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Some debate how long Eisenhower can hold out

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR**
AND **JON GAMBRELL**
Associated Press

ABOARD THE USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER IN THE RED SEA — The combat markings emblazoned on the F/A-18 fighter jet tell the story: 15 missiles and six drones, painted in black just below the cockpit windshield.

As the jet sits on the deck of the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier in the Red Sea, its markings illuminate the enemy targets that it's destroyed in recent months and underscore the intensity of the fight to protect commercial shipping from persistent missile and drone attacks by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

But they also hint at the fatigue setting in, as the carrier, its strike group and about 7,000 sailors close in on their ninth month waging the most intense running sea battle since World War II. That raises difficult questions about what comes next as U.S. military and defense leaders wrangle over how they will replicate the carrier's combat power if the ship returns home to Norfolk, Va.

Already, the carrier's deployment has been extended twice, and sailors post dark memes around the ship about only getting one short break during their steadily growing tour. Some worry they could be ordered to stay out even longer as the campaign drags on to protect global trade in the vital Red Sea corridor.

At the Pentagon, leaders are wrestling with what has become a thorny but familiar debate. Do they bow to Navy pressure to bring the Eisenhower and the other three warships in its strike group home or heed U.S. Central

SEE HOLD ON PAGE 7



PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL/Stars and Stripes

Lt. Sergei, a Ukrainian tank commander, stands in front of a Leopard 1 A5 tank at the Kletz training range in Germany, June 13.

'You can never give up'

German range one of largest efforts to train Ukrainians to stand against Russia

By **ALEXANDER RIEDEL**
Stars and Stripes

KLIETZ, Germany — Scanning the horizon for targets, a Ukrainian tank commander in a German-made Leopard 1 locked onto a sudden downrange movement in a vast, cratered field.

The turret swiveled and the gunner took aim with the battle tank's targeting laser. Moments later, a projectile erupted from the barrel with a roar, shaking the ground as it struck a pop-up target.

The mock battle is a daily occurrence at the Kletz military training range, where Ukrainian soldiers prepare to defend their country from Russian invasion forces.

Kletz represents one of the largest efforts to train Ukrainians on using Western-made weapons systems, along with the U.S. range in Grafenwoehr and an air base in Romania, among others.

Approximately 12,000 Ukrainian soldiers have passed through the 35 square miles of Kletz's pine-covered terrain, which is about 55 miles west of Berlin.

The reality of the war is ever-present here. Drones suspected by German counterintelligence officials of being linked to Russia are regularly spotted over the training grounds, a

SEE NEVER ON PAGE 6



A Leopard 1 A5 tank driven by a Ukrainian crew moves into position for an exercise June 13, at the Kletz training range.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Germany	\$3.844	\$4.385	\$4.735	\$4.144	Azores	..	..	\$4.585	..
Change in price	-0.6 cents	-0.6 cents	-0.5 cents	+1.1 cents	Change in price	..	..	-0.5 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$4.657	\$4.925	\$4.758	Turkey	..	..	\$4.401	\$4.534*
Change in price	..	-3.4 cents	-3.6 cents	-3.4 cents	Change in price	..	..	-0.5 cents	No change
U.K.	..	\$4.385	\$4.735	\$4.144	Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective June 21. The change in price is from June 14.				
Change in price	..	-0.6 cents	-0.5 cents	+1.1 cents					

PACIFIC GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Japan	..	\$4.379	..	\$3.789	South Korea	\$3.519	..	\$4.409	\$3.819
Change in price	..	No change	..	+8.0 cents	Change in price	+1.0 cents	..	No change	+8.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.489	..	..	\$3.789	Guam	\$3.549**	\$4.089	\$4.439	..
Change in price	+1.0 cents	..	..	+8.0 cents	Change in price	+1.0 cents	+1.0 cents	No change	..
*DieselEFD **Midgrade									
Pacific prices for the week of June 21-27									

EXCHANGE RATES			
Military rates			
Euro costs (June 21)	\$1.05	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8925
British pound (June 21)	\$1.24	Thailand (Baht)	36.74
Japanese yen (June 21)	153.00	Turkey (NewLira)	32.8202
South Korean won (June 21)	1348.00		
Commercial rates		(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.)	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3768		
Britain (Pound)	1.2678		
Canada (Dollar)	1.3695		
China (Yuan)	7.2607		
Denmark (Krone)	6.9538		
Egypt (Pound)	47.7111		
Euro	0.9324		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8041		
Hungary (Forint)	369.89		
Israel (Shekel)	3.7225		
Japan (Yen)	158.72		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3066		
Norway (Krone)	10.5160		
Philippines (Peso)	58.85		
Poland (Zloty)	4.03		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7513		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3534		
South Korea (Won)	1390.82		
INTEREST RATES			
Prime rate		8.50	
Interest Rates Discount rate		6.00	
Federal funds market rate		5.33	
3-month bill		5.38	
30-year bond		4.35	

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MILITARY

US underscores commitments to Philippines

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Secretary of State reassured his Philippine counterpart of the “United States’ ironclad commitments to the Philippines” two days after a violent clash between Philippine sailors and China’s coast guard in the South China Sea.

The State Department described China’s actions as “escalatory,” and “dangerous and irresponsible,” according to a readout of Secretary Antony Blinken’s phone call Wednesday with Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo.

“Secretary Blinken emphasized that the PRC’s actions undermine regional peace and stability and underscored the United States’ ironclad commitments to the Philippines under our Mutual Defense Treaty,” the readout stated.

Chinese coast guard personnel on more than eight motorboats repeatedly rammed then boarded two Philippine navy inflatable boats Monday to prevent Filipino personnel from transferring food and other supplies, including firearms, to the BRP Sierra Madre, The Associated Press reported Tuesday.

The grounded warship serves as a Philippine territorial outpost on Second Thomas Shoal, which Beijing also claims.

After a scuffle and repeated collisions, the Chinese seized the boats and damaged them with machetes, knives and hammers. They also seized eight M4 rifles packed in cases, navigation equipment and other supplies and wounded several Filipino sailors, including one who lost his right thumb, two Philippine security officials told the AP.

A spokesman for China’s Foreign Ministry laid responsibility for the incident on the Philippines. “Let me stress that what direct-



Armed Forces of the Philippines

A screenshot posted on X by the Philippine military purports to show Chinese coast guard personnel intercepting a Philippine resupply mission in the South China Sea on Monday.

ly led to this situation is the Philippines’ ignoring of China’s dissuasion and deliberate intrusion into the waters” around the shoal, spokesman Lin Jian told reporters Wednesday, according to his remarks posted on the ministry website.

“The law enforcement action taken by China Coast Guard on the scene was professional and restrained and aimed at stopping the illegal ‘resupply mission.’”

Further escalation at the shoal is possible, according to Carlyle

Thayer, an emeritus professor at the University of New South Wales and a lecturer at the Australian Defence Force Academy.

“In recent days China has pushed the envelope beyond dangerous maneuvers, water cannons and ramming to seizing and vandalizing Philippine supplies for its detachment on the BRP Sierra Madre and now boarding and seizing weapons carried by uniformed Philippine officials,” he told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday.

‘Up the ante’

Escalation could result in a Filipino fatality or sinking a Philippine vessel as the Philippines increases the scope and tempo of naval patrols in its territorial waters in the South China Sea, he said.

However, if China holds short of an armed attack on Philippine military ships and public vessels, the risk of U.S. involvement is low, Thayer said.

America’s options include enlisting other allies such as Japan

and Australia, along with like-minded maritime powers in Europe, to join patrols and provide overwatch for Philippine supply missions or even escorts for Philippine supply vessels, he said.

Grant Newsham, a retired Marine colonel and senior researcher with the Japan Forum for Strategic Studies in Tokyo, agreed the situation may intensify.

“The Chinese have been clear about what they intend to do with Philippine maritime territory that the PRC covets: dominate, control, and, if necessary, seize and occupy it — make it impossible for their smaller, outmatched victims to retake it,” he said by email Thursday. “This is also the pattern they’ve used throughout the South China Sea. And they are quite willing to use force to get their way.”

Clashes will continue until the Philippines backs off or the United States steps in and lives up to its commitments to its Philippine allies, Newsham said.

U.S. Navy ships and aircraft could accompany Philippine vessels and U.S. ships and helicopters could conduct resupply missions to the shoal, he said.

However, Ian Chong, an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore, said any intensification of the dispute will likely be limited.

“It seems that both sides are trying to show resolve but do not want greater escalation at this point,” he said.

China will likely “up the ante” but the U.S. response depends on what the Philippines wants, he said.

“Manila and Washington probably want to remind Beijing and the world that protecting sovereignty is the Philippines’ prerogative, although they probably have an incentive to show that they are not going to cave to increasing pressure,” he said.

Japan moving ahead with work for Marine Corps runway on Okinawa

By KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Japanese government plans to resume major construction, delayed more than four years, on an airfield for the Marine Corps at Camp Schwab, according to Okinawa prefecture.

The Okinawa Defense Bureau on Tuesday notified the prefecture that work on the Oura Bay section of the site will resume in August, a spokesman for the prefecture’s Seashore Disaster Prevention Division told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday. The defense bureau represents the Japan Defense Ministry on Okinawa.

The runway being built on re-

claimed land in Oura Bay in the Henoko area of Okinawa is meant to replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in urban Ginowan. That base, surrounded by homes and schools, is considered inherently dangerous by some Japanese officials.

The construction zone at Schwab is divided into two main sections: 279 acres on the base’s north side and 91 acres in the south, according to the prefecture’s website.

Work on the Oura Bay side, or north side, has been on hold since April 21, 2020, when Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki refused to approve changes to the construction plans to solidify the soft seabed.

Japanese Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Tetsuo Saito eventually approved the permits Dec. 28 after Tamaki ignored a Dec. 25 deadline from Fukuoka High Court. The court handed Saito that authority if Tamaki refused.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi in January announced that work to reclaim land from the bay would resume. The Japanese government in January created a storage yard at the site for construction materials, the seashore division spokesman said Thursday.

The prefecture and the bureau have gone back and forth on design details and environmental preservation measures along the

Oura Bay side since February, according to the spokesman.

The prefecture filed its most recent questions June 5 and the bureau responded Tuesday with the August start time, he said.

“The prefecture just noticed us that will start work on the places that are under discussion, which means the Oura Bay side,” the spokesman said. “We don’t have any details at the moment, we don’t know if these works mean about the seawall constructions or the soil improvement work.”

He said the prefecture asked the bureau to delay construction until their discussions had concluded.

Some government officials in Japan may speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

The bureau did not respond to a phone call from Stars and Stripes seeking comment Thursday.

The project, originally slated for completion by 2014, is expected to take until at least 2032 and cost the Japanese government \$6.9 billion.

Hayashi at a press conference Wednesday in Tokyo refrained from commenting directly on the discussions between the prefecture and the bureau.

He said the government “will continue explaining politely to the local community,” and that “steadily moving forward with the construction” will eventually eliminate hazards at MCAS Futenma.

Relocating the airfield to the Henoko region of Okinawa “is the only solution” he said.

PACIFIC

Putin inks deals with Vietnam to bolster Asia ties

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL
Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam — Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a series of deals with his Vietnamese counterpart To Lam on Thursday, during a state visit that comes as Moscow is seeking to bolster ties in Asia to offset growing international isolation over its military actions in Ukraine.

The two signed agreements to further cooperation on education, science and technology, oil and gas exploration and health. They also agreed to work on a roadmap for a nuclear science and technology center in Vietnam.

Following the talks, Putin said that the two countries share an interest in “developing a reliable security architecture” in the Asia-Pacific Region based on not using force and peacefully settling disputes with no room for “closed military-political blocs.”

This was echoed by Vietnam’s new President To Lam, who said they seek to further “further cooperate in defense and security to cope with non-traditional security challenges” while implementing energy projects and expanding investments. He also congratulated Putin on his re-election and praised Russia’s “domestic political stability.”

The agreements between Russia and Vietnam were not as substantial as an agreement Putin signed with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un the previous day, pledging mutual aid in the event of invasion said Nigel Gould-Davies, a senior fellow for Russia and Eurasia with the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, and a former British ambassador to Belarus.

Putin arrived in Hanoi early Thursday morning from North Korea, where he and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed

an agreement that pledges mutual aid in the event of war. The strategic pact that could mark the strongest connection between Moscow and Pyongyang since the end of the Cold War comes as both face escalating standoffs with the West.

Putin also met Vietnam’s most powerful politician, Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, as well as Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, according to the official Vietnam News Agency. He is also scheduled to meet parliamentary chief Tran Thanh Man.

Putin drove to Vietnam’s Presidential Palace on Thursday afternoon, where he was greeted by school children waving Russian and Vietnamese flags. There, he shook hands with and embraced Lam before a bilateral meeting and a joint briefing to the media.

Russia is keen to maintain “close and effective cooperation” in energy, industry, technology, education, security and trade, Russian Ambassador to Vietnam Gennady S. Bezdetko said on Wednesday, according to Vietnamese official media.

The trip has resulted in a sharp rebuke from the U.S. Embassy in the country.

Much has changed since Putin’s last visit to Vietnam in 2017. Russia now faces a raft of U.S.-led sanctions for its invasion of Ukraine. In 2023, the International Criminal Court in Hague issued an arrest warrant for Putin for war crimes. The Kremlin rejected it as “null and void,” stressing that Moscow doesn’t recognize the court’s jurisdiction.

Putin’s recent visits to China and now North Korea and Vietnam are attempts to “break the international isolation,” said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore’s ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

South Korea will consider supplying arms to Ukraine in wake of pact

By KIM TONG-HYUNG
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea said Thursday that it would consider sending arms to Ukraine, a major policy change suggested after Russia and North Korea rattled the region and beyond by signing a pact to come to each other’s defense in the event of war.

The comments from a senior presidential official came hours

after North Korea’s state media released the details of the agreement, which observers said could mark the strongest connection between Moscow and Pyongyang since the end of the Cold War. It comes a time when Russia faces growing isolation over its war in Ukraine and both countries face escalating standoffs with the West.

According to the text of the deal

published by the North’s official Korean Central News Agency, if either country gets invaded and is pushed into a state of war, the other must deploy “all means at its disposal without delay” to provide “military and other assistance.”

But the agreement also says that such actions must be in accordance with the laws of both countries and Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which recognizes

a U.N. member state’s right to self-defense.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the pact at a summit Wednesday in Pyongyang. Both described it as a major upgrade of bilateral relations, covering security, trade, investment, cultural and humanitarian ties.

The office of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol issued a

statement condemning the agreement, calling it a threat to the South’s security and a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, and warned that it would have negative consequences on Seoul’s relations with Moscow.

Yoon’s national security adviser, Chang Ho-jin, said Seoul would reconsider the issue of providing arms to Ukraine to help the country fight off Russia’s invasion.



ERIC STANTON/U.S. Navy

Sailors handle a mooring line on the fantail as the USS Ronald Reagan pulls into Naval Base Guam for a scheduled port visit Wednesday.

USS Ronald Reagan returns to Guam for first time in 2 years

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The USS Ronald Reagan steamed into Guam’s Apra Harbor on Wednesday for a scheduled port call and the aircraft carrier’s first visit to the island since 2022.

The Ronald Reagan, now on its final patrol in the Indo-Pacific, stopped in Guam following the conclusion Tuesday of Valiant Shield, a biennial exercise, according to photos posted to the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service website.

The Ronald Reagan is returning to the U.S. after nine years for scheduled maintenance at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard at Bremerton, Wash. It will be replaced at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, by the carrier USS George Washington, now en route, according to the Navy.

The scheduled port call allows the Ronald Reagan to stock up on supplies during its summer patrol — usually a six-month affair — and provides crew members a chance to participate in community or volunteer activities, according to Carrier Strike Group 5 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Seth Koenig.

One of its escort ships, the guided-missile cruiser USS Robert Smalls, also stopped in Guam, he added. “About a dozen sailors on the Ronald Reagan crew from Guam were able to reunite with family on the pier upon the ship’s arrival, and it was heartwarming to see,” he told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday. “Guam is a special place for all of us.”

The carrier last visited Guam in June 2022 after concluding that year’s iteration of Valiant Shield, according to Koenig.



CALEB DYAL/U.S. Navy

Petty Officer 1st Class Nathan Rupley, from Dededo, Guam, greets family members on the pier.

Koenig declined to comment on how long the ships will remain in Guam, citing operational security concerns.

The Ronald Reagan and two escort ships, the guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins and guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam, spent four days in Guam in 2022, according to the Navy at the time.

Valiant Shield this year brought approximately 10,000 U.S. military members from all six services to Japan, Guam, the Mariana Islands and Palau.

The exercise concluded with the sinking of a decommissioned amphibious transport dock, the USS Cleveland, about 40 miles off the coast of Palau, U.S. Pacific Fleet spokesman Chris Loundermon told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday.

EUROPE

Paratroops help in search for WWII Thunderbolt pilot

BY REBECCA HOLLAND
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — Army paratroopers teamed up with a Pentagon agency earlier this month to locate and bring home the remains of a Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter pilot lost over central Italy during World War II.

Soldiers with the Vicenza-based 173rd Airborne Brigade aided the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency during the archaeological investigation between April 6 to June 8, at which point evidence was sent to DPAA's laboratory.

DPAA does not release the exact location or name of the missing soldier until the family is notified.

There are more than 72,000 personnel still missing from World War II, with several thousand still missing in Europe, according to DPAA, the only federal agency with a mission to find missing service members from past conflicts.

DPAA researchers and analysts comb through records and other evidence. They look at information on where a plane was last seen, whether residents reported a crash during the war, or if anyone reported wreckage found more recently.

When the information looks promising, they send a small team to visit for talks and preliminary investigation.

"They're also doing things like using metal detectors, ground-penetrating radar, digging small tests, to try to find evidence that yes, indeed there is a plane here and the evidence says that it could very possibly be, in this case, a P-47 Thunderbolt," said Sean Everette, DPAA spokesman. "If they find evidence that yes, this is an American plane, then we put it on the schedule to send out a recovery team."

That's where the 173rd Airborne Brigade came in. Fourteen paratroopers traveled south to clear and construct the excavation site.

"When we went out there it was just trees, up in the mountains. All we saw was trees," said brigade soldier Pvt. Samuel Aguilar-Andres.

They cleared vegetation and ran the wet screening station, where buckets of water were poured over wire mesh to help sift through dirt.

Aguilar-Andres said he felt connected to the mission due to the 173rd's history in World War II, the location in Italy and the fact that everyone was working equally toward the goal.



U.S. Air Force

The P-47 Thunderbolt was one of the key U.S. fighter planes of World War II.

"I saw leaders doing the same work as the privates, and that meant a lot," he said.

Sgt. Dillon Long, a soldier with the 54th Brigade Engineer Battalion, also noted the teamwork from so many backgrounds.

"We had a lot of dudes who might be combat engineers doing generator maintenance," Long said. "We had radio guys doing the same thing. You name it, people were out doing all sorts of things."

Investigators primarily look for human remains. But they also search for objects like a wedding ring or a watch they can tie to a photo of the service member, Everette said. In this case, the team looked for parts of the plane with a serial number.

When they make a match, DPAA contacts the branch the service member belonged to, which then goes to the family. The process takes anywhere from a couple of months to years.

Since 2015, when DPAA was formed under its current structure, the agency has identified 1,000 people.

While those searching for missing family members from World War II are often too young to have known the service members personally, Everette said they are still eager to find them.

"Sometimes, they still feel a connection because of the way their family kept their memory alive," he said.

In other instances, the next-of-kin know little about the people who served because their families found the loss too hard to talk about.

"The process of finding their family member helps to bring answers to those families," Everette said.

Though the numbers of missing service members are daunting, Everette said DPAA will continue its mission until everyone is accounted for.

Long said he and other soldiers are comforted by this.

"It's important to know that people are going to come look for you if you go missing," Long said. "With everything going on in the



COLE YARDLEY/U.S. Air Force

Army Pfc. Michael Cannan, assisting the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, screens soil during a recovery mission in Italy on May 21.



COLE YARDLEY/U.S. Air Force

A recovery team member inspects soil for items related to the P-47 crash.

world, with tensions rising, a lot of guys have families pretty concerned about us being stationed overseas.

"If something were to occur, we're not going to become some statistic. It means a lot to us."



COLE YARDLEY/U.S. Air Force

Clive Vella, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency scientific recovery expert, sorts aircraft wreckage during the recovery mission in Italy.



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EUROPE

Never: 1K German soldiers support Ukrainians as they train

FROM PAGE 1
sign that what happens here is of great interest to Moscow.

The work at Kliestz is rigorous, and the Ukrainian soldiers must master in a few short weeks what their German counterparts typically learn in six months.

Each day begins at 5:30 a.m. with breakfast, followed by training sessions that extend up to 12 hours. Leadership courses often continue into the night.

Instructors face the challenge of tailoring their approach to soldiers varying from combat-hardened leaders to newly drafted recruits.

Even experienced drivers, loaders, gunners and commanders have something to learn because each tank is different. Operating a T-72 or another Soviet-designed tank doesn't automatically equate to proficiency on a Leopard 1, said instructors, who along with Ukrainian soldiers were not fully identified due to security concerns and German regulations.

"A lot of what we do is learning by doing," said German army Sgt. 1st Class Kevin M., a tank trainer. "When you sit in and operate the tank, you learn better than learning theory. That's why they're on the tank as early as possible.

"We all know that this is not an exercise course but training for war. Accordingly, the motivation is also high."

Bringing back Leopard 1

The war in Ukraine has given the Leopard 1 A5, once relegated to secondary roles and industry storage, a second life on the battlefield.

It was developed in the 1960s and phased out of Germany's army in the early 2000s as the Leopard 2 model was introduced.

Last year, Ukraine was promised more than 100 Leopard 1 models and a smaller quantity of Leopard 2's from Germany, with further shipments from Denmark, Norway, Poland, Portugal and the Netherlands. About 90 Leopard 1 tanks have been delivered thus far, Germany's Economy Weekly news magazine reported in May.

Leopard 1 tanks are much lighter and have a smaller gun than U.S. Abrams M1A1 tanks, 31 of



ALEXANDER RIEDEL/Stars and Stripes

Ukrainian soldiers and a German instructor examine the internal control cluster of a Leopard 1 A5 tank during a technical training session on June 13, at the Kliestz military range in Germany.

which were received by Ukraine last year.

Five of the Abrams tanks had already been lost to Russian attacks as of April, military officials told The Associated Press, citing surveillance and hunter-killer drone technology in driving significant changes to how and where tanks can be used effectively.

Despite its age, the Leopard 1 compares favorably to the Soviet holdovers in service. Its stabilized barrel allows for precise targeting even during movement, and its 105 mm cannon remains a formidable weapon.

The instructors are mainly active-duty soldiers, but some reservists from Germany and Denmark have volunteered to return to duty to support Ukraine.

Sergei, a Ukrainian army lieutenant and company commander, has served in the eastern Donetsk region and said the lessons here provide his teams with skills that can save lives.

"The training here is very, very good, better than what we could do in Ukraine. It gives us important time to practice and train," he said.

Like many of his fellow troops,

Sergei began his service on Soviet-era tanks like the T-62. He said he appreciates the in-depth training on the more advanced Leopard 1 A5.

"The Leopard is different from what we are used to, but the basics are similar," he said. "We need more technology on the battlefield. This help is crucial."

Life on the range

The relationship between the instructors and the students is professional, if tempered by a cold reality. There is a greater emotional distance than is often found between NATO military forces training together, one German service member said, because of the understanding that the Ukrainians will return to the front lines of a war that has claimed, by conservative estimates, well over 100,000 lives on each side.

The Ukrainian soldiers remain behind the barbed wire of the base, with rare exceptions made for group tours and medical appointments. They live in white, air-conditioned tents standing in neat rows, or containerized housing if staying for longer.

A dedicated support team of up

to 1,000 soldiers works to ensure that Ukrainian forces have everything they need to focus on their training.

"Our team is on duty 24/7 and our work starts when the trainers finish," said German air force Capt. Alena K., a liaison officer for Kliestz and two other training camps.

Semi-permanent field kitchens serving traditional German fare with a capacity to make 3,350 meals a day offer hot food and lunch packs for the range.

A recreational area offers a gym, video games, board games and table tennis. A supply counter sells soft drinks, cigarettes and other creature comforts. Each Ukrainian receives a spending allowance of 6 euros per day.

"We try to make life here as good as possible for them," said German navy Chief Petty Officer Patrick F., who manages the Ukrainian information and service point at Kliestz. "In the evenings they can watch TV, play PlayStation or soccer. It's no different from what we offer German soldiers during deployments."

The most crucial resource, however, is the Wi-Fi network, Patrick

said. Most soldiers use what little free time they have to talk with loved ones back home.

To break the camp monotony, the German team offers limited family meetings whenever possible to allow soldiers brief reunions.

"The human is at the center of what we do on the support side," Alena K. said. "This is part of that mission."

German teams organize transportation, meeting points and equip meeting areas with toys and supplies to make families comfortable. A few short and supervised hours later, however, they also must ensure Ukrainian troops return to their training.

"Many soldiers talk to us about things they can't discuss with their peers," said Staff Sgt. Simon W., a Russian speaker assigned to the team for two weeks. "They are grateful they can speak to us. We are a bit of an emotional support to them. There is a lot of dark humor among the soldiers, many of whom fear they may never come home."

Ukrainian soldiers carry the weight of their experiences and the uncertainty of their future. For those new to military service, the rapid transition to combat readiness is daunting.

"We see various types of soldiers here ... and of course we hear some of their stories, see pictures or videos that are making the rounds. It's not easy," Alena K. said.

Bearing witness to the soldiers leaves a mark on the German team, she added.

"We witness these reunions, their children visit, and it's clear these soldiers are not just soldiers but also family men," she said. "It touches us deeply, because we know that some soldiers training for front-line roles may never see their families again."

Tank commander Sergei knows he will return to the front as soon as his training is up. He is ready to fight, and where exactly he will deploy matters little to him.

"You can never give up," Sergei said. "You have to fight for yourself and your family. And that's what we're doing. We are fighting for our families."

US to redirect interceptor missiles to Ukraine that others had on order

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House announced Thursday that it will rush delivery of air defense interceptor missiles to Ukraine by redirecting planned shipments to other allied nations, as Washington scrambles to counter increased Russian attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure.

National security spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. had taken

the "difficult but necessary decision to reprioritize near-term planned deliveries of foreign military sales to other countries," though he wouldn't say which nations would be affected or how many.

"Right now, we know that Ukraine urgently needs these additional capabilities," Kirby said on a call with reporters, adding, "Obviously more is needed, and it's needed now."

The announcement comes after President Joe Biden, during last week's Group of Seven meeting in Italy, suggested such action might be necessary, saying, "We've let it be known for those countries that are expecting, from us, air defense systems in the future, that they're going to have to wait."

"Everything we have is going to go to Ukraine until their needs are met," Biden said. "And then we will

make good on the commitments we made to other countries."

The U.S. was already sending Ukraine a consistent stream of interceptors for its air defense systems, including for the Patriot missile batteries and the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems, or NASAMS. But Kirby said that more was urgently needed as Russia's military has accelerated missile and drone attacks "trying to destroy Uk-

raine's energy system ahead of this winter."

The number of interceptors to be sent isn't clear but Kirby said it could involve "hundreds" of Patriot interceptor missiles.

Asked to describe how other countries reacted to the shift, Kirby said they were "broadly understanding of it."

"They know how serious the need is in Ukraine," he said.

MILITARY

King takes over US Army command in Europe

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

SEMBACH, Germany — An Army command at the forefront of modernization efforts amid Russia’s war in Ukraine got a new leader Thursday.

Brig. Gen. Curtis King took over from Brig. Gen. Maurice Barnett as the head of the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command at a ceremony at Sembach Kaserne.

The command is responsible for U.S. air defense operations in Europe that use ground-based missiles.

Several of its batteries are deployed to NATO’s eastern flank to counter airborne threats.

The command’s role “is more important than ever, given the re-



PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes
Brig. Gen. Curtis King makes his first speech as commander of the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command at Sembach Kaserne, Germany, on Thursday.

turn of large-scale ground combat to the Continent,” commander of U.S. Army Europe and Africa Gen. Darryl Williams said Thursday.

Williams lauded Barnett’s efforts over the past two years, underscoring the “pivotal role” he played in working with Ukrainian leaders and overseeing Ukrainian air defense training.

The 10th AAMDC, which was upgraded to a one-star command in 2019, grew under Barnett’s watch. In October 2022, he oversaw the activation of the 52nd Air Defense Artillery Brigade in Sembach, which provides command and control for all Army air and missile defense forces in Europe.

Its subordinate units include a Patriot battalion and two short-range air defense battalions, all based in Germany, and two missile defense batteries, one in Turkey and the other in Israel.

The 5th Battalion, 4th Air De-

fense Artillery Regiment, one of the short-range units, became the first to fully transition to the Stryker-based Maneuver Short-Range Air Defense system, or M-SHORAD, and the first to use the system in an active defense mission.

It did so last year. Last week, the Army renamed the M-SHORAD the Sgt. Stout for Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. Mitchell Stout, an artilleryman who was killed protecting his fellow soldiers in Vietnam. It’s currently being used in Poland and Romania. The other short-range unit, the 1st Battalion, 57th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, was reactivated in October and is expected to support missions this fall.

While air defense became an

Army priority after Russia annexed Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula in 2014, officials say Moscow’s full-scale invasion of the country in February 2022 has bluntly made the case for greater capacity, especially in Europe.

A hallmark of the conflict has been Russia’s prolific use of missiles and drones to exhaust Ukrainian defenses.

American air defense officials say they have been analyzing the Kremlin’s tactics and learning from them.

As the senior Army air defender in Europe, King will be tasked with coordinating air defense with various military entities. He arrives after serving as the commandant of the U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery School.

Hold: Navy leaders cite strain on sailors

FROM PAGE 1

Command’s plea to keep them there longer? And if they bring them home — what can replace them?

U.S. officials say that they’re weighing all options and that a decision is expected in the coming weeks.

U.S. commanders in the Middle East have long argued that they need an aircraft carrier in the volatile region. They say that it’s an effective deterrent to keep Iran in check and that the ship gives them critical and unique war-fighting capabilities against the Houthis, who say their attacks are aimed at bringing an end to the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

The massive ship is a flexible, floating flight line that can launch fighter jets on a moment’s notice, without any of the limits that host nations in the Middle East can place on Air Force aircraft taking off from bases on their soil. And those carrier-based jets can get within striking distance of Houthi weapon systems quickly without crossing borders.

“What the carrier brings is an offensive platform that’s mobile, agile and doesn’t have any access, basing or overflight restrictions,” said retired Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, who headed U.S. Central Command for three years. “It’s sovereign U.S. territory. You can do as you want with those airplanes on that carrier. So that gives you enormous flexibility when you consider response options across the region.”

Rear Adm. Marc Miguez — who commands Carrier Strike Group Two, which includes the Eisenhower and supporting ships —

agrees that the aircraft carrier is crucial to America’s military.

“Every time that there’s a crisis on the globe, what’s the first thing the president asks? ‘Where are the U.S. aircraft carriers?’” Miguez told The Associated Press during a visit to the Eisenhower and the USS Laboon, one of the guided-missile destroyers accompanying it.

On any given day, Navy F/A-18s roar off the Eisenhower and take out Houthi missiles or drones preparing to launch. The U.S. warships have fired volleys of Tomahawk missiles into Yemen to destroy warehouses of weapons, communications facilities and other targets.

Pentagon leaders worry that without the Eisenhower, they will need to tap more Air Force fighter jets based in surrounding countries, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

But many Arab nations place flight or other restrictions on the types of offensive strikes the U.S. can do from their land because of regional sensitivities. Others worry about triggering another war between Saudi Arabia and Yemen or inflaming tensions with Iran.

U.S. military leaders say the U.S. can adapt and get forces where they need to be. But that can require longer fighter jet flights from distant bases, requiring refueling capabilities and presenting other hurdles.

