with a haunting score.

Buffalo soldiers celebrated on the History Channel

The History Channel plans to tell the real story of Black heroes who helped America stretch its Western boundaries and protect the nation on foreign soil. "Black Patriots: Buffalo Soldiers" premieres on May 31, the day after Memorial Day. The one-hour documentary follows these peacetime regiments whose bravery and resilience paved the way for other African Americans to join and succeed in the military.

The film is narrated by actor Blair Underwood, himself the son of an Army colonel. Underwood says his father's service was critical in his development. "I was an Army brat so we moved every two years," he said. "So I think part of going in and out of different communities and schools and neighborhoods — being the perpetual 'new kid' on the block — that forced me, in a way, to really study and analyze the community I was stepping into, and out of, and back into another one," he said.

— Luaine Lee/TNS



Netflix photos

Manuel Garcia-Rulfo assumes the role of Mickey Haller, above and below, in "The Lincoln Lawyer," now a Netflix series.

Whatever it takes to win

Author Michael Connelly's 'Lincoln Lawyer' back on screen in new Netflix series with Mexican Garcia-Rulfo in title role

BY KATE FELDMAN
New York Daily News

Mickey Haller will tell you that everybody lies. He'll tell you repeatedly, until you believe it. But he doesn't really believe it himself.

The criminal defense lawyer, based on Michael Connelly's character and originated on screen by Matthew McConaughey in the 2011 movie "The Lincoln Lawyer," is back in a new Netflix series of the same name that premiered last week with Mexican actor Manuel Garcia-Rulfo in the title role — the character is half-Mexican in the bestselling novels, a detail that was glossed over in the movie.

After almost a year off from work while he recovered from a drug and alcohol addiction, Mickey finds himself dumped with a full caseload when a colleague is found dead. Among the cases is a high-profile murder in which a millionaire video game designer allegedly killed his wife and her lover after finding them in bed together.

At the same time, Mickey is juggling his own problems, particularly two ex-wives: Maggie (Neve Campbell), a deputy district attorney who has full custody of their daughter, and Lorna (Becki Newton), who still works for him. And he does it all from his Lincoln town car, driven across Los Angeles with his vanity license plates touting his "not guilty" verdicts.

Garcia-Rulfo, staring at a character who made decisions he couldn't comprehend, turned to Connelly for advice, who in turn passed along a quote from McConaughey: "Mickey Haller is a guy that dances in the rain without getting wet."

"He's always living at the edge and he has to survive," Garcia-Rulfo said. "He

has to feel that fire in him."

Sometimes that means cavorting with people who aren't quite on the up-and-up (his private investigator used to belong to a violent, drug-dealing biker gang). Sometimes it's recklessly chasing down leads. It always means doing whatever he needs to do to win the case, no matter how innocent or guilty his client is.

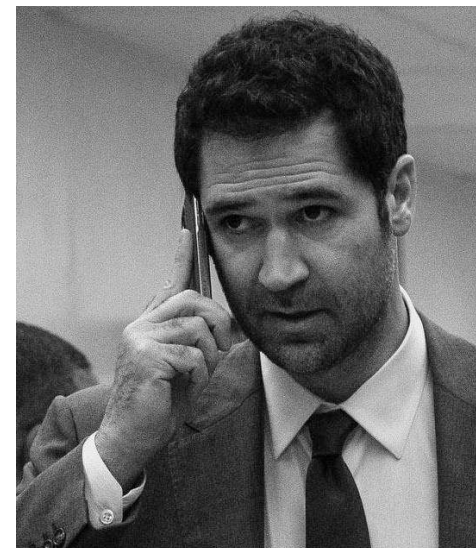
"You have to be a true believer in the constitutional rightness of what you're doing," showrunner Ted Humphrey said, "but you also have to have the cynical streak that enables you to get through your day knowing that, in many cases, you're hoping people get out of their just punishment, whatever that may be."

Humphrey, who went to law school and practiced "for a hot minute" as a corporate lawyer, said he was drawn to the "gray area" of criminal defense lawyers, particularly those who know their clients are guilty. For Mickey, defending Trevor Elliot, the video game designer, isn't about helping someone who needs it. Trevor could hire any lawyer in L.A. he wanted. But, like Garcia-Rulfo said, Mickey's chasing that fire.

He's also outrunning his one truly innocent client, a man who got sent away for 15 years because Mickey couldn't get the job done.

"They all have the story about the one who got away," Humphrey said. "The 50 guilty clients they got off and the one innocent person is the one who haunts them. The murderer who got off doesn't keep them up at night; the innocent person who didn't does."

So while Mickey's biggest professional mistake rots away behind bars, he fights for everyone else to make sure it doesn't happen again. He hires his clients for odd



jobs, including driving him from courthouse to courthouse so he can work in the backseat.

"He sees the good in people," said Garcia-Rulfo, who co-starred in "From Dusk till Dawn: The Series" and was one of "The Magnificent Seven" in the 2016 remake. "If Lorna is good at X, he won't judge her as his ex-wife; he just sees her as good at X."

But Mickey would never admit that, because he has to maintain that cynical streak. He has to convince himself that he is so jaded that representing a man who almost definitely murdered his wife doesn't keep him up, that a successful day for him is getting that man back out on the street.

"'Everybody lies' is one of the core concepts from the book and it's something that Mickey lives by, and yet he just can't help himself from wanting to believe. Maybe that's part of what keeps him going," Humphrey said. "How you sleep at night or how you turn your brain off is that at the end of the day, you never stop believing."

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



Taking your biking adventure off-road

Experts offer new gravel cyclists tips on how to find good bike routes, how to prepare for short- or long-distance trips

By PAM MOORE

Special to *The Washington Post*

Krystal Salvent was an avid road cyclist — until she found herself lying in a ditch after a driver ran her off the road. That experience prompted the Boulder, Colo., co-leader of Black Girls Do Bike Denver to buy her first gravel bike.

“If I can remove that obstacle for myself and focus more on my bike handling, rocks and maybe rattlesnakes, I think I’m a little better off,” she said.

Salvent represents the growing community of gravel cyclists who prefer pedaling alongside fields and forests rather than cars and trucks due to safety concerns. The past 10 years saw a 37% increase in accidental bike-related injuries.

“There’s this sense of, ‘Do I really want to be on the road?’” said Dirk Sorenson, executive director and sports industry analyst at the NPD Group, a market research firm. After steady growth since 2018, gravel bike sales over the 12 months ending in February 2022 jumped 62% compared to those of February 2020, Sorenson said.

Gravel bikes feature gearing and geometry similar to road bikes and the wider, knobby tires of a mountain bike. While they lack the shock-absorbing suspension forks and rear shocks that mountain bikes have, gravel bikes allow access to off-road terrain, including muddy trails, dirt roads and crushed gravel paths.

Rachel Olzer, co-founder of Pedal 2 the People, a community of cyclists of color, credited much of gravel’s popularity to its accessibility. She said many cyclists want to avoid traffic and explore remote areas without the challenges of mountain biking, which include a steep learning curve and a degree of fearlessness required to stay upright on technical terrain. Gravel biking, which typically takes riders over more forgiving terrain, has a relatively low barrier to entry.

Inspired to explore gravel cycling but not sure where to begin? Here are some factors to consider:

Where to ride

Start with a shorter route and park at the trailhead “in case you get in any kind of pickle where it’s five miles in and this is actually a lot harder than [you] thought,” Olzer suggested.

One of the most important route-planning considerations is the surface you’re riding on.

“‘Gravel’ is a little bit of a misnomer,” said Linda “Gravel Girl” English, co-founder and executive director of Dirty Freehub, a Bend, Ore.-based nonprofit whose mission is to share gravel cycling routes. The word encompasses a wide variety of surfaces, including gravel of all sizes and textures, pavement, forest roads, fire roads, singletrack (mountain bike trails) and dirt.

Because gravel routes aren’t necessarily labeled as such, talking to other cyclists is the best way to get accurate information about the terrain, road closures and potential hazards, English said. Most bike clubs have Facebook groups for tip sharing, or you can ask your local bike shop for recommendations. Online resources include Gravelmap, which shares dirt roads, and Dirty Freehub, which offers curated routes across the West and gives details about elevation, technical difficulty, cellphone coverage and e-bike access.

Strava, a fitness tracker that lets users share routes, can also be helpful — but it’s not perfect: Mer Parra, a service technician and bike marketing manager at Dirt Rooster Bicycles in Catonsville, Md., said she used the “heat map” feature, which shows popular routes, to plan a cross-country gravel tour. While this worked well at times, because these maps represent historical rather than real-time data, she encountered “all sorts of crap,” such as a washed-away bridge and a flooded path that forced her to reroute.

Tire pressure

While you should always inflate your tires before a ride, determining how much is tricky, English said. The recommended pressure stamped into every tire’s sidewall is a rough guideline.

“It depends on your weight, where you are riding and tire width,” but most people ride with too much pressure, English said. Lower pressure gives you more traction on rough terrain.

She suggested using free online tools (such as those from Silca and Gravel Cyclist) as a starting point and adjusting tire pressure midride as needed.

“If the road gets chunky, washboard or sandy, we let the air out,” English said.

What to bring

Just as you would for road or mountain biking, at minimum, bring tools to change a flat. While all riders

should have a tire lever and a couple of carbon dioxide cartridges or a pump, additional must-haves depend on the type of tires.

Kevin English, co-founder of Dirty Freehub along with his wife, Linda, said that if you’re running tubeless tires, you need a small bottle of sealant, a valve core remover (necessary to create an opening in which to insert the sealant) and dynaplug, which plug punctures and inflate tires. Many gravel riders prefer tubeless tires because you can run lower pressures without the risk of the tube pinching against the rim.

Salvent suggests bringing two extra tubes, whether you’re using tubes or tubeless tires, in case of a major gash, as well as a multi-tool for basic mechanical problems.

Linda English said her ride’s risk profile determines the rest of her packing list: “If I’m using our local mountain biking trails mixed with some gravel farm roads, there’s so many people out there, I’m not too worried.”

Safety precautions

On the other hand, English said, “If I’m 40 miles in the middle of nowhere, with no cell service,” her preparation looks different.

For more remote rides, the Englishes take plenty of food and water, their phones, Wahoo GPS bike computers and a satellite communication device. Kevin English suggested downloading the Avenza Maps app, which doesn’t require an Internet connection. “In case you’ve gotten off track on your Wahoo or you’re not quite sure where you are, you’ve still got a really good map to look at.”

Salvent suggests taking a taillight and headlight, should you outride daylight. Extra layers are helpful in case of unexpected weather or emergencies. English once waited two hours for a rescue team after she broke her pelvis on a gravel ride.

Olzer and her partner share their locations with one another in case of emergencies. GPS bike computers and apps such as Google Maps, Find My iPhone and Strava make this easy to do.

Regardless of where you go, how far you ride or what you take — don’t worry too much about making mistakes, Parra said. “Everyone is getting on a bike to have their own adventures.”

WEEKEND: FAMILY



Courtesy of Annis Waugh

A group of dads in St. Albans, England, attend a hair-braiding class at a local elementary school in February.

Better to 'share the load'

Hair-braiding class for fathers teaches men skills to do their kids' hair

BY SYDNEY PAGE
The Washington Post

Annis Waugh decided to host a hair-braiding class for fathers, though she expected only handful of sign-ups. To her surprise, the class quickly sold out, and dozens of dads added their names to a wait list.

Waugh, who lives in St. Albans, England, is the owner of Braid Maidens, and has been teaching hair-braiding classes for nearly a year. Although she never promoted her lessons as being for women, "I noticed that no men were booking on," she said.

As part of a fundraiser for a local elementary school, Waugh agreed to offer hair-braiding tutorials for parents, and she decided to designate one class specifically for dads. She called the event "Beers and Braids" and was stunned when it sold out faster than the class for mothers.

Waugh's goal in hosting a dads-only class, she said, was to create an environment where "everyone is in the same boat, and they're all learning at the same basic level."

She didn't want men who had never braided their child's hair to shy away, and she figured the fathers might be less intimidated to participate if the course was designed with them in mind. Many men don't have long hair themselves, and it's not as common for boys and male teens to practice braiding hair, one of the ways girls and young women have traditionally honed their skills.

"I was really nervous before the class," Waugh said, explaining that she wondered whether the men actually wanted to participate, or if they were "under duress because their partners put them up to it."

"I thought it was going to be awkward," Waugh admitted. "I had completely misjudged. I needn't have worried because straightaway they were into it."

During the two-hour session Feb. 23, the dads who secured the eight coveted spots were eager to learn the craft that has conventionally been the purview of women.

"They were concentrating so hard," Waugh said. "They were really into it and really wanted to do well at it."

The class began with a lesson on brushing and ponytails, and Waugh delved into how to deal with different hair textures and types. Then she transitioned to braids and covered everything including how to form traditional braids and fishtail braids. She capped the lesson with a princess-style updo.

"They impressed their kids with that," Waugh said, adding that the men practiced the hairstyles on plastic heads. "They were super engaged and really enthusiastic learners."

While they certainly "laughed a lot," Waugh continued, at times it was "totally silent. The concentration levels were through the roof."

In fact, some of the dads were perfectionists.

"One guy was brushing out a really good braid and said there wasn't enough tension at the top," Waugh recalled. "They took it seriously, and they were there to learn a new skill to use on their kids."

The class challenged Waugh's own biases, she said, and highlighted that anyone can learn how to style hair with some guidance.

"It doesn't matter if you're a 10-year-old girl, a 35-year-old woman or a 45-year-old man," she said. "There is no reason why it should be weird for a dad to do his child's hair. Why should that be strange?"

Particularly amid the pandemic, many dads have taken on more caregiving responsibilities, including John Hardern, who enthusiastically participated in Waugh's braiding class.

His wife recently started going back to work, and he has become responsible for getting his four long-haired daughters — ages 10, 8, 6 and 4 — ready for school several mornings per week.

He often braids their hair in the morning when time permits, taking requests for side braids, French braids and fishtails.

"It shouldn't just be one gender doing stuff like this," Hardern said. "The more we do and share the load, the better is it for my daughters."

The class, he said, "was incredible" and allowed him to "gain a bit of confidence" with braiding. Before the lesson, Hardern's wife would style the girls' hair before school on her own. Now, they share the duty.

"Practice makes progress," Hardern said, adding that he has been doing his daughters' hair a lot more often since Waugh's lesson, and his hair-braiding skills are steadily improving.

The dads who participated in Waugh's class have kept tabs on each other, and "they are all doing it more as well, which is really great," Hardern said.

The workshop was a huge hit, and "I've now got a waiting list of 45 dads," said Waugh, who has scheduled four future sessions for fathers. "Every day, I get messages saying 'Please teach me.' I think it's going to become a very regular fixture."

