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TAIWAN DEFENSE MINISTRY/Reuters

A Taiwanese sailor aboard a Taiwan navy vessel looks toward a Chinese warship while navigating on waters off Taiwan's western coast.

Taiwan reacts to China drills

Jets scrambled, military on alert in response to surrounding exercise

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Taiwan scrambled jets and put military units on alert on Thursday in response to China's two-day military exercise surrounding the island, according to the Associated Press.

The Chinese drills, dubbed Joint Sword 2024A, include components from its army, navy, air force and rocket force, China's Eastern Theater Command said Thursday in a series of posts to the Weibo social media website.

The training includes sea and air combat patrols, battlefield control and "joint precision attack" drills, a post said.



TINGSHU WANG/Reuters

A large screen shows news footage Thursday in Beijing of a map of military drills conducted by China's army around Taiwan.

The exercise effectively surrounds Taiwan, according to imagery shared by the command on Weibo. The drills began at 7:45 a.m., according to the state-sponsored Xinhua News Agency.

"This is also a powerful punishment for the 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces seeking 'independence' and a serious warning to external forces for interference and provocation," command spokesman Col. Li Xi said in one of the social media posts.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense condemned the exercise Thursday afternoon and said Chi-

SEE REACTS ON PAGE 3

Audit faults EUCOM on Ukraine aid requests

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

American military officials in Europe didn't document the procedures they took to validate and approve Ukraine's requests for military assistance following Russia's 2022 invasion of the country, according to a new audit.

The findings by the Pentagon's Inspector General come as Ukraine struggles to hold off a lightning Russian offensive near Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city.

The audit was conducted from December 2022 through March of this year, and a report of it was released Tuesday. It focused specifically on aid provided through presidential drawdown authority, which allows for the quick delivery of military equipment and services from Pentagon stocks to foreign countries in response to emergencies.

Since the start of the war in February 2022, the Defense Department has announced nearly 60 presidential drawdowns for Ukraine totaling about \$30 billion.

U.S. European Command and affiliated commands and organizations on the Continent had controls in place to validate Ukraine's requests for equipment and training, the audit report said.

However, "a sense of urgency" to support Ukrainian troops meant they did not document their roles, procedures and processes, according to responses by the groups mentioned in the report.

"Officials did not ensure seamless operations," the IG said. "Documenting processes and procedures is critical due to the rate of rotation of personnel supporting the

SEE RECORD ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	Azores	..	..	\$4.744	..
Germany	\$3.993	\$4.535	\$4.894	\$4.198	Change in price	..	..	-2.8 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$4.839	\$5.110	\$4.839	Turkey	..	..	\$4.560	\$4.721*
U.K.	..	\$4.535	\$4.894	\$4.198	Change in price	..	..	-2.8 cents	No change

Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective May 24. The change in price is from May 17.

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	\$3.669	..	\$4.569	\$3.869
Japan	..	\$4.539	..	\$3.839	Change in price	-2.0 cents	..	-3.0 cents	-6.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.639	..	..	\$3.839	Guam	\$3.699**	\$4.239	\$4.599	..

*DieselEFD **Midgrade
Pacific prices for the week of May 24-30

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (May 24)	\$1.06	Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3768
British pound (May 24)	\$1.24	Britain (Pound)	1.2716
Japanese yen (May 24)	152.00	Canada (Dollar)	1.3684
South Korean won (May 24)	1331.00	China (Yuan)	7.1061
		Denmark (Krone)	6.8862
		Egypt (Pound)	47.1731
		Euro	0.9229
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8086
		Hungary (Forint)	357.33
		Israel (Shekel)	3.6763
		Japan (Yen)	157.10
		Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3070
		Norway (Krone)	10.6318
		Philippines (Peso)	58.18
		Poland (Zloty)	3.93
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7501
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3504
		South Korea (Won)	1365.19

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	8.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	6.00
Federal funds market rate	5.33
3-month bill	5.39
30-year bond	4.54

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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PACIFIC

Navy, Dutch meet for training in South China Sea

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A pair of U.S. Navy ships took advantage of a rare chance to train alongside a Dutch vessel this week in the South China Sea, according to U.S. 7th Fleet.

The littoral combat ship USS Mobile, the dry cargo ship USNS Wally Schirra and the Dutch frigate HNLMS Tromp focused on maneuvers, communications and “routine bilateral surface operations,” fleet spokeswoman Lt. Jamie Moroney told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday.

She declined to say exactly where

the training took place, citing operational security concerns.

“The Netherlands is one of our oldest, continuous bilateral relationships, stemming from the 18th century,” Capt. Sean Lewis, commander of Destroyer Squadron 7, said Wednesday in a 7th Fleet news release. “I look forward to any opportunity to work together with partners and allies, especially at sea.”

While Dutch warships regularly work alongside the United States, their presence in the Indo-Pacific is less frequent. Moroney couldn’t immediately verify when a Dutch war-

ship last operated with 7th Fleet.

In 2021, the Dutch frigate HNLMS Evertsen joined the British aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth’s strike group in the Philippine Sea for drills alongside the carriers USS Ronald Reagan and USS Carl Vinson.

A Netherlands navy spokesperson did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment Thursday.

“We’re fortunate to work together with allies and to have them provide replenishment to us. Operating together fortifies our existing relationship with our partners from the

U.S.,” the Tromp’s skipper, Cmdr. Yvonne van Beusekom, said in 7th Fleet’s release. “We look to continue coordination between our nations to promote regional peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.”

The Tromp embarked on a six-month mission March 9 dubbed Pacific Archer. The mission provides essential experience in operations, maintenance and logistics and demonstrates the Dutch navy’s ability to operate independently worldwide for an extended period, according to a March 7 report from the Curacao Chronicle.

Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hanke Bruins Slot announced in October that a Dutch frigate would sail in the South China Sea this year, the Philippine News Agency reported Oct. 30.

Wednesday’s training occurred the day before China launched a series of exercises around Taiwan in response to the inauguration of the island’s new president, Lai Ching-te, on Monday.

The U.S.-Dutch drill was not in response to any specific event and was a “routine integration” between the U.S. and an ally, Moroney said.

The ships did not encounter other military forces, she added.

Troops ruck and run in honor of Four Chaplains’ heroic actions

By LUIS GARCIA
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — A recent run and ruck march on Osan Air Base south of Seoul honored four chaplains who gave their lives rescuing people caught in one of the worst sea disasters of World War II.

The Four Chaplains Run and Ruck started Saturday with a Norwegian foot march of nearly 19 miles while carrying a 25-pound load, followed by a half-marathon and a family-friendly run.

It drew more than 500 airmen, soldiers, Space Force guardians, civilians and South Korean troops, according to a post on Osan’s official Facebook page.

Two chaplains assigned to Osan’s 51st Fighter Wing — Lt. Col. James Galyon and Capt. Mark Bradshaw — organized the event in memory of the Four Chaplains of the SS Dorchester.

The ship, requisitioned as a troop carrier during the war, went down off Greenland on Feb. 3, 1943. It had been torpedoed by a German U-boat.

The four Army chaplains — John Washington, Alexander Goode, George Fox and Clarke Poling — remained calm as the Dorchester began to sink. They passed out life preservers and helped others over-



LUIS GARCIA/Stars and Stripes

U.S. troops and others take on a nearly 19-mile Norwegian ruck march during the Four Chaplains event at Osan Air Base, South Korea, on May 18.

board, according to The Army Historical Foundation website.

Of the 900 people aboard, about 230 survived.

After giving away their own life preservers, the four chaplains — a Roman Catholic, a Jew and two Protestants — prayed together as the ship disappeared.

Galyon, who wanted to organize a

half-marathon dedicated to the chaplains’ memory, shared his vision with Bradshaw, a certified triathlon coach, and the two brought the event to fruition, Galyon told Stars and Stripes on May 16.

“It was not just the fact that they were willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others, but the way that they led before their deaths be-

fore the Dorchester went down,” he said.

To prepare for the run and ruck, Bradshaw created training groups and adapted Air Force marathon training with his own program to tailor a plan for the event.

Bradshaw said he hoped the training would make a positive impact on the participants’ resilience

against adversity and their sense of purpose.

“Challenging yourself to do something that a few months ago seemed maybe impossible comes together into a winning combination for what this event is meant to be,” he said.

The training began in early February with about 20 people doing mostly weekend and some midweek runs.

“To me, it was a good time, you know, challenging but really enjoyable to be able to do it with other people out there as well,” Master Sgt. Belinda Mercado Rivera, a flight chief for Osan’s protocol office, said May 16.

The top time for the half-marathon — one hour, 30 minutes — was recorded by Tech. Sgt. Jonathan Doyle of 7th Air Force’s 607th Air Operations Center.

“I’ve seen some Army people out here and everyday people from other bases, so it’s a good opportunity to connect with other people,” he told Stars and Stripes at the event.

The fastest time in the Norwegian foot march — three hours, 21 minutes — went to Tech. Sgt. Jeffery Herron of the 8th Security Forces Squadron at Kunsan Air Base.

“I’m happy with my performance, to say the least, but I know I must give a shout out to all the people I’ve been training with,” he said.

Reacts: Chinese military drills come days after new Taiwanese president Lai sworn in

FROM PAGE 1

na’s actions jeopardized regional peace and stability.

“We seek no conflicts, but we will not shy away from one to ensure our nation’s safety and protect our beautiful homeland,” the ministry wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

The ministry regularly posts 12-hour updates on the number of Chinese aircraft and warships operating near Taiwan, but had released no details of activity around the island as of Thursday afternoon.

The drills come just three days

after Taiwan’s new president, Lai Ching-te, was sworn into office.

Lai, a member of the Democratic Progressive Party, pledged to continue the direction set by his predecessor, Tsai Ing-wen. Beijing looks at Lai as a separatist, according to a report Monday by Japanese public broadcaster NHK.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin critiqued the congratulations U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken gave upon Lai’s inauguration Monday.

“‘Taiwan independence’ leads nowhere, and anyone who con-

nives at and supports ‘Taiwan independence’ is doomed to failure,” Wang was quoted as saying Monday in remarks posted on the Foreign Ministry website.

China views Taiwan, a self-governing island, as a breakaway province that must be reunified with the mainland, by force if necessary.

Lai in his inaugural speech called on China to “cease its political and military intimidation against Taiwan,” according to a translation posted by Taiwan’s presidential office.

He also asked China to “share with Taiwan the global responsibility of maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait as well as the greater region, and ensure the world is free from the fear of war.”

The exercises are clearly meant to send a message to Lai and are consistent with “the coercive diplomacy Beijing has exercised toward Taiwan” in the past, said Jeffrey Kingston, a professor of history and Asian studies at Temple University.

Tsai “stood up to Beijing’s bullying, and it wants to discourage such

behavior,” he told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday.

China reacted similarly when Tsai visited California to meet with former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in April 2023. Beijing launched a three-day exercise, also called Joint Sword, around the island.

Last year’s drills were on par with Chinese exercises in response to Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in 2022, with five days of exercises that included missile launches, aircraft sorties and naval drills.

MILITARY

Combat course forges 'multi-capable airmen'

BY LUIS GARCIA
AND DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — Every month at this fighter base south of Seoul, security forces airmen spend 10 days honing the combat skills they need to fend off an attack on the installation.

The Combat Readiness Course is mandatory for the 450 members of the 51st Security Forces Squadron, but it is also open to other airmen. These volunteers, who primarily hail from noncombat arms units, are “really just making better defense for our ... readiness,” Chief Master Sgt. James Tavenner told *Stars and Stripes* on Wednesday at the squadron’s headquarters.

Around 40 airmen take part in the course, including roughly 20 who set aside their usual Air Force jobs to train as warriors.

Senior Airman Ethan McGregor-Offen, an aircraft parts store journeyman for the 51st Logistics



THOMAS SJOBERG/U.S. Air Force

Senior Airman Ethan McGregor-Offen, with the 51st Logistics Readiness Squadron, carries a mock casualty to safety during a Combat Readiness Course at Osan Air Base, South Korea, in March.