Extending the Eisenhower’s deployment again is an option — but for many, it’s the least desirable.

Navy leaders worry about the sailors, who actually have been able to see incoming Houthi-launched missiles seconds before



BERNAT ARMANGUE/AP

Fighter jets maneuver on the deck of the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in the Red Sea on June 11.

they are destroyed by the ship’s defensive strikes. And officials in the Pentagon are talking about how to care for the sailors when they return home, including counseling and treatment for possible post-traumatic stress.

Miguez also notes the strain on the ships themselves.

“We are constantly reminding the Department of Defense that we’re going to need to take a respite and a break, to try and get back to maintenance,” he said. “These ships are floating around in seawater. They’re steel, and they require a lot of maintenance. And when you run them past red lines, when you run them past scheduled maintenance activities, you have to pay those off somewhere down the line.”

A third option would be sending other ships — perhaps another carrier — to take the Eisenhower’s place. But the massive ships are relatively rare. The U.S. oper-

ates 11, which is about 40% of the total number worldwide. Other countries have only one or two.

The U.S. could turn to France or the United Kingdom, which each have one, for at least a temporary stint in the Red Sea. U.S. officials have insisted that protecting the sea lanes is a multinational effort and having an ally take a turn could reinforce that message. It could give the U.S. enough breathing room to get another American carrier there, perhaps late this year.

Of the 11 U.S. carriers, four are deployed, three are in training and preparing to deploy, and four are in routine maintenance and repair, which usually lasts about a year or more.

The USS John C. Stennis, however, is undergoing its major, mid-life overhaul, which can last about four years and calls for the replacement and upgrading of the ship’s nuclear propulsion system

and other critical radar, communications, electronics and combat components. A carrier’s lifespan is about 50 years.

One carrier is always based in Japan and does regional patrols and exercises, and another is generally deployed to the Asia-Pacific. That focus on Asia reflects the long-stated belief that China is America’s top strategic challenge, and 60% of U.S. naval forces are based in the Pacific. The rest are Atlantic-based.

A third carrier is off South America’s west coast, heading toward Japan, leaving the Eisenhower as the only one in the Middle East or Europe.

Lacking a carrier, another option would be to deploy the USS Wasp, a large amphibious assault ship now in Europe that carries F-35 fighter jets. Those jets do short takeoffs and vertical landings, so they can do strike missions off smaller ships.

MILITARY

Black vets pay tribute to fallen on Juneteenth

By Linda F. Hersey
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Army veteran William Jones was handed a machete and M60 machine gun as the “point man” whose job was to advance first through the jungles of Vietnam to clear a safe path for other troops to follow.

“I was the first person to see the action or take a hit. I did not know if I would make it out alive,” said Jones, 76, who stood with his daughter, Timika Jones, at the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Va., to remember the troops who did not make it home alive.

Jones on Wednesday was part of a group of 27 Black veterans, along with family members serving as chaperones, on the first honor flight to commemorate Juneteenth at war memorials and monuments in the Washington, D.C., area.

Juneteenth is a federal holiday on June 19 to remember the Emancipation Proclamation, which President Lincoln issued in 1863 declaring the end of slavery. The federal holiday was first observed in 2021.

Under a blazing sun, the veterans participating in the honor flight — many in their 70s and 80s — embarked on a daylong tour of Arlington National Cemetery, the World War II Memorial and Lincoln Memorial, among other sites.

The group traveled on an all-expenses-paid trip courtesy of the Honor Flight Network, an organization that has hosted nearly 300,000 veterans on flights and tours of Washington, D.C., since

2005.

At 101, World War II veteran Calvin Kemp of Georgia was the oldest veteran to make the trip.

“I’m being treated like a celebrity today. I’m like Denzel Washington. I feel very honored,” Kemp said, seated in a wheelchair at Arlington National Cemetery.

Kemp, a Navy veteran who served from 1943 to 1946, and the other veterans witnessed the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, as several reporters from local TV stations filmed them.

The veterans had traveled from Atlanta to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport early Wednesday, where they were met with a water cannon salute as the plane taxied to the gate. The group then boarded two commercial buses for a day of activities.

The first stop was the Marine Corps memorial. An American flag atop a 60-foot-high bronze pole was the first sight the veterans saw as they arrived.

“It hurts me to my soul to think about my brothers and sisters who sacrificed their lives on the battlefield,” said Army veteran Dennis Brazil, who paused at the memorial to pay tribute to fallen soldiers. “It doesn’t matter [which branch] they served. I am overpowered and overwhelmed.”

“I was a draftee out of college when I entered the military. I saw people die on the battlefield. These are my fellow veterans,” he added.

Brazil, who served as a corporal in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969, said the honor flight was his first trip to



JOHN MCCASKILL

The 27 Black veterans and their chaperones participating in the first honor flight to Washington to commemorate Juneteenth gather Wednesday at the World War II Memorial.



LINDA F. HERSEY/Stars and Stripes

Calvin Kemp, a 101-year-old Navy veteran, is seated next to honor flight chaperones at Arlington National Cemetery.

the nation’s capital.

The mission of the Honor Flight Network is to recognize the service of U.S. military veterans — including many who are aging and infirmed — with tours of national memorials.

“Black veterans were charged with defending our nation, while



LINDA F. HERSEY/Stars and Stripes

Honor flight veterans and volunteers visited Arlington National Cemetery on Wednesday.

also battling various limits placed upon them by society. This trip highlights their extraordinary courage and demonstrates gratitude for their tremendous service,” according to the Honor Flight Network.

Jones, who is from Georgia, said he worked with the veterans group Disabled American Veterans prior to his retirement and has visited war memorials in Wash-

ington many times.

But this trip was the first time he was able to visit with his daughter.

“I knew about my father’s military history. But I felt I needed to learn more,” Timika Jones said.

“I trained for two weeks on how to survive in Vietnam and spent the next 11 months on the front lines,” Jones said. “I was fortunate to make it out with just shrapnel injuries.”

Calif. doubles Guard troops tracking fentanyl smuggling

By Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes

Nearly 400 National Guard troops in California are now deployed in a mission to stop people from smuggling fentanyl into the state at its southern border with Mexico, Gov. Gavin Newsom’s office announced.

The governor doubled the number of troops working on the Guard’s Counter Drug Taskforce operations across the state and at ports of entry along the border, he said last week during a visit to San Ysidro, a district in San Diego.

“The state’s Counter Drug Taskforce is making a profound

difference to hold smugglers accountable and take deadly drugs off our streets,” he said in a statement.

So far this year, the Guard has aided in the seizure of 5.8 million pills containing fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, according to the governor’s office.

Fentanyl is an approved prescription pain medication that is increasingly being produced overseas, smuggled across the southwest border and sold illegally, killing about 70,000 each year, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which is part of the Department of Health and Hu-

man Services.

It also is being discovered mixed with other drugs or used to replace another drug entirely so that users are expecting something else. This has led to a rise in deaths nationwide from fentanyl, according to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In early 2022, the mission had 30 troops spread across the ports of entry at San Ysidro, Otay Mesa, Tecate and Calexico to support federal agents, said Maj. Gen. Matthew Beevers, assistant adjutant general of the California National Guard.

Another \$15 million in annual

state funding was given to the mission, which allowed the Guard to add another 155 full-time troops, the Guard said. Last week’s decision increased the number of troops on the task force to 392. About one-third of the troops are deployed by the governor, and the rest were ordered on the mission by the Defense Department.

The task force focuses on gathering information to interdict illegal narcotics trafficking, utilizing air and ground assets to build criminal investigations, and supporting personnel at border ports of entry to stop illegal narcotics trafficking, according to the gov-

ernor’s office.

Most of the support is behind the scenes and case analysis, said Lt. Col. Brandon Hill, spokesman for the California National Guard.

“Our criminal analysts are military service qualified personnel who may process, categorize and evaluate criminal information, within the immediate scope of the supported law enforcement investigation, in support of law enforcement counter drug activities,” he said.

Troops work to reduce demand for drugs in the community by supporting prevention programs in about 90 schools, Hill said.

NATION

First named storm dumps rain on Texas, Mexico

Associated Press

Tropical Storm Alberto, the season's first named storm, rumbled ashore early Thursday and moved inland over northeast Mexico, bringing heavy rains to the parched region and leaving at least three dead.

The storm was expected to weaken rapidly over land, but carry several inches of desperately needed rain inland to Mexico's Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon and Coahuila states, as well as south Texas.

Alberto had spurred tropical storm warnings covering most of the western Gulf of Mexico's coastline from Texas to Veracruz. The storm made landfall with maximum sustained winds of 45 mph.

Schools were closed across Tamaulipas state where Alberto came ashore and would be through Friday. Shelters were prepared across the state to receive residents trying to escape high water.

As much as 5 inches to 10 inches of rain was expected in some parts of northeast Mexico and southern Texas, with even higher isolated totals possible, according to the National Hurricane Center. Some higher locations in Mexico could see as much as 20 inches of rain,

which could result in mudslides and flash flooding, especially in the states of Tamaulipas, Coahuila and Nuevo Leon.

Alberto had rumbled toward northeast Mexico as the first named storm of the season, carrying heavy rains that left three people dead. But the storm also brought hope to a region suffering under a prolonged, severe drought.

Mexican authorities downplayed the risk posed by Alberto and instead pinned their hopes on its ability to ease the parched region's water needs.

"The (wind) speeds are not such as to consider it a risk," said Tamaulipas state Secretary of Hydrological Resources Raúl Quiroga Álvarez during a news conference late Wednesday. Instead, he suggested people greet Alberto happily. "This is what we've been waiting for for eight years in all of Tamaulipas."

But in nearby Nuevo Leon state, civil protection authorities reported three deaths linked to Alberto's rains. They said one man died in the La Silla river in the city of Monterrey, the state capital, and that two minors died from electric shocks in the municipality of Alende. Local media reported that



JON SHAPLEY, HOUSTON CHRONICLE/AP

A car sits submerged in water as Tropical Storm Alberto approaches land Wednesday, in Surfside Beach, Texas. Areas along the Texas coast were seeing some road flooding and dangerous rip currents Wednesday, and waterspouts were spotted offshore.

the minors were riding a bicycle in the rain.

Alberto was bringing rains and flooding to the coast of Texas as well.

The U.S. National Weather Service said the main hazard for

southern coastal Texas is flooding from excess rain. On Wednesday the NWS said there is "a high probability" of flash flooding in southern coastal Texas. Tornadoes or waterspouts are possible.

Areas along the Texas coast

were seeing some road flooding and dangerous rip currents Wednesday, and waterspouts were spotted offshore.

Alberto was expected to rapidly weaken over land and dissipate Thursday.

Rain might help fight fatal NM wildfires

Associated Press

ROSWELL, N.M. — Heavy rain and hail fell Wednesday around an evacuated village in New Mexico threatened by wildfires that have killed at least two people and damaged more than 1,400 structures, offering the hope of some assistance for firefighters but adding the threat of high winds and flash floods.

Air tankers dropped water and red retardant earlier on the pair of fires growing in a mountainous part of the state where earlier in the week residents of the village of Ruidoso were forced to flee the larger of the two blazes with little notice.

New Mexico State Police spokesman Wilson Silver said Wednesday that officers discovered the skeletal remains of an unidentified second person in the driver's seat of a burned vehicle. It's the second confirmed death in the blazes. The first fire victim was a badly burned 60-year-old man found by the side of the road near the popular Swiss Chalet Inn in Ruidoso.

Weather patterns were shifting Wednesday with moisture arriving from the Gulf of Mexico, said Bla-



ANDRES LEIGHTON/AP

Steven Dobrovolskis eats pizza while spending the night at a shelter in Roswell, N.M., after evacuating from Ruidoso, on Tuesday. Thousands in southern New Mexico fled menacing wildfires.

den Breitreiter of the National Weather Service office in Albuquerque.

"It will be a challenging situation going into the late afternoon and evening," said Breitreiter, who has been an incident meteorologist at past wildfires. "The potential for scattered to isolated thunderstorms could help, but it depends on where they hit. If the rain misses the fires, downward winds could cause problems for firefighters on the ground."

He said rain could also lead to dangerous flash flooding in newly burned areas.

It wasn't immediately clear if the rain and hail that started around Ruidoso on Wednesday afternoon was falling on the fires themselves,

or if it would slow their progress. The National Weather Service issued a flash flood warning for the area until later Wednesday evening.

The two fires remained at 0% containment Wednesday afternoon as crews used heavy equipment to build fire lines while water and retardant was dropped from the air, authorities said.

Ruidoso and areas around Santa Fe and Española, N.M., have served as the backdrop this year for filming of a movie starring Matthew McConaughey and America Ferrera about the devastating 2018 wildfire in Paradise, Calif. That fire killed 85 people and nearly erased the community in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

Jobless claims fall to 238K from 10-month high, still low by historical standards

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits slipped last week as the U.S. labor market remained resilient.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that jobless claims fell by 5,000 to 238,000 from a 10-month high of 243,000 the week before. The four-week average of claims, which evens out weekly ups and downs, rose by 5,500 to 232,750, highest since September.

Weekly unemployment claims — a proxy for layoffs — remain at low levels by historical standards, a sign that most Americans enjoy unusual job security. Still, after mostly staying below 220,000 this year, weekly claims have moved up recently.

"Layoffs are still low overall suggesting businesses remain reluctant to reduce headcount in large numbers," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics. "However, there has been a gradual increase in recent weeks that merits watching for signals about a more material [weakening] in demand for workers going forward."

Nearly 1.83 million people were collecting unemployment benefits the week of June 8, up by 15,000 the week before and the seventh straight weekly uptick.

The U.S. economy and job market have proven remarkably resilient in the face of high interest rates. Employers are adding a strong average of 248,000 jobs a month this year. Unemployment is still low at 4%.

But the economy has lately showed signs of slowing, perhaps offering evidence that higher borrowing costs are finally taking a toll. For instance, the Commerce Department reported Tuesday that retail sales barely grew last month.

The Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times in 2022 and 2023, eventually bringing it to a 23-year high to combat a resurgence in inflation.

Inflation has come down from a mid-2022 peak 9.1% but remains stubbornly above the Fed's 2% target. Fed policymakers announced last week that they have scaled back their intention to cut the rate three times this year. Now they are anticipating only one rate cut.

La. requires Ten Commandments in classrooms

BY SARA CLINE
Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — Louisiana has become the first state to require that the Ten Commandments be displayed in every public school classroom, the latest move from a GOP-dominated Legislature pushing a conservative agenda under a new governor.

The legislation that Republican Gov. Jeff Landry signed into law on Wednesday requires a poster-sized display of the Ten Commandments in “large, easily readable font” in all public classrooms, from kindergarten to state-funded universities.

“If you want to respect the rule of law, you’ve got to start from the original lawgiver, which was Moses” who got the commandments

from God, Landry said.

Opponents questioned the law’s constitutionality and vowed to challenge it in court. Proponents said the measure is not solely religious, but that it has historical significance. In the language of the law, the Ten Commandments are “foundational documents of our state and national government.”

The posters, which will be paired with a four-paragraph “context statement” describing how the Ten Commandments “were a prominent part of American public education for almost three centuries,” must be in place in classrooms by the start of 2025.

Under the law, state funds will not be used to implement the mandate. The posters would be paid for

through donations.

The law also “authorizes” but does not require the display of other items in K-12 public schools, including: The Mayflower Compact, which was signed by religious pilgrims aboard the Mayflower in 1620 and is often referred to as America’s “First Constitution”; the Declaration of Independence; and the Northwest Ordinance, which established a government in the Northwest Territory — in the present day Midwest — and created a pathway for admitting new states to the Union.

Not long after the governor signed the bill into law at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School in Lafayette on Wednesday, civil rights groups and organizations that want

to keep religion out of government promised to file a lawsuit challenging it.

The law prevents students from getting an equal education and will keep children who have different beliefs from feeling safe at school, the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Freedom from Religion Foundation said in a joint statement Wednesday afternoon.

“Even among those who may believe in some version of the Ten Commandments, the particular text that they adhere to can differ by religious denomination or tradition. The government should not be taking sides in this theological debate,” the groups said.

The controversial law, in a state ensconced in the Bible Belt, comes during a new era of conservative leadership in Louisiana under Landry, who replaced two-term Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards in January. The GOP holds a supermajority in the Legislature, and Republicans hold every statewide elected position, paving the way for lawmakers to push through a conservative agenda.

Similar bills requiring the Ten Commandments be displayed in classrooms have been proposed in other states including Texas, Oklahoma and Utah. However, with threats of legal battles over the constitutionality of such measures, no state besides Louisiana has succeeded in making the bills law.

Baby moose trapped in lake saved by Alaska man, police

Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — An Alaska man and two police officers rescued a baby moose from what police described as “a sure demise” after it fell into a lake and got stuck in a narrow space between a floatplane and a dock.

Spencer Warren, who works for the outdoor tourism company Destination Alaska Adventure Co., had arrived at work about 6:30 a.m. June 14 to prepare a floatplane for the day’s trip when he heard what he thought was an odd-sounding bird.

He quickly spotted the moose calf stuck between the floats of the plane and the dock at Beluga Lake in Homer, a Kenai Peninsula community about 220 miles south of Anchorage. The floats replace the wheels on a plane, allowing it to take off and land on water.

He immediately thought, “Oh, man, where is mama? I know she’s nearby,” before spotting the worried mother about 4 feet away with another calf. Mother moose can be dangerously protective of their calves — a photographer was killed by a mama moose protecting her young just last month in



Spencer Warren, who works for a wilderness guiding service, arrived June 14 to prepare a floatplane for a client’s trip when he discovered a calf trapped in Beluga Lake in Homer, Alaska.

Homer.

The baby moose tried to get out of the lake, but couldn’t get its footing on the top of the metal float with its hooves. Its wary mother was keeping Warren, the would-be rescuer, from getting too close as it struggled.

“It’s like an ice rink for the moose and its hooves,” Warren said of Friday’s rescue. “So he just kept slipping and slipping and

could not get up.”

Warren checked in with his boss, who called Homer police.

One officer eventually positioned his police cruiser between the mama moose and the floatplane to allow another officer and Warren to rescue the calf, Homer Police Lt. Ryan Browning told The Associated Press.

The calf had one leg outstretched across the top of the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPENCER WARREN/AP

A moose licks her baby calf after it was rescued from being trapped between a dock and floatplane, in Beluga Lake.

plane’s float, where it was stuck.

“You know, kind of thankfully, he wasn’t moving so that it made the rescue a little bit easier,” Warren said. “We just lifted him straight out and, put him on the dock there.”

The exhausted calf splayed out

on the boardwalk until an officer helped it stand. The calf reunited with its mother and she licked the water off its body — all of it caught on camera by Warren.

“Anytime you can rescue a little critter, it always makes you feel good,” Browning said.

Nurses in Oregon take to picket lines to demand better staffing, pay

Associated Press

More than 3,000 nurses at six Oregon hospitals spent a second day on the picket lines Wednesday carrying signs that say, “Patients over profits” and “We’re out to ensure it’s safe in there,” as they continued to demand fair wages and better staffing levels.

Nurses are striking at six Providence medical facilities across the state — from St. Vincent Medical

Center in Portland in the north down to the Medford Medical Center in the south.

Organizers say it’s the largest nurses strike in the state’s history, while Providence emphasized that no patient’s health is being put at risk, since it has hired contract workers to temporarily fill the void.

Scott Palmer, chief of staff with the Oregon Nurses Association, said nurses have been in negotiations

since December but they “have not been able to get Providence to come to a fair contract.”

Palmer said the focus of negotiations is on “recruitment and retention issues,” including wages, benefits and sufficient staffing standards.

Jennifer Gentry, chief nursing officer for Providence’s Central Division, said the organization contracted with a company to provide re-

placement workers to ensure patient care does not suffer. Gary Walker, a spokesperson for the company, said the strike has not affected their facilities. They treated about 800 people in their Emergency Departments on Tuesday and no elective surgeries have been postponed.

Palmer said the striking nurses want people to get the care they need, but they want the caregivers

to be supported.

“It’s really important for people to know from the nurses and from the American Nurses Association that if you’re sick, don’t delay getting medical care,” Palmer told The Associated Press.

Staffing and competitive wages are the focus of their demands, Palmer said.

The strike was scheduled to run through Thursday.

NATION

China has no favorite in Biden-Trump race, US intel finds

Bloomberg

U.S. spies believe China's leaders see little or no upside to the looming electoral showdown between President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump.

Ahead of next week's first debate of the presidential campaign, U.S. intelligence agencies assess that China has no clear preference between the two candidates, according to American officials, who asked not to be identified discussing non-public assessments.

The conclusion suggests that officials in Beijing, like their counterparts in Washington, believe that ties between the world's two largest economies will continue on their long-term downward trajectory despite a recent increase in high-level

meetings billed as efforts to manage differences. In recent years, the two countries have clashed over everything from technology to human rights and the South China Sea.

The U.S. assessment is matched in interviews with Chinese officials, who also spoke on condition of anonymity. They say the view in Beijing is that both candidates are intent on containing China and disrupting its rise.

"Neither is a perfect candidate to put it mildly," said Gao Zhikai, a former Chinese diplomat who served as translator to the late leader Deng Xiaoping. "Biden is a Cold War warrior, who doesn't care if he pushes the world into conflict, while Trump will probably impose sanctions and tariffs on China in

pursuit of his America-first agenda."

Spokespeople for the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence declined to comment on intelligence assessments of how China views the 2024 vote. Asked about the U.S. elections, Liu Pengyu, spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Washington, said China does not comment on "U.S. domestic affairs."

A second Trump administration could pose significant problems for Beijing.

In his first term, Trump declared a trade war on China, increased high-level ties with Taiwan and oversaw a reorientation of U.S. military strategy to counter Beijing. By the end of his time in office, it was

routine for officials in both Beijing and Washington to refer in private to ties between the nations as a new Cold War.

Chinese officials believe that a second Trump administration would likely be characterized by provocative pronouncements, unpredictable policymaking and a renewed push for anti-China measures, U.S. and Chinese officials said. During Trump's campaign, he's already floated the idea of 60% tariffs on Chinese-made goods,

Liu, the Chinese embassy spokesman, said that raising tariffs on Chinese goods would drive up the cost of goods, "inflicting more loss on American companies and consumers" while damaging global supply chains.

The flip side of these concerns, Chinese officials believe, is that a Trump presidency could weaken Washington's ties with its allies, opening opportunities for Beijing. The former president's first term in office was characterized by repeated friction with European allies over defense spending, as well as periodic complaints about the cost of the protection the US affords Japan and South Korea.

But the prospect of a second Biden term offers little comfort to Beijing.

The central concern for Chinese policymakers would be Biden's likely push to strengthen regional partnerships to push back against Chinese assertiveness, according to U.S. and Chinese officials.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. fails to qualify for CNN's debate

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has failed to qualify for next week's debate in Atlanta, according to host network CNN, falling shy of benchmarks both for state ballot qualification and necessary polling.

The missed markers mean that the June 27 showdown will be solely between Democratic President Joe Biden and presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump. That denies Kennedy a singular opportunity to stand alongside the leading candidates in an attempt to lend legitimacy to his long-shot bid and convince potential supporters that he has a shot at winning.

Both the Biden and Trump campaigns fear that Kennedy could play spoiler in what's anticipated to be a close general election.

According to the criteria set out by CNN, candidates would be invited to participate in the debate if they had secured a place on the ballot in states totaling at least 270 votes in the Electoral College, the minimum needed to win the presidency.

Biden and Trump have easily cleared the polling threshold but

won't be certified for the ballot until their parties formally nominate them later this summer. Both have secured enough delegates to lock in their nominations.

Kennedy's campaign says he has satisfied the requirements to appear on the ballot in 22 states, with a combined 310 electoral votes, though not all have affirmed his name will be listed. California, the largest prize on the electoral map with 54 votes, will not certify any candidates until Aug. 29.

Candidates were also required to reach a polling threshold of 15% in four reliable national polls by June 20, another metric CNN said Kennedy failed to meet. According to the network, Kennedy has received at least 15% in three qualifying polls so far and is currently on the ballot in six states, making him currently eligible for 89 Electoral College votes.

Last month, Kennedy filed an election complaint alleging CNN is colluding with Biden and Trump to exclude him from the June 27 debate, alleging that the participation requirements were designed to ensure only Biden and Trump would qualify and claiming that he is being held to a higher standard.

CNN has said the complaint is without merit. Kennedy's campaign did not immediately respond to a message Thursday seeking comment.



Kennedy



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MIDEAST

Cyprus: US-built pier in Gaza running again

Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Cyprus’ Foreign Ministry said Thursday the U.S. military-built pier in Gaza is up and running again after being detached for a second time last week because of rough seas.

Cyprus plays a key role in the pier because a security and inspection station it built screens the international aid destined for Gaza. There was no immediate confirmation from the U.S.

Theodoris Gotsis, a spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry, said the pier and the causeway in Gaza were both functioning.

He said over the past 40 days, Cyprus has screened and loaded onto boats some 10,000 tons of aid for Gaza.

The U.S. military detached the causeway last week to prevent it from breaking apart again, as it did late last month when it was hit by bad weather.

The pier has faced a number of setbacks since it was erected. It was operational for only about a week when it was blown apart by

high winds in May and then removed again earlier this month.

The U.N.’s World Food Program, one of the main aid agencies to make use of the pier, had paused its distribution of aid coming from it earlier this month over security concerns. WFP could not immediately be reached for comment on whether it was resuming distribution.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the European Union’s executive arm says any threat against Cyprus is a threat against the bloc’s 26 other member nations.

Peter Stano made the remark Thursday in response to a question regarding Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah’s threat that Cyprus could be implicated in a wider conflict if the island nation allows Israel to use its ports and airports to target Lebanon.

Stano said the EU fully supports Cyprus and that the trade bloc is in contact with “a number of partners in the region,” including Lebanon and Hezbollah, in order to de-escalate tension.



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WEEKEND



Trainor still sings with purpose on ‘Timeless’
Music, Pages 28-29

A worthy vehicle

Strong cast, lush cinematography make ‘The Bikeriders’ an engaging ode to a bygone era

Movies, Pages 15-16



Austin Butler stars in “The Bikeriders.”
Focus Features

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

From bottle to beach

Miami company pulverizes recycled glass into sand in hopes of counteracting effects of erosion

By **ASHLEY MIZNAZI**
Miami Herald

Florida’s coastal counties spend millions trucking in sand to preserve the eroding beachfront. But what if a cheaper possible solution could be found in the garbage and recycling bins of Miami bars or even in that six-pack of Miller Light you brought home the other night?

Glass is made from sand, so what about doing the reverse?

Paola Barranco thinks such a new source of the soft, precious stuff could be an attractive, environmentally-friendly option in a state with a shortage of quality beach sand.

The company she co-founded, Glass for Life, is still small, but Barranco has big ideas and hopes.

Her company operates out of a small warehouse in The Hammocks neighborhood in southwest Miami, so far using just one professional glass pulverizer no bigger than an office copy machine. The machine is simple to use. It has a hole you stick the bottles in, a series of powerful hammers and grinders and a spout that spews out the resulting sand.

The team separates the bottles by color and only one bottle can be recycled at a time. The machine separates chunks too big to crush, but someone has to manually sift through the labels and bottle caps. Each bottle makes a handful of sand in seconds, and in half an hour, someone could probably push about 100 bottles through the pulverizing machine. Enough for a sandbag, but not enough to make a difference on a beach. But with more machines, more bottles?

“With this kind of machine, we won’t solve the climate crisis,” Barranco said. “But maybe it will open the door for something bigger. To do something better and think outside the box.”

Seeking more partners

The company is already hoping to scale up, partnering with a handful of commercial clients including 1Hotel and Krus Kitchen in Coconut Grove.

The 1Hotel in South Beach said it partners with Glass for Life to help meet the hotel’s goal of diverting 70% of its waste from the landfill.

“Now, thanks to Glass For Life, over 10,000 glass bottles are pulverized into sand and repurposed, resulting in saving raw materials, using less energy and cutting CO2 emissions,” Paula Lombardo, 1Hotel’s sustainability manager, wrote in an email. “Glass for Life is the perfect fit because so few recyclers actually recycle glass waste even if they collect it.”

The fees start at \$100 a month for weekly pickups, with personalized quotes depending on the location and number and size of containers used. The 1Hotel has pickups twice a week.

“The price for this service is not cheap, and they do not pay us for the glass,” Lombardo said. “But we are willing to pay the price because it is the right thing to do.”

The company’s next goal is to move into residential pickups and drop-off stations.

Lots of glass to mash

There is a lot of unused glass in the waste stream. Since its first pickup in January, Glass for Life has diverted more than 23,400 bottles from landfills that are



D.A. VARELA, MIAMI HERALD/TNS

Glass for Life co-founder Paola Barranco holds the sand produced from processing glass bottles at the company’s warehouse on May 28 in Miami.

fast filling and release greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

The Environmental Protection Agency reports that less than a third of glass in the United States gets recycled.

The process isn’t always clean and green. In Portland, Ore., there are reported issues of glass recycling plants emitting toxic pollution. The Owens-Brockway glass-recycling plant that melts down used bottles was fined by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality more than \$1 million for multiple air quality violations.

Simply crushing glass into sand is a far cleaner process, however.

A common question for Barranco: Won’t this stuff cut you up? The answer is no. The pulverizer produces material you can roll in your hand with no harm. It can crush glass into a beach-like powder or chunkier pieces if desired.

The sand can be used for more than just preserving the beach from coastal erosion. It can be repurposed into sandbags to protect against hurricanes and storm surge, both expected to increase with climate change. It’s also a big need in the construction industry whether it be for gravel or flooring. Glass for Life has also offered the sand to artists to use for mosaics or ceramics.

PNY’s Elite-X Type-C flash drives are small but powerful

By **GREGG ELLMAN**
Tribune News Service

Some computer accessories are about making your life easier, and some, which aren’t as sexy, are about making your workflow more efficient. The somewhat new PNY Elite-X Type-C USB 3.2 Gen 1 Flash Drives fill both needs — and they are budget-friendly.

While smaller (2.25-by-0.5-by-0.25 inches) than my pinky, the powerful storage drives are big in performance; one model has 256GB of storage on board. The small size, fast speeds and ample storage make them ideal for anyone looking to expand a computer or tablet.

The thin profile, pocket-sized flash drives slide out when needed to connect to a Type-C USB port and slide into their narrow bodies for protection when not in use.

Many people like USB-C because there is no upside down. Just plug the cable in either way. Many computers have side-by-side ports, so it can be hard to plug in accessories without them getting in each other’s way. That’s not a worry here; their slim profiles makes them perfect for use next to another plugged-in accessory.

The Elite-X Type-C USB 3.2 Gen 1 Flash Drive is available in capacities of 128GB for \$17.99 and 256GB for \$26.99. A 64GB drive is also available but not currently on PNY.com. All have read speeds up to 200MB/s and transfer speeds up to 100MB/s. PNY states that the flash drives work with PC and Mac operating systems, smartphones and tablets with USB-C connections.

Online: PNY.com



SATECHI/TNS

Users can connect up to four monitors to the Satechi Thunderbolt 4 Docking Station with DisplayLink. Two can be connected via Thunderbolt 4 and two via HDMI.

Satechi has launched yet another innovative docking solution, the **Thunderbolt 4 Docking Station with DisplayLink**. It’s compatible with Mac, Google Chrome and Windows operating systems.

Satechi created the new docking station to resolve the single-display limitation some users experience through

its DisplayLink software technology. With the new dock, up to four external monitors can be used, and up to 40 Gbps transfer speeds will be provided through three downstream Thunderbolt 4 ports.

According to Satechi, the docking station supports the four extended monitors at 4K/60Hz resolution. For ultra-crisp viewing, resolution can go up to 8K/60Hz on compatible devices when a single Thunderbolt 4 port is used for video output.

The universal docking station features versatile ports that allow two monitors to be connected via Thunderbolt 4 and two via HDMI using DisplayLink software.