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Ask proudly, veterans: You deserve discounts

I walked out on the porch to join my husband, Francis, who was talking to his brother, Greg, on the phone. "The cashier at Ace tells me I'm getting a 10% military discount on a hundred bucks worth of stuff, but when he hands me the receipt, it says only two dollars was taken off the bill," Greg said with a huff. "So, I say to the kid, 'two dollars isn't 10% of a hundred bucks.'"

"Yeah, so what did you do?" Francis said.

"Well, he looks at me with this dopey grin and points to the receipt where it reads 'Thanks for your service — Military discount 10%', and says 'Nope, look, it says 10% off and you got your two dollars.'"

"He's a real rocket scientist," Francis grumbled in solidarity with his brother and fellow military retiree.

"And the same day, the cashier at Lowe's looks me up in their system and sees that I should get the 10% military discount. I shoulda known the guy couldn't do higher math," Greg's voice grew higher-pitched with his building annoyance. "After he checks me out, I look at the receipt and realize, he took 10% off, all right ... but he'd jacked up the price before he took the discount!" Francis shook his head.

"I spoke to the baffled manager who couldn't figure it out, so she tells the cashier, 'Check him out again, and just give him 15% off.' But listen to this: Another military guy comes up to the checkout after me, and the cashier gives him 20% off!" Greg concluded with palpable irritation.

"Ridiculous!" Francis scoffed.

The telephone conversation between the two brothers and fellow military retirees then ventured from a detailed analysis of discrepancies between bin and bar code prices at hardware stores to an in-depth comparison of pharmacy services at military clinics and VA facilities, to include which locations have the most comfortable chairs in the waiting areas.

That was my cue to exit the porch.

As riveting as their conversation was, it made me feel, well, old. Sure, we're a retired military family, but we've only been separated for five years. I mean, we don't eat mushy food, we don't need quad canes or Hoveround chairs, we don't go out for the early bird special, and we don't wear stretchy gabardine slacks. At least not yet.

However, regardless of age, military retirees love military discounts. No matter where we go — hardware stores, movie theaters, diners, golf courses, bookstores, my husband asks THAT question: "Do you have a military discount?"

Mostly, the vendors, waiters and cashiers reply sheepishly, "No, I'm sorry we don't." But every once in a while, they answer affirmatively, justifying Francis' relentless inquiries.

Even though the question sometimes makes me feel old, Francis and Greg, and all the other veterans in this country, should proudly seek military discounts because they deserve to be rewarded for volunteering to serve our country.

During May, Military Appreciation Month, as we recognize the service and sacrifices of the military community, let's not forget that less than 1% of Americans step up to serve this country. Those that serve may receive a decent salary and benefits. But they also subject themselves to military orders, deployments, unpredictability, separations from family and friends, and in many cases, dangerous duty. Military discounts are offered regardless of economic need as a way of saying, "Thank you for your service."

Veterans can access a comprehensive list of hundreds of brands and businesses offering military discounts at www.dealhack.com — including retail, museums, parks, theaters, restaurants, automotive, travel, home renovation, legal, jewelry, technology, banking and more.

Better yet, veterans can do what my husband does. With your head held high, proudly ask the question you've earned the privilege to ask — "Do you have a military discount?"

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

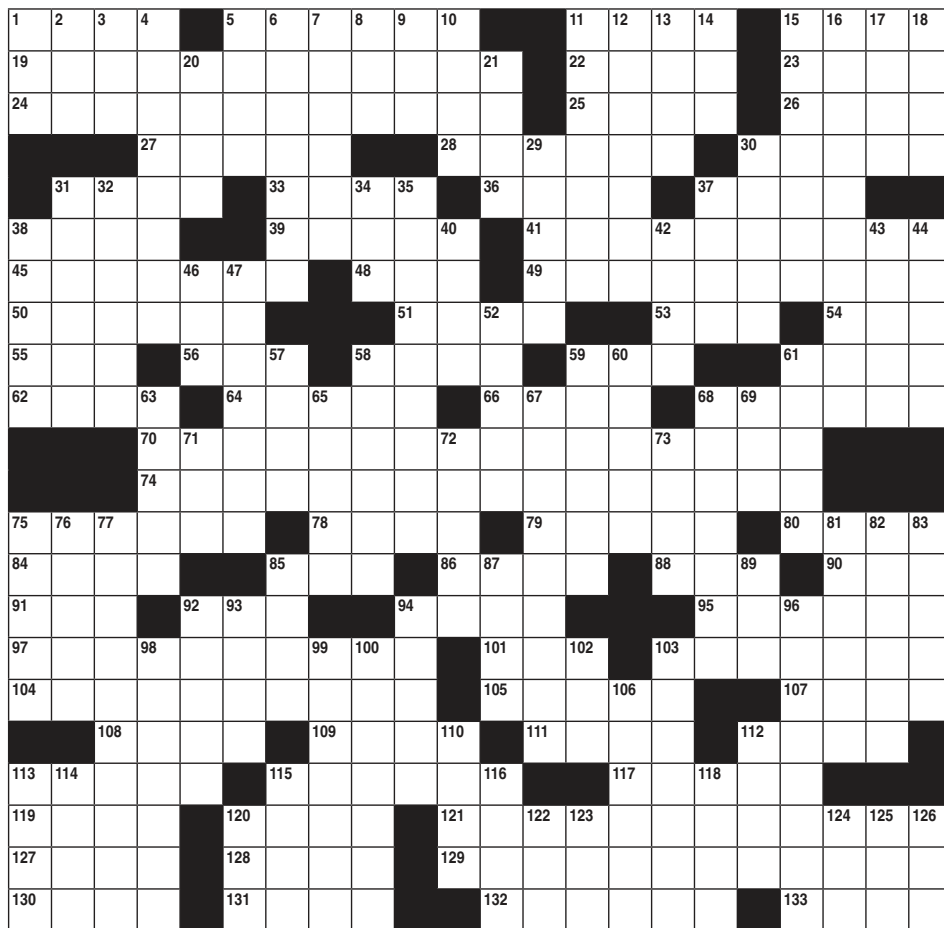
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

TWO-BY-TWO

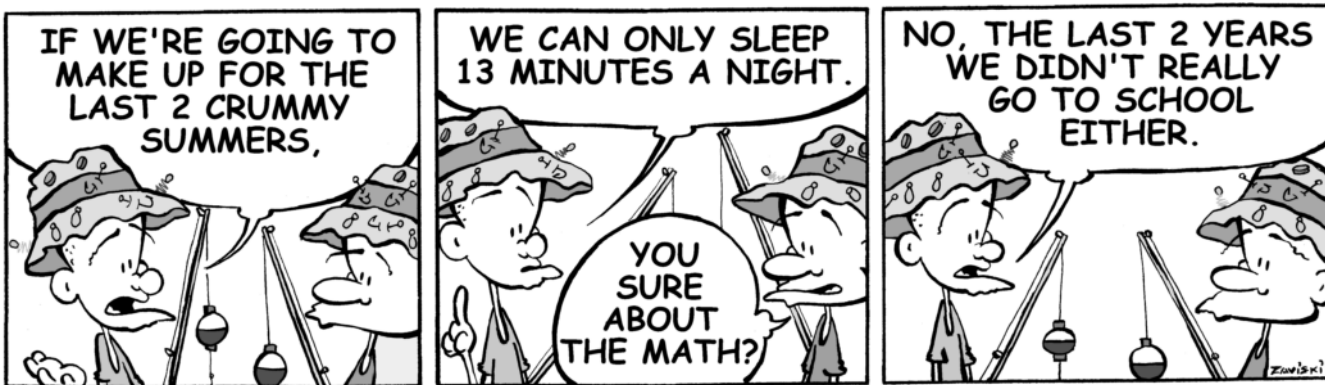
BY MATTHEW STOCK AND CHANDI DEITMER / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Matthew Stock works for a math-education nonprofit in East St. Louis, Ill. Chandi Deitmer, of Cambridge, Mass., is a social worker in the fields of psychiatry and geriatrics. Matthew was making a themeless puzzle a few years ago, and his constructing software suggested 41-Across and 49-Across in adjacent spots. That didn't work out, but he tucked the thought away. A fan of Chandi's last Times crossword, he asked if she'd like to collaborate on this one. — W.S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Some old PCs
 - 5 Experience financial ruin
 - 11 Many files in a Downloads folder
 - 15 Talk ____
 - 19 1990s sitcom starring Tia and Tamera Mowry
 - 22 Beethoven's "Ah! perfido," for one
 - 23 Southwest people known for their dry farming
 - 24 Grand Prix city
 - 25 Fulminate
 - 26 Portent
 - 27 Start a web session
 - 28 Tribute
 - 30 Many zoomers
 - 31 Gush (over)
 - 33 Red lightsaber wielder
 - 36 Singular praise
 - 37 ____ Xtra (soft drink)
 - 38 Soul: Sp.
 - 39 Make it so there's snow way out?
 - 41 1963 hit for the Kingsmen
 - 45 It gets the show on the road
 - 48 Nothing but a number, it's said
 - 49 Call from an old-time paperboy
 - 50 Essayist Susan
 - 51 Attraction, so to speak, with "the"
 - 53 Org. often impersonated by phone scammers
 - 54 Time for a visit from Ong Tao, the "Kitchen God"
 - 55 Slip up
 - 56 Yellowstone sight
 - 58 [Gulp!]
 - 59 House of Commons reps
 - 61 ____ gratia (in all kindness: Lat.)
 - 62 Rush order
 - 64 Like some questions
 - 66 Romanov V.I.P., once
 - 68 Charlotte N.B.A. player
 - 70 "... you get the point"
 - 74 "Well, lookie here!"
 - 75 Quaint exclamation of dismay
 - 78 Fee payer, often
 - 79 Thin pancakes in Indian cuisine
 - 80 Laborer of old
 - 84 Dan of "Schitt's Creek"
 - 85 To the ____ power
 - 86 Time for March madness?
 - 88 Ultimate fighting inits.
 - 90 Certain summer baby
 - 91 "There you ____!"
 - 92 Big tower, for short?
 - 94 Years and years
 - 95 Shock
 - 97 Sings, in a way
 - 101 When you should leave, for short
 - 103 Piece of roller-derby equipment
 - 104 Classic-joke start
 - 105 High five at the Olympics?
 - 107 Unchanged
 - 108 Yea or nay
 - 109 Power source
 - 111 Barfly's flier
 - 112 Added to a thread, say
 - 113 El ____ of the Spanish Renaissance
 - 115 "Amscray!"
 - 117 Egomaniac's thought
 - 119 Noted character with object-subject-verb syntax
 - 120 Dangerous part of a road on which to pass
 - 121 Extroverts
 - 127 Tie down
 - 128 Best-picture winner of 2012
 - 129 Basketball feat suggested by this puzzle's pairs of theme answers, informally
 - 130 1040 figs.
 - 131 Love of languages?
 - 132 In on
 - 133 Add (on)
 - 11 Logical conundrum
 - 12 Prolong
 - 13 Numismatic grade
 - 14 Plopped (down)
 - 15 Setting for many a diorama
 - 16 Shortcut missing from newer smartphones
 - 17 Lead
 - 18 Affixes
 - 20 Subject of interest, in brief
 - 21 Chess piece whose name is derived from the Persian for "chariot"
 - 29 Cocktails made with ginger beer, informally
 - 30 Pieces in the game Bananagrams
 - 31 Flights connect them
 - 32 All-encompassing Egyptian deity
 - 34 Aromatic beverage
 - 35 Perch for the self-important
 - 37 Gemstone cut named for a fruit
 - 38 Baffled
 - 40 Very bright
 - 42 Eye piece
 - 43 Nobelist Joliot-Curie
 - 44 Really get to
 - 46 Sweetie
 - 47 Weep in an unflattering way, in modern lingo
 - 52 Lugs
 - 57 Hold on to
 - 58 Lunchtime estimate
 - 59 Computer shortcuts
 - 60 Slices and dices, say
 - 61 Scottish hillsides
 - 63 Annoying
 - 65 Walk with swagger
 - 67 It might get swiped in a college dining hall
 - 68 Football trophy name
 - 69 Where some replacements take place, in brief
 - 71 Third column on a calendar: Abbr.
 - 72 Eagle's hatching spot
 - 73 Certain public transport
 - 75 Sound from a jalopy
 - 76 Played again
 - 77 Words from an ex-lover
 - 81 Go by
 - 82 Put down again
 - 83 Origami steps
 - 85 Bread in Indian cuisine
 - 87 One taking action
 - 89 Certain close relative
 - 92 Invite out for
 - 93 1990s tennis star Huber
 - 94 Off-kilter
 - 96 "Later!"
 - 98 Green vehicles
 - 99 Fried plantain dish of Puerto Rico
 - 100 Country named for its geographic location
 - 102 It makes you you
 - 103 Lobbyists' area in D.C.
 - 106 Radiator cover
 - 110 "Die Hard" squad, in brief
 - 112 Miss ____, famed dial-a-psychic
 - 113 Businesses that see an uptick after New Year's
 - 114 Aussie hoppers
 - 115 Kernel of an idea
 - 116 "Ouch, ouch, ouch!"
 - 118 High style
 - 120 Barnyard bleat
 - 122 "Mais ____!" ("But of course!")
 - 123 "Cyberchase" channel
 - 124 Org. whose members stay in their lanes
 - 125 Business name ender
 - 126 "Yipe!"

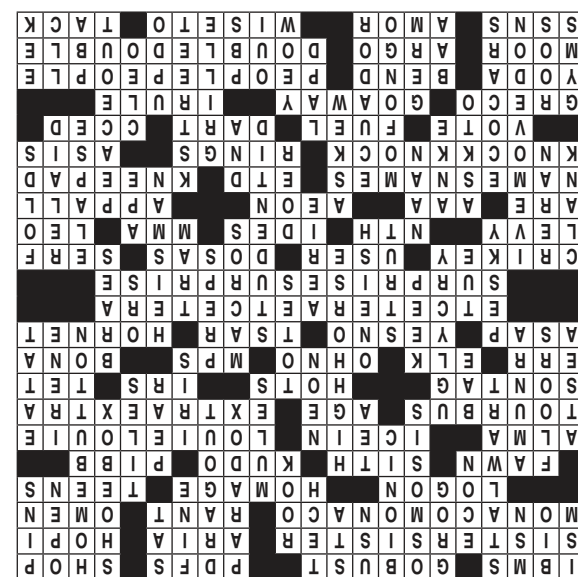


GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

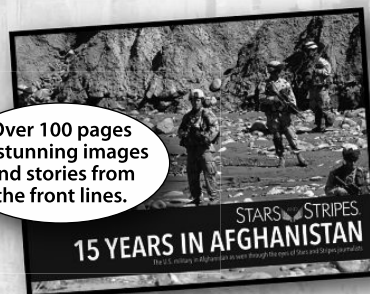
RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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- People saying Free Dog (different breeds) for adoption.