Readiness Squadron, volunteered to attend the March course.

“I thought it was a great learning experience because I’ve never

really done anything sort of like this,” he said Thursday.

Troops are taught to handle the M-4 rifle and maneuver in close-

quarters combat, render first aid to casualties and perform operations using Humvees, Tech. Sgt. Zachary Wales, a senior course instructor, said Wednesday.

The course does not include aircraft and is mostly conducted on base in empty buildings simulating an enemy fortification, Wales said.

The objective is simple: ensure the security squadron airmen are proficient in combat and physically fit to deal with ground-based threats, Tavenner said. The airmen are stationed at Osan for about a year.

“With the recurring influx of people at this installation, we have to have this course at least once per month to ensure mission readiness,” Tavenner said.

The skills learned in the course are applicable throughout the airmen’s military career, he added.

McGregor-Offen said he took the course so he could pass on the weapons skills he learns to col-

leagues.

“God forbid something else were to happen, you’re more prepared for yourself and you can support ... your teammates around you,” he said.

Rucksack marches were among the most difficult events of the course, McGregor-Offen said. Airmen marched a mile on the first day carrying a 35-pound rucksack and wearing body armor. That distance increased throughout the course until the troops marched five miles.

The Air Force needs “multi-capable airmen” like McGregor-Offen to perform basic military functions — from carrying out security operations to firearm familiarity — to become a more effective airman, Tavenner said.

“They’re held to the same exact standard as security forces,” Wales said. “None of the curriculum has changed. They’re given the right to bear arms along with security forces, so we treat them as such.”

‘Preserve their legacy’: Old Guard places flags at Arlington Cemetery

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Members of the Army’s oldest active-infantry unit placed flags at the graves of those buried at Arlington National Cemetery on Thursday morning before Memorial Day weekend.

This tradition, known as “Flags In,” has taken place annually since the 3rd Infantry Regiment, also known as The Old Guard, was designated as the Army’s official ceremonial unit in 1948. The soldiers placed flags in front of more than 260,000 headstones and 7,000 rows in the columbarium. It takes

four hours for nearly 1,500 soldiers, including about 100 joint service members, to place the flags, according to Arlington National Cemetery.

First Sgt. Brian Junga has been in the Army for 20 years, but this was his first time participating in the event now that he is stationed at Joint Base Fort Myer-Henderson Hall, Va.

He doesn’t know anyone personally buried at Arlington. He has a distant relative who is buried there, and he has friends who have friends buried there. Some of them reached out over the last week asking if Junga would place

a flag at their gravesite.

“As I was walking around trying to find this particular grave and looking at the names and just thinking, ‘This could have been me,’” Junga said. “It really makes you appreciate how fortunate you are, and it also makes you grieve. Whatever I can do to help right that ship and help preserve their legacy, we can do it.”

On Sunday, Arlington National Cemetery will host the third Flowers of Remembrance Day at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, according to a news release. The public is invited to place a flower at the tomb from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



MATTHEW ADAMS/Stars and Stripes

Members of the 3rd Infantry Regiment, also known as The Old Guard, place flags on a row in section 12 of Arlington National Cemetery on Thursday, to honor fallen service members for Memorial Day.

in honor of the Unknown Soldiers, and all those who served and sacrificed for the United States.

The flags will be picked up Tuesday following the holiday, an Old Guard spokesperson said.

Beards gain momentum as House panel OKs USAF pilot program

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

Lawmakers took steps this week toward making beards acceptable in the military, with the House Armed Services Committee approving a proposal directing the Air Force to run a selective three-year pilot program that could lead to permanent approval.

An amendment in the draft 2025 National Defense Authorization Act that was adopted unanimously by the committee Wednesday would require the Air Force to study the impact of allowing Air Force and Space Force members in certain units to grow beards.

Selection of the units for the pilot program would be up to the Air Force secretary, who is directed in

the legislation to ensure that the units picked are “located in geographically diverse areas” and “perform various missions.”

The service would be required to submit an initial report to Congress within a year of the start of the program, followed by a final report at the end with the Air Force secretary’s recommendation on whether to make the program permanent. The reports would evaluate whether beards affect the airtight seals of gas masks or similar equipment and whether beards improve inclusivity for those with shaving waivers based on skin conditions or religious beliefs.

In addition, the reports would examine the impact that beards have on discipline, morale and unity, as

well as identify any negative perceptions or biases toward members with beards.

The amendment was introduced by Rep. Marc Veasey, D-Texas.

Next month, the Senate Armed Services Committee will discuss its version of the defense legislation. Both chambers will then come together to negotiate the final bill, which typically passes Congress by the end of the year.

If the NDAA that becomes law ends up preserving Veasey’s provision, airmen could see the pilot program established as early as six months afterward.

The House panel also approved another Veasey amendment requiring the Navy to brief committee members on a 2023 study by the Na-

val Health Research Center on the effect of beards on gas mask seals, with the briefing due by March 1.

The proposal acknowledged that the Navy study had “raised questions about the balance between uniform and grooming standards, and the impact on military readiness and recruiting.”

The amendments are likely to be welcomed by airmen who have long advocated for the ability to grow beards without a waiver.

Currently, airmen are not required to shave only if they have a religious exemption or a medical waiver for conditions such as pseudofolliculitis barbae, which causes painful razor bumps and disproportionately affects Black men.

The number of shaving waivers

for medical conditions granted to airmen and guardians has nearly doubled over the past three years, according to reporting by *Military.com*.

A study published last year in *Military Medicine* found that shaving waivers in the Air Force are associated with longer times to promotion, disproportionately affecting Black troops. In the study, 64% of those on shaving waivers were African American despite only about 13% of the survey cohort being Black.

All military services have faced growing legal and internal pressure to relax grooming standards, as debates on social media and in various other forums highlight the struggle to balance tradition and uniformity with individual rights.

MILITARY

House panel advances defense policy bill

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday night advanced a defense policy bill that would give a nearly 20% pay raise to junior enlisted service members and pour investments into improving the quality of life of all troops.

The legislation was approved in a 57-1 vote and will be debated next by the full House. The Senate Armed Services Committee has yet to release its version of the bill, but members have not indicated they will follow the House in raising pay for troops ranked E-4 and lower.

All service members are slated to receive a 4.5% pay raise under the White House's \$895 billion proposal for the defense budget. The House committee is proposing a 15% pay hike on top of that for junior troops, some of whom make less than \$25,000 in basic pay.

The House bill's focus on addressing the military's shortfalls in compensation, as well as housing, health care and other issues, is reflected in its title: the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act.

"We did that to underscore the tremendous gains this bill makes toward improving the quality of life for our service members and their



GIANNA GRONOWSKI/Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Capitol is seen on March 21.

families," said Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., the committee chairman.

The House panel on Wednesday touted the provisions that it believes will improve life and service in the military.

One measure will restore coverage of the basic allowance for housing from 95% of calculated costs back to 100%, as it was from 2005-16. Another will raise the threshold for the basic needs allowance to 200% of federal poverty guidelines.

Rep. Mike Waltz, R-Fla., singled out the importance of the bill's \$17.5 billion investment in military

construction projects, including \$1.15 billion to improve housing conditions.

"The condition of our barracks in particular is shocking," he said. "It's unacceptable that this committee, frankly, has to step in to push the Pentagon to fix this problem, but that's what we're going to do."

A government watchdog last year found mold and mildew, sewage overflow, broken locks, rodent infestations and other hazardous living conditions across 10 installations in the United States.

The authorization bill for the first time requires each military department to implement an electronic management system to track how funds are spent and keep up-to-date records of facility conditions, according to Waltz, a former Green Beret.

Other efforts to improve quality of life include a permanent authorization of a fellowship program for military spouses searching for employment, the expansion of access to specialty health care providers and the full funding of child care fee assistance programs to eliminate fee assistance waitlists.

Service members and families moving to some overseas locations for a permanent change of station would be allowed to ship and store up to two privately owned vehicles under the legislation.

More broadly, the bill continues to invest in efforts to counter China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and violent extremist groups. It notably rejects the Navy's proposal to procure one Virginia-class submarine, requiring the sea service to procure two as it has the previous 13 years.

The House panel also refused to sanction the Navy's plan to retire two guided-missile cruisers before they reached the end of their service life.

Russia's war in Ukraine made a direct impact on the committee's

priorities for the Pentagon. The bill requires the Army to establish a drone corps as a basic branch of the service to serve as a command center for all drone-related activities.

The authorization bill, which was released last week, grew larger Wednesday as members spent hours voting on more than 700 amendments.

Members agreed to weaken a controversial Pentagon plan to transfer some Air National Guard personnel into the Space Force by giving state governors a say in such changes. Other approved amendments make registration for the selective service automatic and require commissioned officers to receive training on the Constitution.

The Republican-led committee also narrowly agreed, over strong Democrat opposition, to ban affirmative action at the military service academies. The Supreme Court had excluded the academies from a ruling last year that ended race-conscious college admissions.

The Senate Armed Services Committee will discuss its version of the defense legislation next month. Both chambers will then come together to negotiate the final bill, which typically passes Congress by the end of the year.

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Air, Space Force troops now get stipends during training

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Troops in the Air Force and Space Force with dependent family members now receive a daily stipend while attending military training when they spend less than a year at the location and then return to their prior duty station, the services announced.

"We understand that these short moves, while necessary, can be disruptive to the lives and fi-

nances of airmen and guardians with families — particularly in situations where they are slated to return to their original duty station," said Alex Wagner, the assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and Reserve affairs.

The change went into effect May 7, and troops will receive retroactive payments if they meet the eligibility criteria for training that they attended on or after Dec. 23, 2022, according to the

Department of the Air Force, which includes Space Force.

The fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act includes the policy, which was issued Nov. 1 as part of the Joint Travel Regulation.

The Navy, which includes the Marine Corps, updated its per diem policy in March. Army officials said the service is in the process of officially updating its policy. However, the updated Joint Travel Regulation is avail-

able to eligible soldiers without an Army policy.

The updated policy allows service members with dependents to maintain two households, continuing to receive a housing allowance at the rate authorized for families for their prior duty location where their family still lives. The service member also receives per diem in the amount of the housing allowance authorized at the "without dependent" rate for the school or training location.

To receive this benefit, the service member must have orders to return to their prior duty station after they complete school or training and cannot live in no-cost government quarters.

This effort does not replace the Temporary Duty Waiver for Formal Training policy, which allows airmen and guardians to attend courses between 141 and 180 days in a temporary duty status instead of a permanent reassignment status.

Marine avoids jail time after fleeing scene of a crash on Okinawa

By KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

NAHA, Okinawa — A Japanese court sentenced a U.S. Marine to a 26-month suspended sentence Thursday after he admitted driving recklessly and fleeing the scene of a crash that injured three locals last year.

Sgt. Camilo Escobar, 24, was found guilty of violating Japanese traffic law and negligent driving resulting in injury in the Sept. 16 incident.

Naha District Court Judge Takashi Kato suspended Escobar's

sentence for five years, "the maximum limit a sentence can be suspended," Kato said. The Marine will not serve the prison term if he commits no further offenses in Japan.

Escobar was driving a sedan southbound on Route 58 in Ginowan city when his car collided with a gray Daihatsu Move, according to the charge sheet provided by the prosecutors' office. He was going about 48 mph over the speed limit.

The collision injured three people in the Daihatsu: A man in the rear seat suffered a broken hip and two women up front received minor in-

juries, according to the charge sheet.

Police found the sedan a short distance from the crash site and watched Escobar flee on foot, leaving two Marine passengers behind, a city police spokesman said at the time.

Police had stopped Escobar earlier for speeding, the judge said from the bench.

"You received a warning from a police officer at a red light for speeding prior to the crash," Kato said after handing down the sentence. "You were excited driving your

friend's car without looking at the speedometer. You had no awareness of safe driving."

Escobar pleaded guilty on May 16 in Naha District Court and offered an apology.

"I'd like to apologize to the victims and their families. I committed a very shameful action," he said in court, public broadcaster NHK reported that day.