The Thunderbolt 4 Docking Station with DisplayLink delivers up to 96W to the host device. Tablets, smartphones and other power-hungry devices can get up to 15 watts from each of its three Thunderbolt 4 downstream ports.

Satechi notes that the Thunderbolt 4 Docking Station with DisplayLink also has two USB-A 3.2 Gen 2 ports that support 10Gbps. The elite docking station allows users to daisy-chain up to six devices simultaneously and provides 32Gbps native PCIe support for external GPUs and Thunderbolt-based external storage devices.

Users should note that up to two ports can be used for charging at a time. The docking station has a single-cable connection on the side, which eliminates the need for extra charging cables. A UHS-II card reader is also built into the dock, with transfer speeds up to 312MB/s.

Online: Satechi.net; \$299.99

WEEKEND: MOVIES



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

Jeff Nichols, center, writer and director of “The Bikeriders,” poses with cast members Austin Butler, left, and Jodie Comer, May 30 in Los Angeles. The motorcycle is a 1965 Harley Davidson Pan Head that Butler rode in the film.

Evoking the nostalgia of motorcycle clubs

‘The Bikeriders’ director and stars discuss bringing Danny Lyon’s New Journalism-style book of the same name to life

By LINDSEY BAHR

Associated Press

Jeff Nichols had dreamt of making a film about a 1960s motorcycle club for more than 20 years.

The obsession started in his brother’s apartment, when he first cracked open Danny Lyon’s book “The Bikeriders,” a New Journalism-style account of the Chicago Outlaws Motorcycle Club in the mid-1960s. He could see the movie in his mind: A story about rebels, romantics, frauds and the end of an era.

But he didn’t quite realize just how terrifying it would be to film the motorcycles in motion.

The bikes were vintage. The actors, including Austin Butler and Tom Hardy, would be riding at high speeds. And there would be no helmets. At some point, one of his stunt coordinators just came out with it: “There is no way to make this 100% safe.”

They went for it. The danger was kind of the point. And everyone made it out unscathed.

Their motorcycle expert (and amateur philosopher) said something that stuck with Butler. It is dangerous, but it can also be empowering.

“Your life is in your hands,” Butler said. “But it’s also an incredible act of self-love. You have to look out for yourself. Nobody else can do it for you.”

“The Bikeriders,” now in theaters, is a rare summer gem: an original film with stars (including Jodie Comer, Michael Shannon, Norman Reedus and Mike Faist), cool cred, pathos and a clear-eyed wistfulness for a moment and a type of guy, that was vanishing even as it was happening.

“There is all this romanticism around this subculture. It’s easy to become ‘Grease’ really quickly,” Nichols said.

“This is a film that’s really about nostalgia. There is a sadness that comes with that. But there’s also a joy in remembering it.”

Catching a star on the rise

Nichols has always had luck with casting, getting movie stars in his films right as they’re about to break big. Before he made “Take Shelter,” he remembered a producer asking, “who this Jessica Chastain was.” For “The Bikeriders,” it was Butler. “Elvis” had yet to come out. He didn’t yet know about “Dune: Part Two.” But when he met him, he was certain.

“This guy’s a movie star, you know?” Nichols said.

“I read a lot of scripts and this one just felt different,” Butler said. “It felt full of humanity and these cinematic moments I could see in my mind’s eye. ... I felt like I was being invited into this other world. And he was one of the coolest characters I’ve ever read.”

Butler’s Benny is also the most enigmatic of the bunch: a guy whose face is never shown in Lyon’s book and who is never interviewed — just talked about.

“I love how Jeff talks about him as being this empty cup that everybody wants to fill with their own expectations and their own responsibilities. He doesn’t want any of that,” Butler said. “That’s when he wants to cut loose and be free.”

And Butler brought an element to Benny that Nichols hadn’t originally envisioned. Nichols wanted Benny to be bottled up until the end and remembered telling his star to “pull it back” a few times.

“Like, stop smiling,” Nichols laughed. “When that kid smiles the whole world smiles.”

But he soon realized that was missing the point of cast-

ing someone like Butler — an emotive actor with a big heart who would go over to apologize to Hardy after a fight scene.

“At some point you have to find a balance between the character that’s on the page and the human being you have playing that part,” Nichols said. “And that character got better because of him.”

A different point of view

In his many years of thinking about how to make “The Bikeriders” work one of Nichols’ biggest breakthroughs was when he realized who the narrator should be: Kathy.

Based on a real woman, she falls for Benny at first sight and gets wrapped up in the club.

“If you ask Danny, Kathy was one of the most interesting people there. She just pops off the page,” Nichols said. “She’s witty, she’s introspective, she’s self-deprecating, she’s infuriating at times. She is a real person. And honestly, I just kind of fell in love with her.”

Comer saw in her a fascinating character, an “ordinary” but still extraordinary person: strong willed and funny and authentic. She worked tirelessly to nail Kathy’s very specific Chicago accent, using the hours of taped interviews with Lyon as a road map.

“I could see so many older women who I’ve had in my life in her,” said Comer, who was raised in Liverpool. “The way in which they tell stories and have a kind of magnetism.”

But on another level, she was just a better storyteller, both as an outsider with insider intimacy and for what he wanted to say.

SEE MOTORCYCLE ON PAGE 16

WEEKEND: MOVIES

A snapshot of a memorable era

Inspired by a photo book, ‘Bikeriders’ a sketchy meditation on midcentury motorcycle club life with plenty of pathos

By Katie Walsh
Tribune News Service

In the mid-1960s, photojournalist Danny Lyon embedded himself with the Outlaws Motorcycle Club in the suburbs of Chicago, snapping portraits and candid photographs while interviewing members of the Outlaws. The result was a photo book called “The Bikeriders,” published in 1968, that serves as the inspiration for Jeff Nichols’ latest film of the same name, a meditation on mid-century motorcycle life, the birthplace of a certain kind of cool.

Nichols is clearly enchanted by the inimitable style and intoxicating lore that Lyon’s photographs conjure up, and he populates his cinematic Chicago-based motorcycle club — the Vandals — with a coterie of ruggedly handsome stars who can make sideburns and motor oil look good, including Tom Hardy, Austin Butler, Norman Reedus, Beau Knapp, Boyd Holbrook, Emory Cohen and Damon Herriman. There are also some unexpected and welcome casting choices like Karl Glusman and young Australian actor Toby Wallace, who is terrific as a young Vandals wannabe.

As the enigmatic Benny, Butler’s supernova star quality is undeniable, and the film opens with a bourbon and a bang — a shovel to the back of his head during a bar brawl that will haunt the rest of the film. In this bit of bravura filmmaking, Nichols demonstrates a slick style and rhythmic musicality that instantly draws us into this world.

When we next lay eyes on Benny, he’s hulking over a pool table at a bar, his long, golden arms and tousled blonde coif raked over by the greedy gaze of Kathy (Jodie Comer) who stops in for a drink and leaves with a lifetime lover. Nichols’ camera eats Butler up hungrily, every inch of battered denim and well-worn leather, every soulful pout and blood-spattered grin wordlessly seducing Kathy to the dark side. It’s no wonder Kathy’s boyfriend beats it as soon as Benny turns up on their curb, and it’s no wonder Kathy bends her life around her brooding new boyfriend and his clan of grease-streaked miscreants.

Kathy becomes our narrator, her mile-a-minute Midwestern patter adding a layer of percussion to the rumbling engines and plaintive crooning of ’60s rock ’n’ roll on the soundtrack. In a rapid-fire Chicago cadence expertly enunciated by Liverpoolian actor and master of accents Comer, Kathy reels off stories about the boys in the Vandals into the microphone of Lyon (Mike Faist). She’s the observant eyewitness and caretaker of their oral history, though the details are potentially lost, muddled or otherwise exaggerated by our storyteller. We see them though her eyes: sexy, dirty, violent and often tragic.

We also see them through re-creations of Lyon’s photographs, which Nichols and longtime cinematographer Adam Stone painstakingly compose and set to motion. In a montage, we see Lyon snapping portraits of characters like Cockroach (Cohen), Wahoo (Knapp) and Corky (Glus-



Focus Features/AP

Chatterbox Kathy (Jodie Comer), left, and laconic Benny (Austin Butler) are the central couple in “The Bikeriders.” Kathy also acts as the film’s narrator.

man), or capturing candid shots of the gang from the back of a bike. We see an image of a relaxed Benny riding over a bridge, one hand lazily gesturing behind him. Nichols improves upon Lyon’s shot by having our subject face the camera, rather than looking away.

Watching “The Bikeriders” feels like flipping through a photo book, absorbing arresting compositions and snippets of stories, and there’s a sketchy, snapshot quality to Nichols’ screenplay as well. The film is an evocation of character, place and time, the tempo alternating between moody and lively, like our central odd couple, laconic Benny and chatterbox Kathy.

Kathy has plenty to say about Benny, though we rarely see his unique qualities in action. He’s somewhat underwritten, and while Butler has the outsize presence to inhabit the iconic image, Kathy takes up all the air in the script. Benny is reduced to a symbol of sorts, a visual emblem of the Vandals’ dangerous glamour. Their mutual attraction is initially palpable, but we don’t see the glue that keeps them

together throughout the years of peril and partying. The mysterious Benny has more chemistry with Vandals founder and leader Johnny (Hardy), and so too does Kathy.

Hardy is typically fantastic and fantastically weird, and he emerges as the gravitational center, not just of the Vandals, but of the film itself. Johnny leads by his own specific instinctual code, based on whim and personal values, which gets harder and harder to enforce as the club grows, with veterans returning from Vietnam seeking camaraderie, and bringing back darker vices.

“The Bikeriders” is a great hang, until the party’s over and it’s time to hit the road. Though the dramatic thrust of the narrative never quite coheres, there is plenty of pathos, and the ebb and flow reflects both life itself and the uniquely human nature of the storytelling, as Kathy regales us with tales of these wild ones, who now live with the sound of roaring engines only haunting their memories.

“The Bikeriders” is rated R for language throughout, violence, some drug use and brief sexuality. Running time: 116 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

Motorcycle: Nichols balanced romanticism of culture with its realism

FROM PAGE 15

“The ultimate truth, and a subtext of the film, is that men are really bad at sharing their emotions,” he said. “Observing this group in the hands of a male narrator I think would be really boring.”

Fact, fiction and telling a good story

“The Bikeriders” is a work of fiction. Nichols didn’t want to be the historian of the Outlaws, a group that still exists. He mostly wanted to capture this time and culture and evoke the feeling he got when he opened that book so many years ago.

But he also draws heavily on Lyon’s images, some of which are re-created, and reporting. Much of Kathy’s dialogue are things the real Kathy, who was married to Benny, said. Hardy’s character Johnny was also apparently inspired by the Marlon Brando film “The Wild One” to start the club. He was the leader and also a bit of a fraud — a suburban dad with a real job on the side.

Nichols also chose to make the film in color, instead of mimicking Lyon’s famous use of black-and-white photography.

“They’re beautiful, but they are romanticized,” Nichols said. “I think when you put them in color, they become less affected. They become more realistic.”

Getting it to the big screen

“The Bikeriders” journey to theaters was not without

its bumps. Last fall, it had a triumphant debut at the Telluride Film Festival, often a launching pad for Oscar hopefuls. But as the December release date approached, it became clear that the actors strike was not going to be over in time for the stars to help promote the film. Headlines said that The Walt Disney Co.’s Searchlight Pictures had dropped “The Bikeriders” instead of just holding it for a poststrike release.

“It got misrepresented,” Nichols said. “It was frustrating. It was like, you all have a fundamental misunderstanding how this film was made.”

The truth, Nichols explained, is a little more complicated and nuanced because New Regency finances its own films and distribution, often working with partners at studios to do so.

After the drop-dead date came and went for the December release, another opportunity arose with Focus Features, the art house arm of Universal Pictures, which envisioned a splashy worldwide summer release.

The joys and pains of riding those bikes

Like Butler, Hardy came into the film with some motorcycle know-how. But neither would describe it as a leg up — antique bikes are a different beast.

“It just happens to be a convenience because I can ride as opposed to lying about skiing,” Hardy said. “But it quickly became an inconvenience. You’re busy and you’re trying to do the other job, which is the face pulling

piece where you’re trying to act, and the bike is unpredictable.”

Still, once they got it down, it could be rather exciting. “It was exhilarating riding in a giant group,” Butler said. “You feel the energy of every motorcycle coming together.”

Comer said riding on the back of Benny’s bike for the first time was “a really magical kind of movie moment.

“We were on a night shoot in Cincinnati and freezing, wind in your hair,” she said. “You see the twinkle of the lights, the street lamps. You hear the roaring of the engines. I was like, Oh my God, this is exactly what she spoke of.”

And of course the danger was ever-present. But it also resulted in some real movie magic, like the near-impossible re-creation of one of Lyon’s most famous photographs with a single bikerider speeding across the Ohio Bridge, looking over his shoulder.

In the film, the rider is Butler. They had shut down the bridge. The police were there. They couldn’t do it more than twice (both logistically and because they couldn’t risk anything with their star). They had a 35mm film camera mounted on a car with a crane attempting to speed alongside Butler, but not always managing.

“All of a sudden we lock in the cameras in the right spot, the bridge is in the right spot, Austin looks back, then he drives off,” Nichols said. “And you’re like, ‘Holy (expletive): We got it.’”

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

Not in history books

Ainouz’s ‘Firebrand’ a revisionist feminist take on Tudor court drama with 6th and final wife of Henry VIII at center

By MICHAEL O’SULLIVAN
The Washington Post

Set in 1546, “Firebrand” opens with a fairy-tale-like intro delivered by a teenage Princess Elizabeth (Junia Rees): “In a rotten, blood-soaked island kingdom, cursed by plague and riven by religious unrest, there once was a queen by the name of Katherine Parr.” That much is true, if perhaps hyperbolic in its grim assessment of 16th-century England.

Throughout the film, this queen to be, daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife, the beheaded Anne Boleyn, seems to watch and wait in the wings for her own ascendancy to the throne 13 years later. This is no origin story, however.

The virgin queen is not the subject of this ahistoric Tudor drama, which plays so fast and loose with the facts at times that the narrator should be taken only as the most unreliable of witnesses. Katherine, the sixth and last wife of King Henry (Jude Law), who survived her notoriously fickle — even violently mercurial — husband, is the putative firebrand.

The choice of title is a strange one. Played by an equally watchful and waiting — almost inert — Alicia Vikander, Katherine is, for much of the film, something of a fizzling cipher as she patiently endures indignities at the hands of her husband.

Fire does figure prominently elsewhere: in the burning of plague-infected garments, banned books and, at times, Pro-

testants accused of heresy against the Church of England. But the only traditional incendiaries in the story are the radical Protestant preacher Anne Askew (Erin Doherty), a friend of Katherine’s, and Henry’s minion, Bishop Stephen Gardiner, played by an inquisitorial Simon Russell Beale.

“I know what you are capable of,” Anne tells Katherine, after the queen has secretly visited her against the wishes of Henry, head of the Church of England, and Gardiner, who keeps a gimlet eye on those who would go too far in challenging orthodoxy in Reformation-era Britain.

Anne may know what Katherine is capable of. We, on the other hand, are made to wait until the end to learn just what the character is all about. Her emergence as a heroine worthy of a 21st-century audience is a doozy, one you won’t find in any history book. It is, however, the premise of Elizabeth Fremantle’s 2013 novel, “Queen’s Gambit,” from which this revisionist feminist take on Tudor court drama has been adapted by screenwriting sisters Henrietta and Jessica Ashworth (with additional writing by Rosanne Flynn) and directed by Karim Ainouz (“Invisible Life”).

Ainouz captures the look and feel of the time, with sumptuous costumes by Michael O’Connor and handsome production design by Helen Scott. The central, quasi-Shakespearean intrigue — which revolves around Katherine’s potential exposure as a co-conspirator of Askew — is also han-



Roadside Attractions

Jude Law plays Henry VIII and Alicia Vikander his sixth and final wife, Katherine Parr, in “Firebrand,” which evolves around Parr’s potential exposure as a co-conspirator of radical Protestant preacher Anne Askew.

dled adroitly, even if many of the scenes simply feature Henry’s gratuitously cruel efforts to humiliate Katherine.

He forces her to taste his food at a public dinner, presumably for poison. Other scenes show him sticking his fingers lasciviously deep into Katherine’s mouth; openly flirting with a prospective mistress; and accusing Katherine of infidelity with Thomas Seymour (Sam Riley), a former lover as Fremantle’s book has it, whom Katherine would in fact go on to marry after Henry’s death.

There’s also a scene that borders on sexual assault, and another in which Katherine is made to change the pus-soaked bandages on her husband’s ulcerating leg wound, the result of a 10-year-old jousting injury. At times like these, and when we watch Henry’s bare bum writhing atop Katherine during joyless

sex, Ainouz seems to enjoy torturing us almost as much as Henry does Katherine.

But at least Law fills the screen with energy, reveling in Henry’s malignant narcissism with a mesmerizing, maniacal sadism. One wishes to see the titular firebrand stand up to his suppurating cruelty much sooner than she eventually does.

“There is more than one way to scorch the earth,” Elizabeth cautions us late in the film, presumably by way of explaining why we’ve been made to bide so much time without an emotional payoff.

A kind of satisfaction ultimately arrives, but it is not one for purists, or even lovers of speculative history. It feels tacked on: too little, too late, too ludicrous — the past rewritten as a form of wishful thinking.

“Firebrand” is rated R for violence, brief gory images and shots of ugly wounds, sexuality, nudity and mature thematic elements. Running time: 120 minutes.

Skillful directorial debut ‘Thelma’ a love letter to tough grandmas

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

In January, Jason Statham starred in the action thriller “The Beekeeper” as a former special operations assassin who seeks revenge on a group of people targeting the elderly in phone scams. But in Josh Margolin’s directorial debut “Thelma,” it’s the elderly who fight back against the phone scammers themselves. Ninety-three-year-old grandmother Thelma (June Squibb) doesn’t need no stinkin’ Jason Statham. All she needs is a ride.

Set over the course of one day, “Thelma” is a love letter to tough grandmas and Tom Cruise, and a celebration of California’s San Fernando Valley. And while “Thelma” is notable for being the very first lead film role for the 94-year-old Squibb, who has been performing for 65 years, the film is also a calling card for writer/director/editor Margolin, who demonstrates his skill with screen style and suspense in this high-stakes dramedy.

Margolin does a lot with a little in “Thelma,” which is inspired by his own relationship with his beloved grandmother, also named Thelma. While the setting may be humble, Margolin captures the unlikely beauty of the Valley, and injects thrilling suspense into this yarn, rendering quotidian dramas — like making an unprotected left turn, or closing pop-up ads on a webpage — into nail-biting action sequences.

His surrogate in “Thelma” is Daniel (Fred Hechinger), a 24-year-old sensitive ne’er-do-well whose best friend is his grandmother Thelma (Squibb). They spend time together in her comfortable home, which is haunted by the absence of her recently deceased husband, watching “Mission: Impossible” movies, Daniel helping Thelma with her computer and fretting over her safety. When



MAGNOLIA PICTURES/AP

June Squibb and Fred Hechinger in a scene from the film “Thelma.” Hechinger plays the grandson of 93-year-old Thelma (Squibb), who gets targeted by a phone scammer.

Thelma receives a frantic call with the news that Daniel’s been in an accident and she needs to send \$10,000 in cash, she doesn’t hesitate to book it over to the Encino post office to drop the money in the mailbox.

It’s when she finds out she’s been the victim of a scam that the plot kicks into gear. With Daniel safe and unharmed, the police aren’t much help, and her family members (Parker Posey as her daughter, Clark Gregg as her son-in-law) throw up their hands in defeat. But Thelma isn’t about to take this lying down. She will, however, take it sitting down, behind the wheel of a two-seater scooter she “borrows” from an old friend, Ben (Richard Roundtree), whom she visits at an assisted living home. The two set off on an odyssey to retrieve Thelma’s cash, while Thelma’s family worry about her whereabouts.

Their journey takes them to some unexpected places,

specifically an antique lamp shop manned by a menacing Malcolm McDowell, and to some unexpected realizations, about accepting that it’s OK to ask for help, but that independence is a rare and complicated gift later in life. It’s refreshing to see a film show someone in their 90s as able to have new revelations and learning experiences, retaining the capacity to surprise and delight themselves and others.

Squibb is a delightful presence, capably handling the humor and the heart of the story, and demonstrating true grit too, while the late, great Roundtree offers a warm, steadying presence. Posey and Gregg bring the comedic elements as the frazzled parents of Daniel, while Hechinger is charmingly stressed about losing his grandma and trying to figure out what he’s going to do with his life.

The cast is fantastic, but it’s the cinematic style that makes “Thelma” a proper big-screen movie experience. Nick Chuba’s percussive score brings a jazzy beat that’s “Ocean’s 11” by “Mission: Impossible,” and David Bolen’s cinematography is richly saturated with color and creative practical lighting. Margolin’s inspired direction elevates “Thelma,” imbuing each moment with a thoughtful eye towards craft.

“Elderly female action star” is a cute premise, but Margolin makes the most of it without infantilizing his heroine or otherwise resorting to lowest common denominator humor.

Instead, he delivers a film that suggests there’s always an opportunity to experience something new in life, from the smallest observations to the most dramatic show-downs. The most important lesson? Underestimate a determined older woman at your own risk.

“Thelma” is rated PG-13 for strong language. Running time: 97 minutes.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Marching into battle

Photorealistic Empire of the Ants turns classic Werber sci-fi novel into real-time strategy game

By GIESON CACHO
The Mercury News

Tower Five Studio game director Renaud Charpentier first read “Empire of the Ants” when he was 15 years old. The unusual sci-fi novel dramatizes a story about an ant colony in a park near Paris. It’s filled with politics and conspiracy as the six-legged protagonist helps its species survive after a surprising assault. The author Bernard Werber created a whole civilization around the ant world that’s as elaborate as it is fascinating.

Thirty years later, Charpentier found himself making a real-time strategy game based on the novel. Empire of the Ants follows the exploits of Ant No. 103,683 and brings Werber’s vision to life with photorealistic graphics and surprisingly accessible gameplay.

Lessons for an ant

The first thing I learned as an ant is that water is lava. It would get the minions I led killed. The second thing about Empire of the Ants is that the main character sticks to anything. He can climb under branches or over leaves. When No. 103,863 sprints or jumps, he loses that stickiness, so it’s best to sprint in familiar areas.

Exploring the world, there’s a sense of busyness as ants go back and forth and players follow the flow of the creatures.

In the short demo I played, the ant from Bel-o-kan was visiting another colony to help its queen, Ta-yu-ni. I was tasked with getting her ants to the other side of the park, and this was an opportunity to show off the Empire of the Ants’ real-time strategy chops.

Ant No. 103,863 is the leader and orders troops around. The goal is to attack nests, take them over and use them to produce a unit to build a larger army.

Initially, Soldiers are a good choice because they can easily take out firebugs and take over nests. Once under control, nests can produce one unit and one upgrade.

After capturing one nest, I chose to make Gunner ants, which spit acid and act as ranged attackers.

Players can choose all of one unit or send the whole group to

take over nests. With a bigger army and two ways to attack, the next nest put up little resistance and with that I added Aphids, which play a support role healing damaged units.

One nest after another

I also had enough resources to upgrade Ant No 103,863 with a Pheromone perk, which increased my troops’ attack power. Essentially, it was bloodlust from Warcraft. I kept hopscotching from one nest to another, adding to the army and personnel.

Workers were next on the list. They can gather resources found in the field so that players can build more powerful units or set up defenses around a nest to protect from a counterattack. In my run, I found a pinecone and I sent the workers to harvest it. Empire of the Ants has two resources: Food and Wood. Food determines how quickly players can build troops and determines the size of the army. Wood is used for defenses and plays a role in creating other perks and units. Interestingly enough, workers can also take down rival nest’s defenses.

The last unit was the DorBeetles, which are the heavy-duty shock troops that are immune to Gunners and can power through adversaries.

Console controls

Controls for Empire of Ants are streamlined and feel natural



Microids photos

Strategy, exploration, conflicts and even alliances with the local wildlife will be necessary for players to emerge victorious from the numerous challenges that await them in Empire of the Ants.



Everything from the forest lighting to the stream of ants seems real thanks to the Empire of the Ants’ photorealistic effects.

on the controller. Players can easily form combat groups for attack and defense while setting a third for harvesting materials. With a few presses, they can move troops where they need to be.

My big test was attacking a termite nest. I overwhelmed the adversary with superior numbers but lost track of the Aphids. I didn’t realize they were on the front lines instead of the back and paid the price losing a ton of troops but narrowly accomplishing my goal.

I should have taken the opportunity to level up my Soldiers to

Tier 2, but doing so eliminates them from the field and would leave my army vulnerable while the replacement units were made.

That type of nuance shows that Empire of the Ants has some depth to its strategy even if the systems are fairly simple for a real-time strategy game.

What’s truly notable about the game are the visuals, which look so good that I felt that David Attenborough should have been narrating what was going on. Everything from the forest lighting to the stream of ants feels real.



Players will encounter termites, snails, spiders and butterflies.

Part of the reason that the game has a concreteness to it is that Charpentier went to the park mentioned in the books to do firsthand research.

The team even talked with the author, Werber, who is an avid gamer. He offered direction on how the characters should look. That’s one of the reasons why Ant No. 103,683 looks more distinct than the rest of a cast of thousands on the screen.

Empire of the Ants is scheduled to launch Nov. 7 on PC and consoles.

Online: microids.com/empire-of-the-ants

WEEKEND: BOOK REVIEWS

Olympic legend shares credit in ‘Just Add Water’

By AMELIA MCGUINNESS
Associated Press

Katie Ledecky didn’t dream of becoming an Olympian as a kid. It was just something she and her brother, Michael, did at a pool in Maryland that she describes as “maximum chill.” The lack of pressure was part of what drove her deep enjoyment of the sport from an early age, and, consequently, her eye-popping success in the years that followed. This is the story that forms the basis of Ledecky’s memoir, “Just Add Water: My Swimming Life.”

Fifteen years old and in London, Ledecky became the youngest athlete ever to win the women’s 800-meter freestyle at the Olympics. She won six more Olympic gold medals in Rio and Tokyo and broke Michael Phelps’ record of 16 individual gold medals at the World Aquatics Championships.

She’s widely regarded as one of the best swimmers of all time, but like many athletes, hers isn’t just a story



about her elite athleticism — it’s about the people who helped her get there.

Even when Ledecky made that Olympic final in London, her parents refused to acknowledge that she might have a chance at getting a medal, let alone winning the race. They were more invested in her overall well-being. “For them, it was almost like, Olympics, Schlympics,” she writes.

This low-pressure attitude combined with her dogged positivity and high ambition underpins the tone of her writing: “Keeping pace with the male swimmers? Why not? Shaving time off my records? Why not? Doing something significant every time I swim? Why not?”

It’s clear to see how she’s maintained the mental toughness required to perform at an elite level for so long — she’s currently in training for the Paris Olympics, which will be her fourth.

She also delves into the techniques and training that elevated her swimming and led to her remarkable dominance as a distance swimmer: her discovery of the “loping stroke” that allowed her to get even faster, her right-side-only breathing that ensured she’d only ever come up for air on her good side, the progression-style training that allowed her to continue to swim extraordinarily long distances without getting injured.

Throughout it all, Ledecky’s writing pulses with her love for the pool and an appreciation for all the people that have shaped her into the champion she is — her coaches, her brother, her grandparents, and, of course, her parents.

Readers will feel inspired by Ledecky’s enthusiasm and gratitude for everything she’s worked hard to achieve.

The Stardust Grail

Yume Kitasei

Grad student Maya Hoshimoto is having a hard time settling down on Earth after a thrilling career as an art thief, stealing looted objects and returning them to their people. So when her best friend Auncle — an octopus-like being from another solar system — offers one last job, of course she says yes. But we all know it’s never simply one last job.

“The Stardust Grail” is Kitasei’s second novel, another thrilling space adventure featuring strong women and diverse characters.

As in her first novel, “The Deep Sky,” Kitasei uses sci-fi to recontextualize issues that have been banging around your brain with no easy answers — like what determines personhood and whether artificial intelligence can obtain it, or when cultural adaptation becomes appropriation or oppression.

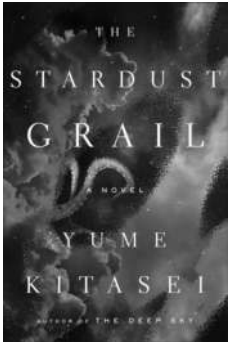
Maya believes she can find the Stardust Grail, which could be the secret to allowing Auncle to reproduce and preserve the Frenro species. She had sworn her days of stealing and repatriating artifacts were over, but this mission is special; the Grail shows up in her dreams.

Because of the Infection — an extraterrestrial pandemic that, if survived, gives some humans the Frenro ability to dream across space time and experience possible futures — Maya knows exactly what she’s looking for. But Earth’s military force is racing after the same prize, and between Maya’s small, unfamiliar crew and the lack of information about the Grail’s whereabouts, it will be a miracle if she actually obtains it. Or survives, for that matter, as past enemies with valid grudges keep cropping up along the way.

The plot laid out at the start seems predictable enough, but that’s only the half of it — literally, we see it play out by the halfway mark. Then, in true Kitasei fashion, the game changes and things get really interesting.

And the end, while a bit abrupt, was satisfying and earned.

— Donna Edwards/AP



You Are Here

David Nicholls

Nicholls is riding a wave of popularity thanks to the Netflix series based on his 2009 blockbuster “One Day.” His sixth novel is a warm, witty and beautifully observed tale about two lonely souls experiencing a new lease on life — and possibly finding romance — while traversing England.

“You Are Here” takes place over 10 days — enough time, it turns out, for Nicholls’ characters to cover significant ground, both geographically and emotionally.

We first meet Marnie, a 38-year-old London copy editor going nowhere fast. Since her divorce, she has led a solitary existence — working from home and losing friends to marriage and parenthood (or “to apathy or carelessness”). We are then introduced to 42-year-old Michael, a geography teacher from York, who still feels “cracked and vulnerable, like a cup with a glued-on handle” after his marital breakup and nervous breakdown.

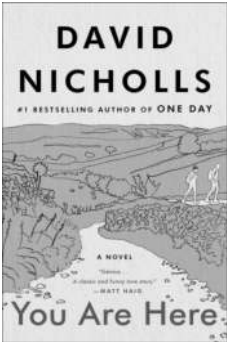
Michael has planned to walk 190 miles across the north of England to take his mind off his troubles. To his chagrin, a friend creates a walking group to keep him company — one member being Marnie, who reluctantly joins after taking stock of her “small and shrinking life.” When the other hikers fall by the wayside, Michael and Marnie are left to go it alone.

The partnership shouldn’t work. She is a city girl who bemoans the elements and is unmoved by the scenery. He is a nature boy who loves the great outdoors and prefers his own company. Both are awkward and jaded. But after a while they open up and develop a shared intimacy.

He helps her appreciate the sublime surroundings; she makes him laugh again. They drink in pubs, discuss their broken marriages and trade secrets, regrets, playlist songs and origin stories. But now that they have crossed paths, will they keep moving forward in the same direction?

Nicholls ensures that we are so invested in his characters that we follow them every step of the way.

— Malcolm Forbes/Star Tribune



The Calculation of You and Me

Serena Kaylor

Marlowe Meadows has great grades and a loving family, two best friends who understand her and all her autistic quirks, and a picture-perfect, blue-eyed, football-playing, romantic boyfriend, Josh. At least, until he breaks up with her at the end of junior year, sending her perfectly categorized world into a tailspin.

Kaylor’s second novel, “The Calculation of You and Me,” is a phenomenal teen romance that celebrates romance itself — the concept and the genre — as Marlowe discovers what makes a healthy, happy relationship through her journey to try and win back Josh.

Realizing she’s failed to adequately show her love and appreciation for Josh — and the normalcy and popularity that dating him brought to her life — Marlowe decides to prove just how romantic she can be. And when her English teacher pairs her with a quiet, moody goth boy, Marlowe sees an opportunity.