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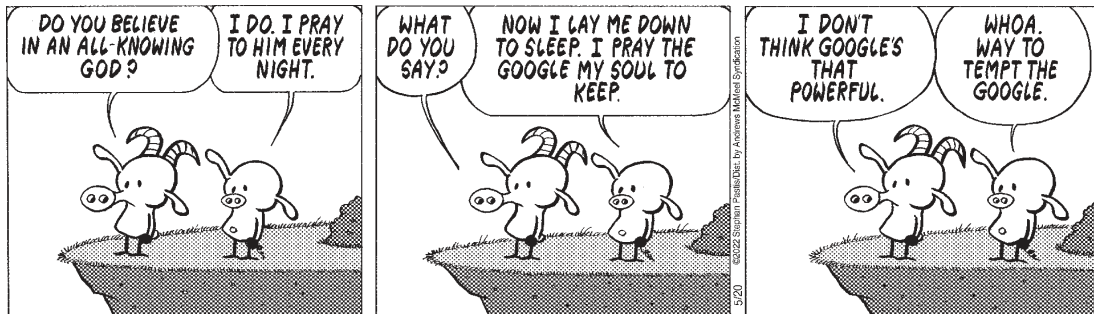
Frazz



Dilbert



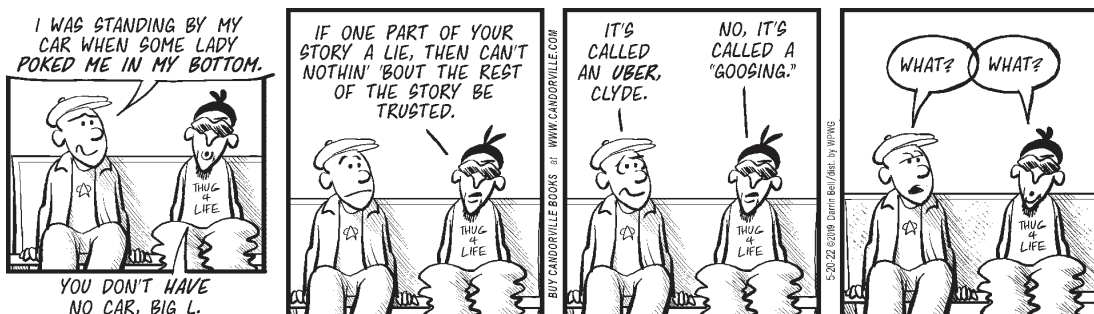
Pearls Before Swine



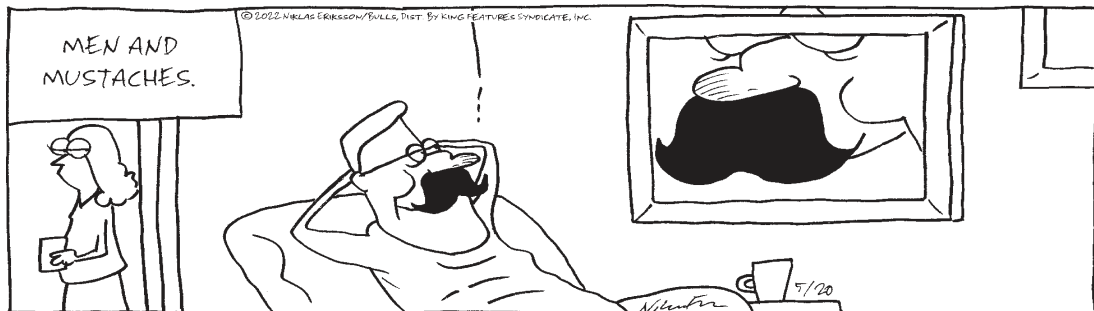
Non Sequitur



Candorville



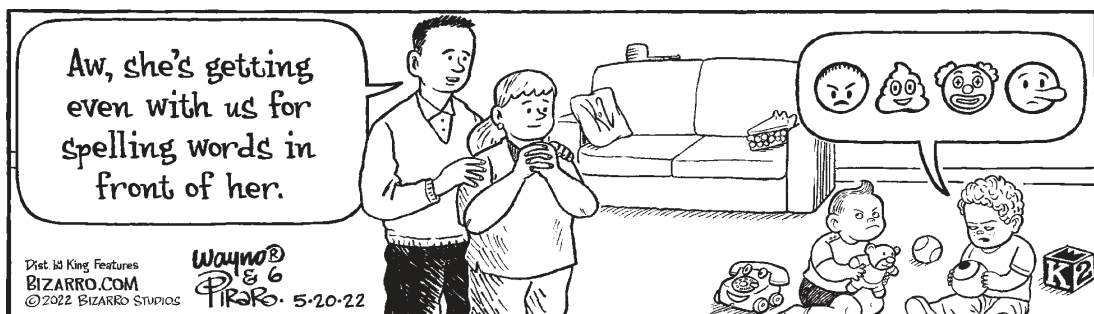
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
		18							19			
20	21					22	23					
24					25					26	27	28
29					30					31		
32			33							34		
			35						36			
37	38	39					40					
41					42	43					44	45
46					47					48		
49					50					51		

ACROSS

- 1 Sneaky laugh
- 4 "Apollo 13" org.
- 8 Spill the beans
- 12 Post-op area
- 13 Count counterpart
- 14 Fallon predecessor
- 15 Rather
- 17 "Don't rub —!"
- 18 Has the flu
- 19 Nervous
- 20 Lovely, in Dundee
- 22 Uber alternative
- 24 Singer India.—
- 25 Wanting company
- 29 Ninny
- 30 Peruses
- 31 "Friendly skies" co.
- 32 Unspecified person
- 34 Sch. supporters
- 35 Bowling targets
- 36 "Top Chef" host Lakshmi
- 37 Japanese wrestlers
- 40 To boot
- 41 Actor Guinness
- 42 Like slasher films
- 46 "Breaking Bad" drug
- 47 Teeny bit
- 48 Knock
- 49 Beholds
- 50 Horn sound

51 Salty expanse

DOWN

- 1 — Royal Highness
- 2 Green prefix
- 3 Doctrine espousing reason over the supernatural
- 4 Recently
- 5 Contented sounds
- 6 Madrid Mrs.
- 7 PC key
- 8 Russian pancakes
- 9 Riga native
- 10 Black birds
- 11 Skeletal
- 16 Bonn article
- 19 Chopping tools
- 20 Sheepish remarks
- 21 Roughly
- 22 Pond hoppers
- 23 Tennis champ Murray
- 25 Author Uris
- 26 Alfresco
- 27 Sir's partner
- 28 Supermodel Benitez
- 30 Baseball stats
- 33 Geological periods
- 34 Go by
- 36 Fold
- 37 Rockwell and Raimi
- 38 Peter Fonda role
- 39 Apportion
- 40 Car
- 42 "Shoo!"
- 43 Aussie hopper
- 44 Whitman of "Good Girls"
- 45 Ecol. watchdog

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	P	U	R	J	A	R	P	A	L	L			
P	E	S	O	U	S	O	A	L	T	I			
A	R	E	S	D	A	M	N	U	D	E			
S	E	R	E	N	E	A	D	A	M				
				B	E	A	R	I	N	M	I	N	D
G	L	U	E	D	I	N	A	N	A	E			
L	E	N	D	A	V	E	T	U	N	E			
A	T	E	U	N	E	L	I	M	A	S			
D	O	N	T	F	O	R	G	E	T				
				D	O	O	R	A	G	A	S	S	
O	M	I	T	A	V	I	N	O	U	S			
L	A	N	E	K	I	T	I	S	B	N			
D	I	G	S	S	I	S	C	O	S	T			

5-20

CRYPTOQUIP

SWU, BTGHL-ZMOPNJUV NGUV

ZPXJUV FTJEWFO FG P

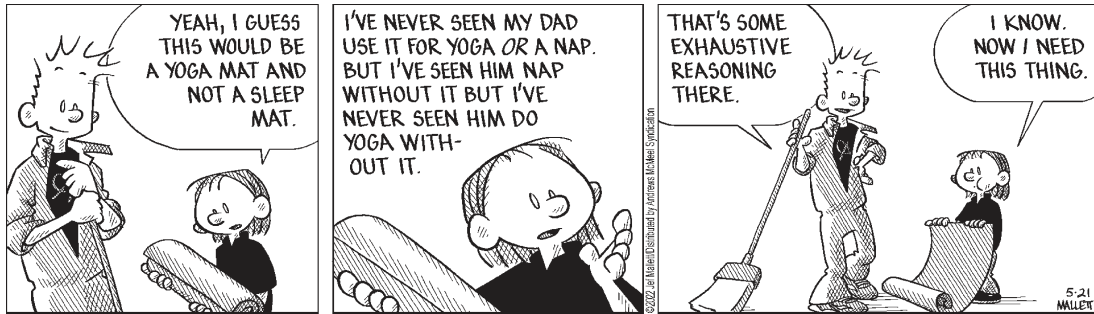
LONFTWBFJCO RJUL GS EEOFMO:

"HOOCJM TGBR XGW."

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I HAVE TAKEN SEVERAL OUTINGS TO THAT GORGEOUS BALKAN REGION. I'VE BEEN TO THRACE THRICE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals I

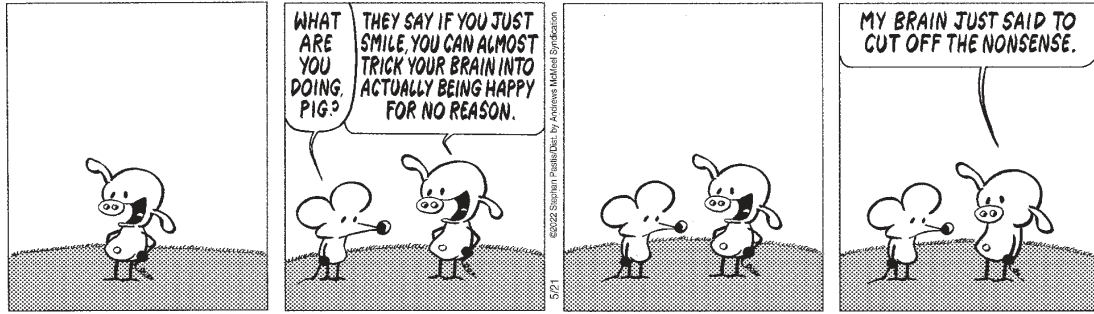
Frazz



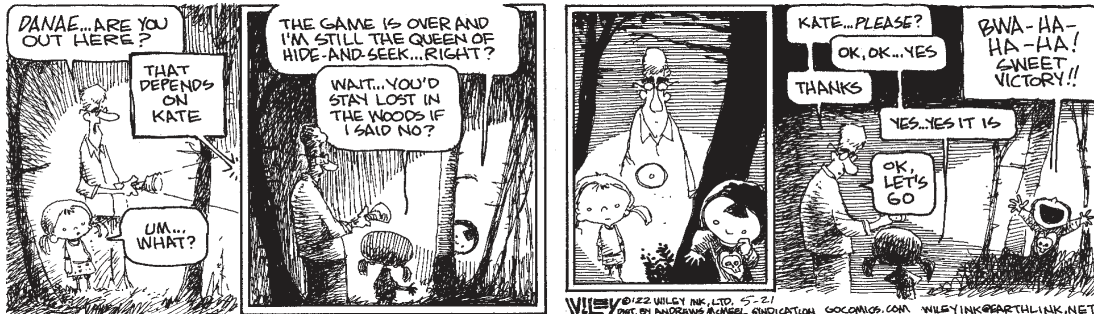
Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



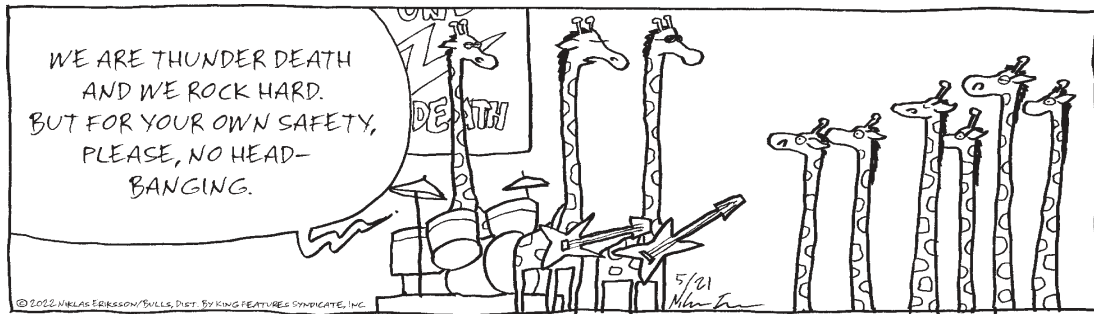
Non Sequitur



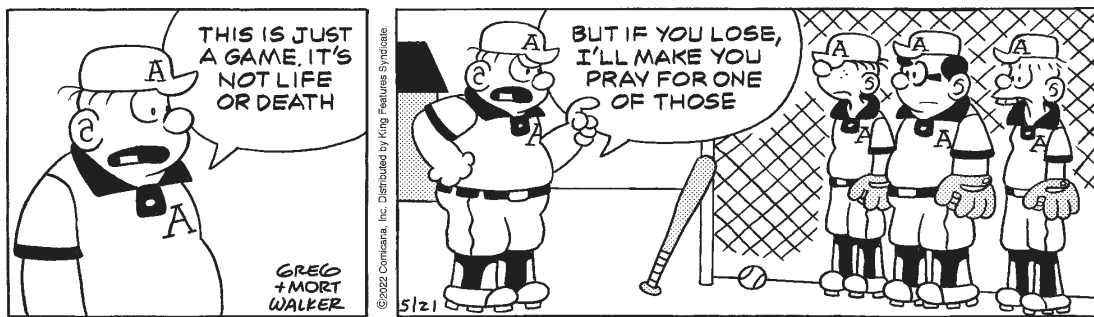
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	
12					13					14			
15					16					17			
18					19					20			
			21	22			23	24					
25	26	27					28			29	30	31	
32								33					
34					35		36						
			37				38						
39	40	41			42	43				44	45	46	47
48					49					50			
51					52					53			
54					55					56			

ACROSS

- 1 Avocado dip, for short
- 5 London district
- 9 — alai
- 12 And others (Lat.)
- 13 Each
- 14 Music's Yoko
- 15 Stallion's mate
- 16 Body pics
- 17 Barbie's guy
- 18 — butter
- 19 Last (Abbr.)
- 20 Morning droplets
- 21 "Fresh Air" airer
- 23 Here (Fr.)
- 25 Enters, as data
- 28 Winter coats
- 32 Streams
- 33 Service period
- 34 Movie theater
- 36 "Help!"
- 37 Long time
- 38 Somewhat (Suff.)
- 39 Witticism
- 42 Singer Ritter
- 44 Jason's ship
- 48 Internet address
- 49 Fashion magazine
- 50 Capital of Italia
- 51 Archipelago unit (Abbr.)
- 52 Dam

- 53 Winnebago owner, briefly
- 54 German article
- 55 Historic periods
- 56 Longings