Escobar was not drinking at the time, an Okinawa prefectural police spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday. He was not arrested before being charged.

Some government spokespeople in Japan are required to speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

Escobar sat calmly in a black suit and blue tie as Kato delivered the sentence.

"You were in panic, got scared and fled the scene," the judge said. "This is considered selfish behavior."

Kato cited Escobar's lack of a criminal record and the compensation, which an insurance company will pay the victims, as reasons to suspend the sentence.

WAR IN UKRAINE

Russian missiles target Kharkiv in deadly attack

By ILLIA NOVIKOV
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian missiles slammed into Ukraine's second-largest city in the country's northeast and killed at least seven civilians early Thursday, officials said, as Kyiv's army labored to hold off an intense cross-border offensive by the Kremlin's larger and better-equipped forces.

At least 20 people were wounded as S-300 missiles struck the city of Kharkiv, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. Explosions reverberated around the city of some 1 million people.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the attack "extremely cruel" and expressed renewed frustration at not getting enough air defense systems from the country's Western partners to prevent the barrages after more than two years of unrelenting war.

The city of Kharkiv, which is the capital of the region of the same name, is about 12 miles from the Russian border. Moscow's troops have in recent weeks captured villages in the area as part of a broad push, and analysts say they may be trying to get within artillery range of the city.

The Russian push is shaping up to be Ukraine's biggest test since Moscow's full-scale invasion in February 2022, with outnumbered and outgunned Ukrainian forces being pressed at several points along the roughly 600-mile front line that snakes from north to south in eastern Ukraine.

With Kyiv short of air defenses and waiting for more Western military support that only recently started trickling in, Ukraine's army has been pushed back in places while Russia has pounded its power grid and civilian areas. Kyiv en-

dured further power outages on Thursday.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said the attacks underscored the country's "urgent" need for more U.S.-made Patriot systems to defend its skies.

Germany recently pledged one of the missile systems "but getting six more as soon as possible remains critical not only for Ukraine's survival but for peace in Europe," Kuleba wrote on the social media platform X.

Zelenskyy said the main hotspots in recent fighting have been Kharkiv and the neighboring Donetsk region, where Ukraine's defenders withdrew in February from the stronghold of Avdiivka. For the Kremlin, taking control of all of partially occupied Donetsk is a war priority.

At the same time, and in an apparent effort to stretch Ukraine's



EFREM LUKATSKY/AP

A POW's child runs past activists during a rally in the Independence square demanding the release of Ukrainian soldiers who were captured by Russia during the war in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Thursday.

depleted forces, Russian troops have made incursions in the northern Sumy region.

Nearly 1,500 people, including 200 children, have been evacuated from the towns of Bilopillia and Vorozhba there, according to regional Gov. Volodymyr Artiukh.

"The main focus (of the fighting) is on the entire border area," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address Wednesday.

In Liubotyn, a small town about 6

miles west of the city of Kharkiv, Russian missiles struck the town's center, wounding eight civilians. In Derhachi, another nearby town, 13 people were wounded in another aerial strike, authorities said.

Russia's defense ministry said Thursday that its forces had taken control of the Donetsk settlement of Andriivka, which Ukrainian forces had held since grueling combat in September that left the village in ruins.

US to announce \$275M more in Ukraine aid

By TARA COPP
AND MATTHEW LEE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States is expected to announce an additional \$275 million in military aid for Ukraine on Friday as Kyiv struggles to hold off advances by Russian troops in the Kharkiv region, two U.S. officials say.

This will be the fourth installment of military aid for Ukraine since Congress passed a long-delayed foreign aid bill late last month and comes as the Biden administration has pledged to keep weapons flowing regularly and to get them to the front lines as quickly as possible.

The package includes high mobility artillery rocket systems, or HIMARS, munitions as well 155 mm and 105 mm high-demand artillery rounds, according to the two U.S. officials. Additional items in the aid package include Javelin and AT-4 anti-tank systems; anti-

tank mines, tactical vehicles, small arms and ammunition for those weapons, one of the officials said. Both officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide details of the aid package before the public announcement.

It follows a monthly gathering Monday of about 50 defense leaders from Europe and elsewhere who meet regularly to coordinate getting more military aid to Ukraine. At this latest meeting, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Ukraine was in a "moment of challenge" due to Russia's new onslaught on Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city. He pledged to keep weapons moving "week after week."

Russia has sought to take advantage of Ukrainian shortages in manpower and weapons while the war-torn country waits for the arrival of more U.S. assistance, which was delayed for months in Congress. Ukrainian forces have



ANDRII MARIENKO/AP

A sapper inspects fragments of a Russian air bomb that hit a living area injuring ten in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday.

been pushed backward in places, while Russia has pounded its power grid and civilian areas.

In the month since President Joe Biden signed the \$95 billion foreign aid package, which includ-

ed about \$61 billion for Ukraine, the U.S. has announced and started to send almost \$1.7 billion in weapons pulled from Pentagon stockpiles.

It's also announced \$6 billion in

funding through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative. That pays for longer-term contracts with the defense industry and means that the weapons could take many months or years to arrive.

Record: Groups in IG report cite a 'sense of urgency' for actions

FROM PAGE 1

Ukraine security assistance efforts."

Aid has included weapons systems, ammunition, training for Ukrainian troops and maintenance of equipment.

EUCOM and affiliated commands are tasked with validating

Ukraine's requests for military support before approving them for submission to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

The IG did not audit controls at the Office of the Secretary of Defense level.

The investigation also showed

that while the Defense Department coordinated with partner countries on Ukraine's requests for military support, several factors made that difficult, including the large number of partner nations donating equipment, partner nations' desire to remain discreet and classification levels of information.

The IG recommended that in coordination with affiliated units, the EUCOM commander document the roles, responsibilities, processes and procedures for validating Ukraine's requests for military equipment and assistance.

It also called on the commander and his counterpart at the Security

Assistance Group — Ukraine to find ways to improve coordination with partner countries.

The EUCOM commander was given a draft of the audit report in March but did not respond to the recommendations in time for publication of the final report, the IG said.

MIDEAST

As Hamas holds firm, Israel faces bad options

By JOSEPH KRAUSS
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Diminished but not deterred, Hamas is still putting up a fight after seven brutal months of war with Israel, regrouping in some of the hardest-hit areas in northern Gaza and resuming rocket attacks into nearby Israeli communities.

Israel initially made tactical advances against Hamas after a devastating aerial bombardment paved the way for its ground troops. But those early gains have given way to a grinding struggle against an adaptable insurgency — and a growing feeling among many Israelis that their military faces only bad options, drawing comparisons with U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This was the subtext of a rebellion in recent days by two members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's three-man War Cabinet — Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Benny Gantz, Netanyahu's main political rival — who demanded that he come up with detailed postwar plans.

They supported Israel's retaliation for Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, including one of the heaviest bombing campaigns in recent history, ground operations that obliterated entire neighborhoods and border restrictions that the United Nations' World Food Program has said pushed parts of the territory into famine.

But now the two retired generals fear a prolonged, costly re-occupation of Gaza, from which Israel withdrew soldiers and settlers in 2005. They are also opposed to a withdrawal that would leave Hamas in control or lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Instead, they have put forth alternatives that many Israelis see as wildly unrealistic. Hamas, meanwhile, has proposed its own postwar plan.

Here's a look at four ways this war might end:

Full-scale occupation

Netanyahu has promised a "total victory" that would remove Hamas from power, dismantle its military



LEO CORREA/AP

Gunmen march as mourners carry the bodies of Palestinians, some draped in the Islamic Jihad militant group flags during their funeral in the West Bank city of Jenin on Thursday.

capabilities and return the scores of hostages it still holds from the attack that triggered the war.

He has said victory could come within weeks if Israel launches a full-scale invasion of Rafah, which Israel has portrayed as the last Hamas stronghold.

Amir Avivi, a retired Israeli general and former deputy commander of the Gaza division, has said that's only the beginning. He said Israel would need to remain in control to prevent Hamas from regrouping.

"If you don't drain the swamp, you cannot deal with the mosquitoes. And drain the swamp means a complete change in the education system, and dealing with local leadership and not with a terror organization," he said. "This is a generational process. It's not going to happen in a day."

Far-right members of Netanyahu's governing coalition, who hold the key to his remaining in power, have called for permanent occupation, "voluntary emigration" of large numbers of Palestinians to anywhere that will have them, and rebuilding of Jewish settlements in Gaza.

Most Israelis are opposed, pointing to the immense costs of stationing thousands of troops in the territory that is home to 2.3 million Palestinians. As an occupying power,

Israel would likely be held responsible for providing health, education and other services. It's unclear to what extent international donors would step in to fund reconstruction amid ongoing hostilities.

There's also no guarantee such an occupation would eliminate Hamas.

Israel was in full control of Gaza when Hamas was established in the late 1980s. Israel's 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon coincided with the rise of Hezbollah, and Israeli troops routinely battle militants in the West Bank, which it has controlled since 1967.

Lighter occupation

Netanyahu has said Israel will maintain security control over Gaza but delegate civilian administration to local Palestinians unaffiliated with Hamas or the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the occupied West Bank. He has suggested that Arab and other countries assist with governance and rebuilding.

But so far, none have shown interest.

No Palestinians are known to have offered to cooperate with the Israeli military, perhaps because Hamas has said they would be treated as collaborators, a veiled death threat.

Efforts to reach out to Palestinian businessmen and powerful families "have ended in catastrophe," said Michael Milshtein, an Israeli analyst of Palestinian affairs at Tel Aviv University and a former military intelligence officer.

He said Israelis seeking such allies are searching for "unicorns" — something that does not exist.

Arab states have also roundly rejected this scenario — even the United Arab Emirates, which is one of the few to formally recognize Israel and has close ties with it.

"The UAE refuses to be involved in any plan aimed at providing cover for the Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip," Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan said this month.

Grand bargain

Instead, Arab states have coalesced around a U.S. proposal aimed at resolving the decades-old conflict and transforming the Middle East.

Under this plan, a reformed Palestinian Authority would govern Gaza with the assistance of Arab and Muslim nations, including Saudi Arabia, which would normalize relations with Israel in return for a U.S. defense pact and help in building a civilian nuclear program.

But U.S. and Saudi officials have said that hinges on Israel committing to a credible path to eventual Palestinian statehood.

Netanyahu has ruled out such a scenario — as have Gallant and Gantz — saying it would reward Hamas and result in a militant-run state on Israel's borders.

Palestinians have said ending Israel's decadeslong occupation and creating a fully independent state in Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem — territories Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war — is the only way to end the cycle of bloodshed.

Hamas has stated it would accept a two-state solution on at least an interim basis, but its political program continues to call for the "full liberation of Palestine," including what is now Israel. Hamas has also said it must be a part of any

postwar settlement.

Deal with Hamas

Hamas has proposed a very different grand bargain — one that, ironically enough, might be more palatable to Israelis than the U.S.-Saudi deal.

The militant group has proposed a phased agreement in which it would release all of the hostages in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners — including senior militants — as well as the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, a lengthy cease-fire and reconstruction.

That would almost certainly leave Hamas in control of Gaza and potentially allow it to rebuild its military capabilities. Hamas might even claim victory, despite the extensive death and destruction suffered by Palestinian civilians since Oct. 7.

But thousands of Israeli protesters have taken to the streets in recent weeks calling on their leaders to take such a deal, because it's probably the only way to get the hostages back.

They have accused Netanyahu of standing in the way of such an agreement because it could lead his far-right allies to bring down his government, potentially ending his political career and exposing him to prosecution on corruption charges.

Supporters of such a deal have said there would be other benefits for Israel, beyond freeing the hostages.

The low-intensity conflict with Lebanon's Hezbollah would likely die down as regional tensions ease, allowing tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border to return to their homes. Israel could finally reckon with the security failures that led to Oct. 7.

And it could prepare for another inevitable round of fighting.

Milshtein has said Israel should adopt Hamas' concept of a "hudna" — a prolonged period of strategic calm.