Ash is an anomaly in their small-town Georgia high school. His emotional intelligence rivals Marlowe’s calculus skills, he’s well-read in romance and writes tortured, lovesick song lyrics for his band. Marlowe just needs to get him to teach her about sweeping gestures and cute dates.

OK, we all know where this is going.

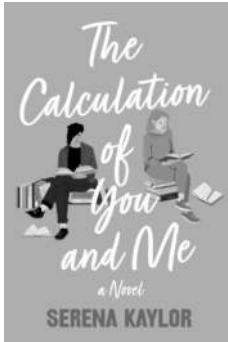
But even when things pan out as expected, it is deliciously satisfying. When they don’t, it’s equally delightful — and nail-biting, tear-inducing and uproarious.

Alongside the unsurprising romance arc, Kaylor’s characters have to learn to navigate everything from bullying to societal expectations to effective communication and relationship-building.

The novel has the sap and safe predictability of a Hallmark movie, but with the bonus ability to make you laugh out loud and cry real tears and become far more invested in the characters than any silly romance ought to make you do.

“Calculation” gets into the flow early and becomes a rushing river that you’re only too glad to be carried along.

— Donna Edwards/AP



Farewell, Amethystine

Walter Mosley

It’s 1970 in Los Angeles, and Easy Rawlins has come a long way since Mosley launched his series about this Black private detective with “Devil in a Blue Dress.”

In that first novel, published in 1990, we met Easy as a young World War II vet. It was 1948, he’d just moved to Los Angeles after losing his job at a Houston defense plant and he was struggling to pay his bills. Now, in the 16th book in the series, Easy is a 50-year-old family man, lives in a nice house and is the owner of a three-man private detective agency.

However, he’s still a Black man in a city where driving a nice car or walking in a white neighborhood is grounds for arrest — or even a beating.

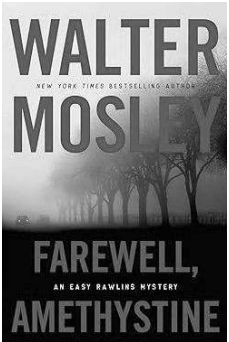
The story begins the way so many hard-boiled crime novels have over the decades. A beautiful woman walks into the detective’s office and asks for help. Her name is Amethystine Stoller. Her ex-husband, a forensic accountant, has gone missing, and she wants Easy to look for him.

He’s reluctant to take Amethystine’s case, but he’s drawn to her. The book’s title, however, tips off readers that their budding love affair is unlikely to work out.

Easy soon discovers that her ex’s disappearance has something to do with gangsters, a Las Vegas casino and, eventually, a series of murders. For help, Easy turns to Melvin Suggs, his lone friend in the LAPD, but learns that Suggs is in hiding, betrayed by corrupt officers in the department.

Mosley’s plotting can be a bit hard to follow at times — much like the work of Raymond Chandler, whose detective character, Philip Marlowe, worked the mean streets of Los Angeles in the 1940s. As with Chandler’s books, however, the main attraction of the Easy Rawlins novels is the superb prose. Mosley’s dialogue, much of it straight out of Watts and Compton, is pitch perfect, and some passages have the sensuous rhythm of a basement slow dance.

— Bruce DeSilva/AP



WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Buoyant, booming Belfast

Belfast, Northern Ireland’s capital city, is perhaps best known for the sectarian strife that took place during the era of the Troubles, and as the birthplace of the Titanic (and many other ships that didn’t sink).



Rick Steves

While these claims to fame aren’t too uplifting, Belfast’s story is hardly a downer. This unsinkable city, two hours away from Dublin by train, makes for a fascinating day trip. Wandering through Belfast’s cheery modern-day downtown, it’s hard to believe the bright and bustling pedestrian center had been a subdued, traffic-free security zone not long ago. But it’s no longer dangerous here. While Belfast has the rough edges of any industrial big city, you have to look for trouble to find it. The city is busy with tourists, and aggressive sectarian murals are being repainted with scenes celebrating heritage and pride.



Jessica Shaw/Rick Steves’ Europe

Explore the sectarian neighborhoods of Belfast with a local guide who can offer insights and commentary on the area’s political murals.

Though people from all walks of Belfast life congregate, work, eat and play in the thriving city center, Unionists (mostly Protestants who feel they’re primarily British) and Nationalists (mostly Catholics pushing to end British rule in the North) still typically live in segregated zones, where tensions still simmer. A Belfast visit wouldn’t be complete without visiting the working-class neighborhoods where the two groups live parallel lives along parallel roads on either side of a “peace wall.” While you can easily and safely walk through these districts on your own, and some tours offer balanced accounts of the challenging times of the Troubles, I find the area’s best enjoyed with a private taxi tour. The cabbies who offer tours of these neighborhoods grew up here and know their city well, offering honest (if biased)

viewpoints on the Troubles, political murals and local culture. My time with them is always the most interesting 90 minutes of any visit to Belfast. The easiest way to get a dose of the Unionist/Protestant side is to walk Sandy Row, the namesake street of Belfast’s oldest residential neighborhood. Stop at a Unionist memorabilia shop or pub and ask a local to explain the Unionist symbolism that fills colorful murals here. Across the River Lagan, east of the center, the historic Titanic Quarter — the former shipbuilding district now filled with museums, entertainment and a hockey arena — symbolizes the rise of Belfast. Next to the original slipways where the Titanic was built, the massive Titanic Belfast museum commemorates Belfast’s shipbuilding industry. Six stories tall, the

striking museum is clad with more than 3,000 sun-reflecting aluminum panels. Inside, the tale of the famous cruise liner is told with creative displays — beginning with a short gondola ride through a mock-up of the ship while it was being built. At the heart of town is another impressive landmark: Belfast’s City Hall. Its 173-foot-tall, green copper dome dominates the city center. Belfast was bombed by the Germans in World War II, and, with the Troubles killing the economy at the end of the 20th century, for decades afterward, little was built. But with peace in 1998 — and government investing to subsidize that peace — the 21st century has been one big building boom.

This article is used with the permission of Rick Steves’ Europe (www.ricksteves.com). Rick Steves writes European guidebooks, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio and organizes European tours.

Experience time travel at these festivals celebrating bygone eras

It can be fun to wonder about what daily life would have looked like, or what one’s job would have been, had one only been born in another time and place. While a Middle Ages festival is an obvious choice for those yearning to travel through time, there are plenty of other festivals poised to take us to other eras of historical or cultural significance to the area.

Celtic life at Triskell in Trieste, Italy

The term Celt refers to not one but several tribes to have emerged in central Europe during the Iron Ages. Although belonging to separate tribes, they all had similar culture, traditions, spiritual beliefs and language. While this festival of Celtic culture centers around music, another pillar of it celebrates the ancient rites once practiced by this widespread group. The festival’s wide-ranging program extends from activities such as archery or playing an instrument to workshops on rope tying, candle making, fire handling, clay modeling and other skills of yore. A significant portion of the instruction is geared toward children, and a moderate fee is charged to compensate for the price of materials. With advance preparation, couples wishing to tie the knot Celtic-style can even avail themselves of the services of a priest. Triskell, which takes place in the Boschetto del Ferdinando, is slated for June 21-30. Online: de.celticevents.org

Viking times in southern Sweden

The term Viking refers to various Scandinavian folk who left their northern homelands to become seafaring warriors, raiding and plundering coastal sites and pushing far inland across continental Europe, the British Isles and beyond from roughly the ninth to 11th centuries. The Foteviken Museum is an archaeological open-air



rheingau.de

The Sekt- and Biedermeierfest that runs July 5-8 in Eltville, Germany, combines sparkling wine and the Biedermeier period between 1815 and 1848.

museum that seeks to portray how life might have looked in the area at the end of the Viking age. Its reconstructed town made up of more than 20 buildings and a Viking ship replica make it an ideal setting for its annual market days set for June 27-30. Would-be Vikings can mix and mingle, watch warrior battles, try out the archery range or shop at the stalls of some 80 exhibitors for handicrafts, fabrics, jewelry and other items. Children can play games, listen to tales or dig for artifacts. Entry costs 255 Swedish Krona for adults and 255 SKK for children ages 4-15. The town of Höllviken, site of the museum, is located just south of Malmö. Online: fotevikensmuseum.se

Relive naval glory in Italy

The Regatta of the Ancient Maritime Republics is a sporting event recalling the rivalry between Italy’s historically strongest seafaring republics: Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa

and Venice. First established in 1955, the regatta, referred to as a palio in Italian, has a rowing crew representing each kingdom compete with one another. Genoa hosts the next edition of this event on Sept 15. Online: tinyurl.com/4vjws3sm

The Biedermeier period in Germany

The Sekt- and Biedermeierfest marries sparkling wine with the Biedermeier period, a historical era in Central Europe between 1815 and 1848 in which the middle classes grew in number and cultivated an appreciation for arts, literature and comforts of the home. From July 5-8, the charming town of Eltville on the Rhine just west of Wiesbaden will offer visitors the chance to sip the effervescent beverage. On Sunday of the festival’s run, members of the town’s Biedermeier Club pull out authentic costumes of the era, many inherited from their parents and grandparents, and proudly promenade throughout the town. The group also presents a few dance styles from the era. Other selling points of this fest include music for all tastes across four stages and a grand display of fireworks on the last day of the festival, always a Monday. Online: tinyurl.com/mxe7z5e4

It’s the 1970s all over

Schlager refers to a type of pop, country or folk-rock music to have emerged in West Germany and Austria in the 1950s. With its catchy instrumental hooks and easygoing, often overly sentimental lyrics, it was and still is derided as a kitschy music for the masses. A mobile festival called the Schlager Move tour is currently boogieing its way across land and sea. Upcoming parties taking place on board ships include Düsseldorf (June 29, July 27 and Aug. 31); Hamburg (July 6 and Aug. 17); Cologne (July 13); Bremen (July 27); Duisburg (July 27); Mannheim (Aug. 3); and Chiemsee (Aug. 24). Online: schlagermove.de/on-tour

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



STEVE WARTENBERG/AP

Hikers reach the top of Mam Tor, a 1,696-foot-tall hill in England’s Peak District National Park on May 8. Mam Tor is not the district’s tallest peak, but is one of the most popular.

Journey to England’s ‘Mother Hill’

Vistas, history and a slice of English countryside await hikers navigating Peak District National Park en route to Mam Tor

By STEVE WARTENBERG
Associated Press

Finally, a sign I couldn’t miss or misunderstand. It read, “Mam Tor via Odin Mine.” As we followed the line of the arrow on the sign, there it was, the popular Mam Tor (Mother Hill), off in the distance, looming above the Hope Valley and beckoning hundreds of hikers to climb to the top on this warm, windy spring day.

“It looks like a bunch of ants walking in a line across the top,” said my sister, Lauren, pointing to the faraway figures moving along the ridge extending east from Mam Tor. Soon enough, we’d join the procession.

This was Day 3 of our six-day hike through England’s Peak District National Park. Despite my protests, I had been appointed lead ant. My wife, Susan, my sister and her husband, Bob, followed my directions, starting the hike at Buxton, then on to Tideswell (13 miles) and Castleton (11 miles), near the base of Mam Tor.

Several cities and towns in the district make good starting points for multiday hikes of the Peak District and are just a two- or three-hour train ride from London. The nearest train station to Castleton is Hope, only a couple miles away.

The district is known for picturesque landscapes, limestone ridges and mineral waters. (Among those frequenting Buxton’s thermal spas over the centuries was Mary Queen of Scots.) It was England’s first national park, created in 1951, and is a popular hiking and camping destination for U.K. residents. Outside of England, it’s not as well known as the coastal paths in Cornwall, or the Cotswold Way. That’s a shame.

On our way to Castleton, we traversed fields full of sheep and edged by limestone walls. We navigated the muddy banks and stepping stones of the winding Wye River, and walked up and down a succession of hills. We went astray three or four times, helped back to the straight and narrow path by helpful farmers, fellow hikers and a bit of luck.

As we neared Castleton, we carefully walked down Cave Dale, a rock-and-boulder-filled gorge created thousands of years ago by melting glaciers. We arrived in the little village and ... discovered it was still another kilometer or so to Dunscair Farm, a working sheep farm and our bed-and-breakfast for the next two nights.

While I silently (OK, not so silently) mumbled about the extra kilometer after the long day’s hike, the quaintness of the farm and the kindness of our hosts (we ate farm-fresh eggs for breakfast and they did a load of laundry for us) more than made up for the extra steps.

Setting out

The next morning, as we headed off in search of Mam Tor, there was the sign — “Mam Tor via Odin Mine” — only a hundred yards from Dunscair Farm. There’s nothing better and more reassuring than a sign that points to a destination you can see.

Mam Tor is 1,696 feet, not the tallest peak in the district but one of its most popular (Kinder Scout is 2,097 feet high). There’s plenty of geology, stunning views and history here.

Stone tools were found in the caves dating back to the Paleolithic Period (500,000—8,000 B.C.). And more than 3,000 years ago, one of Britain’s “most spectacular prehistoric hillforts topped Mam Tor,” according to the museum in Castleton’s tourist information office.

The history is wonderful, but we were here for the views, and off we went, past the Odin Mine — where lead was mined from the 13th to the 19th centuries — to the start of the Broken Road.

Mam Tor is called Mother Hill because frequent landslides (or landslips, as they call them here) caused by unstable layers of shale resulted in a series of smaller “baby” hills forming beneath it. All these shivers and shakes wreaked havoc on the A625 road on the eastern side of the hill and led to a second nickname: the Shivering Mountain.

For years, British engineers and highway workers

patched the convulsed rural road, finally giving up and closing it to vehicle traffic in 1979.

“It looks like lava flowing down the hill,” Bob said as we made our way past sections of broken concrete, some more than 2 feet thick.

On up to the peak ...

The Broken Road ends at the start of the stone and flagstone steps leading to the top of Mam Tor. Several hang gliders were taking off nearby, soaring and landing in a parking lot.

The steps were steep, but it wasn’t an especially hard hike, and the views extended farther the higher we marched. A little stone pyramid at the top marks the peak, and a steady stream of hikers of all ages, many with dogs, were taking selfies and photos there. Some people picnicked, some headed back down the way they came.

We headed the other way, east along the Great Ridge to Hollins Cross, the lowest point on the ridge, and then up, up, up the rocky steps toward Lose Hill, roughly 2 miles from Mam Tor and about as high. The views of the Edale Valley to the left and the Hope Valley to the right are said to be among the best in all of Britain. I’m not about to dispute this.

Large birds of prey put on a show, hovering at eye level and then diving down along the ridge in search of a meal. Later, looking at a poster of local birds of prey at Dunscair Farm, we decided they were red kites.

The road back to town and pub

After Lose Hill, the path along the ridge ends, and it was time to descend and head back to Castleton.

We spotted the remains of Peveril Castle in the distance. It’s one of Britain’s oldest Norman fortresses; the keep was built by Henry II in 1176.

We kept the castle in sight as we hiked the final mile to Castleton. Just below the ruins is The George, our pub of choice and the perfect place to spend the evening discussing the day’s spectacular 7-mile hike.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



Piazza della Libertà, the main square of Udine, Italy, as seen June 6. The square features a Venetian-style Torre dell'Orologio, or clock tower.

PHOTOS BY BRIAN ERICKSON/Stars and Stripes

An Italian city worthy of its high ranking

First place on Il Sole 24 Ore’s quality of life index befits Udine with its architectural splendor, multitude of places to dine

By BRIAN ERICKSON
Stars and Stripes

As 2023 came to a close, I learned that the north-eastern Italian city of Udine was ranked No. 1 in news publication Il Sole 24 Ore’s yearly quality of life index.

The city of approximately 100,000 people is about an hour from Aviano Air Base, and I was curious about what it has to offer for visitors. After a bit of research, I decided to check it out.

I figured that going during the week would allow me to avoid the crowds, but finding an on-street parking spot took more time than I had anticipated.

My best advice for parking is to be patient, as the streets are crowded regardless of the time of day, or find one of the parking garages that are open during the day.

After a 10-minute walk, I arrived at the Piazza della Libertà, the main square in Udine. For me, the clock tower of the Loggia di San Giovanni, also known as the Porch of Saint John, is an amazing piece of Venetian architecture, with its golden sun in the center of the clock.

Sculptor and architect Bernadino da Morcote was the mastermind behind the clock tower and modeled it after the one in Venice’s St. Mark’s Square.

Surrounding the square are several well-preserved monuments that are worth taking a gander at. On the left side of the square are the Statue of Peace and the Statue of Justice. Opposite the former on the right side of the square is a fountain dating from 1542.

Along the street side of the square stands a statue of Hercules and Caco, who was a fire-breathing giant, each

On the QT

Address: Tourist office, Piazza Primo Maggio 7, Udine, Italy
Hours: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and 2-6 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday; closed Mondays. Museums of the Castle (Archaeological Museum, Museum of the Risorgimento, Photography Museum, Ancient Art Gallery) Tuesday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; closed on Mondays.
Cost: Street parking, 1-3 euros per hour depending on zone. Museum admission: 8 euros, free for 18 and under.
Information: Phone: +39 0432 295972; Online: turismofvg.it

Brian Erickson

clad in nothing but a fig leaf.

After seeing the center of town, I began the steep walk to Udine Castle. The 16th-century fortress is built on a hill in the middle of the city and requires a decent climb, but the view is worth it. To begin the 10-minute climb, you pass under the Arco Bollani, named after the Venetian soldier Domenico Bellini.

For those seeking indoor places to pass time in Udine, the ground floor of the castle is home to two recently opened museums.

The Museo del Risorgimento highlights the cultural and political significance of the consolidation of fragmented Italian states into a unified country between 1848 and 1871. The Museo Archeologico displays artifacts unearthed by collectors and scholars from the late 1800s and early 1900s.

However, I preferred to continue walking around the city. My stop at the Chiesa di San Giacomo, however, was limited to the exterior because it was closed to visitors at the time, likely because of a church service.



Castello di Udine was built in the 16th century atop a hill looking out over the city. It has multiple museums inside.

That was unfortunate because I like to visit old churches and wanted to view the artistry inside.

As the sun began to set, I made my way through the Piazza San Giacomo, which used to be home to the city market, in search of food. The square is surrounded by bars, restaurants and cafes, providing options ranging from full meals to light snacks.

Although I had read about a local specialty called polenta e frico, I opted not to search for a place that serves it and instead chose to eat at Mezza Libbra, a burger joint I visited elsewhere in February.

Based on the appealing architecture, with its touch of Venice, and the multitude of places to shop, eat and drink, I found Udine’s high ranking for quality of life warranted.

But luckily for visitors, you don’t have to live in Udine to be charmed by it.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

An alternative to German pastries

Corner Cafe in Otterbach differentiates itself with its Venezuelan food, international desserts

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

The Corner Cafe in Otterbach is aptly named, for it is indeed on a corner at the intersection between two streets in this small village about 6 miles north of Kaiserslautern.

One would never guess, however, just from driving by, that besides the typical cafe offerings, the tiny establishment serves up its own Venezuelan food.

Yna Dan Navarro opened the restaurant about 18 months ago. A chef and baker, Navarro uses her kitchen to create staples from her native Venezuela as well as homemade American- and Italian-style pastries and desserts.

“You can find German pastries everywhere,” she said, explaining what differentiates her cafe from others.

On a recent weekday, my kids and I stopped in for a mid-afternoon lunch — and ate so much that we skipped dinner.

During the week, the cafe typically offers empanadas with beef, chicken or a mix of black beans, plantains and cheese; and arepas stuffed with a variety of fillings, including ham and cheese, beans and cheese and a vegan avocado, tomato, beans and plantains.

When we visited, only empanadas were available. Navarro said her kitchen assistant is back in Venezuela for a short time, so the lunch menu is scaled back for now.

That was fine with us. We got our first taste of traditional Venezuelan empanadas.

Like arepas, empanadas in Venezuela are often made with a corn-based, gluten-free dough.

We ordered chicken empanadas, which are a great deal at three for 10 euros. We had to wait a bit for our order, but they came out piping hot and were worth the wait.

Here’s a tip to distract your kids when waiting for food at the Corner Cafe: Get a milkshake. My son ordered a chocolate shake, which filled a tall sundae dessert glass. It was topped with a mound of whipped cream and had chocolate syrup running down the sides.

Though it was gone by the time the empanadas arrived, the hearty drink didn’t seem to dampen my 13-year-old’s appetite.

We ordered another round, this time with shredded beef.

With the kitchen short-staffed for the time being, the best days to visit for more Venezuelan options is on the weekends, when breakfast starts at 10:30 a.m., Navarro said.

Choices usually include a variety of arepas and a well-rounded meal of fried eggs with a side of avocado, meat, black beans, cheese and flat cornbread rounds.

Some weekends, Navarro also offers special menu items, which she usually posts on the cafe’s Facebook page to give customers a heads-up.

Those include breakfast burritos and quesadillas.

On most Thursdays, Navarro bakes cinnamon rolls, but you can visit Corner Cafe any day to satisfy your sweet tooth.

Her cookies are, in a word, divine.

The ones we got were more gooey than crispy, the perfect accompaniment to coffee or milk. We ordered four: red velvet, Lotus (made with small Biscoff cookies), chocolate chip and oatmeal raisin. We split the red velvet at the cafe and took the rest home.

Navarro also makes cakes, which can be bought whole or by the slice.

She showed me a photo of one that looked like a work of art, a pistachio-green Swedish princess cake consisting of vanilla cake, raspberry jam and vanilla cream, covered with marzipan. Italian-style pastries at the cafe have included custard-filled croissants.

Despite being short on staff, Navarro still made time this week for one of her customers’ favorite treats. She announced on the cafe’s Facebook page that she would have her cinnamon rolls on Friday instead of Thursday.

My son and I took a break from loading up boxes for a move to get some. We tried the traditional cream cheese rolls and a special of the day, chocolate Oreo.

We were lucky she had some left: Navarro said that before she opened at noon, a customer was already waiting at the door for them.

After trying them ourselves, we might be the early birds next time.

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PHOTOS BY JENNIFER H. SVAN/Stars and Stripes

Made from ground corn, the empanadas at the Corner Cafe in Otterbach, Germany, are stuffed with beef, chicken or black beans with plantains and cheese.



Corner Cafe

Location: Lauterstrasse 32, Otterbach, Germany
Hours: Wednesday to Friday, noon-6 p.m.; Saturday, 10:30 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday.
Cost: Empanadas are 4 euros each or three for 10 euros; arepas are 7.50 to 8.50 euros. Cookies are 4.50 apiece and cinnamon rolls are 3.50 or 4 euros each depending on flavor.
Information: Phone: +49 176 36039948; Online: tinyurl.com/fwcmwjmp

Jennifer H. Svan



The Corner Cafe offers savory Venezuelan food and decadent American- and Italian-style desserts. An eclectic mix of antique and country-style furniture and light fixtures gives it a cozy feel.

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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

A sign welcomes visitors to Seibu-Chichibu station in Chichibu, Saitama prefecture, Japan. The serene little city is a great getaway trip not far from the Tokyo metro area.

A refreshing break

Escape the bustle of Tokyo by heading north to Chichibu

By **JUAN KING**
Stars and Stripes

The peaceful, culturally rich area around the city of Chichibu, about 50 miles north of Yokota Air base in western Tokyo, provides a near-perfect outdoor experience, including day camping, barbecuing and a visit to an impressive dam.

Chichibu, a relatively small city of more than 60,000 residents, is spread across lush landscape surrounded by several forested mountains, including Mount Kobushi, Mount Buko and Mount Mitsumine.

Our first stop over the long holiday weekend in May was at a uniquely styled fountain outside a rest stop where we sampled some of the city’s fresh, tasty water.

The water is free to drink at sources throughout the city. Its source is Mount Buko, whose groundwater feeds rivers and tributaries that supply the Hashidate Water Purification Plant, built in 1924.

A short ride farther into the city led to a secluded area at the Urayamaguchi Camp site, located right next to the Arakawa River.

Also known as the raging river, the Arakawa is well known for dangerous, unpredictable currents and is susceptible to changing directions. Dipping a foot into a calmer section of the river, I found the temperature crisp, but it must be a welcome relief for visitors in the summer.

My son and I spent time walking along and listening to the soothing sound of the splashing river and spotting wildlife there.

The campground provides charcoal grills, and we enjoyed a do-it-yourself barbecue with items we purchased earlier

at a city grocery store. The campsite is open from March through November and can accommodate up to 50 visitors for day camping. Day-use only is just 500 yen, or \$3.21. Cabins for overnight lodging are also available.

After enjoying several hours there, we packed up and drove up to Geopark Chichibu, the birthplace of Japanese geological studies, according to its website.

Near the geopark, we made a stop at Urayama Dam, a concrete gravity dam for flood control dam that also provides the city with water and power.

The dam, completed in 1998, is 511 feet tall, the second tallest in Japan, according to the Japan Water Agency website. The drive to the top is tricky, but free parking is available when you get there.

Its intimidating height overlooks the mountains surrounding the Kanto Plain, and though we missed the open hours, you can tour inside the dam during business hours.

The walkway across the top of the dam is dotted with small monuments, including a mallet sculpted from hardened volcanic ash. The nearby museum is open during business hours.

Before leaving the city, I purchased a few local snacks and drinks, among them a bottle of locally made and delicious maple cider and maple gummies. Chichibu is known for its Japanese maple trees that yield maple syrup and other maple products.

The serene little city is a great getaway trip, and harbors plenty of sights not very far from the Tokyo metro area.

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Chichibu water is fresh and free to sample at fountains like this throughout the city.



The vew from atop Urayama Dam in Chichibu, Saitama prefecture, Japan, can be a dizzying sight.

On the QT

Directions: About a 90-minute drive from Yokota Air Base; about two hours by train to Urayamaguchi camp site: 369-1802 3-1 Arakawa Uedano, Chichibu City, Saitama Prefecture; Urayama Dam: 4041 Arakawa Kuna, Chichibu City, Saitama Prefecture, 369-1801.
Times: The camp site is open for day use until 5 p.m.; overnighters check out by 10 a.m.; the dam is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Costs: For the camp site, adults pay 500 yen a day; 300 yen for children. The dam is free to visit.
Food: No food options at the camping site. The dam offers a cafeteria-style dining area inside its exhibition hall.
Information: Online: tinyurl.com/8xan2ue7; tinyurl.com/3f8msrja

Juan King

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

Vegetable curry topped with vegetable tempura is a specialty at Marugoto Vegan Dining Asakusa in Tokyo.

A happy place for vegans

Tokyo eatery dazzles with tasty, health-conscious curry, chocolate treats

BY KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

Vegan food, especially Japanese curry, can be hard to find in Japan, but at Marugoto Vegan Dining Asakusa, vegan diners can enjoy the Japanese culinary classic.

The restaurant is in the Asakusa district in Tokyo, near the Sumida River, and has a perfect view of the Tokyo Skytree across the street.

The owner and all the staff are vegan and may assist customers who are interested in veganism, according to the restaurant website. All of the dishes served by the restaurant are also gluten-free, so there are options for a variety of dietary restrictions.

Marugoto Vegan Dining Asakusa can seat 14 inside and six outdoors, and dogs are allowed.

I opted for their most popular dish, the tempura topping curry for 1,749 yen, or \$11.11, with an organic rooibos tea for 550 yen and a chocolate special for dessert for 800 yen.

It was a delicious curry made of fresh toasted vegetables topped with vegetable tempura with multigrain rice on the side.

The chocolate special is a choc-



Marugoto Vegan Dining Asakusa

Location: 1 Chome-3-13 Hanakawado Taito City, Tokyo 111-0033
Hours: Open 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; closed Mondays
Prices: Items range from 300 yen to 2,035 yen.
Dress: Casual
Directions: Four-minute walk from Kanda Station, Tokyo
Website: Online: dining.marugotovegan.com/menu

Kelly Agee

olate rice waffle topped with chocolate vegan ice cream, chocolate sauce, organic cacao nibs and freeze-dried raspberries. It was to die for, and I couldn't tell that it was gluten-free and vegan.

Other food items are tempeh topping curry, a traditional Indonesian food made from fermented soybeans; fried soybean meat topping curry, an organic soybean meat topped with their



The chocolate special is gluten-free, vegan and delicious.

special seasoning made with tahini sauce; and avocado topping curry, which is topped with half an avocado. All those curries are 1,584 yen for a regular portion and 2,035 yen for a large portion.

Drink options are hot or cold organic coffee or tea for 550 yen; apple juice or organic almond and coconut milk for 600 yen; and craft cola for 660 yen, which can be upgraded to an ice cream float for another 164 yen.

Other dessert options include a sweet potato donut for 300 yen; rice flour waffles in plain or chocolate for 330 yen; and home-made vegan ice cream, a vanilla ice cream made from coconut milk and topped with cashew nuts, maple syrup and cocoa, for 539 yen.

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Nigerian-inspired skillet meal gives leftover rice new purpose

BY CHRISTOPHER KIMBALL
Associated Press

Freshly cooked rice is delightfully tender and fragrant, but not the best choice for fried rice due to its soft, moist texture. In this Nigerian-inspired curried meal-in-a-skillet, we use plain, chilled cooked rice so the grains "fry" up light and fluffy.

The recipe, from our newest cookbook "Milk Street 365: The All-Purpose Cookbook for Every Day of the Year," seasons the rice with curry powder, dried thyme and a handful of aromatics. Beef liver and an assortment of vegetables are classic ingredients, but we opted for chicken thighs and green beans.

We start by seasoning the chicken thighs with salt, pepper and curry powder, then sauté them in hot oil until evenly browned. The chicken then is pushed to the side, and an aromatic mixture of scallion whites and fresh ginger is added, along with green beans, jalapeño chilies, thyme and more curry powder.

Once the green beans are bright green, the cooked, chilled



MILK STREET/AP

Curried Chicken Fried Rice substitutes chicken thighs and green beans for the more traditional beef liver and vegetable assortment that the dish it's based on uses.

rice is added and the pan is deglazed with chicken broth. Don't be afraid to really scrape up the browned bits from the surface of the skillet after you've added the broth. The caramelization gives the rice great depth. Fragrant basmati is especially good, but any type of long-grain white rice works.

Curried Chicken Fried Rice with Chilies

Start to finish: 40 minutes
Servings: 4

Ingredients

3 tablespoons neutral oil or refined coconut oil, divided
1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
2 teaspoons curry powder, divided
Kosher salt and ground black pepper
4 scallions, thinly sliced, whites and greens reserved separately
2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
4 ounces green beans, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 Fresno or jalapeño chili, stemmed, seeded and thinly sliced
4 cups cooked and chilled long-grain white rice, preferably basmati
1 cup low-sodium chicken broth

Directions

In a 12-inch skillet over medium-high, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil until barely smoking. Add the chicken and sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon of the curry powder, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Cook, stirring now and then, until brown, 4 to 6 minutes. Push the chicken to the edge. To the center, add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil, scallion whites and ginger; cook, stirring, until lightly browned, about 1 1/2 minutes. Stir in the beans, thyme, half of the chili, the remaining 1 1/2 teaspoons curry powder and 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Stir the chicken into the bean mixture; cook, stirring occasionally, until the beans are bright green, about 2 minutes. Stir in the rice, then add the broth. Cook, stirring, until the liquid is absorbed, 3 to 5 minutes. Off heat, taste and season with salt and pepper. Serve sprinkled with scallion greens and chili.

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STARS AND STRIPES

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WEEKEND: FOOD

How to go grocery shopping for one

Singles take note: These tips can help you avoid wasting food and money

BY AARON HUTCHERSON
The Washington Post

Grocery shopping for a single person is hard. It's something I've more or less had to do all of my adult life. When I lived with roommates, we would occasionally share things we cooked and would split kitchen staples, like oils and seasonings, but otherwise we focused on feeding ourselves when we made trips to the grocery store. Now that I've been living alone for the past few years, shopping just for myself has only become more challenging.

The issue with single households is that it's easy to over-shop at the grocery store, which means wasted food and money — two things I hate. The problem is caused by the desire to enjoy a variety of foods, use loads of fresh ingredients and not take up too much time and effort. Unfortunately, it's nearly impossible to have all three while still being friendly to the planet and your wallet. (Heck, sometimes it's difficult to get to two.)