- 22 — Beach, California
- 24 Spanish houses
- 25 Col. Sanders' chain
- 26 Yale grad
- 27 Thither
- 29 Tease
- 30 Literary collection
- 31 Farm pen
- 35 Elk's horn
- 36 Baking appliances
- 39 Brit's pound
- 40 Celestial bear
- 41 Misfortunes
- 43 Director Kazan
- 45 Wander
- 46 Fed. agents
- 47 Rowboat needs
- 49 Ram's mate

DOWN

- 1 Jewels
- 2 Six-sided state
- 3 Rhine feeder
- 4 Complete win
- 5 Planet with rings
- 6 October stone
- 7 Some inside info
- 8 Chances, for short
- 9 Gag
- 10 Fresh
- 11 Charged bits
- 20 Classic Clint Eastwood role

Answer to Previous Puzzle

H	E	H		N	A	S	A		B	L	A	B	
I	C	U		E	A	R	L		L	E	N	O	
S	O	M	E	W	H	A	T		I	T	I	N	
				A	I	L	S		A	N	T	S	Y
B	O	N	N	Y		T	A	X	I				
A	R	I	E		L	O	N	E	S	O	M	E	
A	S	S		R	E	A	D	S		U	A	L	
S	O	M	E	B	O	D	Y		P	T	A	S	
				P	I	N	S		P	A	D	M	A
S	U	M	O	S				A	L	S	O		
A	L	E	C			G	R	U	E	S	O	M	E
M	E	T	H			I	O	T	A		R	A	P
S	E	E	S			T	O	O	T		S	E	A

5-21

CRYPTOQUIP

Y S W V H L C Z K K E H G Z D J Z E
 D L I F W U J D I Z G U W Q H L C ' Q W
 N L V W I F L L D S J V X , Y S Z U N L
 H L C N L ? M J I I Z V N F Z M W C K .
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: FUN, CROWD-PLEASING
 SONG PAYING TRIBUTE TO A DESTRUCTIVE
 KIND OF BEETLE: "WEEVIL ROCK YOU."
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: H equals Y

STARS AND STRIPES

OPINION

Clear change in global balance of power

BY DAVID IGNATIUS
Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON

Take a look at what Russians like to call the “correlation of forces” and you can see that there has been a significant change in the global balance of power: Simply put, the United States and its European allies are up, and Russia is down.

The evidence is as close as the morning headlines. Russia is failing in its reckless invasion of Ukraine. No matter how the war ends, the fact is that Russia appears unable to defeat a relatively small neighboring nation. Meanwhile, America and its allies are more united than they have been in years. And the NATO alliance is about to become significantly more powerful with the additions of Finland and Sweden.

“We are now living in a totally new era,” Henry Kissinger, the master of grand strategy, said at a Financial Times forum this month. The former U.S. secretary of state said that Russian President Vladimir Putin “obviously miscalculated Russia’s capabilities to sustain a major enterprise — and when the time comes for settlement ... we are not going back to the previous relationship but to a position for Russia that will be different because of this — and not because we demanded it but because they produced it.”

When an army stumbles in battle, as Russia’s has, what should its adversaries do? The cruel logic of war argues that advancing forces should move rapidly to consolidate their gains — and take maximum advantage of the new strategic position.

Military historian Rick Atkinson shared a catalog of failures to exploit advantage: “Union Gen. George Meade’s failed to pursue the Confederates after a clear win at Get-

tysburg. The Anglo-American landings at Anzio in January 1944 outflanked a surprised enemy but couldn’t exploit that breakthrough. Despite overwhelming success in the Persian Gulf War in 1991, the allies left Saddam Hussein still capable of terrorizing his own people. British Gen. William Howe repeatedly missed opportunities to destroy Washington’s Continental Army.”

Atkinson sums up the new order of battle in Europe this way: “In less than three months, the strategic landscape has changed profoundly — invigorating a NATO military alliance that had seemed nearly moribund, undermining if not neutering Russian imperial ambitions, and reasserting American leadership in a robust coalition of like-minded liberal democracies.”

History teaches the importance of seizing the moment. But Kissinger, the consummate realist, would likely caution that the Biden administration shouldn’t overplay its hand in the glow of Ukraine success. Putin’s defeat could become a very messy affair, through a desperate Russian attempt to use nuclear weapons, or simply through the spread of chaos and fragmentation across Eurasia as Russian power dissolves.

In a rebalancing world, the United States can advance its interests in every direction. Let’s start with Europe: NATO’s center of gravity will shift eastward, as European nations such as Germany add military muscle and become more independent of Russian energy. NATO’s leverage will also extend north, to the new strategic prize of the Arctic, as Sweden and Finland join the alliance. A more European Ukraine may pull Russia and its remaining satellites toward the West, too. The right first step is a rapid move to draw Ukraine — as much as remains unoccupied by Russian forces — into the European Union.

“Putin has destroyed Russia’s reputation as a reliable supplier of energy,” says former national security adviser Tom Donilon. “Over time, it will mean a rewiring of the energy ecosystem”

Putin’s mistakes may be costly, too, for China, Russia’s main ally. President Xi Jinping and Putin pledged “no limits” to their friendship in a joint statement at the Beijing Olympics in early February, but Xi probably didn’t anticipate the folly of Putin’s invasion, and China has maintained only tepid support since.

Kissinger famously split the Russians and Chinese. Martin Indyk, author of the Kissinger biography “Master of the Game,” told me that there’s a similar opportunity now.

With Russia and China both on the back foot, the United States is pressing its own strategic partnerships in Asia. President Joe Biden will meet with the other Quad members — India, Japan and Australia — in Japan on May 24. Biden met last week in Washington with leaders from Southeast Asia, including potentially key partners Indonesia and Vietnam. Biden said it was a “new era” for the region, a bit of useful hyperbole.

Donilon speaks of the “crucial middle powers” — such as India, Saudi Arabia and other gulf states, Southeast Asia, and Brazil — as places where “the United States has tremendous opportunities.”

Latin America is another region where the United States can expand its influence on the tide of Ukrainian success.

The Ukraine war has reminded the world of an inescapable fact: America’s military might, intelligence dominance and strategic partnerships are overwhelmingly powerful. The changes in the balance of power are still in process. But the world is different from what it was before Feb. 24, and for now, it’s going America’s way.

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Ernie Gates

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Enough politics: Disabled veterans need our help

BY BILL TAYLOR
Special to Stars and Stripes

We have a serious problem in this country when it comes to caring for our veterans when they return from war. As a veteran myself who has gone through the disability benefits process, I know this firsthand. This country has a duty to provide these men and women with the health care, benefits, and compensation that they have rightfully earned for their service to the nation. Unfortunately, this has been an ongoing generational challenge.

Our veteran benefits system is deeply flawed. The Department of Veterans Affairs is famously difficult to navigate. It leaves vulnerable wounded veterans with a confusing bureaucracy to navigate to receive the treatment they need for injuries and mental health issues sustained in combat. The VA disability claims process is even more difficult for a veteran to navigate without assistance.

As a veteran-founded company, Veterans Guardian recognized a significant need in the current system to provide Veterans assistance in the VA disability claims process.

The VA requires that veterans provide proof of their disability, proof of eligibility for VA disability benefits, proof that their disability is related to military service, and medical evidence to support their claims. Many disabled veterans need assistance collecting, vetting and providing these materials.

Simply put, the VA is not an ally in this proc-

ess, and the current model for assistance is not working. It depends heavily on veteran service organizations and state and county employees, which do not have the capacity or capability to meet the needs of the full veteran community. These organizations should remain a key pillar of claims assistance, but as part of a wider community of options.

As in any industry, there is malfeasance in parts of the claims consulting industry — among both accredited and unaccredited consultants — and this is shameful. No one should accept this reality. This is why I recently participated in a congressional hearing in front of the House Veterans Affairs Committee on this topic. We at Veterans Guardian detest the mistreatment of veterans, and we view our company as a key component of the solution to empower veterans and to assist them throughout this process.

There are tangible steps we can take to fix things. We must first identify and punish bad actors who are taking advantage of the confusion wrought by the VA to prey upon veterans. Certain companies are securing pensions for veterans and then requiring the purchase of expensive financial products. Most egregiously, some companies provide an upfront loan and then require future repayment that can be more than 10 times the loan amount. These bad actors have no place in the veteran disability benefits system, and Congress, veteran service organizations and companies like ours are right to push for an end to these

despicable practices.

However, the majority of companies in the claims consulting industry focus on assisting veterans with disability claims in an honest and forthright way. These companies typically work on a contingent basis and receive compensation based only on a successful benefits increase. We only win when the veteran wins, and any compensation for our services comes exclusively from new benefits, with a flexible pay schedule for the veteran.

Veterans Guardian supports accreditation reform which opens the tent and provides a path to accreditation for companies such as ours. Reform should allow an accredited agent to assist a veteran for a fee at any step of the process with appropriate protections for the veteran. This would expand the options for assistance, providing veterans with the right to choose how they want to pursue their claims. Reform should also increase requirements for accreditation to ensure competent representation, VA oversight of agents, enhanced transparency throughout the process, and VA enforcement tools to pursue bad actors.

No one questions the service these men and women have provided to our country. It’s time to set aside the politics and find a solution that prioritizes the health and wellbeing of our veterans.

Army Lt. Col. (Ret.) Bill Taylor is the Chief Operating Officer of Veterans Guardian.

SCOREBOARD/NFL

TENNIS

Morocco Open

Wednesday
At Club des Cheminots
Rabat, Morocco
Purse: \$251,750
Surface: Red clay
Women's Singles
Round of 16

Anna Bondar (5), Hungary, def. Kristina Kucova, Slovakia, 6-3, 6-3.
Arantxa Rus (7), Netherlands, def. Dalma Galfi, Hungary, 6-4, 6-2.
Claire Liu, United States, def. Mayar Sherif (4), Egypt, 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-1.
Nuria Parrizas Diaz (3), Spain, def. Kristina Mladenovic, France, 4-6, 6-3, 6-0.
Martina Trevisan, Italy, def. Garbine Murguza (1), Spain, 2-6, 6-4, 6-1.
Lucia Bronzetti, Italy, def. Clara Burel, France, 6-3, 6-2.

Women's Doubles

Quarterfinals
Monica Niculescu, Romania, and Alexandra Panova (2), Russia, def. Anna Danilina, Kazakhstan, and Ingrid Neel, United States, 6-2, 6-2.
Emily Webley-Smith, Britain, and Ingrid Gamarra Martins, Brazil, def. Yana Sizikova, Russia, and Anastasia Detiuc, Czech Republic, 6-4, 6-4.
Ekaterina Yashina, Russia, and Marcela Zacarias, Mexico, def. Tara Moore, Britain, and Paula Kania-Chodun, Poland, 6-2, 2-6, 15-13.
Makoto Ninomiya and Eri Hozumi (1), Japan, def. Arantxa Rus, Netherlands, and Mayar Sherif, Egypt, walkover.

Internationaux de Strasbourg

Wednesday
At Strasbourg Tennis Club
Strasbourg, France
Purse: Euro 203,024
Surface: Red clay
Women's Singles
Round of 16

Kaja Juvan, Slovenia, def. Nefisa Berberovic, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 6-2, 6-3.
Karolina Pliskova (1), Czech Republic, def. Bernarda Pera, United States, 6-3, 1-6, 6-1.
Oceane Dodin, France, def. Ekaterina Makarova, Russia, 6-2, 6-1.
Elise Mertens (4), Belgium, def. Anna-Lena Friedsam, Germany, 7-5, 7-5.
Viktorija Golubic (9), Switzerland, def. Fiona Ferro, France, 6-4, 6-2.
Angelique Kerber (2), Germany, def. Aliaksandra Sasnovich, Belarus, 6-2, 3-6, 6-4.

Women's Doubles

Quarterfinals
Daria Saville, Australia, and Nicole Melichar-Martinez, United States, def. Elena-Gabriela Ruse, Romania, and Marta Kostyuk, Ukraine, walkover.
Lidziya Marozava, Belarus, and Kaitlyn Christian, United States, def. Katarzyna Piter, Poland, and Kimberley Zimmermann, Belgium, 2-6, 6-3, 10-8.

Sania Mirza, India, and Lucie Hradecka (1), Czech Republic, def. Raluca-Ioana Olaru, Romania, and Nadiia Kichenok, Ukraine, 6-3, 7-6 (4).

Lyon Open

Wednesday
At Parc de la Tete d'Or
Lyon, France
Purse: Euro 534,555
Surface: Red clay
Men's Singles
Round of 16

Federico Coria, Argentina, def. Pablo Carreno Busta (2), Spain, 7-5, 6-3.
Alex Molcan, Slovakia, def. Karen Khachanov (5), Russia, 6-2, 7-6 (4).
Holger Vitus Nodskov Rune, Denmark, def. Adrian Mannarino, France, 6-4, 6-3.
Men's Doubles
Round of 16
Maximo Gonzalez, Argentina, and Marcelo Melo (2), Brazil, def. Hugo Nys, Monaco, and Jan Zielinski, Poland, 6-4, 3-6, 10-6.
Artem Sitak, New Zealand, and Max Jacob Schnur, United States, def. Jonathan Erlich, Israel, and Ariel Behar, Uruguay, 6-3, 6-3.

Men's Doubles

Quarterfinals
Ivan Dodig, Croatia, and Austin Krajicek (1), United States, def. David Vega Hernandez, Spain, and Rafael Matos, Brazil, 6-7 (4), 6-2, 12-10.

Geneva Open

Wednesday
At Tennis Club de Geneve Eaux-Vives
Geneva
Purse: Euro 534,555
Surface: Red clay
Men's Singles
Round of 16

Reilly Opelka (4), United States, def. Christopher O'Connell, Australia, 6-3, 7-5.
Joao Sousa, Portugal, def. Nikoloz Basilashvili (5), Georgia, 6-4, 6-3.
Tallon Griekspoor, Netherlands, def. Johan Nikles, Switzerland, 6-3, 7-5.
Thanasi Kokkinakis, Australia, def. Federico Delbonis (7), Argentina, 1-6, 7-5, 7-5.
Casper Ruud (2), Norway, def. Benoit Paire, France, 6-3, 6-1.
Ilya Ivashka, Belarus, def. Denis Shapovalov (3), Canada, 6-4, 6-7 (2), 6-3.
Men's Doubles
Round of 16
Nikola Mektic and Mate Pavic (1), Croatia, def. Sander Arends, Netherlands, and Szymon Walkow, Poland, 6-4, 6-4.

Men's Doubles

Quarterfinals
Roman Jebavy, Czech Republic, and Hunter Reese, United States, def. Ivan Sabanov and Matej Sabanov, Serbia, 6-3, 6-4.
Pablo Andujar, Spain, and Matwe Midelkoop, Netherlands, def. Jakub Paul and Leandro Riedi, Switzerland, walkover.
Joao Sousa and Francisco Cabral, Portugal, def. Jean-Julien Rojer, Netherlands, and Marcelo Arevalo-Gonzalez (3), El Salvador, 7-5, 3-6, 11-9.