"Hudna doesn't mean a peace agreement," he said. "It's a cease-fire that you will exploit in order to make yourself stronger and then to attack and surprise your enemy."

Pro-Palestine protesters leave after Drexel announces police involvement

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Protesters packed up their belongings and left a pro-Palestinian encampment at Drexel University on Thursday after the school announced a decision to have police clear the encampment.

University President John Fry said in a statement that he decided to have campus police and public safety officers join Philadelphia police in clearing the encampment as peacefully as possible.

News outlets reported that police gave protesters a warning to clear the encampment and protesters left.

Fry said the university is committed to protecting the community members' right to assemble peacefully and express their views, but he has the responsibility and authority to regulate campus gatherings to ensure safety and fulfill the mission to educate students.

"An unauthorized encampment

that involves large numbers of people unaffiliated with Drexel trespassing on our campus is illegal," Fry said. "The language and chants coming from this demonstration, underscored by protesters' repugnant 'demands,' must now come to an end."

Protesters gathered their belongings as dozens of officers on bicycles arrived around 5:20 a.m., but in less than a half hour only a few items remained on the Korman Family Quad where the 35-

tent encampment had been, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported.

"The campers picked up their belongings for the most part and left by their own free will," Philadelphia Police Sgt. Eric Gripp said.

In a statement posted online early Thursday, protest organizers said they had launched a "strategic retreat" to ensure the "safe passage of all people and resources out of the liberated zone." They said that neither city

nor campus police delivered a warning to clear the encampment, but rather "we warned ourselves."

The organizers also said "we succeeded in our aim to disrupt — a university-wide lockdown imposed by cowardly leadership and an excessive police presence drained university resources for six days." The group also vowed to stay active, writing: "We won't back down, we will return, and we will come back stronger."

NATION

Severe weather in the forecast for storm-hit Midwest

BY HANNAH FINGERHUT
AND MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press

GREENFIELD, Iowa — More severe weather was coming Thursday for parts of the Midwest where this year's deadliest tornado so far killed four people and injured nearly three dozen as it wreaked havoc in the small city of Greenfield, Iowa.

Before Tuesday's twister carved a path through Greenfield and sent family mementos flying far away, the deadliest tornado in 2024 killed three people in Logan County, Ohio, on March 14.

The National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center showed an enhanced severe storm risk late Thursday into Friday morning for much of Nebraska and western Iowa, including those areas hit by tornadoes Tuesday after hurricane-force winds, large hail and torrential rain flooded streets and basements in parts of Nebraska.

The new risk for severe weather — including possible tornadoes — in Iowa will come "when people are sleeping," warned NWS meteorologist Andrew Anson of Des Moines.

"A lot of these people have already experienced damage to their homes and property that might be hit again with rain and wind. Because of the damage al-

ready there, it won't take much wind to inflict even more damage on these homes," Anson said. "It's just a bad deal all the way around."

More severe weather could also hit Saturday and Sunday in parts of Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas already ravaged by recent storms. An emergency was declared in Temple, Texas, after powerful storms ripped through the city of more than 90,000. Thousands lost power, Thursday's classes were canceled and nearby Fort Cavazos reported debris blocking traffic at the Army installation.

In Iowa, the Greenfield tornado obliterated homes, splintered trees and crumpled cars in the town of 2,000 about 55 miles southwest of Des Moines. The twister also crumpled massive power-producing wind turbines outside the city. It was initially rated at least an EF-3, but the National Weather Service could determine it was even more powerful after a full ground survey.

It was so destructive that it took authorities more than a day to account for the area's residents, and Iowa's Department of Public Safety said the number of injured is likely even higher. Officials haven't yet released the names of the Greenfield victims.

A fifth person was killed Tuesday about 25 miles from Green-



CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP

Local residents walk among the debris from tornado damaged homes Wednesday in Greenfield, Iowa.

field when her car was blown off the road in a tornado, according to the Adams County Sheriff's Office. Monica Zamarron, 46, died in the crash Tuesday afternoon, officials said.

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds has requested an expedited presidential disaster declaration for those Iowa counties that sustained significant damage. The White House announced that FEMA's administrator would be in Iowa on Thursday.

Digging through a debris field that used to be their home in Greenfield, Kimberly Ergish and her husband searched for family photos and other salvageable items. There wasn't much left. The reality of having their house

destroyed in seconds hadn't really set in.

"If it weren't for all the bumps and bruises and the achy bones, I would think that it didn't happen," Ergish said.

This is a historically busy tornado season in the United States, in an era when climate change is heightening the severity of storms around the world. April had the country's second-highest number of tornadoes on record.

Through Tuesday, 859 tornadoes had been confirmed this year, 27% more than the U.S. sees on average, according to NOAA's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Okla. Iowa has so far recorded the most, with 81 confirmed twisters.

On Tuesday alone, the National Weather Service said it received 23 tornado reports, with 21 in Iowa.

The Greenfield tornado appeared to have been on the ground for more than 40 miles, AccuWeather Chief Meteorologist Jon Porter said. A satellite photo taken by a BlackSky Technology shows where the twister gouged a nearly straight path of destruction through the town, just south of Greenfield's center square.

"Debris was lifted thousands of feet in the air and ended up falling to the ground several counties away from Greenfield. That's evidence of just how intense and deadly this tornado was," Porter said.

Families of Uvalde shooting victims suing Texas state police

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — The families of 19 of the victims in the Uvalde elementary school shooting in Texas on Wednesday filed a \$500 million federal lawsuit against nearly 100 state police officers who were part of the botched law enforcement response to the deadly school shooting.

The families said they also agreed to a \$2 million settlement

with the city, under which city leaders promised higher standards and better training for local police.

The lawsuit and settlement announcement in Uvalde came two days before the two-year anniversary of the massacre. Nineteen fourth-graders and two teachers were killed May 24, 2022, when a teenage gunman burst into their classroom at Robb Elementary School and began shooting.

The lawsuit, seeking at least \$500 million in damages, is the latest of several seeking accountability for the law enforcement response. More than 370 federal, state and local officers converged on the scene, but they waited more than 70 minutes before confronting the shooter.

It is the first lawsuit to be filed after a 600-page Justice Department report was released in January that cataloged "cascading failures" in

training, communication, leadership and technology problems that day.

The lawsuit notes that state troopers did not follow their active shooter training or confront the shooter, even as the students and teachers inside were following their own lockdown protocols of turning off lights, locking doors and staying silent.

"The protocols trap teachers and

students inside, leaving them fully reliant on law enforcement to respond quickly and effectively," the families and their attorneys said in a statement.

A criminal investigation into the police response by Uvalde District Attorney Christina Mitchell's office is ongoing. A grand jury was summoned this year, and some law enforcement officials have already been called to testify.

Army sergeant at JBLM sentenced to 5½ years in prison for child rape

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

A sergeant at Joint Base Lewis-McChord has been sentenced to 5½ years in prison for child rape and assault, the Army said Wednesday.

Sgt. Dakota J. Brodsky, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with the 7th Infantry Division, was convicted of one count of child rape and

one count of assault following a five-day trial that ended Friday, said Maj. George Wasickanin, an Army spokesman at Lewis-McChord, which is south of Tacoma, Wash.

Brodsky's sentence included a demotion to specialist. At the end of his time served, Brodsky will be reduced in rank to private and re-

ceive a dishonorable discharge from the Army, Wasickanin said. Lt. Col. Robert E. Murdough was the presiding judge in the trial, which took place at Lewis-McChord.

Wasickanin said privacy rules prohibit base officials from providing Brodsky's age or his photo.

At the time of Brodsky's arraign-

ment in December 2023, the soldier was charged with nine counts of child rape, two counts of assault, a count of domestic violence and a count of destroying military property, according to the Army court docket.

Wasickanin said Brodsky pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Each count of child rape carried

a possible maximum sentence of 30 years imprisonment. The jury consisted of officers and enlisted personnel.

"All charges and specifications other than those of which Sgt. Brodsky was found guilty were dismissed," Wasickanin said.

He said no further information was available about the case.

NATION



JOSE LUIS MAGANA/AP

Rudy Giuliani, who has amplified election falsehoods for years as a staunch ally of former President Donald Trump, has agreed to no longer accuse two Georgia poll workers of tampering with the 2020 election, according to a draft agreement filed Tuesday in court.

Giuliani vows to stop accusing Ga. workers of election tampering

The Washington Post

Rudy Giuliani has agreed to no longer accuse two Georgia poll workers of tampering with the 2020 election, according to a draft agreement filed Tuesday in federal bankruptcy court.

The agreement bars Giuliani — who has amplified election falsehoods for years as a staunch ally of former President Donald Trump — from publishing or helping to publish false statements that the two workers “engaged in wrongdoing” related to the 2020 election.

A draft of the agreement filed Tuesday said Giuliani was permanently prohibited “from publishing, causing others to publish, and/or assisting in others’ publication of ... any statements that suggest that Plaintiffs, whether mentioned directly, indirectly, or by implication, engaged in wrongdoing in connec-

tion with the 2020 presidential election.”

Joe Biden defeated Trump in Georgia, a linchpin for his victory that year. The false accusations against election workers were part of an aggressive pressure campaign by Trump and his allies to cast doubt on the validity of results in the state.

The two Fulton County, Ga., election workers, Ruby Freeman and her daughter Wandrea ArShaye “Shaye” Moss, sued Giuliani for defamation. A federal jury in December ordered Giuliani, a former attorney to Trump, to pay \$148 million to Freeman and Moss for falsely accusing them of election fraud.

The next day, Giuliani filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in New York, listing up to \$500 million in debts. He continued, however, to rant against the trial and the ruling, describing the judge as “hopelessly biased.”

Biden welcomes Kenyan president for state visit

BY AAMER MADHANI
AND SEUNG MIN KIM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Thursday praised Kenya’s William Ruto for “his bold leadership” as the White House marked the first state visit to the United States by an African leader in more than 15 years. Ruto spoke of building a more promising future.

The Kenyan president and his wife, Rachel Ruto, arrived at the White House for a pomp-filled ceremony aimed at recognizing the growing importance of the U.S.-Kenya relationship. The leaders planned to hold talks and a joint news conference before a formal state dinner on the White House grounds.

“Together the United States and Kenya are working together on the challenges that matter most to our peoples’ lives — health, security, economic security, cybersecurity and climate security,” Biden said at the arrival ceremony. “Mr. President, your bold leadership on this front has been important and significantly impactful.”

Biden and Ruto are using the three-day state visit to Washington, in part, to call on economies around the globe to take action to reduce the enormous debt burden crushing Kenya and other developing nations.

The call to action, termed the Nairobi-Washington Vision, comes as Biden presses his appeal to African nations that the U.S. can

be a better partner than economic rival China. Beijing has been deepening its investment on the continent — often with high-interest loans and other difficult financing terms.

Biden and Ruto want creditor nations to reduce financing barriers for developing nations that have been constrained by high debt burdens. They also call on international financial institutions to coordinate debt relief and support through multilateral banks and institutions providing better financing terms.

“Today we have an occasion to build synergies, to build partnerships that will not only solve our current problems, but also to build a future that is a much more promising, a much more prosperous, a fairer, a freer, a healthier and a much more prosperous future,” Ruto said.

The White House also announced \$250 million in grants for the International Development Association, part of the World Bank, to assist poor countries facing crises.

Separately, a \$1.2 trillion government funding bill passed by Congress in March allows the U.S. to lend up to \$21 billion to an International Monetary Fund Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust, which provides zero-interest loans to support low-income countries as they work to stabilize their economies, boost growth and improve debt sustainability. That funding is expected to be made

available to the IMF in the coming weeks.

An Associated Press analysis of a dozen countries most indebted to China — including Pakistan, Kenya, Zambia and Laos — found the debt is consuming an ever-greater amount of tax revenue needed to keep schools open, provide electricity and pay for food and fuel.

Behind the scenes is China’s reluctance to forgive debt and its extreme secrecy about how much money it has loaned and on what terms, which has kept other major lenders from stepping in to help.