But not all is lost! You don't need to just throw your hands up in despair and eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for every meal. Here are my tips for intentionally and efficiently grocery shopping for one person, with delicious possibilities:

Know thyself

Some weeks, I have the best of intentions about what I think I'm going to eat. I dream of smoothies in the morning, salads at lunch and something delicious and homemade for dinner. But in reality, most days I have a piece of fruit or granola bar in the morning (or skip breakfast entirely), am running too late to pack anything to bring for lunch and resort to takeout or delivery for dinner because I'm too exhausted to lift a finger at the end of the workday. Throw in the recipe tests that become meals, and my weekly eating schedule can be difficult to predict.

We need to be real with ourselves about what we actually eat each week. Here are some questions to get started: How often do you prepare your own food versus having someone else prepare it for you? Are leftovers OK for the week, or would you rather be one and done with your meals? If you freeze leftover food, will you remember to eat it down the road? Can you stick to a strict food plan, or do you need some level of flexibility built in?

Make a plan

Once you've answered those questions, you can start making a plan, which is paramount to the goal of cutting back on buying excess groceries. Start by picking just one or two dishes you plan to make



iStock

Buying fresh produce in smaller quantities can help you avoid it going bad before you've had a chance to use it.

that week — don't forget to check how many servings they make — and look at the ingredients required for each. For the fresh ingredients, are you able to buy them in a quantity where you'll use them up for the recipe, or will there be some part remaining, such as a half bunch of fresh herbs or a few stalks of celery? With that answer, you can think up ways to make use of those ingredients in other meals (within their expected life span) or make a note to yourself to repurpose them for later, such as drying the herbs to store in your spice cabinet or freezing the celery to eventually make stock.

Take inventory

Coinciding with making a plan, you need to know what ingredients you already have and which ones you need to consume imminently. Buying a new box of pasta only to discover four more sitting in your cupboard waiting to be cooked isn't the end of the world. But avoiding overbuying is imperative with perishable items, such as the head of cabbage you've been meaning to do something with for weeks or the avocados on your counter that you've been carefully waiting to ripen for days. One trick to help you remember is to keep perishable things in clear eye-sight. For refrigerated items, bring the produce to the front of the shelves and consider taking things out of drawers.

Stock up on pantry items

Having a well-stocked pantry will sim-

plify your cooking and shopping, so it's a good idea to buy as many shelf-stable items as make sense when you're on a grocery run. There are the obvious things, such as rice, beans and pasta, but I'm also talking about frozen seafood and vegetables; fermented things, such as kimchi and sauerkraut; and frozen meals, such as frozen pizza and dumplings. Knowing that you already have what you need to put together meals with minimal fresh ingredients necessary gives you more flexibility when you don't have many available.

Buy perishable goods in small quantities

For the most part, you want to limit how much bread, fresh produce, dairy, meat and seafood you purchase at once. And even still, the right storage and changing the types of certain items you purchase can have a large impact on how long they last. Unless you're buying commercially baked bread that contains preservatives, your loaves will last only a couple of days at room temperature. (Though you can always freeze bread.) Lettuces and herbs can go bad quickly, particularly if you don't store them properly. I don't drink much milk, so I always purchase organic when it's on my shopping list because it lasts much longer than nonorganic milk. Fresh meat should be cooked or frozen within a few days of purchasing, and I'd plan to use fresh seafood within one day.

Though the family pack of chicken thighs might be more affordable, you'll need to keep this timeline in mind.

Shop more frequently

If possible, try to make smaller, more frequent shopping trips. Making a couple of smaller trips each week to just get what you need is a great way to prevent you from buying too much. It's when you try to "save time" and grocery shop for the next week or two that you can find yourself in trouble. More than once, I've loaded up on fresh fruit and vegetables with a plan to eat more healthfully, only to barely make a dent in them before they need to head to the compost bin.

Embrace and freeze leftovers

I know not everyone loves leftovers, but making recipes that lead to more meals later on can make grocery shopping — and life in general — so much easier. I'm all for simply reheating and eating the same meal three or so times over a few days. But if that's not your speed, maybe portioning and freezing the meal to eat in a few weeks or months is more appetizing. Or you can also repurpose, say, a rotisserie chicken, batch of tomato sauce or pot of beans to use in curries, dips, quesadillas, shakshuka, salads, tacos, grain bowls and more. Enjoying a new, freshly prepared meal three times a day would be a joy, but it's simply not practical for most of us. Leftovers can work wonders if you give them a chance.

WEEKEND: FOOD

An everyday dish with bold flavors

Chili crisp and kimchi convert simple meal of coleslaw, grilled pork cutlets into a treat

By Ellie Krieger
The Washington Post

This recipe leans on two ingredients I've come to rely on for bold, savory flavor: chili crisp and kimchi. Once sold mostly in Asian markets, over the past several years they've become much more widely available.

I pull out my jar of chili crisp — the Chinese condiment of dried chiles and oil mixed with aromatics, such as garlic or shallots, and a crunch of nuts and/or seeds — to drizzle on eggs or roasted potatoes, toss into stir-fries or whisk into marinades. And I can't resist the deeply umami-rich kimchi — the Korean staple of seasoned, fermented vegetables. I fold it into omelets, layer it on sandwiches and use it to top grain bowls, to name a few uses.

In this dish, chili crisp and kimchi quickly and easily elevate a simple meal of coleslaw and grilled pork cutlets, layering it with complex flavor. (You can also use chicken cutlets.) The meat marinates in a mixture of

soy sauce, chili crisp and honey while you prepare the slaw.

The slaw is based on one I make all summer long — shredded cabbage, grated carrot and some kind of thinly sliced onion (here, scallions) — tossed with a creamy, tangy dressing of yogurt, mayonnaise and vinegar. Only this version gets an addition of chopped kimchi, which infuses the slaw with an extraordinary, savory undertone.

Kimchi also provides gut-friendly bacteria, making for a double dose of probiotics along with the cultures in the yogurt.

Once the slaw is ready, the marinated cutlets are grilled for just a couple of minutes on each side. The meat, which is cut thinly so it cooks quickly and develops an appealing char without burning, is then served on top or alongside the slaw, and garnished with scallion greens. Each bite brims with layered flavor.

In just about 30 minutes and thanks two bold ingredients, you have an everyday meal that feels anything but ordinary.

Chili Crisp Pork Chops with Kimchi Slaw

4 servings
Total time: 35 mins

Ingredients
1 tablespoon reduced-sodium soy sauce
1 tablespoon chili crisp
3 teaspoons honey, divided
4 (½-inch-thick) boneless pork loin chops (1 pound total)
½ cup plain Greek yogurt (low-fat or whole milk)
3 tablespoons mayonnaise
2 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar
¼ teaspoon fine salt
4 cups thinly sliced green cabbage
1 medium carrot, scrubbed and coarsely grated (½ cup)
½ cup thinly sliced napa cabbage kimchi
½ bunch scallions, thinly sliced (white and light green parts separate from dark green)
neutral oil, such as canola or avocado, for the grill or grill pan

Directions
In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, chili crisp and 1 teaspoon of the honey until the honey dissolves. Place the pork into a flat-bottomed container such as an 8-by-8-inch baking dish, pour the soy sauce mixture over it and flip the chops over so they are evenly coated in the marinade. Let sit at room temperature, turning the meat over a few times, while you prepare the slaw, 20 to 30 minutes.

In a large bowl, stir together the yogurt, mayonnaise, vinegar, the remaining 2 teaspoons of



Tom McCorkle/For The Washington Post

Chili Crisp Pork Chops with Kimchi Slaw gives pork a tasty zing.

honey and the salt. Add the cabbage, carrot, kimchi and scallion white and light green parts, and toss to combine.

Prepare the grill for direct heat. If using a gas grill, set it to 450 degrees. If using a charcoal grill, fill a chimney starter with charcoal, light it, and when the coals are white-gray with ash, pour them onto the charcoal grate, adding more charcoal, if necessary. Put the lid on the grill, making sure the vents are open all the way. When all of the coals are gray and hot, about 15 minutes, your grill should be medium-hot.

(Use a grill thermometer, or test the heat by holding your hand, palm-down, about 4 inches from the grate, making sure that nothing flammable, such as clothing, is near the heat. If you

can hold it there for about 4 seconds, the heat should be at medium, or about 450 degrees. Pull your hand away from the heat before it gets painful.)

Brush the grill grates with oil. Place the pork on the grill, and reduce the heat to medium. Cook until grill marks form and the pork is lightly charred on the outside and slightly blush in the center, about 2 minutes per side. For medium-rare, the meat should register at 145 degrees on an instant-read thermometer. Transfer to a plate and let rest for 5 minutes.

Divide slaw among plates or shallow bowls. Divide the pork chops, placing them either alongside the slaw or on top.

Garnish with the dark scallion greens and serve.

— Ellie Krieger

Whole-grain Dijon elevates pan-fried chicken cutlets

By Christopher Kimball
Associated Press

Pan-fried chicken cutlets are a convenient weeknight dinner, but they can be a little bland. Adding layers of flavor — such as whole-grain Dijon mustard, in this case — ensures delicious results.

Crispy Dijon Chicken with Cucumber-Dill Salad

Start to finish: 30 minutes
Servings: 4

Ingredients
1 English cucumber, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
Kosher salt and ground pepper
⅓ cup all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 large eggs
2 tablespoons whole-grain Dijon mustard
1¾ cups panko breadcrumbs
Four 5- to 6-ounce chicken breast cutlets, pounded to an even ¼-inch thickness
10 tablespoons grapeseed or other neutral oil, divided

Directions
In a small bowl, stir together the cucumber, lemon juice, dill, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon

pepper. Set aside. Set a wire rack in each of 2 rimmed baking sheets. In a pie plate or wide, shallow bowl, stir together the flour and cornstarch. In a second dish, use a fork to beat the eggs, mustard and 1 tablespoon water until well combined. In a third, stir together the panko and ¼ teaspoon each of salt and pepper.

Season each cutlet on both sides with salt and pepper. One at a time, dredge the cutlets through the flour mixture, turning to coat and shaking off any excess, then coat both sides with egg, and finally dredge through the panko, pressing so the crumbs adhere. Place the cutlets on one of the prepared racks.

In a 12-inch skillet over medium-high, heat 6 tablespoons of oil until shimmering. Add 2 cutlets and cook undisturbed until golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Using tongs, flip and cook until the second sides are golden brown, about 1 minute. Remove the skillet from the heat. Transfer the cutlets to the second prepared rack. Repeat with the remaining 4 tablespoons oil and remaining cutlets. Serve with the cucumber salad.

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WEEKEND: MUSIC



Mature messaging

A decade after ‘All About That Bass,’ Meghan Trainor’s feel-good songs have a family focus on ‘Timeless’

By MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

Ten years ago, Meghan Trainor was a successful songwriter, soon to become a hit pop performer in her own right. “All About That Bass” established the then-20-year-old as a new force channeling old sounds — a combination of doo-wop with contemporary pop hooks in a time dominated by big synths — and with something to say. Her public persona became intertwined with the song’s lyrics about body acceptance.

“I have my self-love pop bangers that I just do in my sleep,” she told The Associated Press. “That’s my therapy that I need for myself. But it also helps people, so that’s just a win-win as a songwriter.”

On June 7, Trainor released her sixth studio album, “Timeless.” Empowerment messages are still at the heart of her specific sound, but now she’s matured them to meet where she is in life: as a mother, a sister and a veteran of this business.

SEE MATURE ON PAGE 29

Singer Meghan Trainor performs on NBC’s “Today” show at Rockefeller Plaza on June 7 in New York.

ANDY KROPA, INVISION/AP

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Mature: Trainor wants tour to be fun for family

FROM PAGE 28

The first single, “Been Like This,” featuring her hero T-Pain, even references “All About That Bass.” She sings, “Ooh-wee, she got that booty / That type of boom-boom, that bass that I like.”

Making it the first single? She calls that “destiny,” and is quick to mention that both of her brothers wrote on the song as well. “My mom was sobbing. My dad was crying, like, pretty sure he didn’t know who T-Pain was until I talked about him nonstop,” she says.

Family is at the center of “Timeless” and the music Trainor makes. A mother of two boys, she considers them in everything she does.

“‘To The Moon’ is for my kid, because he loves rocket ships and outer space,” she says of 3-year-old Barry Bruce Trainor. “A lot of it is inspired by my boys. I want them to have songs that help teach them how to love themselves as they’re growing up, you know, self-confidence and being kind to themselves.”

And it’s for the listener, too, of course. “I Wanna Thank Me,” samples Niecy Nash-Betts’ acceptance speech at the 2024 Emmy Awards, where she said, “And you know who I wanna thank? Me, for believing in me and doing what they said I could not do. I want to say to myself, in front of all you beautiful people — Go girl, with your bad self. You did that.”

“I kept writing self-confident bangers, and this was one of the last songs I wrote for the album,” she says, adding that after a while, she didn’t know what else to write about. Then her manager sent her the Nash speech. It was instant inspiration. The day after they wrote it, Trainor sent it to Nash, who filmed herself listening to it while sobbing.

“I had Niecy and her daughter and her wife come over and sing on the album, sing background on the song,” she adds. “So, when you hear all these big vocals at the end, with a bunch of women singing, it’s us.”

“Rollin,’” with its big strings, brass and bass, has a kind of feminist message as well, what Trainor says was inspired by experiences she’s had in the music industry, like watching her manager get called an assistant



EPIC RECORDS/AP

“Timeless,” Meghan Trainor’s sixth studio album, reflects her life as a mother and a veteran of the music industry.

because she’s a woman. “Any more females in the industry, everywhere, would be sick,” she says.

To protect her peace in this business, she says simply, “I’m on antidepressants. I went up after baby number two; I was losing sleep,” she says. “So, I went up on my medicine and I see my therapist. I try to see her every Wednesday, and I try to vocalize a lot when I’m feeling overwhelmed.”

That relates back to the album. “Timeless,” the title, stems from Trainor’s “big, big, big, big fear of death,” as she puts it.

“When you have kids, you’re like, ‘Oh this is the meaning of life. I have to be here forever,’” she says. “Instead of living in this fear that I have every morning and day and night, I want to live. Like, ‘Wow. We’re so lucky, we’re here. We have all this time

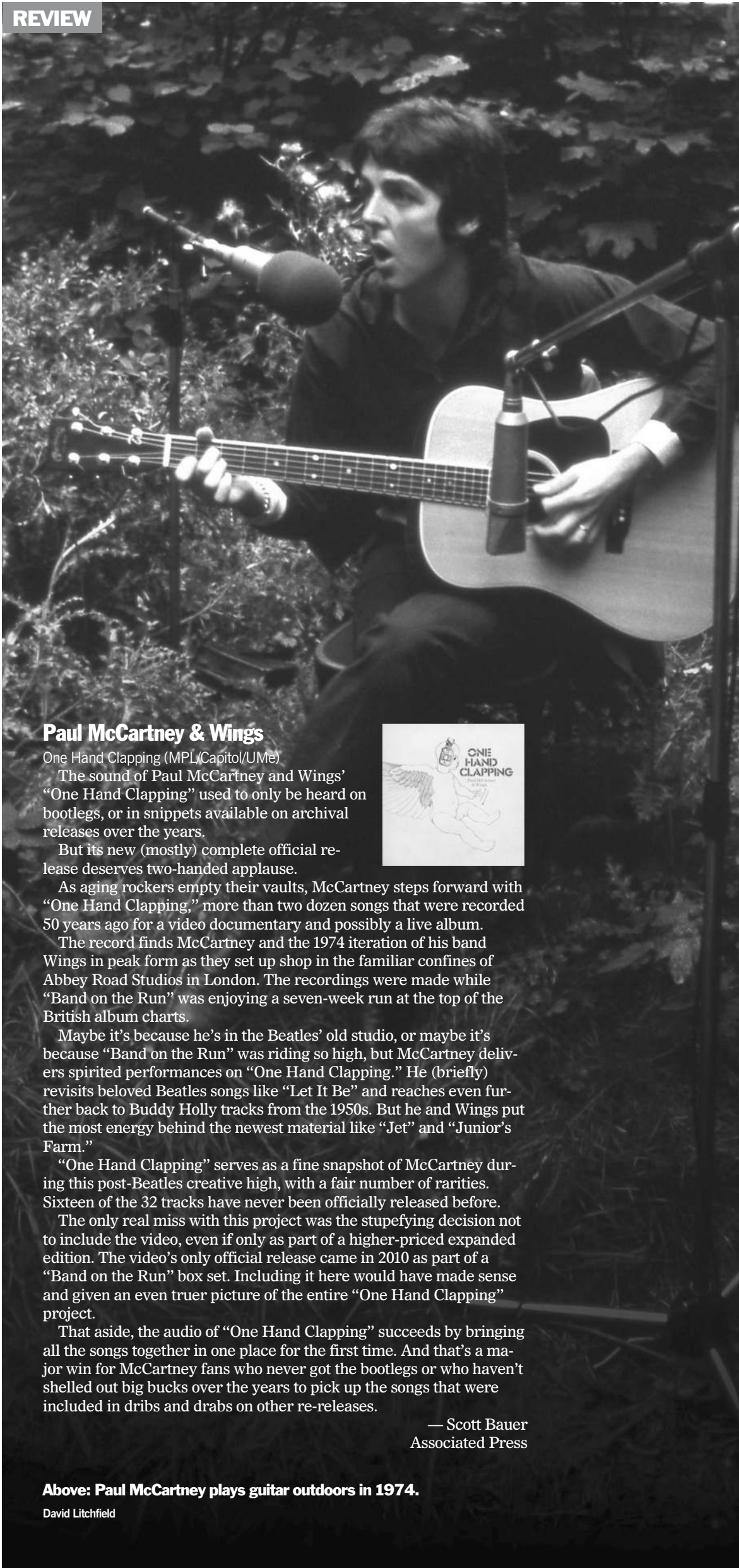
together.’ And so that’s why I’m trying to wrap my head around the word ‘timeless.’”

This fall, Trainor will tour for the first time in seven years — also her first time on the road since becoming a mother. “I am in the gym like an Olympian,” she jokes. “I’m going to get in crazy shape and then start practicing.” Dancing and singing at the same time is no easy feat, and “I want to dance a lot,” she says.

Beyond that, her goals are to put on a great show, and to keep her family involved every step of the way. “I’m going to try to make it fun, where each state we get to do something fun with the kids,” she says. “It’s going to be a blast. I’ve lined it up so we can’t not have fun.”

And potentially make some timeless memories?

REVIEW



Paul McCartney & Wings

One Hand Clapping (MPL/Capitol/UMe)

The sound of Paul McCartney and Wings’ “One Hand Clapping” used to only be heard on bootlegs, or in snippets available on archival releases over the years.



But its new (mostly) complete official release deserves two-handed applause.

As aging rockers empty their vaults, McCartney steps forward with “One Hand Clapping,” more than two dozen songs that were recorded 50 years ago for a video documentary and possibly a live album.

The record finds McCartney and the 1974 iteration of his band Wings in peak form as they set up shop in the familiar confines of Abbey Road Studios in London. The recordings were made while “Band on the Run” was enjoying a seven-week run at the top of the British album charts.

Maybe it’s because he’s in the Beatles’ old studio, or maybe it’s because “Band on the Run” was riding so high, but McCartney delivers spirited performances on “One Hand Clapping.” He (briefly) revisits beloved Beatles songs like “Let It Be” and reaches even further back to Buddy Holly tracks from the 1950s. But he and Wings put the most energy behind the newest material like “Jet” and “Junior’s Farm.”

“One Hand Clapping” serves as a fine snapshot of McCartney during this post-Beatles creative high, with a fair number of rarities. Sixteen of the 32 tracks have never been officially released before.

The only real miss with this project was the stupefying decision not to include the video, even if only as part of a higher-priced expanded edition. The video’s only official release came in 2010 as part of a “Band on the Run” box set. Including it here would have made sense and given an even truer picture of the entire “One Hand Clapping” project.

That aside, the audio of “One Hand Clapping” succeeds by bringing all the songs together in one place for the first time. And that’s a major win for McCartney fans who never got the bootlegs or who haven’t shelled out big bucks over the years to pick up the songs that were included in dribs and drabs on other re-releases.

— Scott Bauer
Associated Press

Above: Paul McCartney plays guitar outdoors in 1974.

David Litchfield

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Leave us a message!

As part of the latest wedding trend, guests giving the gift of gab to couples by signing an audio guest book

By LEANNE ITALIE
Associated Press

The bridal couple can't come to the phone right now. They're busy getting married. Please leave your well wishes at the beep!

Capturing recorded messages on vintage phones is the latest twist to the wedding guest book. Couples who have embraced them said guests had a ball, returning to the phones again and again as their weddings unfolded.

"It felt a little bit more personal. You could hear the inflection in people's voices and they were genuinely having a good time. You can hear what they're excited about and what they enjoyed about the wedding," said Nick Gaines, who married last September in Chicago.

The market is crowded with companies offering the phones for purchase or rent, from fancy 1920s-era looks to rotaries from the '50s and '60s. One vendor, Fête-Fone, offers a phone in the shape of pink lips and another shaped like a cheeseburger.

Some rental companies provide related services like noise reduction, and mini speakers and vinyl records for playback.

Gaines and his wife used LifeOnRecord, a rental service that's been around since 2006. Its prices range from \$99 for a toll-free, call-in number and online portal open for a year, to \$299 for a phone on site with a battery pack good for 12 hours. Guests need only pick up the handset, listen to an introductory greeting from the couple and leave a message.

The phones play into a broader interest in recent years in all things retro in fashion, decor and housewares.

For several years, weddings have been LifeOnRecord's most popular events, though people also use the company for an array of things, from terminally ill patients whose loved ones want to record memories to birthdays, bar mitzvahs and retirements.

Alaa El Ghatit, founder of LifeOnRecord, notes that people can talk a lot faster than they can write in a paper book.

"The phone is very approachable to people," he said.

Sean Taylor and her husband married last year in Richmond, Va. They set up a blue photo booth adorned with flowers to offer guests some privacy while leaving messages. She first heard of the phones on TikTok and used a rental service called After the Tone.

"My husband is really into collecting records so we had them press the messages into vinyl," she said. "I encouraged people to leave messages throughout the night. After a few drinks, the messages toward the end of the night are definitely a little more chaotic, but in a fun way."

Taylor also offered guests the chance to put pen to paper in a traditional guest book.

Andy White, founder of The Telephone Guestbook, offers phone rentals in the U.S. and England. He was providing photo services for events when he hit on the



ALEXANDRIA EL GHATIT/AP

An audio wedding guestbook from rental service LifeOnRecord.

idea of audio guest books.

"I would say 95% of our business is now weddings," he said. "Our business has grown significantly over the past two years."

White provides cards with prompts in case guests have an attack of the shies or are otherwise stumped on what to talk about. The cards suggest things like funny tales, relationship stories, marriage advice and cherished memories.

"People love to talk. It's easy to pick up a phone," White said.

Some couples listen to their messages on their anniversaries or other special occasions.

East Coast wedding planner Danielle Rothweiler, whose clients spend a minimum of \$100,000 on their nuptials, has been swamped with requests for audio guest books over the past two years. Most of her bridal couples don't bother putting out a paper book as well.

"Guests coming to weddings want to see things that are different. No one is asking, where is the traditional guest book?" said Rothweiler, who is based in Verona, N.J.

LifeOnRecord also offers QR codes for scanning if people want to use their own phones.

"You're able to tell stories, and that's what our guests liked about it," said Abigail Bliss, who got married in December 2022 in Grand Rapids, Mich., and used one of LifeOnRecord's phones.

White, Rothweiler and others suggest doing what Taylor did and setting up the phone in a nook or booth slightly off the beaten track so people don't feel rushed and have a bit of privacy.

Add-on kitsch like audio guest books aren't for everybody. Several high-end wedding planners said they're not getting a lot of requests.

"The audio guest book trend is still fairly new, but we are seeing the activity pop up at more and more weddings," said Hannah Nowack, senior editor at The Knot, an online wedding vendor marketplace.

"Over the years, we've seen couples leaning into personalization with their guest books," she said. "In the past, guest book alternatives ranging from Polaroid guest books to vinyl records for signing have popped up at celebrations in lieu of traditional guest books. Audio guest books are the latest."



NIKKI DASKALAKIS/AP

Sean Taylor and Eric Carlstrom put an audio guest book in a phone booth at their wedding in Richmond, Va., on Sept. 3, 2023. The bridal market is crowded with companies renting or selling vintage phones for guests to record their well wishes.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



PHOTOS BY MGM+/AP

Mark Feuerstein plays Burton Greenberg in “Hotel Cocaine.” The series centers on the Mutiny Hotel’s private nightclub, once a notorious hangout for show business types, CIA undercover agents and drug kingpins. The Miami hotel still exists, but its nightclub does not.

Disco, drama and blow

Eight-episode ‘Hotel Cocaine’ takes MGM+ viewers to late-1970s Miami

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

The lapels are wide, “Disco Inferno” is blasting on the dance floor and lines and lines of nose candy are on offer in the new intriguing Miami-based series “Hotel Cocaine.”

The eight-episode romp on MGM+ centers on a real-life hotel at the beginning of the war on drugs that had a private nightclub known as a notorious hangout for show business types, CIA undercover agents and drug kingpins.

Creator and showrunner Chris Brancato, the creator of “Narcos” and “Godfather of Harlem,” explains the show using another hot hangout with war looming: “I describe it as ‘Casablanca’ on cocaine.”

“Hotel Cocaine,” set in 1978, centers on the hotel’s general manager, Roman Compte (played by Danny Pino), a Cuban expatriate who caters to high-end hotel patrons. He slowly gets sucked into a life of crime trying to protect his daughter from unsavory federal agents on one side, and his equally unsavory estranged brother, a mobster, on the other.

“This show has become about many things. It’s about immigration to this country and trying to achieve the American dream. It’s also about a man caught in a perilous moral quandary of trying to save his daughter at the risk of betraying his brother from whom he’s estranged,” Brancato says.

Leavening the darkness is plenty of humor, mocking the era’s emphasis on personal growth through psychedelics and its partying excess. The scripts also have fun portraying real celebrities, like John Lennon, Liza Minnelli, John Bonham, Hunter Thompson and Rick James.

Brancato says he created a careful balance between a “meat and potatoes drug show” and comedy.

“I wanted there to be a sense of humor to what otherwise could be a kind of dark and very dreary subject matter,” he says.

The show also co-stars Yul Vazquez, Michael Chiklis and Mark Feuerstein. It was shot in the Dominican Republic, which “looks more like Miami of the ’70s than Miami now,” Brancato says.

The series is enlivened by

music from the era, including Latin sounds and pop classics, like Eric Clapton’s “Cocaine.” Brancato managed to get the rights to use Dire Straits’ “Sultans of Swing” at a discount because singer-guitarist Mark Knopfler was a fan of “Narcos.”

“The hedonism and the party and the disco and the choreography and the dancing may seem frivolous, but there’s a life-and-death struggle happening underneath,” Pino says.

The action takes place inside and outside the Mutiny nightclub, which was the jewel of the 138-room Mutiny Hotel. The hotel still exists, the nightclub — which also inspired the movie “Scarface” — doesn’t.

“You not only had the cocaine trade flowing through the Mutiny. But you had lawyers, money launderers and intelligence officers. All those roads converged in that little place,” says Vazquez, whose sister partied at the nightclub in her youth.

The show’s hero also was a real man: Roman Compte. His son, “Narcos” actor Maurice Compte, brought his father’s experiences to Brancato, who started fictionalizing. (Pino worked with the younger Compte on “Mayans



From left, Nestor Cabal (Yul Vazquez), Roman Compte (Danny Pino) and Agent Zulio (Michael Chiklis) in “Hotel Cocaine.” Compte, general manager of the Mutiny, tries to protect his daughter from both unsavory federal agents and his unsavory mobster brother, Cabal.

MC” and asked him plenty of questions about his dad.)

“For me, it’s not interesting to do these crime shows unless you can find some interesting new angles. So, for example, ‘Godfather of Harlem’ is the collision of organized crime and civil rights, two things that actually don’t really belong in the same sense,” Pino says.

“Hotel Cocaine” reaches for authenticity by casting two Cuban Americans from Miami as the lead brothers, and dealing with the legacies of Fidel Castro and the Bay of Pigs.

“It’s just filled with all kinds of buttons,” says Vazquez, whose brother was a political prisoner in Cuba. “I want to say it’s filled with memories, but it’s more than memories. ... I jumped at wanting to do this.”

The show has as its tagline “every pleasure has a price,” and Brancato says he hopes it might make viewers realize how much brutality goes into their recreational drugs.

“We do these drugs, and we snort the cocaine, and we give no thought whatsoever to the fact that every line of cocaine has three dead bodies behind trailing back to South America,” he says.

Season 1 is wrapped and the cast hopes there will be another. After all, the ’80s — where hedonism went nuts — beckons.

“It sets up I think a lot of what we hope this show is going to be in terms of understanding maybe what we’re going through today as Americans — through the microscope of being able to analyze what happened in the ’70s and ’80s,” Pino says.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

When is the best time to exercise?

Sports medicine physicians address the conundrum, explain the pros and cons of morning and evening workouts

By RICK THIESSE
Mayo Clinic News Network

It’s a long-standing discussion for all who want to get into shape. When is the best time to exercise? According to Future Member, about 41% of workouts take place between 7-9 a.m. or 5-7 p.m.

“The debate is intriguing with proponents of both morning and evening workouts citing various benefits,” says Andrew Jagim, M.D., director of sports medicine research at the Mayo Clinic Health System in Onalaska, Wis. “From increased energy levels to enhanced performance or greater weight-loss benefits, health experts delve into the science behind exercise timing to shed light on the optimal approach for achieving fitness goals.”

Morning workouts

For morning exercisers, the allure of starting the day with a workout is undeniable. “Getting your workout in and completed before you even begin your day can provide a sense of accomplishment and set a positive tone for the day ahead,” Jagim explains. “The post-workout release of endorphins and the satisfaction of accomplishing something before 9 a.m. can serve as a powerful ego boost.” Perhaps most importantly, morning workouts eliminate the need to worry about finding time for exercise later in the day because it’s often the only time of the day that hasn’t been previously committed to work, social events or family activities.

“By completing your workout in the morning, you free up your afternoons and evenings for other activities, such as cooking dinner, socializing or simply relaxing,” Jagim notes. “This sense of freedom and flexibility can alleviate stress and enhance overall well-being.”

For people embarking on morning workouts, strategic pre-exercise nutrition can make a significant difference in energy levels and performance.

“Starting the day with a balanced breakfast containing carbohydrates, protein and healthy fats can provide the necessary energy to power through a morning workout,” Jagim advises. “Opt for whole-grain cereals, Greek yogurt with fruit, and allow sufficient time for digestion to prevent discomfort and optimize nutrient absorption. Or, if you’re not hungry in the mornings or don’t have time, something simple like an energy bar can suffice.”

Evening workouts

However, for some people, waking up early to exercise is the last thing they feel like doing, and, therefore, the case for evening workouts is more appealing.

“Your body’s ability to perform peaks in the afternoon and early evening, with optimal muscle function, strength and endurance,” states Jake Erickson, D.O., who specializes in sports medicine at the Mayo Clinic Health System in

Onalaska. “During this time, your body has time to wake up a bit by moving around throughout the day, you’ve likely gotten a meal or two in to ensure adequate energy available to use during the workout, and you may be more mentally alert.”

Additionally, oxygen uptake kinetics are more favorable in the evening, allowing for more efficient utilization of resources during exercise.

“Your body is primed for performance in the late afternoon and early evening, making it an ideal window for high-intensity activities like interval training or speed work,” Erickson explains.

Conversely, people opting for evening workouts may have difficulty balancing time commitments and mental energy.