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	4	1	.800	—
Washington	4	1	.800	—
Connecticut	2	1	.667	1
Chicago	2	2	.500	1½
Indiana	2	4	.333	2½
New York	1	4	.200	3

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Las Vegas	4	1	.800	—
Phoenix	2	2	.500	1½
Dallas	2	2	.500	1½
Los Angeles	2	3	.400	2
Seattle	2	3	.400	2
Minnesota	1	4	.200	3

Wednesday's games

Seattle 74, Chicago 71

Thursday's games

Dallas at Phoenix
Minnesota at Las Vegas

SOCCER

MLS

Eastern Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	5	1	6	21	16	9
NYCFC	6	3	2	20	23	10
CF Montréal	6	4	2	20	23	21
Orlando City	6	4	2	20	14	15
New York	5	2	5	20	20	12
Cincinnati	6	5	1	19	16	18
Atlanta	4	4	3	15	17	16
D.C. United	4	6	1	13	14	17
Charlotte FC	4	7	1	13	10	15
Columbus	3	4	4	13	15	13
New England	3	5	3	12	18	20
Inter Miami CF	3	6	3	12	11	21
Toronto FC	3	7	2	11	16	23
Chicago	2	5	5	11	11	16

Western Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Austin FC	7	3	2	23	25	12
LAFC	7	3	2	23	24	14
FC Dallas	6	2	4	22	20	10
LA Galaxy	6	4	2	20	13	11
Real Salt Lake	5	3	4	19	12	16
Nashville	5	4	3	18	13	13
Houston	4	5	3	15	14	14
Colorado	4	5	3	15	14	14
Minnesota	4	5	3	15	13	13
Portland	3	4	6	15	20	21
Seattle	4	5	1	13	13	14
San Jose	3	5	4	13	22	28
Sporting KC	3	7	3	12	12	24
Vancouver	3	6	2	11	12	21

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Wednesday's games

New York City FC 2, D.C. United 0
Chicago 3, New York 3, tie
Miami 0, Philadelphia 0, tie
LA Galaxy 1, Minnesota 1, tie
Seattle 1, Houston 0
Sporting Kansas City 2, Colorado 1
Nashville 2, CF Montréal 1
Vancouver 2, FC Dallas 1
Austin FC 2, Los Angeles FC 1
San Jose 3, Portland 2

Saturday's games

Los Angeles FC at Columbus
Toronto FC at D.C. United
New England at Cincinnati
Atlanta at Nashville

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego	3	1	0	9	7	2
Orlando	2	1	1	7	5	6
Angel City	2	1	0	6	3	2
Portland	1	0	2	5	4	1
Louisville	1	1	2	5	5	5
Houston	1	1	1	4	3	2
Washington	1	1	1	4	3	3
Chicago	1	1	0	3	3	3
Gotham FC	1	1	0	3	3	4
OL Reign	0	1	2	2	3	4
Kansas City	0	2	1	1	2	7
North Carolina	0	2	0	0	2	4

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Wednesday's games

Orlando 2, North Carolina 1
Louisville 1, San Diego Wave FC 0
Washington 1, Portland 1, tie

Saturday's games

Houston at Portland
Kansas City at Angel City FC



MATT ROURKE/AP

Buffalo Bills players make their way to the scene of Saturday's shooting at a supermarket, in Buffalo, N.Y., Wednesday. The Bills, the Sabres and the city's pro lacrosse team, the Bandits, all showed their support for the neighborhood on Wednesday.

Buffalo teams visit, offer support at mass shooting site

BY CAROLYN THOMPSON
Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Buffalo resident Jamie Lash was giddy as Buffalo Bills player Josh Thomas draped his arm around her shoulder and smiled for a picture Wednesday. It was a rare moment of lightness in a week spent mourning the violent deaths of 10 people at the Tops supermarket where she used to work.

"It means unity. It means support," Lash said, adjusting the Bills cap someone else from the team had placed on her head.

"We see the Bills mafia everywhere supporting us," said Thomas, a defensive back on the team.

He was one of dozens of players and staff from the NFL team, the NHL's Buffalo Sabres and the Buffalo Bandits professional lacrosse team to emerge from four tour buses at the scene of Saturday's racist attack, where they laid flowers, dished out food and handed out groceries.

The first stop was a group visit to a memorial at the edge of the store's parking lot, where several players placed flowers in front of cutouts of doves, each bearing the name of a victim.

"It's real, going to the actual site and putting flowers down and seeing the people that were affected," Bills tight end Dawson Knox said. "I still can't truly wrap my mind around it, but it definitely hits differently actually being here."

Like many in the group, Bills offensive lineman Dion Dawkins wore a shirt that said "Choose Love."

After six years in Buffalo, "I am part of this community," he said, calling the attack "a sad act."

"Somebody planned an attack,"

Dawkins said, "did the demographic of this community, said 'This is where they are at the most, let's attack there,' and that's what they did," he said. "I see it more as a terrorist attack to a background of people."

"In the year that we're in now," he said, "I figured people see that your neighbor could be Indian, your neighbor could be Russian, Caucasian, Asian, they could be African. We all live together, we have to make it work. You don't have to love everybody, but you have to show love in some type of way."

From behind tables, quarterback Josh Allen and other players served hot meals of chicken Alfredo with broccoli and handed out lettuce, radishes and other produce to residents.

"This week has been terrible," said Shervon White, who lives near the store and came early to see the team. "Just seeing the community come together means so much. To see the Bills come here, it kind of lightened the spirit of the area."

Twelve-year-old Christopher Boyd smiled at the turn his week had taken as he met players from the Bills team he loves.

"When it first happened I kind of felt unsafe in my home a little bit," he said.

"When I'm here today and I see the Bills," Christopher said, "I just feel like they are giving back to the community. They are showing love as we show them when they're playing on the field. It's just one big happy family, community."

The Buffalo Bills Foundation said it would donate \$200,000 to relief efforts, an amount that will be matched by the NFL Foundation, the team said on Twitter.

DEALS

Wednesday's Transactions

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball American League

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Reinstated RHP Lucas Giolito from the 10-day IL. Transferred RHP Lance Lynn from the 10-day IL to the 60-day IL. Optioned RHPs Davis Martin and Kyle Crick to Charlotte (IL).

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Optioned RHP Brady Singer to Omaha (IL).

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Recalled LHP Jose Suarez from Salt Lake (PCL). Designated RHP Cesar Valdez for assignment. Assigned OF Aaron Whitefield outright to Rocket City (SL).

MINNESOTA TWINS — Reinstated SS Carlos Correa from the 10-day IL. Optioned INF Royce Lewis to St. Paul (IL).

OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Recalled INF Nick Allen from Las Vegas (PCL). Optioned LHP Zach Logue to Las Vegas.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Reinstated RHP Phoenix Sanders from the 15-day IL and optioned him to Durham (IL). Selected the contract of RHP Luke Bard and optioned him to Durham. Transferred RHP Chris Mazza from the 10-day IL to the 60-day IL.

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Recalled INF Yonny Hernandez and RHP Jacob Webb from the taxi squad. Recalled RHP Luis Frias from Reno (PCL). Placed OF Cooper Hummel and LHP Kyle Nelson on the IL. Optioned RHP Edwin Uceta to Reno. Acquired LHP Paul Fry from Baltimore in exchange for RHP Luis Osorio. Fry was then optioned to Reno (PCL).

CHICAGO CUBS — Activated RHP David Robertson off the 10-day IL. Optioned RHP Mark Leiter Jr. to Iowa (IL).

COLORADO ROCKIES — Optioned RHP Ashton Goudeau to Albuquerque (PCL).

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Optioned RHP Ryan Pepiot to Oklahoma City (PCL).

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Placed SS Willy Adames on the 10-day IL, retroactive to May 16. Recalled INF Keston Hiura from Nashville (IL).

NEW YORK METS — Optioned RHP Adonis Medina to Syracuse (IL).

SAN DIEGO PADRES — Activated LHP Blake Snell from the 10-day IL. Optioned LHP Ray Kerr to El Paso (PCL).

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association

NBA — Fined the Dallas Mavericks \$50,000 for violating league rules regarding team bench decorum in a game against Phoenix on May 15.

Women's National Basketball Association

SEATTLE STORM — Announced Fs Kaela Davis was a hardship release and Breanna Stewart was set to active.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed LB Myjai Sanders to a four-year contract.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Signed S Daxton Hall to a four-year contract.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Signed CB Parnell Motley.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed CB Jaire Alexander to a contract extension. Signed S Jack Coco. Released T Jahmir Johnson.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Signed RB Phillip Lindsay. Waived RB Max Borghi.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Signed DE Morgan Fox.

MIAMI DOLPHINS — Signed LB Melvin Ingram III. Waived QB Chris Streveler.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Signed G Josh Andrews and DT Josh Black. Placed LB Sharif Finch on injured reserve.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Signed DE Jalyn Holmes, S Henry Black, CBS Maurice Canady and Khalil Dorsey. Waived QB Brian Lawrence, DE Raymond Johnson III and DB Jordan Mosely (injury designation). Terminated the contract of LB Trent Harris.

NEW YORK JETS — Signed WR Garrett Wilson to a four-year contract.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed CB James Bradberry to a one-year contract.

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Signed WR Jahan Dotson to a four-year contract. Released OT Drew Himmelman. Signed RB Brian Robinson to a rookie contract.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

CALGARY FLAMES — Recalled D Juuso Valimaki from Stockton (AHL) from loan.

DALLAS STARS — Signed F Fredrik Olofsson to a one-year contract.

EDMONTON OILERS — Recalled RW Colton Sceviour from Bakersfield (AHL).

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

D.C. UNITED — Acquired D Sami Guediri on a four-day loan from Loudoun United FC (USL).

FC DALLAS — Announced D Nanu (Guinea-Bissau) and W Szabolcs Schon (Hungary) have been called up to represent their respective countries in the upcoming FIFA international.

COLLEGE

MILWAUKEE — Named Peter Baran associate athletic director for compliance.

YALE — Named Sam Guastella assistant women's basketball coach.

NHL PLAYOFFS

Tkachuk hat trick helps Flames top Oilers in Game 1

Associated Press

CALGARY, Alberta — The first Battle of Alberta in the playoffs in 31 years didn't disappoint.

The Calgary Flames got a hat trick from Matthew Tkachuk to outlast the Edmonton Oilers 9-6 and grab Game 1 of the second round series Wednesday night after a blistering game that saw the most goals in a postseason game in 29 years.

"Strange game," Flames coach Darryl Sutter said. "We scored on our first two shots and there were probably six different games out there. Take the win. Move on."

Blake Coleman scored twice for Calgary. Rasmus Andersson and Andrew Mangiapane each had a goal and two assists, and Elias Lindholm and Brett Ritchie also scored. Jacob Markstrom stopped 22 shots for the win.

Zach Hyman scored twice for the Oilers and Connor McDavid had a goal and three assists for his fourth straight multipoint game in the playoffs.

McDavid leads the league's postseason points race with five goals and 13 assists. Leon Draisaitl had a goal and two assists and Kailer Yamamoto and Evan Bou-

chard also scored for Edmonton.

Oilers starter Mike Smith was pulled in the first period after allowing three goals on 10 shots. Mikko Koskinen made 32 saves in relief.

"We fought back and made it a game, but we can't feel good about that in any way because we scored six goals in game and found a way to not win it," Edmonton coach Jay Woodcroft said.

The winner of the best-of-seven series advances to the Western Conference final. Game 2 is Friday at the Saddledome before the series heads to Oilers home ice for Sunday's Game 3 and Tuesday's Game 4.

It was the highest scoring postseason game since Los Angeles beat the Flames 9-6 in the 1993 division semifinals.

In a matchup of potent offenses, Calgary scored twice in a 25-second span in the first minute and led 3-0 by 6:05 when Smith was replaced by Koskinen. The Flames' two goals in the opening 51 seconds were the fastest two goals to start an NHL playoff game, and electrified a sea of red dotted with Edmonton orange and blue at the Scotiabank Saddledome.



JEFF MCINTOSH/AP

Calgary Flames forward Matthew Tkachuk, right, celebrates a goal against the Edmonton Oilers with forward Johnny Gaudreau. Tkachuk had three goals in a 9-6 win Wednesday in Calgary in Game 1 of a second-round series.

"Couldn't ask for a better start, but you've got to have that killer mindset and you've got to be able to put teams down and keep pushing them down," Coleman said. "We made some mental mistakes in the second period, got away from our checking game a little bit. The good news is it's correctable.

"That's not our style of game, 9-6. It's great that we got the Game 1 win but there's a lot to dissect here."

The Oilers did not go quietly, however. Calgary held a 40-18 edge in shots after two periods, but led 6-5 heading to the third.

Yamamoto briefly tied the game at 1:28 of the final period,

putting McDavid's rebound over Markstrom's outstretched pad.

Andersson regained the lead for the Flames at 2:57 after getting a pass from Mangiapane from behind the net. Tkachuk made it 8-6 at 8:55 with his second of the night and scored into an empty net to complete his first postseason hat trick.

Cole's OT goal lift Canes past Rangers in opener

BY AARON BEARD

Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Sebastian Aho extended the game. Ian Cole ended it. And that allowed the Carolina Hurricanes to escape their first home loss of the playoffs despite being completely outplayed most of the night.

Cole beat Igor Shesterkin at 3:12 of overtime to help the Hurricanes beat the New York Rangers 2-1 Wednesday night, making a late rally to win Game 1 of their second-round playoff series.

Aho had forced the extra period when he pushed one past Shesterkin late in the third period in a dramatic finish. Yet it overshadowed that the Metropolitan Division winners were fortunate to win after the Rangers controlled the first 40 minutes.

"Kudos to our guys, they got it going in, it certainly was a good third period," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We're not going to get away with that, not playing two periods and expect to win a game — especially at this time of year against that team."

The Hurricanes won home-ice by securing the division title with a win against New York in Madison Square Garden in the final week of the regular season. They nearly handed it over but instead will seek a sixth straight win here when they host Game 2 on Friday night.

Cole's rebound winner clipped the stick of Rangers defenseman Ryan Lindgren, with the puck changing direction before slipping past Shesterkin.



KARL B DEBLAKER/AP

The New York Rangers' Ryan Strome, center, drives the puck past the Hurricanes' Brady Skjei, left, only to have it blocked by Carolina goaltender Antti Raanta, who had 27 saves in a 2-1 overtime win Wednesday in Game 1 of the second-round series in Raleigh, N.C.

"I was looking to pass it to someone," Cole said. "And no one was really kind of anywhere dangerous. So I was like, 'Well, I guess I'll throw it on net and see what happens.'"

"Hockey's a game of weird bounces and it happened to go in. Not the prettiest, but we'll take it."