Kenya’s debt-to-GDP ratio tops 70%, with the bulk of it owed to China. Credit ratings agency Fitch estimates Kenya will spend almost one-third of its government revenues just on interest payments this year.

Ruto said Wednesday that his talks with Biden will address “how we can have a fairer international financial system where all countries are treated equally.”

Biden was also informing Congress on Thursday that he will designate Kenya a major non-NATO ally, according to the White House.

The designation, while largely symbolic, reflects how Kenya has grown from a regional partner that has long cooperated with U.S. counterterrorism operations on the continent to a major global influence — even extending its reach into the Western Hemisphere. Kenya will be the first sub-Saharan African country to receive the status.

Haley says she will vote for Trump in 2024 election

BY DYLAN WELLS
AND PATRICK SVITEK
The Washington Post

Former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, who suspended her run for the Republican nomination for president in early March, announced she will vote for Donald Trump but reiterated that he should not assume that her supporters will back him.

“I will be voting for Trump. Having said that, I stand by what I said in my suspension speech,” Haley said Wednesday.

“Trump would be smart to reach out to the millions of people who voted for me and continue to support me and not assume that they’re just going to be with him. And I genuinely hope he does.”

Her announcement came in her first public appearance since suspending her campaign for president during a conversation at the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank where she was recently named the organization’s Walter P. Stern chair. In a speech, Haley repeatedly attacked President Joe Biden’s position on foreign policy and criticized his handling of the wars in Gaza and Ukraine. She did

not mention Trump in her remarks but responded to a moderator’s question after the speech about which candidate she preferred on foreign policy — Trump or Biden.

Haley, a lifelong Republican, heavily criticized Trump during the GOP primary and did not endorse him when she suspended her campaign. Her suspension cleared the way for him to become the presumptive Republican nominee against Biden.

Still, she has continued to earn sizable shares of the vote in primaries since she dropped out, including over 20% against Trump in the Indiana primary earlier this month.

Haley, who served in the Trump administration, was the first major rival to challenge Trump for the nomination. She criticized Trump when he first ran in 2016, before joining his administration the next year. During her campaign she aggressively hit Trump, including questioning his mental fitness for office.



Haley

In addition to policy criticisms, Trump attacked Haley with both sexist and racially charged attacks, including sharing a false “birther” claim about Haley that incorrectly suggested she was ineligible to be president or vice president because her parents were not U.S. citizens when she was born.

Ahead of the South Carolina primary, he mocked Haley’s husband, a service member who was deployed overseas, enraging Haley and her allies.

The Biden campaign has recently made moves to persuade her supporters to vote for Biden instead.

Explaining her decision to back Trump, Haley said: “As a voter, I put my priorities on a president who’s going to have the backs of our allies and hold our enemies to account. Who would secure the border, no more excuses. A president who would support capitalism and freedom. A president who understands we need less debt, not more debt.”

She added: “Trump has not been perfect on these policies. I have made that clear many, many times. But Biden has been a catastrophe.”

RNC HQ locked down after vials of blood delivered

The Washington Post

Republican National Committee headquarters and surrounding streets on Capitol Hill were placed on lockdown Wednesday morning after the RNC offices received a package containing two vials of blood, a Chinese philosophy text, and two ice packs, according to U.S. Capitol Police.

Police spokeswoman Brianna Burch said officers responded to the Republican headquarters, in the 300 block of First Street SE, about 7:45 a.m., and they are investigating the source of the package.

It was unclear whether the package was mailed to the headquarters or dropped off. By 10 a.m., the Capitol Police hazardous incident response unit had removed the package and lifted the lockdown, according to Burch.

A spokesperson for the RNC did not immediately offer a comment on the incident.

NATION

Heated hearing in Trump's documents case

BY TERRY SPENCER
AND ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

FORT PIERCE, Fla. — A lawyer for Donald Trump's personal valet took aim at the conduct of prosecutors in the classified documents case in a heated hearing Wednesday, the first since a judge indefinitely postponed the trial.

Stanley Woodward, a lawyer for Walt Nauta, said prosecutors had targeted his client for prosecution after he refused to cooperate against Trump in the investigation. Nauta was charged alongside Trump last year in a federal case accusing them of conspiring to conceal boxes of classified documents at Mar-a-Lago, Trump's estate in Palm Beach, Fla.

The defense lawyer also said a prosecutor in the case had warned him earlier in the investigation that he needed to be careful or he would "mess up" his bid for a Washington, D.C., judgeship, a comment Woodward interpreted as designed to get him to pressure Nauta to assist the inquiry.

But David Harbach, a prosecutor with Justice Department special counsel Jack

Smith's team, which brought the case, called Woodward's allegations "garbage" and "fantasy." He said the statements attributed to his colleague, Jay Bratt, had been taken out of context. Woodward said he would be willing to testify under oath about the exchange.

The encounter laid bare the simmering tensions between the two sides in a case that has been mired in delays and slowed by legal disputes that the Trump-appointed judge, Aileen Cannon, has yet to resolve. The case, among four criminal prosecutions against Trump, had been set for trial on May 20 but Cannon canceled the trial date earlier this month.

Woodward conceded to Cannon that there was insufficient evidence to dismiss the indictment on grounds of vindictive prosecution. But he said there was enough for her to order prosecutors to turn over all communication they had about Nauta to see if hostility existed.

He said he believed his client was only being prosecuted because he refused to testify against Trump and because he asserted his Fifth Amendment right against self-in-



JUSTICE DEPARTMENT/AP

Walt Nauta, personal aide to ex-President Donald Trump, carries boxes at Trump's Palm Beach, Fla., estate in 2021.

crimination by refusing to testify a second time before a grand jury.

"There was a campaign to get Mr. Nauta to cooperate in the first federal prosecution of a former president of the United States and when he refused, they prosecuted him," Woodward told the judge. "That's a violation of his constitutional rights."

Prosecutor Harbach pushed back on Woodward's arguments, saying it was com-

mon for defendants to be offered better treatment if they cooperate,

"There is not a single bit of evidence of animus toward Mr. Nauta," Harbach said,

Trump was not present for the hearing. The GOP presumptive presidential nominee for 2024 has pleaded not guilty and denied any wrongdoing.

The arguments came one day after a newly unsealed motion revealed that defense lawyers are seeking to exclude evidence from the boxes of records that FBI agents seized during an August 2022 search of Mar-a-Lago.

The defense lawyers asserted in the motion that the search was unconstitutional and illegal and the FBI affidavit filed in justification of it was tainted by misrepresentations.

Smith's team rejected each of those accusations and defended the investigative approach as "measured" and "graduated." It said the search warrant was obtained after investigators collected surveillance video showing what it said was a concerted effort to conceal the boxes of classified documents inside the property.

Hunter Biden's tax trial set for September; gun trial still in June

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Hunter Biden is scheduled to stand trial on federal tax charges in September after a judge on Wednesday granted his request to delay the California trial that had been approaching next month.

U.S. District Judge Mark C. Scarsi agreed during a hearing to push the case to Sept. 5 after defense lawyers said they need more time to prepare with Hunter Biden, who is also facing a separate trial on federal gun charges beginning June 3 in Delaware.

The president's son has pleaded not guilty to both indictments, which his lawyers have claimed are politically motivated. Both cases are being overseen by judges nominated by then-President Donald Trump, a Republican who is running to unseat the Democratic president in November.

The trials will add to an already acrimonious presidential election as Trump's allies again seize on embarrassing details from the younger Biden's troubled life to attack his father, even as Trump faces his own legal problems. Trump is charged in four criminal



DAMIAN DOVARGANES/AP

Attorney Abbe Lowell, representing Hunter Biden in various legal matters, arrives outside federal court Wednesday in Los Angeles.

cases, including a hush money trial underway in New York.

Hunter Biden's lawyers, who have pushed for dismissals and delays in both cases, say they have been struggling to line up expert witnesses to testify in the high-profile trial in Los Angeles.

Prosecutors on Wednesday pushed back on the delay request, describing it as a straightforward

tax case. Prosecutor Leo Wise told the judge: "The time to try this case is now."

Hunter Biden was not required to attend the hearing in Los Angeles federal court and did not do so.

The judge cautioned his lawyer, Abbe Lowell, that this would be the only delay in the case, barring an order from a higher court.

US lawsuit alleges Ticketmaster, Live Nation monopoly

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department filed a sweeping antitrust lawsuit against Ticketmaster and parent company Live Nation Entertainment on Thursday, accusing them of running an illegal monopoly over live events in

America — squelching competition and driving up prices for fans.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Manhattan, was being brought with 30 state and district attorneys general and seeks to break up the monopoly they say is squeezing out smaller promoters

and hurting artists.

The Justice Department accuses Live Nation of practices that allow it to maintain a stranglehold over the live music scene. Ticketmaster, which merged with Live Nation in 2010, is the world's largest ticket seller.

Third American named in a foiled coup plot in Congo

Associated Press

Congo's army spokesman on Tuesday released the name of the third American involved in a foiled coup plot in Kinshasa, while family members in Utah gathered to mourn Christian Malanga, the eccentric leader of the brazen and ill-fated attack targeting the presidential palace over the weekend.

Brig. Gen. Sylvain Ekenge told The Associated Press the third American was Taylor Thomson, but his family identified him as Tyler Thompson. It wasn't immediately clear whether Thompson was among those arrested or killed on Sunday morning following the attack on the palace and another on the residence of a close ally of President Felix Tshisekedi.

Malanga, described as a naturalized American by Ekenge, was killed in a shootout at the palace after resisting arrest. The State Department said it could not confirm Malanga was a U.S. citizen. The other two confirmed Americans involved were a convicted marijuana trafficker, Benjamin Reuben Zalman-Polun, and Malanga's 21-year-old son, Marcel.

Authorities were still trying to untangle how Marcel Malanga went from playing high school football in Utah to allegedly trying to unseat the leader of one of Africa's largest countries.

"My son is innocent," his mother, Britney Sawyer, wrote in an email to The Associated Press on Monday, declining to elaborate.

Sawyer had regularly posted proud family photos on social media, including one in Decem-

ber showing Marcel, a young sister and a toddler hugging in matching Christmas pajamas. In 2020, she posted photos of Marcel lifting weights and dancing during COVID lockdown.

In a Facebook post early Monday, Sawyer angrily wrote that her son had followed his father. "This was an innocent boy following his father. I'm so tired of all the videos being posted all over and being sent to me. God will take care of you people!"

One video that circulated on social media over the weekend showed her son alongside a bloodied white man, whose identity was unclear, both covered in dust and surrounded by Congolese soldiers. Marcel has his hands raised and a frightened look on his face.

On Monday, at the West Jordan home of Malanga's mother, Chantal Malanga, relatives gathered to mourn the deceased leader. A steady flow of friends dropped by with plates of food and to offer condolences.

Sydney, a cousin of Christian Malanga's who answered the door, told AP the family was feeling "heartbroken" and "so raw" after learning of his death. They were discussing plans for a possible funeral in Utah, she said, without giving further details.

It wasn't clear how Malanga had recruited the other Americans for his ill-fated attack on the Congolese state



Thompson

NATION

Unusual yoga class is kind of a pig deal

BY RODRIQUE NGOWI
Associated Press

SPENCER, Mass. — Three little piggies went to a yoga class. Their human companions had a blast.

Wilbur, Charlotte and Bluey fit right into a growing trend of yoga with animals, adding some fun to the usual physical and mental wellness exercises at a class in central Massachusetts.

Darting and strolling among the yoginis making downward dog, crow and cobra poses, the piglets also dug up a backyard with their soft pink snouts as two rabbits and a goat named Munchie searched for the tastiest shoots.

The experience was well worth

a nearly two-hour drive to the town of Spencer for retired New Hampshire dentist Stacey Delbridge and her daughter.

“The best thing about the piglet yoga was, of course, the piglets and how cute they are,” Delbridge said with a jubilant smile. “They were funny, you know. Just when you were getting to a point where you needed a break, you had a great visitor come see you, and you could quit without looking like a quitter. Yeah. They’re adorable.”