“After a long day at work or shuttling around the kids all day, it can be hard to muster the motivation to go to the gym and put forth a lot of physical effort during a workout,” adds Alecia Gende, D.O., who specializes in sports medicine and emergency medicine at the Mayo Clinic Health System in Onalaska. “Additionally, intense physical activity in the evening may trigger a stress response and cause difficulty falling asleep or waking in the middle of the night if your cortisol is disrupted and released at an inopportune time. If you have to get a workout in before sleep, it would be best to be lower intensity such as a walk or lighter lifting session. If that’s the case, moving the workout earlier in the day might be more beneficial for them.”

Lastly, if you choose to exercise later in the day, it’s important to ensure you are getting adequate nutrients

throughout the day so you have enough fuel available to support the workout, in addition to eating a well-balanced meal after the workout.

“After a long day, it’s essential to refuel the body with carbohydrates and protein,” Jagim suggests. “Consuming a nutrient-rich meal within two hours of your workout can facilitate muscle recovery and enhance adaptation to training. Consider options such as grilled chicken with quinoa and vegetables, or a protein-packed stir-fry to refuel and replenish after an evening workout.”

What about a midday workout?

Most people hit the dreaded afternoon slump around 3 p.m. A study of more than 90,000 people recently found working out in the afternoon reduces the risk of heart disease or early death more than physical activity in the morning or evening. The benefits of afternoon exercise for longevity were largest in men and the elderly.

“Morning workouts may not be ideal for shift workers or those working late or staying up later in the evening,” Gende says. “In that case, it may be more prudent to allow more sleep in the morning and perform a midday workout or early afternoon workout before your next evening shift or late night.”

According to a OnePoll survey, the most effective activity for an afternoon workout is getting up and going for a walk, which is a great way to perk up both your mind and body.

Avoid just staying on the couch

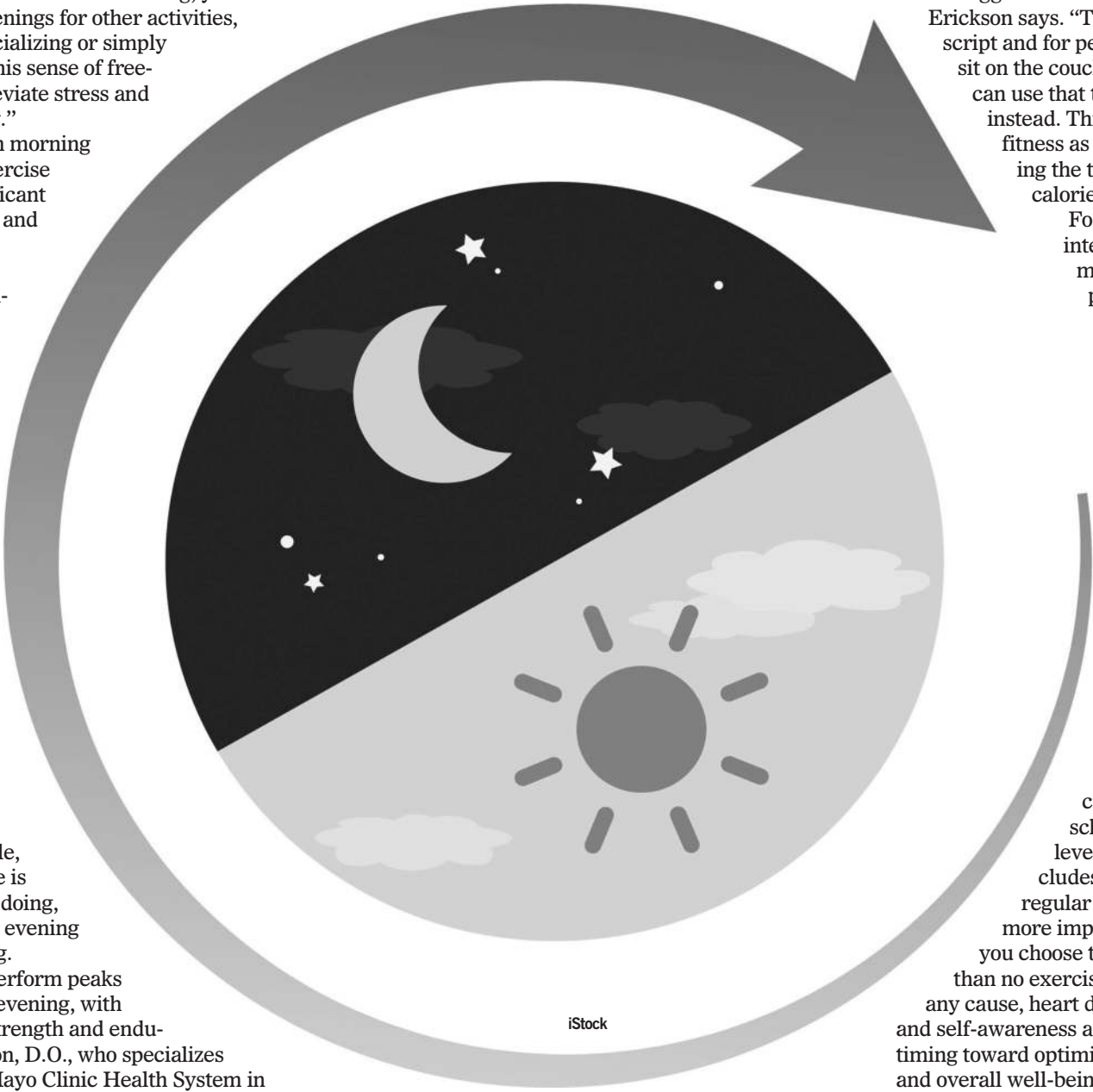
For those who say ‘I don’t have any time available’ — there’s always time.

“I suggest scheduling a ‘snack competing’ activity,” Erickson says. “This can be a good excuse to flip the script and for people who know they may choose to sit on the couch and snack in the evenings. They can use that time to grab a workout of some kind instead. This can lead to a big swing in people’s fitness as they consume less calories by avoiding the typical snacking time and burn more calories by the workout.”

For people engaging in prolonged or intense exercise sessions (more than 90 minutes), mid-workout nutrition can play a pivotal role in sustaining energy levels and preventing fatigue. Jagim recommends consuming carbohydrate-rich snacks during extended workouts to maintain endurance and performance.

Finding the balance

So, what is the best time to exercise? There are even benefits to splitting up a workout into short 10-minute minisessions throughout the day if you don’t have time to get a full 60-minute session in. One thing is clear: Even though science may seem contradictory, the importance of regular physical activity cannot be overstated. “Ultimately, the best time to exercise is the time that fits into your schedule and aligns with your energy levels and preferences,” Jagim concludes. “Consistency and adherence to a regular exercise routine are key and far more important regardless of the time of day you choose to work out. Any time of day is better than no exercise in reducing the risk of death from any cause, heart disease and cancer. Experimentation and self-awareness are essential in determining the ideal timing toward optimizing exercise performance, recovery and overall well-being.”



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WEEKEND: FAMILY



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Parents who can't get off of gadgets are likely to have a harder time convincing children why they should have to.

Screen-time reality check

Worried about your tween's obsession with devices? Examine your own

BY CAITLIN GIBSON
The Washington Post

For families who want to keep their tween children from spending too much time in front of screens, a new study offers illuminating — and potentially challenging — advice: Parents, you'll need to put your phones down first. The study, published this month in the journal *Pediatric Research*, examined the links between parenting strategies involving digital media and early adolescent screen use. Among the most striking findings: Parental screen use was strongly associated with higher adolescent screen time and problematic social media or video game use.

"One of the biggest predictors of adolescents' screen use is their parents' screen use," says Jason Nagata, a pediatrician at the University of California at San Francisco and the lead author of the study. This might feel startling, given that preteens are increasingly independent and influenced by their peers. But parental modeling still matters: "It's especially important that parents follow their own rules and practice what they preach," Nagata says, "because even if they think their kids aren't watching them, they really are."

The study examined data from a racially and economically diverse sample of more than 10,000 American 12- and 13-year-olds and their parents, who answered a questionnaire about their screen use and parenting strategies. Participants indicated whether they felt their relationship with screens was problematic — for instance, if they feel that they can't stop looking at their devices, lose track of how often they're using their phone, or find their phone habits are interfering with their social life or ability to focus at school.

The results of the study identified time frames when screen use appears especially harmful. Over a third of families reported that they often watched a screen during meals, and nearly half of adolescents reported having access to a phone while in bed. The use of screens during mealtimes and at bedtime was associated with higher overall screen time as well as problematic social media, video game and mobile phone use, the study found.

Committing to screen-free meals and bedtime routines is one key, actionable takeaway, Nagata says. "Of the different parenting practices that we examined, the one that had the most significant effect was limiting bedtime screen use," he says. "So if you only choose one rule to implement, that may be the most effective one for reducing total screen time."

The study caught the attention of Megan Moreno, professor of pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. What she has noticed in the emerging research — including this new study — are findings that underscore the importance of parental behavior, parenting practices around digital media and an adolescent's home environment.

In her own research, she says, adolescents who reported having strong mental health also indicated that they had close parent-child relationships, their parents implemented rules and boundaries, "and parents didn't use social media around [their children] very much," she says.

But she also doesn't think parents need to feel judged or shamed by these findings: "I don't think that is helpful. To me, the message is: Parents, even when you feel that your early adolescent might be pulling away, if you perceive that they're growing up, your role is still so absolutely important," she says. Being present and available to them — without a phone in your hand — "really makes a difference."

The study also highlighted the benefits of establishing limits and guidelines for screen use. About 67 percent of parents reported that they monitor their adolescent's screen time during the week, and more than 76 percent said they impose limits on screen time — and those strategies were linked with both lower overall adolescent screen use and lower problematic screen use, Nagata said.

But many parents also use screen time access to try to control a child's behavior. Seventy-eight percent of parents in the study reported taking away screen time as a punishment for bad behavior, and almost 39 percent said they offered it as a reward. The study indicated that these parenting methods actually backfire: "Using screens as either a punishment or reward was associated with overall more screen time," Nagata says. "That was a little bit of a surprising finding for me, initially ... but many young adolescents are very tech savvy, so even if you try to institute restrictions or punishments, they may be able to get around them."

The better approach, he says, is to have a clear family plan for media use, with understood guidelines and an open line of communication as both parent and child navigate our screen-saturated reality.

"I know that this is really hard for everyone, and despite our best intentions, kids and adults may not be able to always follow these rules," Nagata says. "So I also think it's a good opportunity to have open conversations with your preteens when we sometimes fall short."

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Flushing away my sanity and seat liner

It's officially summer, so people are packing up and heading out for a busy travel season. But the highways, bus stations and airports aren't the only places that will see a lot of action. With all those travelers on the go, and needing to go, public restrooms will be at maximum capacity.

Recently, I took a trip to Italy, requiring my 58-year-old bladder and me to frequent several airport bathrooms. It occurred to me that travel pottying has changed significantly over the years.

When I was a child, in the '70s, our station wagon simply pulled over to the side of the road for pit stops during long trips. My husband's family kept a mayonnaise container known as the "tinkle jar" in their vehicle. If we did manage to find a gas station with a bathroom, my mother would spread half a roll of toilet paper on the seat before I was allowed to sit down.

But those improvised methods of yesteryear are no longer considered apropos — or sanitary, for that matter. Today, the transportation authorities have provided travelers with state-of-the-art public toilet facilities.

The problem is, the newly automated restrooms are so high-tech, they sometimes leave one longing for the simple practicality of a roadside patch of weeds.

During my recent visit to an airport restroom, I selected one of the many stalls, latched the door, straddled my humongous carry-on bag and grabbed for a paper seat cover.

The first three covers ripped in half, the fourth fell into the toilet and the fifth one disappeared when the toilet unexpectedly flushed.

Known as "phantom flushes," the sensor-triggered water swoosh in public restrooms not only sucks down the paper seat covers, they can scare the you-know-what out of you. At least you'd be seated in the right place for that occasion.

With a seat cover finally in place, I took my position.

Strangely, the otherwise noisy bathroom fell dead silent. I could see the feet of the occupants next to me, but could've heard a pin drop. I prayed that someone would turn on the sink, while my bladder refused to release the 64 ounces of coffee I'd consumed that morning.

I'd experienced "stage fright" on other occasions, most notably in college, when perpetually clogged bar toilets caused long lines in the bathrooms. The one working toilet usually had no toilet paper, a broken door lock and gaps in the stall that allowed everyone in line to stare through the cracks. Once it was my turn, I was paralyzed.

Waiting in the airport stall for someone to make noise, I fidgeted, and — WHOOSH! — set off my own phantom flusher. It scared me, but provided the break I needed. Relief!

The toilet paper was affixed to some type of conservation dispenser that stopped the roll at each half turn. The flimsy tissue ripped with the slightest resistance, forcing me to make several attempts — roll, stop, rip, roll, stop, rip, roll, stop, rip — until I had enough scraps to do the job.

Finally, I stood up to trigger the flusher, but this time, nothing happened. I swiveled my hips, bobbed my head, and waved my hands to no avail.

With only minutes to boarding, I gave up on flushing and left the stall. Halfway to the sinks I heard it — WHOOSH!

The bank of sinks had no knobs, controls or buttons. "Here we go again," I thought, waving my hands in search of automated soap and water. I had a choice of hand dryers: a high-speed "air blade" that nearly blows your skin off, or the old-fashioned kind that emits a warm breeze that requires you to give up and wipe your hands on your pants.

Frustrated with newfangled automation, I chose the latter.

"Coffee?" the flight attendant asked after we took off.

"Sure," I said, "but do you happen to have an empty mayonnaise jar?"

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

QUIET TIME

BY ZACHARY SCHIFF / EDITED BY JOEL FAGLIANO

Zachary Schiff is a writer living in New York. This is his first crossword for The Times. The theme was initially planned for a 15x15 weekday puzzle, but it didn't quite pan out; through "trial and error and a little bit of luck," he was able to rework it into a Sunday. His favorite clue is 89-Down, a fact he heard a few years back and stored away in the hope of one day including it in a puzzle.

ACROSS

1 Sacks

5 San Diego winter hrs.

8 Lead-in to bad news

12 "Bennie and the Jets," vis-à-vis "Candle in the Wind"

17 Bar order that's dairy-free, despite its name

19 Hockey fakeout

20 On deck

22 Sweet loaf with a swirl

24 "Get real!"

26 Like some dive bars and granola bars

27 Tried to get on one's side

28 Q5 maker

30 Pro ____

31 Triple-platinum song from Taylor Swift's debut album

35 Electrical network

37 Western Hemisphere grp. since 1948

38 Global bank headquartered in London

39 Hockey Hall-of-Famer Cam

40 Block letters?

41 Work diligently at

42 Ice cream brand with brown-and-white striped lids

45 Bear who loves a "pic-a-nic"

47 Colt, for one

49 Potato battery or model volcano, e.g.

55 See 23-Down

56 Lines connected to pumps?

57 Win over

58 Extra source of income, slangily

62 ____ chips

65 Close call

66 Christmas-poem opener

67 Big container

68 Pros with IVs

70 Bauhaus artist Paul

71 Prepare to massage, perhaps

73 Part of a Viking funeral

76 Side dish at a summer cookout

79 Yoga positions

81 ____ Gershovitz, birth name of Ira Gershwin

83 Wee, informally

84 Classic game-show intro

87 Remove a plug from

91 Ancient region once conquered by Julius Caesar

92 Gobsmacks

93 Old dating inits.

94 Ending with concert

95 Accelerated H.S. science class

99 Priory of ____, guardians of a monumental secret in "The Da Vinci Code"

101 Fashion designer Anna

102 "I feel that!"

103 Pay a backhanded compliment, perhaps

109 Members of a famous boxing family

110 Updo hairstyle

111 Flat's problem

112 Cookie brand named for its signature ingredient

115 Upgrade for a growing family

117 Popular charity event ... or a hint to this puzzle's circled letters

120 Error message on a Blu-ray player, maybe

121 List-ending abbr.

122 Got to

123 Actress Witherspoon

124 Gives a ride to the body shop

125 Looney Tunes devil, for short

126 Puts in stitches

DOWN

1 List that only the sender sees

2 Soul singer India. ____

3 Field with a pool?

4 Like a proper shuffleboard table

5 Grier of "Foxy Brown"

6 Sleepy time at work

7 Barbershop fixtures?

8 One selling space, informally

9 Top city in England, by the sound of it?

10 T'Challa ____ Black Panther

11 Accords, e.g.

12 Genre for "Turner & Hooch" and "21 Jump Street"

13 Bit of rosemary

14 Chemical suffix

15 Baby doll

16 Former friend

18 Early pyramid builders

21 All-encompassing

23 With 55-Across, "Oh, cry me a river!"

25 Hardly

29 "Yeah . . . I'm gonna go now"

32 Introduce

33 "Hot damn!"

34 Couplings

35 Intervening period

36 One of four for a grand slam

41 Bear who loves honey

42 Green sci.

43 Dreadful

44 "Better ____ . . ."

46 Test for college srs.

48 Fitting N.B.A. team to go on a hot streak?

49 Waited

50 TV franchise since 2000

51 Wild dogs

52 "Gotta catch ____!" (Pokémon phrase)

53 Chick of jazz

54 Trapped up in the branches

58 Short-tailed weasel

59 "That would be nice"

60 Start of an Eastern religious title

61 "Yo!"

63 Without a doubt

64 "Wheel of Fortune" buy

69 Caribbean nation whose capital is Castries

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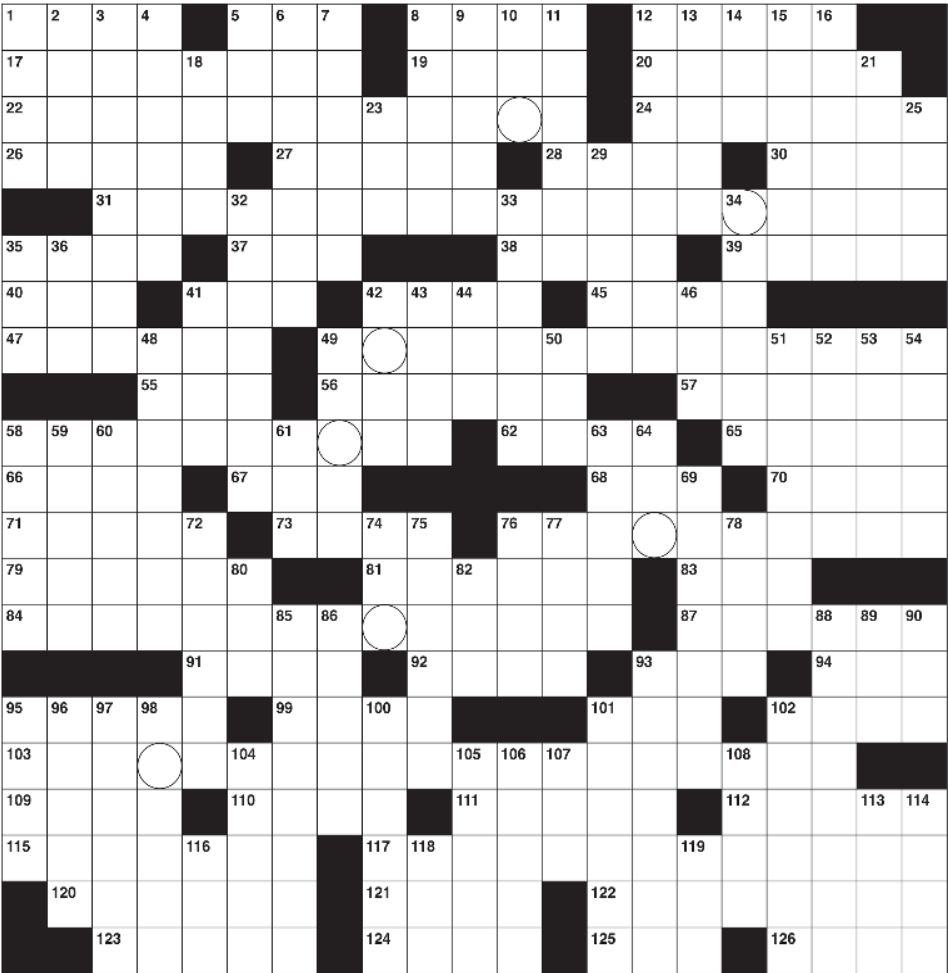
114

119

122

125

126



- 72 Chinese gambling game with dominoes

74 Carnival city

75 Neighbor of Francia

76 Cab charge

77 Cabs, e.g.

78 Opposite side divided by the hypotenuse

80 Agcy. for retirees

82 "Tartare"

85 Never, ever again

86 Yale of Yale University

88 History-book graphic

89 Fee, in dollars, to run the inaugural N.Y.C. marathon in 1970

90 Give a bad review

93 Mozzarella with a creamy core

95 Leading man?

96 Whom Biden debated in 2008

97 Bach's "Mass in ____"

98 Like the first post position in horse racing

100 Counterbalance

101 Show utter contempt for

102 Presently

104 "Skip me"

105 Arnold Schwarzenegger, to Chris Pratt

106 Christmas carols

107 Bronzed

108 Early pyramid builders

113 MGM co-founder Marcus

114 "No ifs, ____ or buts"

116 Go toe to toe

118 Judge Lance of the O.J. Simpson trial

119 Potato-chip brand

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE





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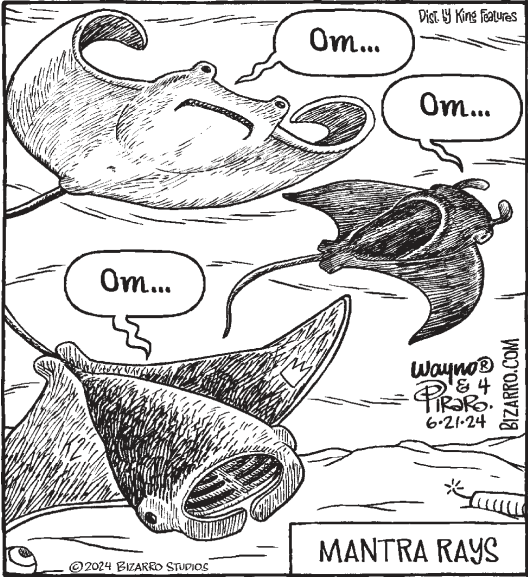
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Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3			4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11
12					13				14				
15					16				17				
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					45				46		47		
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53							54				55		
56							57				58		

- ACROSS**
1 Eastern "way"
4 — de deux
7 Sweetie
12 Mess up
13 Wyo. neighbor
14 Metal fastener
15 Actress Long
16 Mementos
18 Bit of ink
19 "The Sopranos" restaurateur
20 Rosebud, to Kane
22 Born
23 Dutch cheese
27 Mensa stats
29 Windshield cleaners
31 Author Walker
34 Break a Commandment
35 Rio Grande city
37 Blend
38 Party time, briefly
39 GPS suggestion
41 "Amen!"
45 Dundee residents
47 Citric beverage
48 Mementos
52 Computer acronym
53 Apply, as pressure
54 Thither
55 TV schedule abbr.
- DOWN**
1 Bivouac shelters
2 Popular typeface
3 Give a speech
4 Galileo's birthplace
5 Decorates
6 Fry lightly
7 Gratis
8 — -Manuel Miranda
9 Bird (Pref.)
10 Debussy's "La —"
11 UFO passengers
17 Panorama
21 Fraught with danger
23 Strong bond
- 56 Taboos
57 Choice words?
58 Layer
- 24 "Lion" actor Patel
25 "— you for real?"
26 Rockies hrs.
28 Proof letters
30 Here (Fr.)
31 Cleric's tunic
32 Young fellow
33 Glass of public radio
36 Killer whale
37 Shower unit
40 Capital of Japan
42 Third rock from the sun
43 Pueblo material
44 Macho type
45 Bygone fliers
46 Taxpayer IDs
48 "Community" actor Jeong
49 Outer (Pref.)
50 Still, in verse
51 Expert

Answer to Previous Puzzle

J	A	B		G	R	A	B		A	F	E	W	
O	N	O		L	A	M	A		V	I	V	A	
B	O	R	R	O	W	E	R		O	V	E	R	
		D	U	B		S	O	R	C	E	R	Y	
A	P	E	M	A	N		N	E	A				
M	I	A		L	I	D		A	D	A	G	E	
A	L	U	M		T	A	M		O	N	E	L	
T	E	X	A	N		B	O	G		N	O	S	
			C	O	M		M	A	D	A	M	E	
I	N	V	A	D	E	R		N	O	R			
N	O	O	B			N	E	I	G	H	B	O	R
T	H	O	R			L	I	C	E		O	W	L
L	O	M	E			O	D	E	S		R	N	S

6-21

CRYPTOQUIP

RGLJD BXD B. QDK DKDQJGRDF
Q D I M M N R B Q D L W P W R M N ,
CXIB CIR BXD RGBWIBGPL BXD
LDKB FIN? FGLP-RPQD.

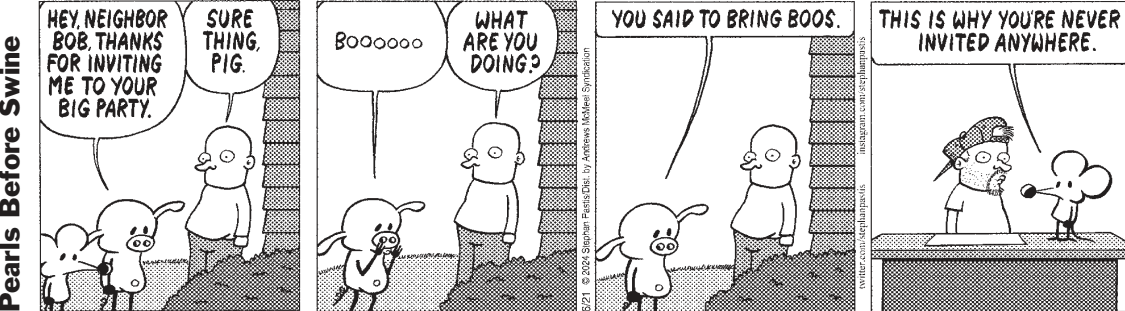
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT COULD YOU CALL X-RAY IMAGES THAT PEOPLE GET WHEN UNDERGOING DENTAL EXAMS? TOOTH PICS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals T

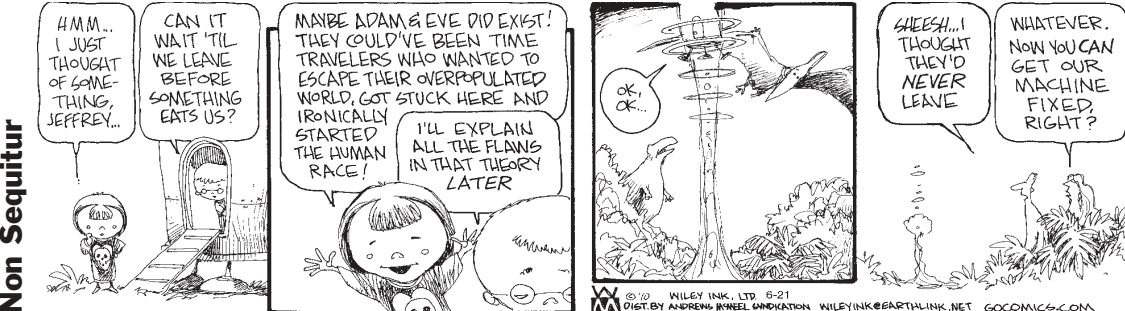
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



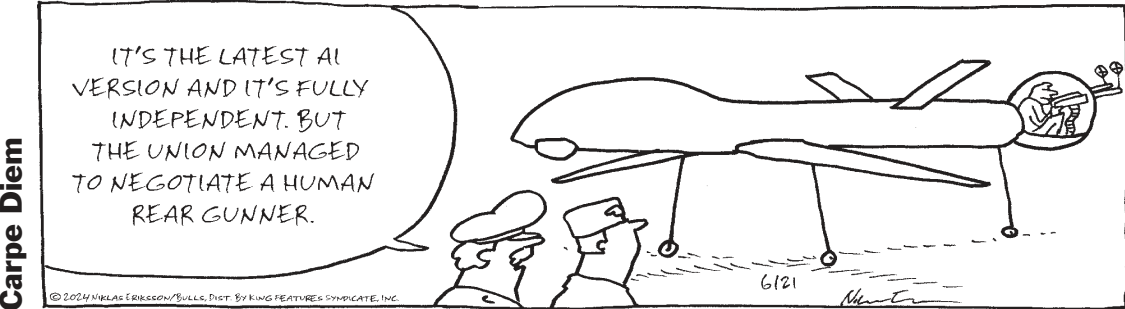
Non Sequitur



Candorville



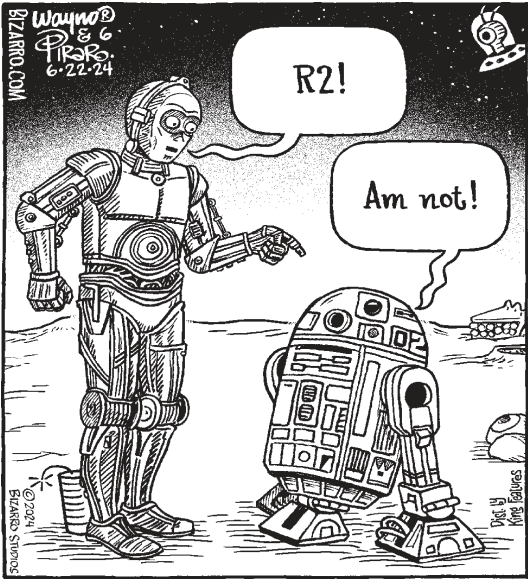
Carpe Diem



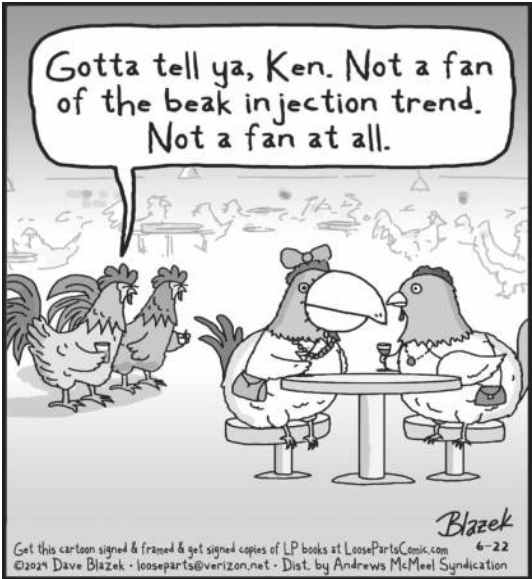
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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ACROSS

- 1 Stein filler
- 4 Melville's obsessed captain
- 8 Lopsided win
- 12 Superman foe Luthor
- 13 Poet Teasdale
- 14 Choir voices
- 15 Roman 52
- 16 Chicago paper, briefly
- 17 Campus bigwig
- 18 Weekend "dinner date" time
- 21 Tofu source
- 22 "Yoo- —!"
- 23 Moppets
- 26 Blemish
- 27 Prattle
- 30 Rapunzel's glory
- 31 Humorist
- 32 Sea bird
- 33 Tolkien creature
- 34 "— -hoo!"
- 35 Suggest
- 36 URL ending
- 37 Nevertheless, briefly
- 38 Event for college seniors
- 45 Serve tea
- 46 Round bread of India
- 47 Pie — mode
- 48 Designer Gucci

- 49 Harp's cousin
- 50 Hardly any
- 51 Slender
- 52 Pro votes
- 53 Sawbuck

- 23 Fill in — blank
- 24 TV chef Martin
- 25 DIY buy
- 26 "O Sole —"
- 27 Gloomy guy
- 28 — Baba
- 29 Crunchy sandwich
- 31 Feminine
- 32 Hoodlum
- 34 "How dare —!"
- 35 Telethon array
- 36 PC drive insert
- 37 Pageant crown
- 38 Transcript stats
- 39 Hamburger holder
- 40 BMW rival
- 41 Diggs of "Private Practice"
- 42 Loopy
- 43 Downwind
- 44 Show ennui

DOWN

- 1 Shakespeare title starter
- 2 "Star Wars" princess
- 3 Way out
- 4 Houston team
- 5 Robust
- 6 Met solo
- 7 Infant's head warmer
- 8 Ham's device
- 9 Couturier Cassini
- 10 Six-sided state
- 11 Shade
- 19 Friendly leader?
- 20 Fish-fowl insert

Answer to Previous Puzzle

T	A	O		P	A	S		F	L	A	M	E	
E	R	R		I	D	A		R	I	V	E	T	
N	I	A		S	O	U	V	E	N	I	R	S	
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S	L	E	D		N	E	E		E	D	A	M	
				I	Q	S		W	I	P	E	R	S
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B	D	A	Y		R	T	E		Y	E	A	H	
				S	C	O	T	S		A	D	E	
K	E	E	P	S	A	K	E	S		R	O	M	
E	X	E	R	T		Y	O	N		T	B	A	
N	O	N	O	S		O	R	S		H	E	N	

6-22

CRYPTOQUIP

M V Q Z N C N M A X I Q U I Q G
V Q K A M Y F E I I S X T M F G E K E U Q N
D E Y Z B E J I Z K M Y F B E J M N M I O .
M I ' U E U S E C O T Z U M Y X U U .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SINCE THE T. REX EXERCISED REALLY STRENUOUSLY, WHAT WAS THE SITUATION THE NEXT DAY? DINO-SORE.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals G

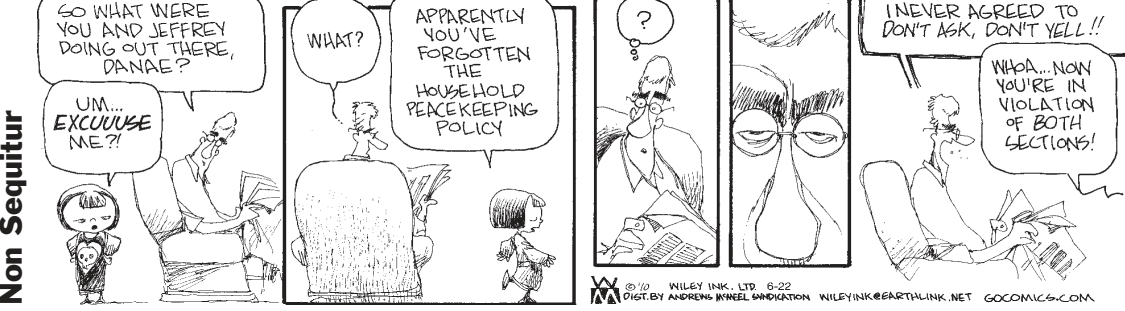
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



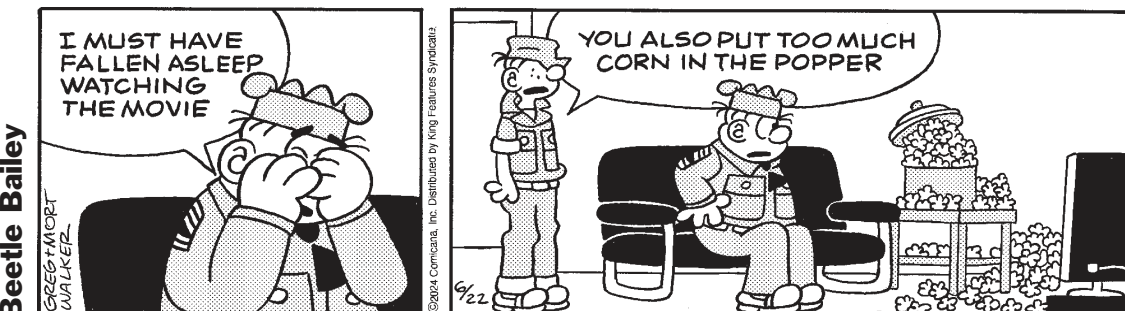
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Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey





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 Lt. Col. Katie R. Fidler, Europe commander
 John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
 Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Pacific commander

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OPINION

Mays was a ‘natural’ who made himself better still

BY GEORGE F. WILL
The Washington Post

In the 1962 Yankees-Giants World Series, the Yankees’ Clete Boyer hit a line drive to right-center. “As the ball left the bat, I said to myself two things. The first thing I said was ‘Hello double!’ The second thing I said was, ‘Oh, sh--, he’s out there.’ ”

Willie Howard Mays Jr., who died Tuesday at age 93, was the archetypal “five tool player” who could run, catch, throw, hit and hit for power. Said his first major league manager, Leo Durocher, “If he could cook, I’d marry him.” Said actress Tallulah Bankhead, “There have only been two authentic geniuses in the world, William Shakespeare and Willie Mays.”