The score capped Carolina's late comeback, which began with the Hurricanes showing more urgency and aggression coming out of the second intermission.

Carolina also got a key effort from Antti Raanta, who had 27 saves and helped the Hurricanes hang around until their attack finally took its fa-

miliar form.

"They put a big push on in the third period in the first 10 minutes, and we weathered that storm," Rangers coach Gerard Gallant said. "But the first two periods was perfect hockey for us. ... I thought it was our best game of the year, I really did."

Filip Chytil scored the first-period goal for New York, while Shesterkin finished with 24 saves.

Both teams advanced through grueling seven-game first-round series, first with Carolina finally getting past Boston on Saturday followed by the Rangers rallying past Pittsburgh in overtime a day later.

The Hurricanes never trailed in that series nor in their four home wins. New York had to rally from a 3-1 series deficit, which included Shesterkin — finalist for the Vezina Trophy for league's top goalie and Hart Trophy for league MVP — bouncing back from surrendering 10 goals in Games 3 and 4.

Yet when this one started, it was Carolina which looked a step slow.

As defenseman Tony DeAngelo tried to send the puck back to teammate Jaccob Slavin for a reset, Rangers forward Alexis Lafrenière stole the pass to lead a 3-on-2 rush. Lafrenière passed to Chytil, who one-timed the puck from the right side past the extended stick of Slavin and Raanta at 7:07 of the first.

That lone-goal lead held up for more than 50 minutes.

Scoreboard

Second round

(Best-of-seven; x-if necessary)

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Carolina 1, N.Y. Rangers 0

Carolina 2, N.Y. Rangers 1, OT

Wednesday: Carolina 2, N.Y. Rangers 1, OT

Friday: at Carolina. AFN-Sports2, 2 a.m.

Saturday CET; 9 a.m. Saturday JKT

Sunday: at N.Y. Rangers. AFN-Sports2, 10

p.m. Sunday CET; 5 a.m. Monday JKT

Tuesday: at N.Y. Rangers. AFN-Sports2, 1

a.m. Wednesday CET; 8 a.m. Wednesday

JKT

x-Thursday, May 26: at Carolina

x-Saturday, May 28: at N.Y. Rangers

x-Monday, May 30: at Carolina

Tampa Bay 1, Florida 0

Tampa Bay 4, Florida 1

Thursday: at Florida. AFN-Sports2, 1 a.m.

Friday CET; 8 a.m. Friday JKT

Sunday: at Tampa Bay. AFN-Sports2,

7:30 p.m. Sunday CET; 2:30 a.m. Monday

JKT

Monday: at Tampa Bay. AFN-Sports2, 1

a.m. Tuesday CET; 8 a.m. Tuesday JKT

x-Wednesday, May 25: at Florida

x-Friday, May 27: at Tampa Bay

x-Sunday, May 29: at Florida

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Calgary 1, Edmonton 0

Wednesday: Calgary 9, Edmonton 6

Friday: at Calgary. AFN-Sports2, 4:30

a.m. Saturday CET; 11:30 a.m. Saturday JKT

Sunday: at Edmonton. AFN-Sports2, 2

a.m. Monday CET; 9 a.m. Monday JKT

Tuesday: at Edmonton. AFN-Sports2,

3:30 a.m. Wednesday CET; 10:30 a.m. Wednesday JKT

x-Thursday, May 26: at Calgary

x-Saturday, May 28: at Edmonton

x-Monday, May 30: at Calgary

Colorado 1, St. Louis 0

Colorado 3, St. Louis 2 (OT)

Thursday: at Colorado. AFN-Sports2,

3:30 a.m. Friday CET; 10:30 a.m. Friday JKT

Saturday: at St. Louis. AFN-Sports2, 2

a.m. Sunday CET; 9 a.m. Sunday JKT

Monday: at St. Louis. AFN-Sports2, 3:30

a.m. Tuesday CET; 10:30 a.m. Tuesday JKT

x-Wednesday, May 25: at Colorado

x-Friday, May 27: at St. Louis

x-Sunday, May 29: at Colorado

NHL/MLB

Battle of Alberta splits fans across province

Associated Press

RED DEER, Alberta — The old Crown and Anchor bar in Red Deer was famous for its line drawn down the middle when hosting fans during the Battle of Alberta playoff games of the late 1980s.

Calgary Flames fans on one side. Edmonton Oilers fans on the other.

NHL allegiances, after all, are split in the community of just over 100,000 people that sits just about halfway between the two cities on Highway 2, about 95 miles from each. The Flames lost 9-6 the Oilers in Game 1 Wednesday to kick off the second round of the NHL playoffs in a Battle of Alberta with stakes not seen in decades.

Calgary got a hat trick from Matthew Tkachuk to outlast the Edmonton in a blistering game that saw the most goals in a post-season game in 29 years. It was perhaps, a sign of things to come in what is expected to be a fiercely competitive series.

“To see both fan bases totally engaged in playoffs is something that has just never happened in a lot of people’s lifetimes who are under the age of 40,” said Merrick Sutter, senior vice president of the Red Deer Rebels and nephew of Flames coach Darryl Sutter. “We see it every day in Red Deer, just the sheer nature of being exactly in the middle.”

The Oilers and Flames have met five times in the postseason, but not in 31 years. Three of the series went seven games and the Oilers won four of them.

Red Deer wins no matter which team emerges victorious, Mayor Ken Johnston said.

“Really, every city from Fort McMurray in the north to Lethbridge in the south is going to benefit from the series, the bars, the restaurants, the hospitality industry, the ability for people to come together and socialize ... and it couldn’t come at a better time from that perspective,” he told The Canadian Press. “People are just so eager to get out and be in person.”

The mayor, by the way, is pulling for the Flames; he has a Calgary jersey and a hat signed by Flames legend Lanny McDonald.

“Being a good mayor, I also have a little Oilers fanfare to wear from time to time,” he added with a laugh.

Sutter said allegiances in the Battle of Alberta have generational roots. His, of course, were forged in his family’s long history with the Flames. His dad Brent, now owner, president and GM of the Rebels, coached the Flames for three seasons. Uncle Darryl’s first coaching stint in Calgary was in 2003.

“Not many can understand, but



JEFF MCINTOSH/AP

Edmonton Oilers fans will be cheering against their province rivals in a second-round series. The Oilers took a 1-0 lead in the series with a 9-6 win Wednesday against the Calgary Flames.

there’s not very many circumstances where you have two franchises with such a longstanding rivalry,” he said. “This goes back to grandparents and parents, back in the ’80s and whatnot. It’s embedded. Now, to be able to reignite it is special, but to me it’s really about the younger people who have never seen that rivalry.”

Troy Gillard, who does play-by-play of Rebels games, said Red Deer has unique connections to both teams. He believes the Oilers won some new fans when the club drafted Rebels center Ryan Nugent-Hopkins first overall in 2011.

“Even here at the Rebels, we’re split pretty much 50/50. It’s gonna be a lot of fun around here the next couple of weeks,” Gillard said.

The 2022 playoffs are the first held in full arenas in Canada since the pandemic began. Red Deer was slammed by the omicron variant this past winter, prompting the cancellation of the world junior championships after just four days.

Now, Red Deer bars are buzzing with anticipation after a couple of years of hard times.

“We’re all very very excited, it’s been a long time to have this kind of thing happen,” said Brennen Wowk, an Oilers fan and owner of Bo’s Bar & Stage. “Staff will be in jerseys of their choice, we’ll be pouring lots of beer and have the volume on as loud as it can go.”

Dallas Gaume, the GM of the Red Deer Minor Hockey Association, hopes the clash will help hockey registration numbers in Red Deer return to pre-pandemic numbers. There was no season in 2020-21 due to COVID-19, and the number of returning players dropped by 7.5% this past winter.

“A lot of eyes are going to be on the province in the next two weeks, and I really think we’re going to get some growth out of this,” he said.

Scoreboard

American League East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	28	9	.757	—
Tampa Bay	23	15	.605	5½
Toronto	20	18	.526	8½
Boston	15	22	.405	13
Baltimore	14	24	.368	14½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	22	16	.579	—
Chicago	18	19	.486	3½
Cleveland	16	18	.471	4
Kansas City	14	22	.389	7
Detroit	13	25	.342	9

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	24	14	.632	—
Los Angeles	24	16	.600	1
Texas	17	19	.472	6
Seattle	17	21	.447	7
Oakland	16	24	.400	9

National League East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	25	14	.641	—
Philadelphia	18	19	.486	6
Miami	17	20	.459	7
Atlanta	17	21	.447	7½
Washington	13	26	.333	12

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	24	14	.632	—
St. Louis	20	17	.541	3½
Pittsburgh	16	21	.432	7½
Chicago	15	21	.417	8
Cincinnati	10	26	.278	13

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	25	12	.676	—
San Diego	23	14	.622	2
San Francisco	22	15	.595	3
Colorado	18	19	.486	7
Arizona	18	21	.462	8

Wednesday’s games

Tampa Bay 6, Detroit 1
 Minnesota 14, Oakland 4
 Boston 5, Houston 1
 N.Y. Yankees 3, Baltimore 2
 Seattle 5, Toronto 1
 Kansas City 6, Chicago White Sox 2
 Texas 6, L.A. Angels 5, 10 innings
 Cincinnati at Cleveland, p.p.d.
 Milwaukee 7, Atlanta 6, 11 innings
 Colorado 5, San Francisco 3
 L.A. Dodgers 5, Arizona 3
 Philadelphia 3, San Diego 0
 Washington 5, Miami 4, 10 innings
 N.Y. Mets 11, St. Louis 4
 Pittsburgh 3, Chicago Cubs 2

Thursday’s games

N.Y. Yankees at Baltimore
 Cincinnati at Cleveland
 Chicago White Sox at Kansas City
 Seattle at Boston
 Texas at Houston
 San Diego at Philadelphia
 St. Louis at N.Y. Mets
 Arizona at Chicago Cubs

Friday’s games

Chicago White Sox (Keuchel 2-3) at N.Y. Yankees (Cortes Jr. 2-1)
 Tampa Bay (Beeks 1-0) at Baltimore (Wells 1-3)
 Cincinnati (Castillo 0-1) at Toronto (Ryu 0-0)
 Detroit (Skubal 3-2) at Cleveland (Civale 1-3)
 Seattle (Ray 4-3) at Boston (TBD)
 Minnesota (Smeltzer 0-0) at Kansas City (Lynch 2-2)
 Texas (Pérez 2-2) at Houston (Javier 2-1)
 Oakland (Blackburn 4-0) at L.A. Angels (Silseth 1-0)
 Arizona (Castellanos 2-1) at Chicago Cubs (Hendricks 2-3)
 St. Louis (Wainwright 4-3) at Pittsburgh (Thompson 2-3)
 Atlanta (Morton 2-3) at Miami (Rogers 2-4)
 L.A. Dodgers (Urias 2-3) at Philadelphia (Suárez 4-1)
 Washington (Fedde 2-2) at Milwaukee (Lauer 3-1)
 N.Y. Mets (Carrasco 3-1) at Colorado (Márquez 1-3)
 San Diego (Manaea 2-3) at San Francisco (Junis 1-1)

Saturday’s games

Chicago White Sox at N.Y. Yankees
 Cincinnati at Toronto
 Seattle at Boston
 Detroit at Cleveland
 Tampa Bay at Baltimore
 Minnesota at Kansas City
 Texas at Houston
 Oakland at L.A. Angels
 Arizona at Chicago Cubs
 San Diego at San Francisco
 L.A. Dodgers at Philadelphia
 Atlanta at Miami
 St. Louis at Pittsburgh
 Washington at Milwaukee
 N.Y. Mets at Colorado



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Mets starting pitcher Max Scherzer, right, leaves during the sixth inning of Wednesday’s game against the St. Louis Cardinals.

Scherzer pulls self in 6th of Mets rout

By Mike Fitzpatrick

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Max Scherzer had a four-run lead in the sixth inning and everything was rolling right along for the New York Mets — same as all season.

Until the three-time Cy Young Award winner signaled to the dugout he was done.

Scherzer pulled himself from a start Wednesday night with discomfort in his left side before New York finished off an 11-4 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals. He plans to get an MRI on Thursday.

“I don’t think this is a major strain,” Scherzer said. “I was kind of tight and then all of a sudden it went. But I don’t feel like I really ripped it. It just kind of got worse. So hopefully I got out of there quick enough to prevent a major injury here because I know oblique, intercostal, those things can be nasty. Hopefully I avoided a serious injury.”

Pete Alonso homered and drove in four runs for the Mets (25-14), already missing ace starter Jacob deGrom and his effective replacement in the rotation, Tylor Megill, because of injuries.

Still, they improved to 13-1 following a loss. The only time they dropped consecutive games this season was April 10-11.

Jeff McNeil had an early two-run single and Alonso snapped a 2-all tie with an RBI single off rookie reliever Jake Walsh (0-1) in a four-run fifth. Dominic Smith singled home a run and Luis Guillorme drove in another with a nicely executed safety squeeze.

New York batters were hit by pitches three times, increasing their major league-leading total to 28. That includes eight by Cardinals pitchers in six games — the teams got into a bench-clearing melee in St. Louis last month.

Both clubs were warned Wednesday night after Mark Canha was hit near the ribs by a 98 mph fastball from Cardinals starter

Jordan Hicks in the third, but there was no trouble between the teams.

Canha scored three times and followed Brandon Nimmo’s run-scoring triple with an RBI single as the Mets broke open a 6-4 game with a five-run eighth capped by Alonso’s three-run homer off struggling lefty T.J. McFarland.

Nolan Arenado hit a two-run homer for St. Louis in the eighth. Albert Pujols got two hits to pass Eddie Collins for 10th place on the career list with 3,314, including an early two-run single off Scherzer (5-1).

The 37-year-old right-hander left with two outs in the sixth and a 1-1 count on Pujols.

“It’s in spasm right now. It doesn’t feel real good,” he said after the game, chuckling. “But once you get the spasm subside, what’s the actual extent of this injury? We don’t know. So we’ll know tomorrow.”

With two runners on, Scherzer threw a slider in the dirt and immediately motioned to the New York bench that he was finished.

“Just felt a zing on my left side and just knew I was done,” he said. “When I felt it, I just knew there’s no way you can throw another pitch, so just get out of there.”

Pitching coach Jeremy Hefner, manager Buck Showalter and a trainer came out to the mound. After a quick discussion, Scherzer walked off the field.

“I don’t rush out there, because usually it’s not really good news,” Showalter said. “He’s been a great self-evaluator. He knows when he’s at a point where if he pushes more, it’s going to turn into something serious.”

“He’s not going to put himself in harm’s way. A lot of guys might have tried to continue to pitch. I’m hoping we caught whatever’s in there at an earlier stage of it.”

Scherzer threw 61 of his 87 pitches for strikes and left with a 6-2 lead against his hometown team.