Beyond Yoga & Wellness owner Ashley Bousquet teaches piglet yoga, and says there is such demand that online registrations typically sell out within hours.

The classes begin with Bous-



Piglets interact with instructor Ashley Bousquet during an outdoor yoga class on May 17, in Spencer, Mass. AP

quet inviting participants not to fret over interrupting their flows to interact with the piglets, who come from a friend’s farm.

“During the class you have piglets causing mischief and running on you, on top of you or cuddling with you,” Bousquet said. “It’s super cute.”

Amy Finkel brought her two daughters with her, smiling broadly while snapping photos of piglets as the girls hugged a rabbit.

“Seeing them so joyful and

happy” was the high point, she said. The low point? “When it was over, because it just seemed to go so quickly.”

Practicing yoga with animals can produce unexpected benefits. If done with shelter animals, it may even encourage adoptions, said Rebecca Purchase of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals-Angell.

“Is yoga stressful to animals that join? It can be if it’s not the right animal,” Purchase said.

“But for animals that really thrive being around people and getting to socialize with them, it absolutely can be a benefit.”

Finkel is a big fan of animal yoga — she said it helped keep her mind from wandering. “I’m really focused on to what’s going on presently around me. And I think in today’s day and age, that’s very hard to do.”

“I just wanted to sit with them,” Delbridge said. “I could have skipped yoga and gone just piglet. All piglet.”

Sun’s closer magnetic field may improve solar storm forecasts

BY MARCIA DUNN
Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — New research indicates the sun’s magnetic field originates much closer to the surface than previously thought, a finding that could help predict periods of extreme solar storms like the ones that slammed Earth earlier this month.

The magnetic field appears to generate 20,000 miles beneath the sun’s surface. Previous calculations put the roots of this process more than 130,000 miles below, an

international team reported Wednesday.

The sun’s intense magnetic energy is the source of solar flares and eruptions of plasma known as coronal mass ejections.

When directed toward Earth, they can create stunning auroras but also disrupt power and communications.

“We still don’t understand the sun well enough to make accurate predictions” of space weather, lead author Geoffrey Vasil of the University of Edinburgh said in an email.

The latest findings published in the journal Nature “will be an important step toward finally resolving” this mysterious process known as solar dynamo, added co-author Daniel Lecoanet of Northwestern University.

Galileo was among the first astronomers to turn a telescope skyward and study sunspots, back in the early 1600s.

Solar flares and coronal mass ejections tend to occur near sunspots, dark patches as big as Earth that are located near the most intense portions of the sun’s shifting

magnetic field.

Vasil and his team developed new models of the interaction between the sun’s magnetic field and the flow of plasma, which varies at different latitudes during an 11-year cycle.

They fed their calculations into a NASA supercomputer in Northern California — the same one used in the 2015 movie “The Martian” to verify the best flight path to rescue the main character. The results suggested a shallow magnetic field and additional research is needed to confirm this.

The modeling was “highly simplified,” University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Ellen Zweibel, who was not part of the team, said in an accompanying editorial.

The results are intriguing and “sure to inspire future studies,” Zweibel said.

The new knowledge should improve long-term solar forecasts, allowing scientists to better predict the strength of our star’s future cycles. The sun is approaching its peak level of activity in the current 11-year cycle, thus the recent flareups.

Chances are Memorial Day traffic will be much worse this year

BY DAVID KOENIG
Associated Press

You didn’t think summer travel would be easy, did you?

Highways and airports are likely to be jammed the next few days as Americans head out for Memorial Day weekend getaways and then return home.

AAA predicts this will be the busiest start-of-summer weekend in nearly 20 years, with 43.8 million people expected to travel at least 50 miles from home between Thursday and Monday. The Transportation Security Administration says up to 3 million might pass through airport checkpoints on Friday alone.

And that is just a sample of what is to come. U.S. airlines expect to carry a record number of passengers this summer.

Their trade group estimates that 271 million travelers will fly between June 1 and Aug. 31, breaking the record of 255 million set — you guessed it — last summer.

The annual expression of wanderlust is happening at a time when Americans tell pollsters they are worried about the economy and the direction of the country.

A slowdown, and in some cases a retreat, from the big price increases of the last two years may

be helping.

Airfares are down 6% and hotel rates have dipped 0.4%, compared with a year ago, according to government figures released last week.

Prices for renting a car or truck are down 10%. The nationwide price of gas is around \$3.60 a gallon, about 6 cents higher than a year ago, according to AAA.

As in past years, most holiday travelers are expected to travel by car — more than 38 million of them, according to AAA. The organization advises motorists hoping to avoid the worst traffic to leave metropolitan areas early Thursday and Friday and to stay

off the roads between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday and Monday.

“We haven’t seen any pullback in travel since the pandemic. Year after year, we have seen

these numbers continue to grow,” AAA spokesperson Aixa Diaz said. “We don’t know when it’s going to stop. There’s no sign of it yet.”




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WORLD

UN OKs annual Srebrenica genocide remembrance

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS—The United Nations approved a resolution Thursday establishing an annual day to commemorate the 1995 genocide of more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslims by Bosnian Serbs, a move vehemently opposed by Serbs who fear it will brand them all as “genocidal” supporters of the mass killing.

The vote in the 193-member General Assembly was 84-19 with 68 nations abstaining, a reflection of concerns among many countries about the impact of the vote on reconciliation efforts in deeply divided Bosnia.

The resolution designates July 11 as the “International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica,” to be observed annually starting in two months.

The resolution, sponsored by Germany and Rwanda, doesn't mention Serbia as the culprit, but that didn't stop the intense lobbying campaign for a “no” vote by the Bosnian Serb president, Milorad Dodik, and the populist president of neighboring Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic.

On July 11, 1995, Bosnian Serbs overran a U.N.-protected safe area in Srebrenica. They separated at least 8,000 Muslim Bosniak men and boys from their wives, mothers and sisters and slaughtered them.

The Srebrenica killings were a bloody climax of Bosnia's 1992-95 war, which came after the breakup of the then-nation of Yugoslavia.

Both Serbia and Bosnian Serbs have denied that genocide happened in Srebrenica although this has been established by two U.N. courts.

Winds topple rally stage in Mexico, killing at least 9

Associated Press

SAN PEDRO GARZA GARCIA, Mexico—A strong gust of wind toppled the stage at a campaign rally Wednesday evening in the northern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon, killing at least nine people — including a child — and injuring 63, the state's governor said.

The collapse occurred during an event attended by presidential long-shot candidate Jorge Álvarez Máynez, who ran to escape. Videos of the collapse on social media showed

people screaming, running away and climbing out from under metal polls.

The victims “will not be alone in this tragedy,” Máynez told reporters Wednesday night, adding that he had suspended campaign events.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said he “sends a hug to family members, friends of the victims and political supporters.” Condolences poured in from across Mexico, including by other presidential candidates.

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WEEKEND



Cage the Elephant
resets with 'Neon Pill'
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Focus on Furiosa

Latest 'Mad Max' film gives backstory
to 'Fury Road's' coolest character

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Anya Taylor-Joy stars in "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga."
WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



Password to passkey

Microsoft is offering its users a new way to log into their accounts

BY TATUM HUNTER
The Washington Post

As passwords slowly go extinct, Microsoft is introducing another way to log in to your consumer account.

The company said this month that users logging in to Microsoft 365 workplace software, Copilot, Xbox and Skype can now use “passkeys” rather than traditional passwords or an authenticator app. That means whatever biometric authentication (such as a thumbprint or face ID) you use to open your phone or computer will be all you need to access your Microsoft account. Passkeys were available on desktop and mobile browsers as of May 2, with support for mobile apps in the coming weeks, the company said.

Cybersecurity professionals and organizations such as the FIDO Alliance, an industry group that includes Amazon, Apple, Google and Meta, have been pushing consumer tech companies to retire “shared secret” passwords for the past decade. These passwords aren’t so secret — because people have so many to remember, they constantly lose or forget passwords, which leads to lost time and money for consumers and companies alike. Hackers, meanwhile, steal passwords in data breaches. Last year there were more than 3,000 breaches in the United States alone, according to the Identity Theft Resource Center. Microsoft says its identity systems detect around 4,000 password attacks each second.

Passkeys, on the other hand, can’t be stolen or forgotten. They’re strings of letters and numbers that are unique to your account, stored on your device or in a safe cloud environment. You don’t need to memorize them — they’ll automatically unlock your accounts when you go to log in.

Microsoft has been working on passkeys since FIDO introduced the technology two years ago, said Vasu Jakkal, corporate vice president of Microsoft security. The company wanted to wait to release passkeys until they could function across consumer accounts, Jakkal added.

Many sites have adopted passkeys, including Uber, TikTok, Amazon, PayPal and Nintendo. Here’s how to set them up for your Microsoft accounts.

How do I set up a passkey?

Go online to login.live.com and select a method — face, fingerprint or PIN — to unlock your passkey.

From then on, you’ll select “Sign-in options” to log in with your passkey.

You may decide to turn on passkeys for other eligible accounts as well. To set up a passkey for Google (which includes Gmail and YouTube), open any Google app, click on your profile icon in the top right corner and go to “Manage your Google Account.” From there, go to “Security” in the left-hand menu, scroll to “How you sign in to Google” and turn on passkeys.

If you use a password manager such as Dashlane, 1Password, Apple’s or Google’s, you can save passkeys the same way. Your manager of choice should prompt you to save the passkey when you set it up.

Should I trust biometric authentication?

You can access your passkeys through the same biometric authentication you use to unlock your device — and yes, this method is safe and private.

Neither your device nor a company like Microsoft gets a copy of your face or fingerprint. Instead, your device uses some measurements of your face or thumbprint to create a mathematical representation of you. If your face or thumb matches this profile, your device sends the green light to Microsoft, saying it’s really you trying to log in.

Biometrics are securer than traditional passwords, experts agree. But if you can’t or don’t want to use face or fingerprint ID, you can still secure your passkey behind a personal identification number or password.

What if I share my account?

Shared devices and accounts — such as a library computer or family email address — can be a challenge for passkey users, said FIDO Alliance Executive Director Andrew Shikar. Some password managers such as Apple’s let you share passkeys with people in your contacts.

If you share a Microsoft account with someone else, it might be easiest to log in with a safe option like the Microsoft Authenticator app, which you can download on multiple devices linked to the same account.

Can I keep using my password?

Yep — if you really don’t want to set up a passkey, you can continue using a traditional password. Keep in mind, though: About two-thirds of people familiar with passkeys find them more convenient than passwords, a FIDO survey estimated.

ESR’s Qi2 3-in-1 charging station can charge an iPhone, AirPods and Apple Watch. It’s currently on sale for \$59.99.

ESR/TNS



ESR launches new Qi2 chargers, Tribit has new speaker

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Most people want charging accessories that are better and faster. Leading accessory brand ESR helps achieve this with its new collection of Qi2 chargers.

Qi2 is the latest standard in wireless charging technology, delivering 15 watts of power and utilizing magnetic alignment for fast and efficient charging. The Qi standard was limited to 5W, while Qi2 supplies charge up to 15W.

ESR’s new devices are designed for the latest Apple products such as iPhones, the Apple Watch and AirPods.

The ESR Qi2 3-in-1 charging station (on sale for \$59.99 from \$89.99) includes 15W MagSafe charging for iPhones, AirPods charging and a 5W space for Apple Watch charging. The stand has a ring of magnets so iPhones can be placed in portrait mode, landscape mode or standby mode while charging.

There’s also ESR’s Qi2 Car Charger (on sale for \$35.99 from \$39.99), which is marketed as the first in the world. It also supplies MagSafe 15W fast charging. It is built with a three-point vent mount and a support arm. This ensures steady viewing and navigation even on bumpy roads.

Another option for mounting and viewing is the included dashboard anchor. Both mounts have an adjustable ball joint, and a full ring of magnets enables precise adjustments in portrait or landscape modes for comfortable viewing at any angle and compatibility with practically all cars.