“I can’t hit the pitching up there,” said Mays, a scared minor leaguer, in 1951, speaking by phone to Durocher, who would soon manage him. “Do you think you can hit .2-f---ing-.70 for me?” Durocher asked of the player who was hitting .477 in Minneapolis. He could.

A few weeks later, the Giants sent Mays — who was 0-12 in major league at-bats — to the plate to face, 60 feet 6 inches away, Warren Spahn, who was en route to becoming the winningest left-hander in baseball history. Mays hit the first of his 660 home runs. After the game, Spahn said, “For the first 60 feet it was a helluva pitch.” Years later, he said: “We might have gotten rid of Willie forever if I’d only struck him out.”

In 1963, in a game of a sort that will never again be played, Spahn, then 42, and another

er future Hall of Famer, Juan Marichal, 25, both pitched shutouts into the 16th inning. Marichal threw 227 pitches, Spahn 201. The Giants won 1-0 when Spahn gave up a walk-off home run. You know who hit it.

Mays, whose mother died giving birth to her 11th child, grew up in Birmingham, Ala., which the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. considered the United States’ worst big city regarding race relations. The teenage Mays played professionally for the Birmingham Black Barons and listened to radio broadcasts of the Birmingham Barons, a White team whose play-by-play announcer became, in the 1960s, infamous: Theophilus Eugene “Bull” Connor’s use of fire hoses and police dogs on student protesters in 1963 helped propel a horrified nation to embrace the 1964 Civil Rights Act. “Pretty good announcer,” Mays remembered.

In a sense, Mays was too good for his own good. His athleticism and ebullience — e.g., playing stickball with children in Harlem streets — encouraged the perception of him as man-child effortlessly matched against grown men. He was called a “natural.” Oh? Extraordinary hand-eye coordination is a gift. There is, however, nothing natural about consistently making solid contact with a round bat on a round ball that is moving vertically, and horizontally, and 95 mph. Because Mays made the extraordinary seem routine, his craftsmanship and intelligence were underrated.

Even as a rookie, he would reach second base, decode the opposing catcher’s pitch signs, and tell the Giants’ dugout that, say,

Dems are underwater, but Biden’s keeping it close

BY BEAU BRESLIN
The Fulcrum

The Democrats are underwater. Alarmingly so. That’s good news for President Joe Biden.

A recent Gallup poll revealed that there are fewer Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents than at almost any time since Gallup began seriously studying party affiliation in 1992.

Democrats are currently underwater by 7 percentage points, in terms of partisan advantage (“the percentage of U.S. adults identifying as or leaning Democratic minus the percentage identifying as or leaning Republican”). Only once before — in December 1992 — did Democrats face a similar shortfall. Since then, the party on the left has almost always been in the black, even reaching a partisan advantage of a whopping 18% in 2008.

Doubtless those figures have the Biden campaign worried. The deficit has prompted some urgency. In recent weeks, the president has stepped up his attacks on former President Donald Trump, altered his immigration stance, touted his economic success, and even put money directly back into the pockets of his most skeptical audience.

Democratic members of Congress have similarly celebrated the considerable successes of this administration. So has the Democratic National Committee. And yet the needle has barely moved. The last time the Democratic Party was consistently above water was the summer of 2021. Since then, the party of the left has been furiously swimming upstream, trying to gain traction with a largely disaffected electorate.

So, what happened? What accounts for the significant decline in Democratic Party sup-

port in recent years?

Well, the first thing one notices when reviewing the fine-grained data is the fairly significant increase in independent voters over the past two decades. The percentage of independent voters used to hover around 30%; they constitute almost half of the electorate now. That increase in non-affiliated voters has assuredly impacted the Democratic rolls.

Of course, it’s also impacted Republican numbers. Thirty-eight percent of the electorate were registered Republicans in November 2004. Today, that number is 27%. It seems that the independent electoral movement is siphoning converts from both sides of the aisle.

Perhaps it’s the incumbency problem at the top. Sitting presidents are frequently the source of partisan ire and admiration. Perhaps we can infer something about the Democrats’ deficit from presidential popularity over the decades. The answer is maybe.

Biden’s job approval rating is low, averaging around 40% for the past many months. That’s bad news for the incumbent. But those numbers are within the margin of error for several former presidents, including Trump and, until right before the 2012 election when he saw a considerable spike, Barack Obama.

One incumbent president was reelected with less than stellar approval ratings (Obama), and one was not (Trump). Throughout this period, though, Democrats were still doing well — they were above water.

We might also surmise that Democrats face unprecedented headwinds, challenges no party or president has likewise encountered in the 21st century.

COVID-19 wreaked havoc on public perception (the economy is not as bad as many suggest); there is battle fatigue over the coun-

the third in each sequence was the actual sign. His base-running “instincts” actually were a meticulously honed craft: Although he played center field, he would take pre-game infield practice, reminding himself where infielders should position themselves to cut off throws from outfielders. Then when he got a hit, he could take an extra base if the infielders were out of position. Sometimes early in a game, Mays would intentionally swing at and miss a pitch he could easily have hit, thereby encouraging the pitcher to throw the pitch during a crucial late-inning at bat.

Mays and another early 1950s center fielder, who played less than a mile away from the Giants’ Polo Grounds, the Yankees’ Mickey Mantle (like Mays, born in 1931), electrified baseball in the 1950s, when it was indisputably the national pastime.

In the 1954 World Series, the Indians’ Vic Wertz crushed Don Liddle’s pitch into baseball’s deepest center field — 483 feet to the wall in the Polo Grounds — where Mays made The Catch. Liddle, who was put in the game to pitch only to Wertz, reportedly said laconically, “I got my man.” Yes, by getting him to hit a Ruthian blast to the only player who could have caught it.

Baseball fans are an argumentative tribe, but none question that Mays was among baseball’s half-dozen best position players. Still, after that first home run off Spahn, Mays went 0 for 13, making him 1 for 25. Even baseball’s gods need time to figure things out.

try’s support for overseas wars; both the Supreme Court and Congress appear feckless; polarization is testing our capacity for patience and compassion; traditional allies, like young voters, union members, and persons of color, are abandoning the party in record numbers; the party’s standard bearer is just plain old. I could go on. The list is long, the troubles are real and the Democrats are reeling.

So then why is this good news for Biden? Why should Democrats feel some optimism about the current electoral landscape?

Because he’s keeping it close. The most recent polls show that Biden is running neck and neck, nationally, with Trump. The current president is even remaining competitive in some of the crucial swing states. Staying competitive in a race where both candidates are facing eye-popping disapproval ratings may seem like a hollow victory.

But in this political climate — where the Republican base is more energized, incumbency is a liability, Democratic Party registration has slowed, COVID’s electoral relevance is long gone, inflation remains high and traditional Democratic backers are questioning their allegiance — any victory is welcome. The contrast is rich. The Democratic Party is bleeding support while polls suggest that its leader remains electorally viable.

In the end, it seems apparent that closing the 7% deficit Democrats face today may be the key to holding on to the White House, surging in the Senate and flipping control of the House. Democrats, it appears, will need to learn how to tread water once again.

Beau Breslin is the Joseph C. Palamountain Jr. Chair of Political Science at Skidmore College and author of “A Constitution for the Living: Imagining How Five Generations of Americans Would Rewrite the Nation’s Fundamental Law.”

SCOREBOARD/NBA

DEALS

Wednesday’s transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Transferred RHP Tyler Wells from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Optioned CF Kyle Stowers to Norfolk (IL). Selected the contract of SS Nick Maton from Norfolk.

CLEVELAND GUARDIANS — Recalled RHP Darren McCaughan from Columbus (IL). Placed RHP Nick Sandlin on the 15-day IL retroactive to June 17.

DETROIT TIGERS — Sent RHP Alex Faedo to Toledo (IL) on a rehab assignment.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Optioned LHP Clayton Andrews to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL). Reinstated RHP Gerrit Cole from the 60-day IL. Transferred INF Anthony Rizzo from the 10-day IL to the 60-day IL. Sent RHPs Scott Effross and JT Brubaker to Tampa (FSL) on a rehab assignment. Optioned LHP Anthony Misiewicz to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

National League

CHICAGO CUBS — Signed and activated C Tomás Nido. Designated C Yan Gomes for assignment. Placed RHP Keegan Thompson on the paternity list. Recalled RHP Porter Hodge from Iowa (IL).

COLORADO ROCKIES — Reinstated 3B Sean Bouchard from the 10-day IL. Optioned SS Greg Jones to Albuquerque (PCL).

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Reinstated RHP Bobby Miller from the 15-day IL. Placed RHP Walker Buehler on the 10-day IL.

MIAMI MARLINS — Designated LHP Kent Emanuel for assignment. Selected the contract of RHP Yonny Chirinos from Jacksonville (IL). Sent RHP Edward Cabrera to Jacksonville on a rehab assignment. Acquired C Ali Sanches from the Chicago Cubs in exchange for cash considerations.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Designated RHP Elieser Hernandez for assignment. Optioned 2B Oliver Dunn to Nashville (IL). Recalled RHP Bradley Blalock from Biloxi (SL). Recalled 2B Tyler Black from Nashville.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Reinstated SS Alika Williams from the 10-day IL. Optioned SS Alika Williams to Indianapolis (IL).

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Reinstated RHP Kyle Gibson from the bereavement list. Optioned RHP Ryan Loutos to Memphis (IL).

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

DETROIT PISTONS — Fired head coach Monty Williams.

Women’s National Basketball Association

DALLAS WINGS — Signed F Morgan Bertsch to a rest-of-season hardship contract.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

DENVER BRONCOS — Signed LB Dondrea Tillman to a three-year contract.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Released K Jack Podlesny.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Released WR Denzel Mims and DB Trenton Thompson.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

DETROIT RED WINGS — Signed D Albert Johansson to a one-year, two-way contract

NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Acquired G Jacob Markstrom from the Calgary Flames in exchange for D Kevin Bahl and New Jersey’s first-round selection in the 2025 NHL Draft (top-10 protected).

NEW YORK ISLANDERS — Signed F Kyle MacLean to a three-year contract.

SAN JOSE SHARKS — Acquired C Ty Dellandrea from the Dallas Stars for a 2025 4th round pick. Claimed C Barclay Goodrow off waivers from the N.Y. Rangers.

UTAH HOCKEY CLUB — Signed G Matt Vilalta to a two-year, two-way contract.

VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Signed D Mark Friedman to a one-year contract.

WASHINGTON CAPITALS — Acquired C Pierre-Luc Dubois from Los Angeles in exchange for G Darcy Kuemper.

SOCCER
MLS

ATLANTA UNITED — Signed D Matt Edwards and MF Matias Gallardo to short-term agreements.

FC CINCINNATI — Signed G Alec Kann to a contract extension.

ORLANDO CITY SC — Signed F Wilfredo Rivera to a short-term agreement from Orlando City B (MLS NEXT Pro).

PHILADELPHIA UNION — Signed Ms David Vazquez and CJ Olney to a short-term agreement.

COLLEGE BASEBALL

College World Series
At Omaha, Neb.
(Double Elimination; x-if necessary)
Friday, June 14
North Carolina 3, Virginia 2
Tennessee 12, Florida St. 11
Saturday, June 15
Kentucky 5, NC State 4, 10 innings
Texas A&M 3, Florida 2
Sunday, June 16
Florida St. 7, Virginia 3, Virginia eliminat-ed
Tennessee 6, North Carolina 1

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Connecticut	13	1	.929	—
New York	12	3	.800	1½
Atlanta	6	7	.462	6½
Indiana	6	10	.375	8
Chicago	4	9	.308	8½
Washington	2	13	.133	11½
WESTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	12	3	.800	—
Seattle	9	6	.600	3
Las Vegas	7	6	.538	4
Phoenix	8	7	.533	4
Los Angeles	4	11	.267	8
Dallas	3	10	.231	8

Wednesday’s games

Indiana 88, Washington 81
Minnesota 68, Atlanta 55
Las Vegas 94, Seattle 83

Thursday’s games

Dallas at Chicago
Los Angeles at New York

Friday’s games

Indiana at Atlanta
Connecticut at Las Vegas

Saturday’s games

Dallas at Washington
Los Angeles at New York
Phoenix at Minnesota

TENNIS

Queen’s Club Championships

Wednesday
Purse: Euro 2,411,390
Surface: Grass
Men’s Singles
Round of 16

Ajla Tomljanovic, Australia, def. Zhu Lin, China, 6-7 (6), 6-1, 6-4.
Elisabetta Cocciaretto, Italy, def. Sloane Stephens, United States, 6-4, 6-2.
Leylah Annie Fernandez (6), Canada, def. Viktorija Golubic, Switzerland, 4-6, 7-5, 6-3.
Anastasia Potapova (7), Russia, def. Lucia Bronzetti, Italy, 6-3, 7-5.

Thursday

Tommy Paul (5), United States, def. Alejandro Tabilo, Chile, 6-3, 6-4.
Jack Draper, Britain, def. Carlos Alcaraz (1), Spain, 7-6 (3), 6-3.

German Open

Thursday
At Berlin
Purse: Euro 802,237
Surface: Grass
Women’s Singles
Round of 16

Anna Kalinskaya, Russia, def. Marketa Vondrousova, Czechia, 5-5, ret.
Elena Rybakina, Kazakhstan, def. Veronika Kudermetova, Russia, 6-4, 7-5.
Coco Gauff, United States, def. Ekaterina Alexandrova, Russia, 7-6 (6), 6-2.
Jessica Pegula, United States, def. Donna Vekic, Croatia, 6-4, 7-5.

Halle Open

Thursday
At Halle, Germany
Purse: Euro 2,255,655
Surface: Grass
Men’s Singles
Round of 16

Arthur Fils, France, def. Dominik Koepfer, Germany, 6-3, 6-4.
Christopher Eubanks, United States, def. Alexander Bublik (7), Kazakhstan, 7-6 (5), 4-6, 6-3.
Zhang Zhizhen, China, def. Daniil Medvedev (3), Russia, 6-3, 2-6, 7-6 (5).
Alexander Zverev (2), Germany, def. Lorenzo Sonego, Italy, 6-4, 7-6 (5).

Birmingham Open

Thursday
Purse: \$267,082
Surface: Grass
Women’s Singles
Round of 16

Yulia Putintseva, Kazakhstan, def. Anhelina Kalinina, Ukraine, 6-3, 6-0.
Diana Shnaider, Russia, def. Marie Bouzkova (8), Czechia, 7-6 (5), 6-3.
Barbora Krejickova (2), Czechia, def. Harriet Dart, Britain, 6-3, 6-4.

PRO SOCCER

MLS						
EASTERN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Inter Miami CF	12	3	5	41	46	29
Cincinnati	12	3	3	39	31	21
New York	8	4	7	31	31	25
NYCFC	9	7	2	29	26	22
Charlotte FC	8	6	5	29	21	20
Columbus	7	3	6	27	25	17
Toronto FC	7	9	3	24	28	32
Nashville	5	5	8	23	22	23
Atlanta	5	8	5	20	25	23
Philadelphia	4	6	8	20	31	29
D.C. United	4	8	7	19	25	33
CF Montréal	4	7	7	19	25	37
Chicago	4	8	6	18	21	30
Orlando City	4	8	6	18	19	29
New England	5	10	1	16	15	29

WESTERN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Real Salt Lake	10	2	7	37	40	22
LAFC	10	4	4	34	32	21
LA Galaxy	9	3	7	34	37	27
Minn. United	8	5	5	29	31	28
Colorado	8	7	4	28	34	31
Vancouver	7	6	4	25	26	22
Portland	6	7	6	24	34	33
Houston	6	6	6	24	22	22
Austin FC	6	7	6	24	22	28
Seattle	5	7	7	22	24	23
FC Dallas	5	8	5	20	25	28
St Louis City	3	6	9	18	23	30
Sporting KC	3	11	5	14	31	40
San Jose	3	13	2	11	27	45

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Wednesday’s games

Orlando City 2, Charlotte FC 2, tie
Atlanta 1, D.C. United 0
Miami 2, Columbus 1
New York 2, CF Montréal 2, tie
Nashville 2, Toronto FC 1
Cincinnati 4, Philadelphia 3
Los Angeles FC 1, Austin FC 1, tie
FC Dallas 5, Minnesota 3
Seattle 2, Houston 2, tie
Real Salt Lake 4, Sporting Kansas City 3
Colorado 3, St Louis City 0
LA Galaxy 2, New York City FC 0
Portland 2, San Jose 1

Saturday’s games

New England at Cincinnati
Sporting Kansas City at Columbus
Houston at D.C. United
Toronto FC at New York
Chicago at Orlando City
Charlotte FC at Philadelphia
Austin FC at Minnesota
New York City FC at Nashville
Atlanta at St Louis City
CF Montréal at Colorado
LA Galaxy at Real Salt Lake
San Jose at Los Angeles FC
Vancouver at Portland
FC Dallas at Seattle

Friday, June 28
Orlando City at New York City FC

Saturday, June 29

St Louis City at Vancouver
Toronto FC at Atlanta
Philadelphia at CF Montréal
Columbus at New England
D.C. United at New York
Cincinnati at FC Dallas
Charlotte FC at Houston
Austin FC at Sporting Kansas City
Miami at Nashville
Colorado at Los Angeles FC
Minnesota at Portland
LA Galaxy at San Jose
Chicago at Seattle

NWSL						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Kansas City	8	0	5	29	33	19
Orlando	8	0	5	29	21	11
Washington	9	3	1	28	27	17
Gotham FC	8	2	3	27	16	9
Portland	7	4	2	23	25	16
Chicago	5	6	2	17	18	19
North Carolina	5	7	1	16	13	15
Louisville	3	4	6	15	19	17
Angel City	4	6	3	15	15	20
San Diego	3	5	14	12	13	
Houston	3	6	4	13	11	20
Bay FC	4	9	0	12	17	25
Seattle	2	9	2	8	13	25
Utah Royals FC	2	10	1	7	7	21

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Wednesday’s games

Gotham FC 2, San Diego 1
Angel City 3, Louisville 2

Friday’s game

Utah Royals FC at Orlando

Saturday’s games

San Diego at Houston
Angel City at Bay FC

Sunday’s games

Washington at Gotham FC
Kansas City at Portland
Louisville at Seattle
Chicago at North Carolina



CHARLES KRUPA / AP

With NBA Finals MVP Jaylen Brown, right, already locked up long-term and Jayson Tatum, center, set to join him in the \$300 million club this summer, Boston is in good shape to keep its core together.

Celtics have short offseason to-do list

By KYLE HIGHTOWER
Associated Press

BOSTON — It took more than a decade, savvy front office and draft moves, and some free agency luck for the Celtics to ultimately build the roster that brought an end to their 16-year championship drought.

But with NBA Finals MVP Jaylen Brown already locked up long-term and fellow All-Star Jayson Tatum set to join him in the \$300 million club this summer, Boston doesn’t have nearly as much work to do this offseason to keep together a core looking to become the first team since the 2018 Golden State Warriors to repeat as champions.

In the euphoria of locking up the franchise’s record-breaking 18th championship, Celtics majority owner Wyc Grousbeck gave president of basketball operations Brad Stevens a shoutout for finishing a process that began when Stevens was originally hired as Boston’s coach in 2013.

“We all watched the team the last few years. Great teams, but not quite there,” Grousbeck said. “And Brad was brilliant. We knew we needed to make changes ... and he got it done.”

Moving away from longtime executive Danny Ainge — the architect of Boston’s 2008 championship Big 3 of Paul Pierce, Kevin Garnett and Ray Allen — in favor of the 44-year-old Stevens was bold. Now, just three years after being pulled off the sideline, Stevens has made good on the belief ownership had in him.

He did it by taking the war chest of draft picks Ainge left him and borrowing from the aggressiveness his predecessor was known for to immediately go to work.

It started coyly with a February 2022 trade deadline acquisition of Derrick White, a young defensive-minded reserve with San Antonio.

Then, following the loss to the Warriors in the Finals, he steered the team through the suspension and ultimate departure of coach Ime Udoka.

Facing a franchise-altering moment, Stevens leaned on his gut, elevating back bench assistant Joe Mazzulla to the top job.

Then, after a conference finals loss to Miami last season, he did what was originally unthinkable by trading veteran leader Marcus Smart and reigning NBA Sixth Man of the Year Malcolm Brogdon in separate deals that brought in 7-footer Kristaps Porzingis and defensive stalwart Jrue Holiday.

The pair turned out to be the missing links for a team that, including the playoffs, finished 80-21 this season, placing it second in team history behind only the Celtics’ 1985-86 championship team that finished 82-18.

It also marks the first time in seven seasons the team with the best record during the regular season went on to win the title.

Most importantly, Boston is set up to keep the current core intact. Brown is already locked up through 2029. Tatum is eligible to sign a five-year supermax extension this summer that will be worth a record \$315 million and run through 2031. White can ink a four-year deal worth about \$125 million this offseason.

The remaining returning starters, Holiday and Porzingis, have already been extended through 2028 and 2026, respectively.

Brown said it’s left everyone poised to defend their title next season and beyond.

“I think we have an opportunity. I think we definitely have a window,” he said. “We take it one day at a time. We definitely have to make sure we stay healthy. But, we’ll enjoy the summer, enjoy the moment, and then we get right back to it next year.”

NFL/BASKETBALL

Notable RBs often struggle after leaving original team

By STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

Saquon Barkley’s move from one NFC East team to another gives Philadelphia Eagles coach Nick Sirianni the opportunity to deliver a stinging response whenever a rival fan shouts “Go Giants” at him. “I typically let it go,” Sirianni said. “But if the guy gets me good enough, I usually say, ‘You know, I got your best player.’”

Barkley was one of several notable running backs to switch teams for the first time during the offseason. The list includes Washington’s Austin Ekeler (formerly with the Los Angeles Chargers), Baltimore’s Derrick Henry (Tennessee), Green Bay’s Josh Jacobs (Las Vegas), Minnesota’s Aaron Jones (Green Bay), Houston’s Joe Mixon (Cincinnati) and Tennessee’s Tony Pollard (Dallas). All but Ekeler made a Pro Bowl with their original teams.

“It’s like a fresh start,” said Barkley, who spent six seasons in New York. “I feel like a rookie again.” Recent history suggests Barkley and the other running backs who switched teams could struggle to match the production they had with their original franchises.

According to Sportradar, only three players have rushed for at least 1,200 yards with multiple teams since 2010: LeSean McCoy (Philadelphia and Buffalo), DeMarco Murray (Dallas and Tennessee) and Christian McCaffrey (Carolina and San Francisco). Barkley, Henry, Jacobs and Mixon have a chance of adding their names to the list.

That’s a pretty steep drop, considering 14 different players rushed for 1,200 yards for a second franchise from 2000-09.

“A lot of it is just nowadays running backs aren’t valued as high,” said McCoy, who now co-hosts “Speak,” a sports talk show on FS1. “Around that time (the early 2000s), they emphasized getting the ball to the running back — they



NICK WASS/AP

New Baltimore Ravens running back Derrick Henry works out at a practice June 11 in Owings Mills, Md. Henry was an All-Pro with the Tennessee Titans, where he spent the first eight seasons of his career.

emphasized needing just one. Now if you’re not that top-top guy, you’re splitting carries.”

McCaffrey joined an exclusive fraternity last season by becoming just the fourth running back ever to earn first-team All-Pro honors with multiple teams. The others are Cookie Gilchrist, Eric Dickerson and Jerome Bettis.

Henry and Jacobs will try to join that club. Henry earned All-Pro honors with Tennessee in 2020 and Jacobs did the same with Las Vegas two years later.

For Henry, this represents a chance to show he still has plenty left to give after leading the NFL in carries four of the last five seasons.

“I think it’s taking care of your body, doing the things you need to do to get your body prepared, year in and year out, week in and week out and every single day, making sure that you’re at your best, can perform at your best (and) creating good habits with eating healthy,” Henry said during his introductory news conference with the Ravens.

“As you get into the league, do more research (on) guys who played a long time. Be a sponge to guys at the running back position or anywhere else and see what they’ve done to try and implement that into your life, as well. That’s all I try to do. I feel great.”

Henry, 30, is a throwback to an era when teams ran the ball more often and had one primary running back. He had 2,030 carries during eight seasons at Tennessee.

Most of today’s top ball carriers don’t stay with their original teams nearly that long. For instance, one of Henry’s replacements in Tennessee is Pollard, a 27-year-old with only 762 career carries since he was splitting time with Ezekiel Elliott for much of his Dallas tenure.

Some of these running backs benefit from a new chapter. McCoy cited Jacobs and Barkley specifically as players who could thrive in their new situations because of the talent they’ll have around them.



CHRIS SZAGOLA/AP

Philadelphia Eagles running back Saquon Barkley turns upfield during practice at minicamp on June 4. Barkley left the New York Giants after six seasons to sign with the Eagles.

“All the pressure and workload won’t be on Josh,” McCoy said. “Look at Saquon. Now he goes to a team that’s super productive — especially on offense. ... You won’t have to do everything for them to win, where in New York, he had to do everything.”

Jacobs, 26, believes coming to Green Bay will help him bounce back from a disappointing 2023 campaign. After rushing for an NFL-leading 1,653 yards and gaining 4.9 yards per carry in 2022, Jacobs ran for 805 yards last season.

“It was just so much uncertainty,” Jacobs said of his time in Las Vegas. “We were going through a lot of coaches, having certain things happen as a team, I just felt like it was like an emotional rollercoaster. So to be somewhere and be stable and be at a place where you feel like you’re wanted and

things like that, I think it’s huge. It definitely brings that joy back to the game.”

McCoy has some advice for them based on his own experience.

“Don’t let your past hurt your future,” McCoy said. “The new team they’re on, they traded for you. They signed you. Don’t let all the baggage from the old team — you’re mad because they didn’t sign you, mad because you’re at a new place, mad because you moved your family — that stuff can (tick) you off, but don’t let that hurt what you’ve got now.”

“When a player goes to a new team, that new team wants him and will do whatever you take to make you comfortable. So I’d tell all those guys, when you go there, be happy, because they wanted you.”

Brink tears ACL, will miss WNBA season, Olympics 3x3

Associated Press

UNCASVILLE, Conn. — Los Angeles rookie Cameron Brink tore the ACL in her left knee, the Sparks announced Wednesday.

The rookie forward had to be helped off the court after suffering the injury in the first quarter of the Sparks’ 79-70 loss to Connecticut on Tuesday night.

Once over to the sideline, the No. 2 pick in the draft hobbled toward the locker room, but was forced to stop as a result of the pain. A pair of Sparks personnel lifted Brink off her feet and carried her to the locker room.



Brink

— I’m not defined by basketball, but it is something that I love deeply and I will work every day to get back to it. It’s not goodbye basketball it’s just a see you later. I’m always so thankful

“You never think it will happen to you. And despite all the hard work sometimes it does. This is hard to fathom but I know it will only make me stronger,” Brink wrote in a post to Instagram. “I will not be derailed and I will continue to love this life — I’m not defined by basketball, but it is something that I love deeply and I will work every day to get back to it. It’s not goodbye basketball it’s just a see you later. I’m always so thankful

for your thoughts and prayers.”

The 22-year-old Brink came into the game averaging 8.1 points, 5.7 rebounds and 2.5 blocks in her first season for Los Angeles (4-11). She’s tied with A’ja Wilson for the second-most blocks in the WNBA.