AUTO RACING/HORSE RACING

Dixon seeks to jump-start season at Indy

Driver, who won just once last year, looks return to 2020's title-winning form at Indy 500

By JENNA FRYERS
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Scott Dixon won't sugarcoat the start he has had this season: "It's been pretty horrendous," the six-time IndyCar champion admitted.

There's no race like the Indianapolis 500 to turn a season around, and Dixon got off to a strong start in pursuit of his second win at "The Greatest Spectacle of Racing."

He spent hours atop the scoring pylon on the opening day of Indy 500 preparations until a late run by Takuma Sato bumped Dixon to second on the speed chart. Dixon put little stock in Tuesday's showing at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

"Let's see what the rest of the week brings," he said.

Wednesday brought rain to the speedway and hours of idle time for drivers.

Dixon wanted to be in his car working with Chip Ganassi Racing to figure out how to jump-start his season. The 41-year-old New Zealander has high expectations for himself and simply hasn't been meeting them since he wrapped up his sixth title in 2020 — a championship that moved him within one of A.J. Foyt's record seven titles.

He was overshadowed much of last season by new teammate Alex Palou, who won the season-opening race to launch his own championship-winning campaign. Dixon won only once last season and failed to win multiple IndyCar races in a season for just the sixth time in 21 full years with Ganassi.



Dixon



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Scott Dixon, of New Zealand, climbs into his car during practice for the Indianapolis 500 on Tuesday. Dixon won only once last season and failed to win multiple IndyCar races in a season for just the sixth time in 21 full years with Chip Ganassi Racing.

That 51st victory last year did move Dixon within one win of tying Mario Andretti for second on the all-time wins list, but that's where he's sat for the last 18 starts. It is Dixon's longest winless streak since 2003 through 2005 when he went 40 races between wins.

He's called "The Iceman" because Dixon is typically so calm and collected. This challenging stretch has tested his temperament.

"I definitely get frustrated. I swear a lot," he said. "But that's just because we're all com-

petitive. It's always tough, been in this position before, it's nothing new. We'll turn it around and we'll get on with it."

What's jarring through five races is how underwhelming he has been. He has struggled in qualifying, has yet to score a podium, his highest finish is a pair of fifths and he's not led any laps since the 26 he was out front in the season opener.

Dario Franchitti, Dixon's close friend and former teammate and rival, noted Dixon has never not rebounded.

"We've had a lot of chats over the last month or so and he's mad. He hates being beaten," Franchitti said. Franchitti beat Dixon for the title head-to-head four times, including three times as Ganassi teammates.

"He's been through a lot more difficult situations through his career, and if you look at 2007, when I beat him for the championship and the 500, you watch his recovery in 2008 and it shows you he's tough. He's as mentally tough as any person I know."

Dixon returned from his 2007 losses to Franchitti to win six races, including his only Indy 500 and the championship.

He is fifth in the IndyCar standings headed into the May 29 race, but only because Dixon has salvaged all five race weekends. His problems have come in qualifying — Dixon has started 16th, 13th and 21st in the last three races — and he made up 10 spots at Long Beach, eight spots at Barber and 11 spots last Saturday on Indy's road course.

He's been flabbergasted by what he called two "pretty big mistakes that we did as a group that should have never happened."

"I think we got into a bit of a weird snowball effect here on the road course, and honestly we just changed way too much stuff, and when you do that, you just miss the balance," Dixon said. "With how tight the competition is right now, then you're going to be out to lunch, and we definitely were."

He's had a strange career with the Indy 500 in 19 career starts: Dixon started from the pole four times but has just the 2008 victory and three runner-up finishes to show for it.

Franchitti said he believes the 500 can be the turning point Dixon needs.

"Scott knows they've got to improve, everybody on that team knows that," Franchitti said. "And they know how to improve it. If you don't know what you are doing wrong, then you've got a problem. He's not in that situation."

Another long shot? Fenwick is 50-1 in Preakness

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Rich Strike winning the Kentucky Derby at 80-1 may not be the only big upset this Triple Crown season.

Not if Fenwick has anything to do about it.

Two weeks after Rich Strike became the second-biggest long shot to win the Derby, Fenwick could join him in the record books at the Preakness Stakes. The 50-1 shot also has as heartwarming a story and is as unlikely to be on the Triple Crown trail: named after owner Jeremia Rudan's mother who died in a house fire when he was 19 and running for Kevin McKathan two years after the trainer lost his brother because of a heart attack.

"This is one of those deals where you can stop and take a breath and say: 'You know what, we can do this,'" McKathan said Wednesday. "It can happen."

Fenwick has the longest odds of any horse in the field of nine for Saturday's Preakness, which is being run without Rich Strike, largely because Fenwick finished last in his most recent race in April and has just one win in six lifetime starts. Rich Strike also had only won once before shocking the sports world in the Derby.

"Everyone's like, 'This is a real sport for the

Scoreboard

Preakness Odds

The field for Saturday's 147th Preakness Stakes, with post position, horse, jockey's name and odds:

Horse	Jockey	Odds
1. Simplification	John Velazquez	6-1
2. Creative Minister	Brian Hernandez Jr.	10-1
3. Fenwick	Florent Geroux	50-1
4. Secret Oath	Luis Saez	9-2
5. Early Voting	Jose Ortiz	7-2
6. Happy Jack	Tyler Gaffalione	30-1
7. Armagnac	Irad Ortiz Jr.	12-1
8. Epicenter	Joel Rosario	6-5
9. Skippylongstocking	Jose Alvarado	20-1

rich and famous," McKathan said. "But let me tell you what: You just end up with a good horse and you can beat 'em all. That horse has no idea. He has no idea what he cost. He has no idea who owns that guy. He has no idea what kind of plane they flew in here on. They don't know."

Few know much about Fenwick, who was bought by Rudan and McKathan for the modest sum of \$52,000 as a yearling and went unsold as a 2-year-old after a freak accident caused him to run slower than expected.

"He goes faster, he brings \$900,000 and

we're not here," McKathan said. "Someone else is."

Perhaps it's par for the course for the big chestnut colt who McKathan acknowledged runs into troubles on the racetrack. That would explain the 11th-place finish in the Blue Grass Stakes on April 9 when Rudan said Fenwick "broke a step slow (and) got cut off in the corner."

"He's the kind of horse who needs to be free to run," Rudan said. "He didn't get that chance. I'm not saying he would have won, but if he had made that hole on the first turn, it might have been a different race."

The race, as it played out, was a big reason Pimlico's Keith Feustle didn't think highly of his odds of winning the Preakness against Derby runner-up Epicenter and Kentucky Oaks-winning filly Secret Oath, among others.

"You're going to need that racing luck to have something like an 80-1 win again," said trainer Tim Yakteen, who has Armagnac in the Preakness after running Taiba and Mesier in the Derby. "It doesn't happen very often."

Fenwick also was a late addition to the Preakness. Technically, Fenwick is McKathan's first starter in a Triple Crown race, but

the veteran horseman got training started for Bob Baffert's Real Quiet, Silver Charm and American Pharoah.

He has all three of their names tattooed on his left arm and called American Pharoah's 2015 run to end the sport's lengthy Triple Crown drought "life-changing." Fenwick could presumably join them if he pulls off a Preakness upset.

"Given the opportunity and everything kind of goes his way, he deserves to be here and he'll show them," McKathan said. "I think he is special."

It would also be special given the grief his owner and trainer have experienced. Rudan's mother got him into racing and after calling him "Sunshine," he thought it only fitting to honor her, especially because the horse's mother was Make the Sun Shine.

The sun was shining during an early morning this week at Pimlico when McKathan got emotional talking about brother and longtime partner J.B. who died Feb. 3, 2019, at age 53. He wasn't sure what to say but perked up when asked what his brother would think of him entering Fenwick in the Preakness.

"Oh, he'd think I'm crazy," McKathan said with a chuckle. "My brother would be like: 'What are you doing? Don't do that.'"

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



PAUL SANCYA/AP

Alabama coach Nick Saban called out fellow Southeastern Conference school Texas A&M for “buying” players in its top-ranked recruiting class with name, image and likeness deals.

Saban says Texas A&M used NILs to buy players

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Alabama coach Nick Saban called out Texas A&M on Wednesday night for “buying” players in its top-ranked recruiting class with name, image and likeness deals, saying Crimson Tide football players earned more than \$3 million last year “the right way.”

“I know the consequence is going to be difficult for the people who are spending tons of money to get players,” Saban said while speaking at an event in Birmingham, Ala., to promote the World Games being held there in July.

“You read about it, you know who they are. We were second in recruiting last year. A&M was first. A&M bought every player on their team. Made a deal for name, image and likeness. We didn’t buy one player. But I don’t know if we’re going to be able to sustain that in the future, because more and more people are doing it. It’s tough.”

Saban’s comments were first reported by AL.com and echoed some of the points he made in March during an interview with The Associated Press.

The NCAA lifted most of its rules barring athletes from earning money from sponsorship and endorsement deals last July, but there are concerns among many in college sports that NIL deals are being used

to as recruiting inducements and de facto pay-for-play.

Last week, the NCAA issued guidance to Division I members to clarify its rules against boosters being involved in recruiting.

On Wednesday night, the 70-year-old Saban, who has won six national championships, was more targeted in his critique of the current state of college football.

“We have a rule right now that said you cannot use name, image and likeness to entice a player to come to your school. Hell, read about it in the paper,” Saban said. “Jackson State paid a guy a million dollars last year that was a really good Division I player to come to school.”

Jackson State and coach Deion Sanders landed one

of the most highly rated recruits in the country in cornerback Travis Hunter, who had been committed to Florida State until a signing day flip in December.

Sanders has denied Jackson State made any impermissible offers to Hunter to get him to sign with the historically black college that competes in the second tier of Division I football.

“You best believe I will address that LIE Coach SABAN told tomorrow,” Sanders tweeted. “We as a PEOPLE don’t have to pay our PEOPLE to play with our PEOPLE,” Sanders tweeted.

Saban also referenced Miami donor John Ruiz, a billionaire who has funded NIL deals for numerous Hurricanes athletes.

“Those guys from Miami that are going to play basketball there for \$400,000, that’s in the newspaper,” Saban said.

But the Texas A&M comments were closest to home. The Aggies are a Southeastern Conference rival in the West Division and coached by former Saban assistant Jimbo Fisher.

The Aggies beat Alabama last season, but finished 8-4 while the Tide went on to win the SEC and play Georgia for the national championship.

In February, Fisher went off on competitors who were pushing rumors that Texas A&M had spent \$30 million on NIL deals to land its

star-studded recruiting class.

“Clown acts,” Fisher said. “Multiple coaches in our league.”

Saban said he supports players being able to cash in on their fame and cited Alabama’s success.

“I told our players when this whole thing started to get agents, get representation, so you create opportunities for yourself,” he said. “Our players last year created \$3 million worth of opportunities for themselves in doing it the right way. I have no problem with that and nobody had a problem on our team with that because the guys that got the money earned it. There were only 25 guys on our team that had opportunity to earn money.”

“A&M bought every player on their team. Made a deal for name, image and likeness.”

Nick Saban
Alabama football coach

Pac-12 ends divisions after NCAA paves way

By RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

The Pac-12 announced Wednesday it was scrapping its divisional format for the upcoming football season moments after the NCAA Division I Council tossed out requirements that dictate how conferences determine a champion.

The Pac-12 will pair the teams with the highest conference winning percentages in its title game after 11 seasons of matching winners of the North and South divisions.

Other conferences are expected to follow, most notably the 14-team Atlantic Coast Conference. The ACC is looking to implement a new model as soon as 2023.

Syracuse athletic director John Wildhack said it was unlikely the ACC would follow the Pac-12 and get rid of its divisions this year.

“I don’t think you’d see it. We’ve already released our schedule for 2022. But we could do it with 2023,” said Wildhack.

To have a conference title game, NCAA rules previously required leagues to split into divisions if they could not play a full round-robin schedule. The 10-member Big 12 decided to resume its title game even without divisions in part to raise the profile of the winner for playoff consideration.

“Our goal is to place our two best teams in our Pac-12 football championship game, which we believe will provide our conference with the best opportunity to optimize CFP invitations and ultimately win national championships,” Pac-12 Commissioner George Kliavkoff said. “Today’s de-



CHASE STEVENS/AP

Utah players celebrate after their victory over Oregon in the Pac-12 Conference championship Dec. 3 in Las Vegas. The conference is scrapping its divisional format for the coming season.

cision is an important step towards that goal and immediately increases both fan interest in, and the media value of, our football championship game.”

The D-I Council also approved a Football Oversight Committee recommendation meant to aid with roster management, lifting the yearly scholarship cap of 25.

While the maximum of 25 so-called initial counters will be waived for the next two years, the overall scholarship limit of 85 per team in the Bowl Subdivision and 63 in the Championship Subdivision will remain in place. The change, backed by the American Football Coaches’ Association, is aimed at helping teams replenish rosters that have been thinned by transfers.

AP Sports Writer Aaron Beard contributed to this report.

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PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

Shunning the spotlight

Scheffler arrives at latest major as understated No. 1 in world ranking

BY DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. — Scottie Scheffler has earned the right to strut onto the first tee at Southern Hills and puff out his chest, an unintended yet unmistakable consequence of winning the Masters, ripping off three more victories and rising to No. 1 in the world.

Except, well, ahem ...

“The thing I love so much about Scottie is that he’s just a good dude,” said his childhood friend and rival Will Zalatoris, “and it tastes like vinegar coming out of my mouth considering the amount of golf we’ve played together.”

You see, Scheffler doesn’t strut so much as amble, and if he’s puffing out his chest, he’s probably out of breath. For all his success, he was able to go about business as usual during his practice round Tuesday, which tends to be a whole lot easier when most of the fans watching outside the ropes still don’t recognize his easy gait and charming smile.

“Tiger’s here,” Scheffler quipped, “so nobody really remembers that I’m here, so it’s all good.”

That’s quintessential Scottie: Rather than an abundance of arrogance, he offers an overwhelming measure of modesty.

After spending most of the past two years contending week to week, the 25-year-old broke through in February in Phoenix and never slowed down. Scheffler won a few weeks later at Bay Hill,

defeated Kevin Kisner in the finals of the Match Play, then conquered his nerves to triumph at Augusta — despite a cringe-inducing four-putt on the 72nd hole.

There is no hotter player in the world heading into this week’s PGA Championship.

The rankings say there’s no better player, either.

“Tiger’s here, so nobody really remembers that I’m here, so it’s all good.”

Scottie Scheffler

“He won Augusta, No. 1 in the world — you’ve kind of got that swagger when you walk on the range. I know I did,” said two-time PGA champion Brooks Koepka, who also won two U.S. Opens and spent 47 weeks at No. 1.

“I’m pretty sure everybody else that’s been No. 1, you’ve got a little extra strut, whatever the hell else is going on,” Koepka said, “but you’ve got a little something and I think it’s noticeable.”

On anyone but Scheffler, maybe.