Online: esrgear.com

Just in time for the spring and summer, Tribit has launched the powerful-sounding XSound Plus 2 portable Bluetooth speaker.

Inside the 7.8-by-2.6-by-2.7-inch, 1.76-pound speaker is a pair of neodymium full-range drivers, producing 30W of twilight sound with crisp clarity. The advanced DSP and amplifiers feature an XBass-patented algorithm, wirelessly elevating the listening experience to new heights.

It pairs with Bluetooth 5.3 for a wireless range of up to 150 feet. Multi-link support allows for pairing multiple devices (sold separately) simultaneously for full stereo sound. The XSound Plus 2 is built with Powered by RunStretch technology for prolonged battery life, providing 24 hours of playtime with the volume at 60% and the XBass off. The internal battery charges with the included USB-C cable in four hours.

With an IPX7 rating, the XSound Plus 2 portable Bluetooth speaker can withstand being dunked in 3 feet of water without harm.

The Tribit app can be used to customize the sound in seconds. Users can switch between Audiobook, Max-Sound traditional, Jazz, Rock and XBass (the default) presets, or these presets can be turned off entirely. A customized EQ curve with nine bands that range from 80Hz to 13kHz can also be created.

The speaker has three built-in button modes and six default app settings. A row of buttons along the top controls the power, pairing, music selections, volume and more.

Online: tribit.com; \$69.99



With an IPX7 rating, the Tribit XSound Plus 2 portable Bluetooth speaker can withstand being dunked in 3 feet of water without harm.

TRIBIT/TNS

WEEKEND: MOVIES



SCOTT A GARFITT, INVISION/AP

From left, Anya Taylor-Joy, director George Miller and Chris Hemsworth pose for photographers May 16 at the photo call for the film “Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga,” the prequel to “Fury Road,” at the 77th Cannes international film festival in southern France.

Miller and the method to ‘Mad Max’

Although no longer a doctor, ‘Furiosa’ director still approaching the people, places of 45-year franchise with a holistic eye

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Only recently has George Miller realized just how influential his medical education was to the world of “Mad Max.”

Miller was briefly a doctor before finding filmmaking and his twin brother, with whom he attended university, remained one. As a resident at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Sydney, Miller saw people in birth and in death, in moments of, he says, “extremis.”

Extremis — a Latin word that literally translates as “at the point of death” — would be a fairly apt way to describe the postapocalyptic wasteland of “Mad Max.” It could apply to, well, all of the characters, or to the Earth itself. The more you think about it, the more Miller’s desert dystopia begins looking like a fantastical emergency room. The human blood bags of “Mad Max: Fury Road.” Furiosa’s prosthetic arm. Immortan Joe’s respirator mask.

“I don’t think I’d still be making films if I didn’t have that part of myself,” Miller said of his medical background in a recent interview.

“You’re looking at a human being from every point of view. As organs. As individuals,” Miller says. “Sometimes looking through a microscope and seeing their cells. Or an autopsy. Psychologically. In every way, you’re looking at the human being. That’s what you do as a storyteller.”

Miller’s holistic eye could apply to the sprawling saga of “Mad Max,” too. It’s a world that has lived in his head for nearly half a century. Unlike most other long-running film franchises, it’s exclusively Miller’s. The 79-year-old filmmaker has written and directed every film, from 1979’s “Mad Max” to the new “Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga,” now in theaters.

Also unlike that of most franchises, Miller’s vision has grown only more kinetic with time. “Fury Road,” considered among the greatest action films ever

riosa, enlarges the saga, and, particularly in a few breathless sequences, maintains the same headlong momentum.

“I don’t do anything with my hands anymore,” Miller says. “There’s always someone who can type faster than me. There’s always someone who can cut faster than me. There’s always someone who can operate a camera much better than me. So it’s all in the head.”

“I can quote some of the lines from the movie, but I know virtually every cut of virtually every movie I’ve made — and in

bles and discord among its cast. Friction continued in the years after, too, as Miller and Warner Bros. sued each other in a pay dispute.

Those issues eventually got ironed out and attention turned to a pair of scripts Miller had ready. While “Fury Road” was stuck in delay, Miller had written treatments for both “Furiosa” and “The Wasteland,” a “Mad Max” film taking place a year before “Fury Road.” He hopes to make that soon. First came “Furiosa,” which Miller first intended to be an anime.

“I had no thoughts of making it into a feature film,” he says. “But when ‘Fury Road’ was delayed yet again by rains, there was no point in making an anime before we made ‘Fury Road.’ By the time we made ‘Fury Road,’ all the history of that, we decided to make it as a feature.”

Miller reassembled much of the same team from “Fury Road”: editor Margaret Sixel (Miller’s wife), co-writer Nico Lathouris, producer Doug Mitchell, production designer Colin Gibson and stunt coordinator Guy Norris. But his cast would be largely new. For a younger Furiosa, he turned to Taylor-Joy. As they discussed her casting, Miller asked Taylor-Joy to film herself doing the “Mad as Hell” monologue from “Network.”

How was her Peter Finch? “I got the part,” Taylor-Joy says, smiling. Then came the hard part: shooting “Furiosa.”

“You’re looking at a human being from every point of view. As organs. As individuals. Sometimes looking through a microscope and seeing their cells. Or an autopsy. Psychologically. In every way, you’re looking at the human being. That’s what you do as a storyteller.”

“Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga” director George Miller of using his medical background to make films

made, moved like Buster Keaton on steroids, with madcap stunts and continual forward movement, all agonizingly spliced together from the briefest of shots amid an infamously troubled production. “Furiosa,” a prequel to the events of that film starring Anya Taylor-Joy as a young Fu-

riosa, enlarges the saga, and, particularly in a few breathless sequences, maintains the same headlong momentum.

But it took time to restart “Mad Max.” As sensational as the response was to “Fury Road,” which won six Oscars, its making was marred by production trou-

SEE MILLER ON PAGE 16

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Miller: Stars praise experience on new film

FROM PAGE 15

"It's what I wanted. I knew I wanted something that was going to test me in every way, shape and form," Taylor-Joy says. "And I got that experience. Anybody that's attracted to making a 'Mad Max' movie, if it's not arduous in some way, I personally would feel cheated. That's not what you go to the wasteland for."

That included only some three dozen lines in the whole movie for Taylor-Joy. On the other hand, a staggering action sequence principally on the War Rig took 78 days to shoot. Taylor-Joy says it was an exercise of piece-by-piece filmmaking.

"I could kind of count myself down," Taylor-Joy says. "I was like, 'OK, I'm below the vehicle. And now I'm on the side of the vehicle. And I've finally made it into the cow catcher. And, oh my God, I'm standing. This is better.'"

Chris Hemsworth, in one of the most colorful and transformative performances of his career, plays the villain Dementus with the flair of a deranged Roman conqueror. A key to unlocking the character, Hemsworth says, was a tip from Miller to try journaling in the voice of Dementus, a maniac with his own painful history who wears his Rosebud — a teddy bear — strapped to his back.

"It was the most satisfying experience that I've had," Hemsworth says of the role. "The script gave me so many more options and directions that I could take a character than I had previously been given. It was a big departure from everything else I'd done."

Lengthy as the making of "Furiosa" was, both stars went into the process determined to have a more positive environment than on "Fury Road."

"We all went in to make this — not excusing any kind of behavior — wanting to be extra kind to each other," Taylor-Joy says. "Especially for me, I'm a big George Miller fan. I wanted to make sure he felt respected and heard and cared on set."

"Mad Max" has by now morphed into a kind of archetype — a near-future Western with amped-up modern anxieties. As before in "Mad Max," water is short and natural resources are brutally battled over in "Furiosa."

"You could argue that depending on where you are in history, where you are in time and space, there is always a sense of potential chaos and a fallen world," Miller says. "It's always there in the zeitgeist."

But, Miller points out, these movies are largely shot outdoors, and the conditions he's made them in have markedly changed with time. Miller remembers visiting an area of the Great Barrier Reef in the early '70s. When he returned decades later to the same beach, "the difference was shocking to me."

"All of that stuff is there," Miller says. "And it has to be expressed in any story you tell about the world."

Miller's brother recently retired as a doctor. But for years, they'd speak on the phone about his patients, discussing observations and diagnoses.

"That was a way, I realize, of us both processing the chaos of the world," Miller says. "I like to think that that's what I'm still doing."



Warner Bros. Pictures

Chris Hemsworth plays the villain Dementus, a maniac who wears a teddy bear strapped to him.



Warner Bros. Pictures

Tom Burke, left, as Praetorian Jack and Anya Taylor-Joy as Furiosa in "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga."

Frustration with 'Furiosa'

Prequel to 'Max Max: Fury Road' built around titular character but Taylor-Joy meek, doesn't get enough screen time and is overshadowed by everybody else

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

At the beginning of "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga," we are introduced to a kick-ass woman who rides a horse, then a motorbike, nails a few bad guys with sharpshooting finesse and fights off a mob. But it's not Furiosa — it's her mom.

That's one of the oddities of this latest offering in the Mad Max Cinematic Universe: Creator and director George Miller has taken the coolest role of 2015's "Mad Max: Fury Road" and built a whole prequel around her, yet has her overshadowed by everyone else.

The adult Furiosa — a coiled, clenched Anya Taylor-Joy — only appears after the first hour-mark. We get way too much preteen Furiosa, and she's meek for another quarter of the film. We, frankly, wanted more. Charlize Theron as Furiosa promised a "Top Gun" swagger, yet Taylor-Joy mostly does furious side-eye.

What goes into making adult Furiosa is very unpleasant: She endures childhood kidnapping and torture, goes mute, passes herself as a boy, gets traded for gas, works her way up a madman's hierarchy and only in the final scenes does she have real agency. We do learn how her left hand was maimed and that she was sweet on a guy. But making her mute? In her own movie?

Back are some familiar, scarred faces — Immortan Joe, The People Eater and a legion of half-naked War

Boys. The new mega villain is Chris Hemsworth's Dementus, who has a hunger for human blood sausage and a knack for spectacularly murdering people whom Furiosa cares about.

Miller has added pretentious chapter titles like he was making a black-and-white Czech New Wave exposition on existentialism — "The Pole of Inaccessibility" and "The Stowaway" are among the sections — despite also employing a narrator.

By the time Miller is finished, he's built an epic, gritty history in the Wasteland like "Lord of the Rings" or "Game of Thrones." But was the point of this franchise a better understanding of the negotiating tactics of untrusty warlords in a hellscape? No: It was rocket-propelled grenades, motorcycles, chains, massive sandstorms and cracked skulls.

The best action sequence happens at the halfway point — not a good omen — with a 15-minute sequence inside, over and under a barreling silver double-tanker War Rig while it is being attacked by motorbikes, buggies and parachuting adversaries. It's a marvel, truly, but since 2015 we've had cooler moments in things like "Mission: Impossible" and "Fast and Furious" so, sorry, mind not blown.

Viewers also spend time whipping through the Citadel, the Bullet Farm and Gas Town, but there's something missing — that unpredictable spark of madness, maybe. Perhaps once you've seen an insane guy chained to the outside of a zooming truck play-

ing guitar solos in front of a wall of amps with fire coming out of the headstock, the shock wears off.

Speaking of heavy metal, Hemsworth wears fingerless gloves, a codpiece, leather pants, a sleeveless leather vest and flowing hair, like he was a member of Mötley Crüe circa 1983. He has decided to perform his role in full psychotic camp — licking the tears of a victim, he describes them as "zesty" — and proves it by incorporating a teddy bear into his ensemble. Perhaps he should have his own stand-alone movie, because he doesn't really fit in here as the deranged comedy monster in a film with grim faces and famine.

A large part of the problem is that young Furiosa is on an epic hero's quest to go home — like "The Odyssey" or any "John Wick" movie — but we know from "Fury Road" that the Green Place is no more. So "Furiosa" then just becomes a catalog of crazy stuff that happens to her until it morphs into her cold-blooded quest for revenge. There's no real risk either because we know Furiosa lives to team up with Tom Hardy in 2015.