Brink is on the U.S. 3x3 team for the Paris Olympics along with Rhyné Howard, Cierra Burdick and Hailey Van Lith. A replacement will have to be named for her.

Brink, Burdick and Van Lith led the United States to a gold medal at the 2023 FIBA World Cup.

“Our thoughts are with Cameron as we wish her a speedy recovery. As a result of Cam’s injury, USA Basketball will begin the process of selecting an athlete to join the 2024 USA 3x3 Women’s National Team,” USA Basketball said in a statement. “We hope to see Cam back on the court and representing the red, white and blue soon.”

It’s the second consecutive Olympics where the U.S. team will have to replace one of its original players. Katie Lou Samuelson missed the 2021 Tokyo Games after she caught COVID right before the Olympics.

CWS/SOCCER



Tennessee's Christian Moore slides into home in the second inning of a College World Series game against Florida State on Wednesday.

Vols first No. 1 since 2009 to reach finals

By ERIC OLSON
Associated Press
OMAHA, Neb. — Tennessee fell flat in its two previous College World Series appearances and in between there was the crushing loss in NCAA super regionals as the No. 1 national seed.

All that has led to this year's Volunteers putting themselves in position to play for the program's first national title beginning Saturday.

Tennessee is heading to the CWS finals for the first time in the modern era after it knocked out Florida State with a 7-2 victory on Wednesday to win its bracket.

Zander Sechrist held the Seminoles (49-17) scoreless for six innings and the Volunteers struck for four early runs to become the first No. 1 national seed since 2009 to advance to the best-of-three finals.

"We always say before something happens, something happens," coach Tony Vitello said. "There's been a lot of build-up into the successes we've had this year and the failures, too, to be honest with you. And it's been fun to be a part of."

Tennessee's win assured an all-SEC finals for the second straight year and third time in four. The Volunteers (58-12) will play Texas A&M (52-13).

The Southeastern Conference has had at least one team in the finals 15 of the last 16 years. Seven different SEC teams have made it since 2009. The fact that Tennessee hadn't been among them had become more frustrating on Rocky Top in recent years. The Vols' 209 victories and 559 home runs since the start of the 2021 season are the most of any Division I program, after all.

Tennessee made it to a one-game final in its first CWS appearance in 1951, losing 3-2 to Oklahoma. In those days, there were no preliminary rounds in the NCAA Tournament; teams were selected for the CWS based on regular-season performance.

The Vols broke through under

Vitello after winning a combined one of five games in trips to Omaha in 2021 and 2023. In 2022, they lost a three-game super regional to Notre Dame team at home.

"That's a good team in the other dugout, clearly," said second-year FSU coach Link Jarrett, who coached the Notre Dame team that knocked out the Vols two years ago. "Well-constructed, variety of arms, physical offensively, dynamic, athletic. They made some exceptional plays. You could basically go around the diamond and make note of the exceptional plays they made."

FSU freshman John Abraham (5-2) was making his first start since April 9 and third of the season. He struggled with his control and faced only five batters before getting pulled with one out.

Tennessee was up 4-0 when Burke singled in a run in the second, and he finished the scoring in the ninth when he hit his 20th home run of the season. That made the Vols the first team in Division I history to have five players with at least 20 homers. They have a nation-leading 178, nine behind the Division I record set by LSU in 1997.

In a CWS marked by jaw-dropping defensive plays, Tennessee's Kavares Tears made one equal to teammate Hunter Ensley's against North Carolina on Sunday.

Tears chased down Marco Dinges' deep drive to right center to end the first inning, catching the ball while crashing into the wall, his sunglasses and hat flying off.

Tears, the Vols' regular right fielder, made his first start in center since April 23 because Ensley suffered a lower-body injury when he caught Anthony Donofrio's deep fly to center just before he ran into the wall. Ensley was the designated hitter against the Seminoles and went 1 for 4.

"K.T.'s catch set the tone, especially in the first inning," Sechrist said. "I know our offense scored in the top of the first, but he set the tone right there."

Copa is last big challenge before US hosts '26 Cup

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press
NEW YORK — In a region that provides few tests, the United States views the Copa America as its last significant challenge ahead of the 2026 World Cup.

"A World Cup on home soil is the biggest thing that you know we'll probably do in our career," star attacker Christian Pulisic said. "It's a special time for this sport in America."

Eighteen players from the 2022 World Cup roster were in training camp ahead of the tournament. The U.S. opens against Bolivia on Sunday at Arlington, Texas, plays Panama four days later at Atlanta and closes the group stage vs. Uruguay on July 1 at Kansas City, Mo.

The U.S. could meet Brazil in the quarterfinals. But players and staff view this as another step toward June 12, 2026, when the Americans play their World Cup opener at Inglewood, Calif.

"Copa America is essential to the growth of this group, and I believe this is a very important tournament for us as a team. This is the last major tournament before the World Cup. We'll have Gold Cup, but the caliber of teams does not match Copa America," coach Gregg Berhalter said. "It is a building block in which to go into the World Cup confident."

Berhalter was let go when his contract expired at the end of 2022 in the messy fallout of a feud with the Reyna family, then brought back and returned behind the bench last September. His core is the same as during the 2022 World Cup, where the U.S. lost to the Netherlands 3-1 in the round of 16.

Pulisic, 25, comes into the tournament following his best season. He scored 12 Serie A goals in his first season with AC Milan plus one in the Champions League and two in the Europa League. His equalizer gave the Americans a 1-1 draw against Brazil on Tuesday night in their last pre-tournament warmup, his 29th international goal in 68 appearances.

"He's had some unfortunate injuries along his path and he's been at some places where maybe he hasn't gotten the best look and wasn't really the number one option, but I think everyone in this country knows how talented he is," said American forward Haji Wright, Pulisic's teammate now and at the 2015 Under-17 World Cup. "He's really finding his goal-scoring form. He's able to affect the game by actually scoring and contributing in front of the goal. And that's something he always used to do when we were children."



U.S. forward Christian Pulisic looks to control an overhead pass against Brazil during a friendly soccer match on June 12. The Americans are playing in the Copa America starting on Sunday.

"Copa America is essential to the growth of this group, and I believe this is a very important tournament for us as a team."

Greg Berhalter
US men's coach

Tyler Adams, the U.S. World Cup captain and another member of that 2015 team, is regaining fitness following a frustrating 15 months. A 25-year-old defensive midfielder, Adams played just one club match from March 2023 until this past March 13 because of a torn right hamstring that needed surgery. After returning to play two matches for Bournemouth in March, the midfielder was limited by back spasms to one game over the rest of the season, an 11-minute appearance on May 11. He entered

the June 12 friendly against Brazil in the 76th minute.

Right back Sergiño Dest will miss the tournament because of a torn ACL, opening the spot for 21-year-old Joe Scally. Chris Richards appears to have gained a starting spot in central defense alongside Tim Ream on a back line that has Antonee Robinson on the left.

Goalkeeper Matt Turner is a cause for concern. He lost the starting job at Nottingham Forest this season after poor play and was at fault for some of the goals in the 5-1 loss to Colombia and this week's game against Brazil.

"He's getting his rhythm. He's going to be fine come tournament time," Berhalter said. "You can see that he didn't have a regular slate of games and it's going to take him a little bit to get into it."

This will be the fifth Copa America appearance for the U.S., which was eliminated in the group stage in 1993 and 2007, and finished fourth in 1995 and 2016.

"What you're seeing on the pitch is now we're clicking even more than ever," midfielder Brenden Aaronson said, "and I think it's just going to continue to get better and better."

MLB

Pirates’ pitching staff growing up fast

By Will Graves
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Derek Shelton emerged from the dugout at sweltering PNC Park and trotted toward the mound to take the ball from Mitch Keller early in the eighth inning Wednesday.

A smattering of boos greeted the move after Keller had spent most of the afternoon dominating the Reds with remarkable efficiency.

Keller, however, didn’t say a word after issuing a leadoff walk in a scoreless game. Sure, he’d thrown 83 pitches over seven-plus innings, but with temperatures in the mid-90s, Keller admitted it felt more as if he’d tossed 150.

So he didn’t plead his case. There was no need anyway. Keller knows as well as anyone what’s lurking at the back end of a bullpen that’s becoming dominant. Colin Holderman retired the next three batters to get out of the eighth unscathed.

Bryan Reynolds’ solo shot in the bottom of the eighth gave the Pirates the lead. David Bednar worked a perfect ninth for his 16th save as Pittsburgh took two of three from the Reds in a series that offered a glimpse of what its staff could become as spring turns to summer.

Electrifying rookie Paul Skenes and three relievers held the Reds to one run in a victory Monday. Bailey Falter pitched seven solid innings in a losing effort Tuesday. Keller, Holderman and Bednar limited the Reds to four baserunners, none of whom made it to third.

“I don’t know if we’ve pitched better than we did in this series,” Shelton said.

It’s becoming a bit of a habit. The shutout was the fourth tossed by the Pirates in June. They’ve allowed four runs or fewer in 12 of their 17 games this month, buoyed



PHOTOS BY GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

Mitch Keller has established himself in the Pittsburgh Pirates’ rotation with an 8-4 record this year to go alongside a 3.11 ERA and 85 strikeouts in 15 starts, continuing to build off his All-Star nod last season.

by not just a rotation that boasts Skenes, Keller and Jared Jones but a bullpen that has started to figure things out after a sluggish start.

Not bad considering the Pirates are essentially short a starter at the moment with Marco Gonzales, Martin Perez and Quinn Priester all on the injured list at the moment.

“Everyone’s vibing and gelling together,” Keller said. “Everyone’s helping each other out which is really cool to see. Picking up little tidbits from someone here and there. It’s really cool.”

While Skenes is 4-0 with a 2.29 ERA and 53 strikeouts in 39½ in-

nings during his seven starts — starts that are increasingly feeling like events in a city where the Pirates have largely been an afterthought for the past half-decade — he’s hardly doing it alone.

Keller, who signed a \$77 million contract extension in February after being an All-Star last season, is 6-1 with a 1.53 ERA since May 1. Falter’s ERA is 3.74, a full run below his career average coming in. Bednar, slowed by a lat injury that forced him to miss basically all of spring training, has converted 10 saves since the start of May. Holderman has allowed just two runs in 26 appearances in a setup role.

Their emergence has helped the Pirates stay in the mix of an underwhelming NL Central despite an offense that is struggling to produce consistently. Pittsburgh is in the bottom third in the majors in most major offensive categories, including runs (22nd), homers (23rd) and OPS (28th).

“Yeah man, (the pitching is helping) us out a lot, especially today,” Reynolds said. “Mitch puts up a zero all the way to the eighth and just hands it off. Helps the offense a little bit. Takes a little pressure off.”

It helps to have a staff that seems to have taken ego out of the equation. There is a free exchange of ideas — from the starters to the relievers — on everything from sequencing to pitch grips to tips on how to rest and recover.

Keller makes it a point to tell Bednar regularly that he likes Bednar’s splitter to help give him confidence. Holderman has been

experimenting with the delivery of his sinker, willing to give just about anything a shot.

“There’s a lot of smart guys in this room,” Holderman said.

Guys who are regularly giving opponents plenty to think about. Cincinnati manager David Bell watched emerging Reds ace Hunter Greene shut down the Pirates over 6½ masterful innings, only to be outdueled by Keller.

“Keller I think executed every single pitch he threw today,” Bell said. “Today was a tough day with Keller, Holderman and Bednar, they executed their pitches and they have really great stuff to go with it.”

Pittsburgh plans to rely on the staff heavily as it tries to gain traction to seriously contend for a postseason spot for the first time since the club won 98 games in 2015.

This group is not that group that featured proven veterans such as A.J. Burnett and J.A. Happ to go with a young Gerrit Cole. The current Pirates are still under .500 as July 4 approaches.

Still, there is an optimism in the clubhouse that’s been missing for a while. It’s creeping back in with impressive outings from the guys in charge of throwing the ball.

“We’ve got a lot of dudes in here with good stuff,” Holderman said. “And the further we get in the season with some guys that don’t have that much experience in the big leagues, they’re only going to get better and I think our pitching is going to last pretty deep into the season.”

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	51	25	.671	—
Baltimore	48	25	.658	1½
Boston	40	35	.533	10½
Tampa Bay	35	39	.473	15
Toronto	35	39	.473	15
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	45	26	.634	—
Minnesota	41	33	.554	5½
Kansas City	41	34	.547	6
Detroit	34	40	.459	12½
Chicago	20	55	.267	27
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	44	32	.579	—
Houston	34	40	.459	9
Texas	34	40	.459	9
Los Angeles	29	45	.392	14
Oakland	28	48	.368	16
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	49	25	.662	—
Atlanta	41	31	.569	7
Washington	36	37	.493	12½
New York	35	38	.479	13½
Miami	25	49	.338	24
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	44	30	.595	—
St. Louis	36	37	.493	7½
Pittsburgh	36	38	.486	8
Chicago	36	39	.480	8½
Cincinnati	35	39	.473	9
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	46	30	.605	—
San Diego	38	40	.487	9
Arizona	36	38	.486	9
San Francisco	36	39	.480	9½
Colorado	26	48	.351	19
Wednesday's games				
Atlanta 7, Detroit 0 Cleveland 8, Seattle 0 Boston 7, Toronto 3 Houston 4, Chicago White Sox 1 Texas 5, N.Y. Mets 3 Baltimore 7, N.Y. Yankees 6, 10 innings Tampa Bay 3, Minnesota 2, 10 innings Milwaukee 2, L.A. Angels 0 Oakland 5, Kansas City 1 Pittsburgh 1, Cincinnati 0 Miami 4, St. Louis 3 San Diego 5, Philadelphia 2 Chicago Cubs 6, San Francisco 5 Washington 3, Arizona 1 Colorado 7, L.A. Dodgers 6				
Thursday's games				
Arizona at Washington Seattle at Cleveland Tampa Bay at Minnesota Houston at Chicago White Sox L.A. Dodgers at Colorado Kansas City at Oakland Baltimore at N.Y. Yankees San Francisco at St. Louis Milwaukee at San Diego				
Friday's games				
N.Y. Mets (Quintana 2-5) at Chicago Cubs (Imanaga 7-1) Arizona (Montgomery 5-4) at Philadelphia (Walker 3-2) Chicago White Sox (Fedde 5-1) at Detroit (Flaherty 4-4) Tampa Bay (Pepiot 4-4) at Pittsburgh (TBD) Atlanta (Sale 9-2) at N.Y. Yankees (Rodón 9-3) Boston (Crawford 3-6) at Cincinnati (Abbott 5-6) Seattle (Kirby 6-5) at Miami (Rogers 1-8) Toronto (TBD) at Cleveland (Carrasco 2-6) Kansas City (TBD) at Texas (Eovaldi 3-3) Baltimore (Rodriguez 8-2) at Houston (TBD) Washington (Herz 1-1) at Colorado (Hudson 2-9) Minnesota (Ober 6-4) at Oakland (Estes 2-2) Milwaukee (Rea 6-2) at San Diego (Cease 6-6) L.A. Angels (Sandoval 2-8) at L.A. Dodgers (TBD)				
This day in baseball				
June 21				
1964 — Jim Bunning of the Philadelphia Phillies pitches a perfect game against the New York Mets. It gives Bunning a no-hitter in each league, and the Phillies' Gus Triandos becomes the first catcher to handle no-hitters in both leagues. 2022 — Los Angeles Angels designated hitter Shohei Ohtani has a career high 8 RBI in an 11-inning 12-11 loss to the Kansas City Royals in Anaheim, Calif.				



Rookie phenom Paul Skenes has lived up to the hype so far, posting a 2.29 ERA with 53 strikeouts in seven starts since his call-up last month.

STANLEY CUP FINAL



Florida Panthers left wing Matthew Tkachuk reacts after scoring a goal against Edmonton Oilers goaltender Stuart Skinner during the second period of Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Finals on Tuesday in Sunrise, Fla.

Panthers not feeling pressure after losses

BY TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Florida coach Paul Maurice sat behind a microphone again on Wednesday, giving his daily news conference even though basically nothing new had happened in the 13 hours between then and the last time he spoke to reporters.

He took a bunch of questions. He also had one to ask.

“How can I be the only person in a decent mood here today?” Maurice asked, sort of rhetorically, sort of seriously.

Yes, the Panthers have lost their last two games and gotten embarrassed in one of them. Yes, they’ve wasted two chances to win the Stanley Cup. Yes, a 3-0 lead in the title series against the Edmonton Oilers is down to 3-2, after the Panthers lost Game 5 on home ice 5-3 on Tuesday night. Yes, Game 6 is in Edmonton on Friday night and, yes, Oilers star Connor McDavid just had back-to-back games the likes of which have never been seen in the Cup final before.

No, that doesn’t mean the Panthers are worried about wilting under pressure.

“You’re going to think I’m lying to you,” Maurice said. “I’m more comfortable. I understand the feeling of 3-2 because most series are like that; 3-0 is more of an aberration, isn’t it? Pressure. I think we think about these things possibly differently and I’m not

Scoreboard

Stanley Cup Final
(Best-of-seven; x-if necessary)
Florida 3, Edmonton 2

Florida 3, Edmonton 0
Florida 4, Edmonton 1
Florida 4, Edmonton 3
Edmonton 8, Florida 1
Edmonton 5, Florida 3

Friday: at Edmonton, **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.**
Saturday CET; 9 a.m. Saturday JKT
x-Monday: at Florida, **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m.**
Tuesday CET; 9 a.m. Tuesday JKT

sure I would agree with the assessment that the pressure has shifted so heavily to us.”

Forget the on-ice matters for a moment. Just about every historical stat that Maurice can show his team before it boarded another flight to Edmonton on Thursday says the trends over time show that Florida should be liking its chances:

- The Panthers won Game 1. Game 1 winners win the Cup 76% of the time.
- They led the series 2-0. Teams in that situation win the Cup at a 91% rate.
- They led the series 3-0. The Cup rate there: 96%.
- They led 3-1. Cup rate in that situation: 97%.
- They lead 3-2. Cup rate in that situation: 81%.

After getting outscored 13-1 from late in Game 3 to basically midway through Game 5, after losing 8-1 in their last trip to Edmonton and falling at home on Tuesday night, the Panthers still

lead the series. Nobody, if offered the chance to be in this spot on the first day of camp back in the fall, would have declined.

“It’s still 3-2,” Maurice said.

Sure, Edmonton has done what it must do. It has fended off elimination twice. It has sent the series back to Alberta and will have a chance in front of its own rowdy, delirious, Cup-starved fans to try to force the ultimate — a Game 7 — in Florida that would be played Monday night. The Panthers are tipping their caps, yet they still believe they can make the change they need to finish this thing off.

“I think we were gripping the sticks a little tight,” Panthers forward Sam Bennett acknowledged after Game 5. “We wanted it a little too bad tonight. ... We’ve just got to win one game. It’s as simple as that.”

There are most certainly things for the Panthers to clean up. Nobody was pleased with how, on the heels of losing 8-1, they got into a 3-0 hole to start things in Game 5. They have been outscored on their own power plays 2-1, which is inexcusable on a number of levels.

There’s also things to like. That’s what Maurice is preaching now, with only one or two games left in the season.

“Our 5-on-5 game was as good last night as it’s been all series,” Maurice said. “That gets you out of bed and gets you ready for Game 6.”

Oilers’ other Connor thriving in resurgence

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — There is no doubt Connor McDavid is the biggest reason the Edmonton Oilers have made it a series in the Stanley Cup Final against the Florida Panthers.

Their other Connor has played a crucial role in the comeback bid, too.

Connor Brown set up the early short-handed goal that sparked the team in Game 4 on the way to an 8-1 rout that avoided a sweep, then scored one in Game 5 to send the series back across North America. Maligned for his lack of production in his first season with Edmonton, Brown finally looks like himself 20 months after tearing the ACL in his left knee, and that could not be coming at a better time for the Oilers.

“It’s so nice to see a guy stick with it after going through so much adversity,” coach Kris Knoblauch said Wednesday. “It just took him a while to build his game. This should be expected because of his injury, and he just continually got better throughout the season. ... His play right now has been exceptional.”

Brown injured his knee Oct. 17, 2022, in just his fourth game with the Washington Capitals, who at the time were counting on him to bring some of the speed and scoring he showed throughout his first seven NHL seasons with Toronto and Ottawa. Instead, he leaned on short-time teammates John Carlson and Carl Hagelin and team staff to handle the mental aspect of such a traumatic injury.

“Obviously, it wasn’t an easy year for me,” Brown said on Cup final media day. “I come in, I’m in a situation where I don’t really

know anyone, I’m just getting my feet wet and get injured. It was a big set of adversity for me, but it all kind of led me here.”

Brown, who turned 30 in January, signed an incentive-heavy contract with the Oilers that paid him the league-minimum \$775,000 with \$3,225,000 in performance bonuses. One of the reasons fans were critical of Brown putting up just 12 points in 71 games is that extra money counts against the team’s salary cap expenditures next season.

He had four points through three rounds before making a major impact in the final.

“I think a lot of people lost faith, but he’s an unbelievable player,” said top-line winger Zach Hyman, who overlapped with Brown for parts of four seasons with the Maple Leafs from 2016-19. “I played with him for a long time, so I knew how good he can be. He’s showing it every night. At the highest stage, he’s one of the best players. Credit to him.”

Brown, a decade removed from starring in junior as a teammate of McDavid’s and playing for Knoblauch with the Ontario Hockey League’s Erie Otters, knew he was not fully healthy at the start of this season and struggled to handle that limitation. Slowly, he felt the jump in his legs come back, feeding the speed he’s now unleashing on the Panthers.

With the dark days of the injury and rehab behind him, Brown “just started to just play again,” and suddenly hockey became fun again.

“Over the last bunch of months, it just doesn’t feel like work,” Brown said. “I’m excited to come to the rink day in, day out, especially with this group. It’s good to be back.”



Edmonton Oilers right wing Connor Brown (28) controls the puck as Florida Panthers center Anton Lundell (15) defends during the first period of Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Finals on Tuesday in Sunrise, Fla.

OLYMPICS

King: Parris has been nearly unstoppable since recovering from herniated disc in neck

FROM PAGE 48

gold just shows me that I can go out there and get gold this year.”

The biggest leap for Parris came between his final two years of college. He went 19-6 in 2022 after missing much of the first semester with a herniated disc in his neck. He said wrestling while less than fully healthy was worth it because the Wolverines won the Big Ten championship.

Once healthy, Parris was nearly unstoppable and matched more of Steveson’s achievements. He went undefeated, won a national title and took the Dan Hodge Trophy for the nation’s best wrestler.

USA men’s freestyle wrestling coach Bill Zadick said he noticed significant improvement in Parris between those final two college seasons, and it continued into international competition. Steveson won their weight class at the Pan-American Games in 2021; Parris did the same in 2023 and 2024.

“A lot of it’s confidence, just understanding when you get to new levels, you don’t know what you don’t know,” Zadick said. “And sometimes, your discovery is that you know more than you thought you did before. You’re more prepared or more capable of rising

to that occasion. And I think he’s discovered that all along the way.”

Parris’ growth curve continued this month when he won a ranking event in Hungary with some of the world’s best. He pinned Kazakhstan’s Yusup Batirmurzaev in the final. Batirmurzaev had defeated Tokyo silver medalist Geno Petriashvili of Georgia in the semifinals.

“It was just an opportunity for me to kind of tune myself up two months out from Paris and just kind of figure it out and figure out the stuff that I wanted to work on,” Parris said. “And, you know, luckily for me, it was a really great confidence boost for me and helps me bring a lot of momentum to Paris and know that I’m training and doing the right things.”

Zadick said Parris’ work ethic, smarts and strength make him a legitimate contender for gold.

“When he’s faced great resistance and great odds, he makes adjustments and learns and gets better each time,” Zadick said. “And that’s why he’s been able to make progress. And he’s continued that progress. It, I think, doesn’t matter who the opponents are. He’s focused on maximizing his own opportunity, his own potential.”

“When he’s faced great resistance and great odds, he makes adjustments and learns and gets better each time.”

Bill Zadick

U.S. men’s freestyle wrestling coach



AIDAN CONRAD / AP

Mason Parris celebrates his victory in the 125-kilogram final at the U.S. Olympic wrestling trials in State College, Pa., on April 20.

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OLYMPICS

Knighton able to run at US trials following contamination case

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — Sprinter Erriyon Knighton tested positive for a banned substance that an arbitration panel determined came from contaminated meat, a decision that keeps the 200-meter specialist eligible to run at the upcoming U.S. Olympic trials.

The 20-year-old from Florida, who holds the under-18 and under-20 records in the 200 meters, tested positive for the performance enhancer trenbolone during an out-of-competition test in March, according to the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, which revealed details of the case Wednesday.

Though the arbitration panel cleared Knighton to run in the 200, starting June 27, the decision can be appealed by either the Athletics Integrity Unit, which oversees doping in track and field, or the World Anti-Doping Agency.

WADA spokesman James Fitzgerald said “as it always does, WADA will review this case and reserves the right to take an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, as appropriate.”

“We did what the rules require us to do in all positive cases,” USADA CEO Travis Tygart said. “We can take comfort that justice was served and transparency as required by the rules was achieved.”

Tygart said the contaminated meat came from oxtail at a bakery in central Florida. A USADA investigation, including obtaining the meat and testing it, along with interviews with the manager of

the bakery, Knighton, his girlfriend and his mother, backed up the sprinter’s contamination claim.

When Knighton qualified for the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, he became the youngest male since Jim Ryun in 1964 to make the U.S. Olympic team. He finished fourth in the 200 behind Andre De Grasse, Kenny Bednarek and Noah Lyles. Knighton finished second behind Lyles at last year’s world championships.

Contamination cases such as Knighton’s aren’t unheard of, though they have come under closer scrutiny of late in the wake of a case involving 23 Chinese swimmers whose positive tests for a banned heart medication were deemed to have come because of contamination.

WADA accepted the explanation from Chinese authorities and did not pursue that case, which became public after reporting by The New York Times and the German broadcaster ARD. That decision has been roundly criticized by USADA and others because the initial positives were not made public.

Part of WADA’s argument has been to point out contamination cases that originated in the United States — which have involved everything from meat to dog medicine — have not always resulted in sanctions. USADA has insisted it has followed the rulebook in all those cases, including making public any violation, even if it did not result in a penalty.



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

Sprinter Erriyon Knighton tested positive for a banned substance an arbitration panel ruled came from contaminated meat, which kept the 200-meter specialist eligible to run at the Olympic trials.



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Caeleb Dressel swims during a men’s 50-meter freestyle preliminary heat Thursday at the U.S. Swimming Olympic Trials in Indianapolis. Dressell finished third in the 100-meter freestyle Wednesday night.

Dressel, Manuel settle for relay spots at swim trials

By PAUL NEWBERRY
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Coming back from lengthy layoffs, American swimming stars Caeleb Dressel and Simone Manuel were eager to claim their first individual events of the Paris Olympics.

Instead, they had to settle for supporting roles.

Dressel finished third in the men’s 100-meter freestyle at the U.S. Olympic trials on Wednesday night, while Manuel touched fourth in the women’s 100 free.

Only the top two will get to swim the events individually in Paris, but Dressel and Manuel will both be part of the 4x100 freestyle relays.

“I think Paris is going to be a blast,” said Manuel, who has endured a long road back after being diagnosed with overtraining syndrome ahead of the Tokyo Games. “It’s a different spot than I’m used to right now with only being a relay swimmer. But it’s my third Olympic team and that’s something that’s really hard to accomplish.”

Potential breakout star Kate Douglass claimed the victory and Torri Huske took the runner-up position, with Gretchen Walsh also finishing ahead of Manuel.

Dressel, the winner of five gold medals in Tokyo, won’t get a chance to defend his 100 freestyle title after reaching the wall behind Chris Guiliano and Jack Alexy.

“I’m trying to have fun; I am having fun,” Dressel told the crowd of 22,209 on the deck of the temporary pool inside Lucas Oil Stadium. “You don’t know how much it means to me, the love I’m getting from you. It’s been tough.”

Dressel walked away from swimming in the midst of the 2022 world championships, later revealing he needed an extended break to rediscover his love of the sport.

Dressel failed to even qualify for the 2023 worlds, but his times have improved significantly since last fall. He still has a shot to qualify individually in the 50 freestyle and 100 butterfly — two more events he won at the last Summer Games.

Manuel also has the 50-meter freestyle left on her plate.



Manuel

In perhaps the surest bet of the meet, Katie Ledecky claimed her third victory with another dominating performance in the 1,500 freestyle, though the time was a bit of a disappointment.

Seventeen-year-old Thomas Heilman won the men’s 200 butterfly, while Matt Fallon touched first in the 200 breaststroke. Both will be first-time Olympians.

Dressel was all smiles as he hugged the guys ahead of him, saying he was pleased to be on the relay that will set its sights on taking down the world record at the Olympics.

“That’s an unbelievably fast top four, top five — oh my gosh, the top six,” he said, looking at the times on the massive scoreboard above the pool. “That’s a great group of guys. It’s fast.”

Guiliano and Alexy were tied at the turn, but Guiliano got to the wall in 47.38 seconds to edge Alexy’s 47.47. The margin was even closer to third, with Dressel missing an individual spot by just six-hundredths of a second.

His time of 47.53 was about a half-second off his winning performance in Tokyo (47.02).

Hunter Armstrong finished fourth, with Ryan Held and Matt King also likely to be added to the Olympic team as relay swimmers.

Manuel was the first Black woman to capture an individual swimming gold when she tied for the top spot in the 100 freestyle at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.

She didn’t get a chance to defend her title in Tokyo, and she won’t swim the event in Paris either.

Still, Manuel was clearly moved just to be on a relay, breaking down in tears in front of the big crowd.

“It’s a miracle that I’m even able to stand up here and be able to race again,” she said. “The people close to me know the journey it took to get here. I’m really proud of myself and proud of Team USA.”

Douglass was fourth at the turn, but she powered to the finish for a winning time of 52.56. Huske finished at 52.93, while Walsh faded from the lead at the midway point to touch third in 53.13.

Manuel was next at 53.25, with fifth-place finisher Abbey Weitzeil (53.70) also likely headed to her third Olympics as a relay option.

SPORTS



‘Dudes with good stuff’
Pirates pitching staff taking pressure off developing offense » **MLB, Page 44**



Michigan's Mason Parris, top, attempts to turn Iowa's Tony Cassioppi during the semifinal round of the NCAA Wrestling Championships in Tulsa, Okla., on March 17, 2023.

IAN MAULE, TULSA WORLD/AP

The man who would be ‘King’

Parris hopes to live up to nickname, claim heavyweight wrestling gold at Paris Olympics

BY CLIFF BRUNT
Associated Press

Mason Parris has a golden opportunity to live up to his fabulously coincidental nickname. Parris said that, years ago, he was dubbed ‘King Parris,’ and it stuck. “My old club wrestling coach kind of started calling me that in high school,” the American freestyle wrestler said. “Just being a heavyweight wrestler, they associate

the biggest weight class with being the king. So whenever I see him, he always calls me that.” Parris could rule the 125-kilogram weight class at the Paris Olympics. He fully embraces the name. When he won the U.S. Olympic Trials, he was already prepared. He wore a hat with the words ‘Parris in Paris’ below the Olympic rings. Well before that, he had a shirt with a crown and ‘HWT King’ across the front on sale through his NIL deal with the Cliff

Keen Wrestling Club. The Lawrenceburg, Ind., native will try to make the most of his first visit to Paris. To be the king of heavyweights, the former Michigan star must successfully follow in the footsteps of American Gable Steveson, who won gold in Tokyo in their weight class. Parris lost to Minnesota’s Steveson 8-4 in the NCAA finals in 2021 but gave him a closer match than most. Steveson won the Olympic gold medal just months later. Steveson since has stepped away from

amateur wrestling and now is with the NFL’s Buffalo Bills. Parris said facing Steveson over the years has helped prepare him for this moment. “He’s definitely pushed me to get better,” Parris said. “I just have felt myself improving so much, especially since then. I just felt like I’ve become such, such a better wrestler, even since the last time that we wrestled. Seeing that he went out there and got

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