Perhaps it’s because, despite being born in New Jersey, Scheffler is decidedly Midwestern nice, a fact that just happens to play

well in Oklahoma. Or because all that success has come so quickly — Scheffler could become the first person since Tom Watson in 1980 to win five times by the end of May should he hoist the Wanamaker Trophy on Sunday.

“Living in the moment is usually what works best for me,” he said. “I don’t want to get too high or get too low. So if you guys are building me up, then you know, I may not prepare as hard because I show up being like, ‘I’m the guy, I’m the man and no one can touch me.’ That doesn’t work for me. And if I show up too low then you guys are saying, ‘Oh, Scottie doesn’t have it. He’s not any good anymore,’ then I’m going to show up and maybe I’m going to prepare too hard.

“So for me,” Scheffler said, “kind of staying in my own lane and doing my own thing is what works best.”

It has worked well so far.

Scheffler could join Woods, Vijay Singh and Nick Price as the only players to win five times in a stretch of 10 tournaments or fewer. He could join Sam Snead, Jackie Burke Jr. and Jack Nicklaus as the only ones to win the Masters and the PGA in the same calendar year. And he could join Woods and Jordan Spieth as the only players since Nicklaus in 1972 to follow up their greenjacket from Augusta — currently hanging in his closet at home — by winning the next major championship.

All of those players are in the



EMIL LIPPE/AP

Scottie Scheffler could become the first person since Tom Watson in 1980 to win five times by the end of May if he is victorious in the PGA Championship this weekend at Southern Hills.

World Golf Hall of Fame except Spieth, who is destined for it one day. And that’s some pretty heady company, whether the down-to-earth Scheffler wants to admit it or not.

More than likely not.

“When I show up to tournaments, it’s a little bit different,” Scheffler said. “There’s more people kind of hollering at me when I’m playing a practice round, wanting to get signatures or whatever it is. You know, at home, I’ve been recognized a few more times than I did in the past. But I kind of stay in my own little bubble, and for me not much has changed when I’m at home. Not much has

changed the way I practice. When I show up to tournaments, I don’t feel any different.”

Plenty of others view him differently, though. Scheffler is suddenly the one to beat at the PGA and, along with Jon Rahm, the favorite according to FanDuel Sportsbook to join an exclusive list of players that have won multiple majors.

“I want to win this tournament as bad as any other one,” Scheffler said. “For me not much changes, whether it’s the PGA, Masters, British Open, whatever it is. I’m an extremely competitive person. I want to win. For me winning is fun.”

Spieth: Even some of golf’s greats fell short of career Slam

FROM PAGE 48

for the final leg. Gene Sarazen in 1935, Ben Hogan in ’53 and Tiger Woods in 2000 did it in their very first try; Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player weren’t far behind.

Some of the game’s greatest players never do it.

Arnold Palmer’s victory in the 1961 British Open left him, much like Spieth, needing the PGA to finish it, but he played the tournament 34 times without winning. Phil Mickelson’s vexing second-place history at the U.S. Open is well-documented. The same tournament also is missing from three-time PGA champion Sam Snead’s résumé. Byron Nelson and Raymond Floyd never won the British Open. Lee Trevino won every major (twice) except the Masters.

“Long-term,” Spieth said, “it would be really cool to say that you captured the four biggest tournaments in the world, that are played in different parts of the world, and different styles, too. You feel like you kind of accomplished golf.”



SUE OGRONKI/AP

Jordan Spieth hits from the bunker during a practice round for the PGA Championship on Tuesday in Tulsa, Okla. Spieth rebuilt his swing and pre-shot routine after an extended slump.

It’s a feeling that Rory McIlroy, who will play with Spieth and Tiger Woods for the first two rounds at Southern Hills, knows too well. The two-time PGA champion has taken eight swings at winning the Masters, the lone major missing

from his own ledger, and has been in the top 5 four times, with a second-place finish earlier this year.

“I think the most consistent way to get yourself to be able to have chances to win these major championships is to sort of adopt a con-

servative strategy,” McIlroy said. “Tiger did it most of his career, and OK, he had a couple of huge wins in there, but a lot of times being conservative with his strategy, letting other guys make the mistakes — pars are pretty good in major championships, and that’s sort of the philosophy that I believe in going forward.”

Another word for conservative could be deliberate, and that’s a good way to describe Spieth these days.

When mired in mediocrity, he tore down his swing and began to rebuild it. Spieth implemented a curious pre-shot rehearsal — almost mechanical in nature — designed to get into the proper position at the right tempo. The deliberate routine isn’t just for the driving range or practice rounds, either. Spieth takes it right onto the course with him.

“I get to my ball quickly, I play faster than I used to, I’m not slowing anybody down, and I make better, more committed swings

with it,” he explained. “At this point, that’s where I’m at, and that’s what I’ll keep doing. It’s just trying to — like I’ve mentioned before — going back to go forward, going back to my DNA on how I’ve swung the club growing up.”

Like he was swinging it in 2015, when Spieth won the year’s first two majors and people began to whisper of the Grand Slam. Or a couple of years later, when he added the Claret Jug to his trophy case, leaving only the PGA still missing.

“You want to win any major,” said Justin Thomas, “and this one is just always going to be put on a little bit more of a pedestal than the other ones for him. I know he’s going to be fine. And I’m not just saying it because he’s one of my best friends. I mean, I’ve just seen him get it around when he’s not playing well. I’ve seen him play well when he is playing well. All of us go through little spurts. It’s just for him, this has just been a tough one. I mean, he’s going to be fine.”

NBA

Warriors romp past Mavs in Game 1

Doncic kept in check while Splash Brothers heat up in second half

By JANIE McCAULEY
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Once Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson slowed down, caught their breath and stopped rushing shots, the Splash Brothers got on a roll that proved too much for Dallas to stop.

Especially because Andrew Wiggins worked end to end to make sure Luka Dončić couldn't get going.

Curry had 21 points and a game-high 12 rebounds, Golden State held Dončić in check and the Warriors beat the Mavericks 112-87 on Wednesday night for a 1-0 lead in the Western Conference finals.

"Just make him work, that was the main thing," Wiggins said.

Dončić scored 20 points but shot just 6-for-18 and 3-for-10 from deep. He made back-to-back three-pointers late in the first half to get his team within 54-45 at the break, but Curry and Thompson heated up and helped Golden State pull away in the second half.

"A great job. That's it," Dončić said. "They did a great job."

Jalen Brunson scored 14 points but missed all five of his three surprising Dallas, which stunned the top-seeded Suns in a 123-90 thumping in Game 7 on Sunday in Phoenix.

Game 2 in the best-of-seven series is Friday night at Chase Center, where the raucous, yellow-clad sellout crowd brought back memories of that 2007 "We Believe" Warriors playoff team led by Baron Davis that shocked the No. 1-seeded Mavericks in a six-game first-round upset at Oracle Arena.

That helped propel Golden State



JED JACOBSON/AP

Warriors Kevon Looney, left, and guard Klay Thompson defend Mavericks guard Luka Dončić during the first half of Game 1 of the NBA Western Conference finals in San Francisco on Wednesday.

back to prominence. The Warriors reached five straight NBA Finals from 2015-19 but missed the playoffs the past two years before this run.

Wiggins added 19 points, getting Golden State going by making six of his first eight shots on the way to shooting 8-for-17. Jordan Poole also scored 19 off the bench.

Dončić received a scratch across his face early from a first-quarter swipe by Wiggins. The mark — "makes me look tough," he quipped — went from the bridge of the star guard's nose across his right cheek under the eye. Dončić also tugged at his troublesome right shoulder

that has been taped previously during these playoffs.

"They did a really good job. Wiggins picking him up full court," Mavs coach Jason Kidd said. "They went box-and-one, they went zone. We understood coming into the series that we were going to see that. We'll go back and look at the video and see what we can do better."

Stopping Dončić, who was averaging 31.5 points in the playoffs, is the tall task this time after the Warriors already handled two-time reigning MVP Nikola Jokic of Denver in the first round, then Ja Morant early last series before his knee injury.

"I thought Wiggins was fantastic," coach Steve Kerr said. "Dončić is as difficult a cover as there is in this league. ... It's important to make him work. He's so good. Any great player in the league you're trying to limit the damage that they do."

Curry, last season's scoring champ, missed his initial five three-point tries before connecting with 50 seconds left in the first half. But he got involved other ways by dishing out four assists and grabbing seven rebounds.

Then he hit two quick threes in sparking a 10-2 burst to begin the third for a Golden State squad that eliminated Memphis in a six-game

Scoreboard

Conference finals

(Best-of-seven)
x-if necessary
Eastern Conference
Miami 1, Boston 0

Tuesday: Miami 118, Boston 107
Thursday: at Miami
Saturday, May 21: at Boston. AFN-Sports, 2:40 a.m. Sunday CET; 9:40 a.m. Sunday JKT
Monday, May 23: at Boston. AFN-Sports, 2:40 a.m. Tuesday CET; 9:40 a.m. Tuesday JKT

x-Wednesday, May 25: at Miami
x-Friday, May 27: at Boston
x-Sunday, May 29: at Miami

Western Conference
Golden State 1, Dallas 0

Wednesday: Golden State 112, Dallas 87
Friday: at Golden State. AFN-Sports, 3 a.m. Saturday CET; 10 a.m. Saturday JKT
Sunday, May 22: at Dallas. AFN-Sports, 3 a.m. Monday CET; 10 a.m. Monday JKT
Tuesday, May 24: at Dallas. AFN-Sports, 3 a.m. Wednesday CET; 10 a.m. Wednesday JKT
x-Thursday, May 26: at Golden State
x-Saturday, May 28: at Dallas
x-Monday, May 30: at Golden State

semifinal series.

"It is how we play," Curry said. "When you have that ability to create separation like we did in the third quarter, it's a fun way to play."

Thompson scored all of his 15 points after halftime.

"I didn't have a field goal in the first half but that will never discourage me," Thompson said. "I will always hunt my shot."

Kevon Looney remained in the starting lineup after coming in to start the Game 6 clincher against the Grizzlies. He finished with 10 points, five rebounds and four assists.

Kidd's team couldn't keep up in a drastic contrast of styles featuring the slow-paced Dallas attack and up-tempo Warriors.

"We would like to play our pace but the Warriors have a unique pace, they're going to get out and put a lot of pressure on your defense in transition," Kidd said. "We have to be cautious of that. We don't want a track meet."

New league for prep standouts sends 2 to combine

By PAT GRAHAM
Associated Press

They took a chance on each other: The teenage power forward from New Jersey on the start-up league. The start-up league on the young player with immense talent.

Dominick Barlow received on-the-job training — and a six-figure salary — to skip college and join Overtime Elite, a new basketball league created to give high school players another path to the pros. He learned about nutrition, social-media skills and financial literacy as he immersed himself in hoops.

He has parlayed his time with OTE into an invitation to the NBA draft combine this week in Chicago.

For the league, it demonstrates there's room for yet another option beyond the conventional route through the college ranks, the NBA's G League Ignite or playing overseas.

"This just shows how big this industry is," said Jay Bilas, a basketball analyst for ESPN.

"There's not just one way to be successful and have a productive and long career."

There were almost as many OTE players (Barlow and guard Jean Montero) invited to the combine as from Kansas, the NCAA champion (Ochai Agbaji, Christian Braun, Jalen Wilson).

Over the next few days, they will participate in games, drills and go through interviews. It's a chance to possibly move up a team's draft board. Montero and Barlow are both currently forecast as second-round picks (although, some mock drafts have Montero going late in the first).

Coming out of high school, Barlow wasn't a five-star recruit. He had suitors — DePaul, Illinois and Florida among them, according to Rivals.com — but elected to go with the league that guarantees at least \$100,000, along with shares in the company (Overtime) and other revenue streams through sales of custom jerseys, trading cards, video games, and NFTs.

Barlow learned about nutrition and simple lessons like how to balance his plate after a heavy workout. He took a course on media training and on expanding his brand on social media. He also worked with the assistant coaches in practice sessions and was supervised by head coach Kevin Ollie, who guided Connecticut to a national title in 2014.

The 26 players who formed the inaugural OTE class were divided into three teams and played a full schedule against prep schools and each other. The 6-foot-9 Barlow was on Team Overtime, along with Montero, where he averaged 14.8 points. Barlow shot 58.5% from mid-range and 33.9% from three-point land.

Oftentimes, in front of scouts. Throughout the year, more than 300 pro scouts passed through the complex.

"This put him in position probably much faster than anybody would have imagined," said Brandon Williams, the head of basketball operations at OTE who had stops in the

NBA with Golden State, San Antonio and Atlanta. "Much like a flower, you need the proper nutrients to blossom. That's what we were able to do here."

One major thing college basketball does have: Exposure. The television deals and the NCAA Tournament provide a powerful draw even for players who only plan to stick around for one season. There's also burgeoning name, image and likeness opportunities.

Barlow has helped set the foundation for what could be big things ahead. In next year's NBA draft, OTE players such as twins Ausar and Amen Thompson are projected to be lottery picks.

"We don't have the history of some of the blueblood schools," Williams said. "We have to embrace that difference. There's this revolutionary group that embraced it as well, that wants to play where it matters. They want to line up against the best talent. You get charged up when you know that you've got to fight."

SPORTS



'Iceman' hoping to heat up
Dixon looks to turn around subpar season in Indy 500 » **Page 44**

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

Still chasing elite company

Spieth among favorites at Southern Hills in quest to complete career Grand Slam

By **DAVE SKRETTA**
Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. — Not long ago, it seemed a foregone conclusion that Jordan Spieth would one day capture golf's career Grand Slam.

Even more recently, it seemed as if he might never contend again.

After scorching a Tiger-esque path through his first three years as a pro, including triumphs at the Masters and U.S. Open in 2015 and the British Open in '17, things suddenly went sideways for Spieth. That crisp ball striking that was once the envy of so many had abandoned him, his driver went a bit haywire and his short game had let him down.

The former No. 1 went nearly four years without a win, plummeting to 92nd in the world rankings

Armed with a retooled swing thousands of shots in the making, though, and brimming with confidence after winning at Hilton Head and finishing second at last week's Byron Nelson, the popular 28-year-old Texan arrived this week at the PGA Championship once again among the favorites to raise the Wannamaker Trophy on Sunday.

INSIDE

No. 1 Scheffler content to keep it low-key
Page 46

And at long last, join that most exclusive club.

"Certainly at this point, having won the other three, it's an elephant in the room for me," Spieth acknowledged before heading out for Wednesday's practice round. "If you just told me I was going to win one tournament the rest of my life, I'd say I want to win this one, given where things are at."

History is not necessarily on his side.

Of the five players to have won the Grand Slam, none waited more than three years

SEE SPIETH ON PAGE 46

Jordan Spieth putts on the 18th hole during the final round of the Byron Nelson in McKinney, Texas, on May 15. Spieth's second-place finish put him among the favorites at Southern Hills.

EMIL LIPPE/AP



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