It feels like with this fifth Mad Max installment, Miller is trying to add operatic heft and seriousness to what started in 1979 as a fun, rip-roaring smear of nightmarish, postapocalyptic motor oil. In that case, "Fury Road" was fantastic, but "Furiosa" is just fine.

"Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga" is rated R for sequences of strong violence and grisly images. Running time: 148 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

Animated 'Garfield Movie' far from purr-fect

New film breaks from funny pages canon in its attempts to monetize comic icon again by giving him an origin story

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

If you catch the latest Garfield movie, you might not expect to find the famous orange feline at one point running from bad guys on the top of a speeding train. Lasagna eating? Sure. But any sort of cardio?

Then prepare for "The Garfield Movie," a curious new animated attempt to monetize the comic icon again by giving him an origin story and then asking him to do things a galaxy away from what he does in the funny pages. It's like if Snoopy ran an underground bare-knuckle fight club.

Chris Pratt voices the Monday-hating, self-centered hero and Samuel L. Jackson animates his long-lost father, who abandoned Garfield in an alley one rainy night, leading to lifelong trauma. That may explain his endless appetite, to fill the void of parental neglect.

"The Garfield Movie," directed by Mark Dindal, reunites Garfield and his not-so-savory dad — there's no mention of a mom and there are shades of the plots from "Kung Fu Panda 3" and "Chicken Run" — as he gets caught up in a criminal plot to raid a corporate dairy and steal thousands of



COLUMBIA PICTURES, SONY/AP

Clockwise from left: Jon, voiced by Nicholas Hoult; Garfield's long-lost father Vic, voiced by Samuel L. Jackson; and Garfield, voiced by Chris Pratt, in a scene from the animated film "The Garfield Movie."

gallons of milk.

Sorry, what was that? Garfield is perhaps the most indoor cat in history and seeing him dodge massive chopping blades or boulders on screen is just plain weird. Making it even weirder is that his partner Odie — traditionally a drooling idiot — is remade here as highly competent, perhaps even a savant. This is not canon.

The movie gets mildly amusing as it re-creates the kind of vent-crawling, security guard-avoiding heist in the dairy along to the theme from "Mission: Impossible" and that's largely because the gang is being directed by a bull voiced by Ving Rhames, a veteran of that franchise. There are also nods to "Top Gun": I do my own stunts," Garfield says.

"Me and Tom Cruise."

The script — by Paul A. Kaplan, Mark Torgove and David Reynolds — grounds the movie firmly in today, with Garfield using food delivery phone apps and Bluetooth, watching Catflix and characters declaring that they are "self-actualized." There's also some pretty awkward product placement, like for

Olive Garden, that may not send the message it wanted.

This is the part when we talk about food abuse. Garfield has a bit of a problem on this front, and the filmmakers more than lean into it. Thousands of pounds of junk food get inhaled by the tabby, but not salad. Heaven is described as an "all-you-can-eat buffet in the sky," and cheese is Garfield's "love language." It's the laziest kind of writing.

There's a mini "Ted Lasso" reunion when Hannah Waddingham (playing a psychotic gang leader) and Brett Goldstein (as her henchman) appear, while Snoop Dogg has a cameo as the voice of a one-eyed cat and offers a song that runs over the credits.

The animation is pretty great — the backgrounds, at least. Ladders show rust and forests are lush, but then the main characters are a step or two less realized, more cartoonish. Jim Davis, who created Garfield, is an executive producer, so he must be OK with this forgettable, unfunny animated slog.

At one point, Garfield says "Bury me in cheese," and that seems a fitting final resting place for this cat's film career.

"The Garfield Movie" is rated PG for mild thematic elements, action and peril. Running time: 101 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

Other entries unnecessary after 'Strangers: Chapter 1'

By ADAM GRAHAM
The Detroit News

Talk about stranger danger.

"The Strangers: Chapter 1" is a completely unnecessary remake/reboot of 2008's genuinely unsettling home invasion horror thriller "The Strangers," and the first entry in a planned trilogy due for release this year.

Usually when an appetizer is this bad, you just get up and leave the restaurant; you don't wait around for the rest of the meal.

Maya (Madelaine Petsch) and Ryan (Froylan Gutierrez) are a bland couple from Chicago road-tripping to Oregon for Maya's job interview in Portland. They stop along the way to get a bite to eat in a small town, where the locals are needlessly hostile, as townies tend to be to Big City Folk in films like these.

The couple's car malfunctions under mysterious circumstances and the local yokel mechanic informs them he won't be able to fix it until the morning. There are no hotels in town but there is one of them "internet houses" — that would be an Airbnb — and no sooner do Maya and Ryan settle in do they get an aggressive knock on the door and a muffled voice asking ominously, "Is Tamra here?"

Fans of writer-director Bryan Bertino's

"The Strangers" know the original line is "Is Tamra home," and this is what passes for innovation in this dead-end dud from director Renny Harlin.

Once upon a time, Harlin was a big-swinging Hollywood heavyweight, helming "Die Hard 2" and "Cliffhanger," but his résumé took a hit when he bankrupted a studio with 1995's disastrous "Cutthroat Island." In recent years he's been making movies in China and his native Finland.

"The Strangers: Chapter 1" won't do much to build back his reputation. The original was a tightly wound nail-biter, full of looming dread, but this one runs on fumes: There's no tension or atmosphere, just recycled beats from the original, played like a cheap cover song.

The trio of masked psychos is back, even wearing the same cheapo Halloween disguises: a burlap sack, a baby doll mask and a pinup girl mask. Horror villains need not play by the accepted rules of physics, but this is an especially fleet-footed bunch, able to completely disappear from the frame in milliseconds without being seen or making a sound.

Several sequences are so jarringly edited that it's unclear what is even transpiring on screen, and an extended sequence in the woods never establishes any sense of spatial relation, so you can't follow who



LIONSGATE/TNS

Madelaine Petsch stars as Maya in "The Strangers: Chapter 1," the first of three films shot concurrently that are intended to be released within the next year.

is where, and when.

Not that any of it matters at all. The script by Alan R. Cohen and Alan Freedland fails to provide a reason to invest in the characters on either side of the stalking, and Harlin's direction is so phoned in that it's clear he couldn't be bothered to care.

The original's gut-punch ending — the killers' motive was that they had no motive — landed with a sickening wallop; this

time around it plays as pure, sadistic nihilism. As a nod to the cheesy soft rock heart at the center of 2018's inferior but stylish sequel "The Strangers: Prey at Night," this film cues up "The Best of Times" by Styx in one of its final scenes. But for this franchise, the best of times have long since passed.

"The Strangers: Chapter 1" is rated R for horror violence, language and brief drug use. Running time: 91 minutes. Now playing in select on-base theaters.

WEEKEND: MOVIES



AMAZON PRIME/AP

Using IMAX-certified cameras mounted on a helicopter, “The Blue Angels” documentary filmmakers were granted unprecedented access to the U.S. Navy’s Flight Demonstration Squadron, both on the ground and in “the box,” the tightly guarded performance airspace. The film has no staged re-creations, second takes or computer-generated shots.

Even better than being in the cockpit

‘Blue Angels’ documentary offers helicopter footage of squadron from airspace where no civilian aircraft has been allowed

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

If you’re looking for a little bit of fresh “Top Gun: Maverick” spectacle and thrill this summer, you’re in luck. A groundbreaking new documentary, “The Blue Angels,” is flying off of IMAX screens and onto Prime Video this week.

Using IMAX-certified cameras mounted on a helicopter, the filmmakers were granted unprecedented access to the U.S. Navy’s Flight Demonstration Squadron, both on the ground and in “the box,” the tightly guarded performance airspace. Unlike in a Hollywood movie, there were no staged re-creations, second takes or computer-generated shots. And they had about “5% of the budget” “Top Gun” had, those involved estimated.

The film was the brainchild of Rob Stone and Greg “Boss” Wooldridge, a former Blue Angel and subject of a 1994 film about one of their historic tours in Europe. COVID-19 derailed plans to follow their 75th anniversary season, but a silver lining emerged in the delay.

By that point, aerial coordinator Kevin LaRosa II had worked several times with actor Glen Powell, on “Top Gun” and “Devotion.”

Powell, he’d learned, had grown up with a Blue Angels lithograph in his childhood bedroom.

“(Powell) said, ‘I’ll hook you up with the Creative Artist Agency in Hollywood and we’ll get this done,’” Wooldridge said in a recent interview.

Soon, they were also talking to J.J. Abrams’ company Bad Robot and figuring out ways to collaborate with IMAX and show audiences things that no civilian has seen before, under the direction of filmmaker Paul Crowder.

Abrams, who also produced, had grown up living across the street from a former Blue Angel pilot and wrote in an email that he’d “always been intrigued by

their skill, bravery and heroism.” This film would take that fascination to the next level.

“The footage was filmed especially for IMAX,” Abrams continued. “Watching these pilots do their thing in this format — the jets literally inches apart — is utterly bonkers. Truly spectacular to see.”

One of the craziest ideas was to put a helicopter with a camera mounted on it in the middle of a demonstration, in airspace where no civilian aircraft has ever been allowed.

“Watching these pilots do their thing in this format — the jets literally inches apart — is utterly bonkers. Truly spectacular to see.”

J.J. Abrams
producer on documentary

It would be during a practice demonstration, but Wooldridge is quick to remind that there is no real difference between a practice and the real show when it comes to execution, the level of excellence expected and the danger involved.

“When Kevin said ‘let’s do this,’ my eyes got as big as saucers,” Wooldridge said. “I led the (Blue Angels) on three occasions and I said, ‘I’m not sure I would allow this to happen.’”

LaRosa had exhaustively studied how it might happen safely and ensured that everyone was properly debriefed. Still, on the day, everyone was prepared to hear “no ma-

neuver” (flight canceled) as everyone got used to the distraction of a helicopter in their airspace. Much to their surprise, the “boss” never called “no maneuver.” It all went according to plan.

“We researched every possible way to film that information, and everybody’s done it different ways from the ground. But to get into the air with a wing-mounted camera and all the cameras in the cockpit?” Wooldridge said. “It was unbelievable.”

LaRosa had done such a good job flying the helicopter that they were able to inch even closer to the jets by the end of the shoot. Crowder also used a Phantom camera, which can shoot 1,000 frames per second (the standard is 24 fps), to get spectacular shots of the vapors coming off the jets.

Beyond the spectacle, the film looks at the people in the jets as well, including the first woman to fly with the squadron as a pilot, Lt. Amanda Lee, of Mounds View, Minn.

“You can read all you want, but until you’ve spent time in Pensacola (Fla.) at the air base and really spend time with these guys, watching them do what they do and dedicated everything that they are to it, you don’t really get it,” Crowder said. “What we were hoping to do in the film was to portray a lot of that.”

Crowder recommends ignoring “mom’s advice” and sitting as close to the television screen as possible for the best viewing experience.

Wooldridge, who led the Blue Angels three times, said the experience of watching this film is better than being up there.

“I’ve seen it from the cockpit, my cockpit, a bunch. I’ve seen it from the ground as we debrief,” he said. But I’ve never seen it the way you see it in this movie. The perspective was so much better than I ever saw as a pilot. I’m wowed and awed by it.”

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Respecting the power of the Swiss Alps

I learned to respect the power of nature in the shadow of Switzerland's towering Jungfrau, just south of Interlaken in the Lauterbrunnen Valley.

Avalanches are a part of life here — where humble yet tough mountain huts are built on the downhill side of giant and protective boulders. Hikers, hearing rivers of falling snow rumble in the distance, scan the edges of distant glaciers hoping for a glimpse of the icy action.

Aiming for the heart of the Alps, I catch my train from the resort town of Interlaken down a long, lush valley that leads south to the snowy peaks of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. Once in my seat, I slide open the big window. The lush air, perfumed with the sweet, sweaty smell of freshly cut hay, fills my car.

Below me a swollen stream charges noisily down the center of the valley. Slowly we glide higher and higher into the Lauterbrunnen Valley, a glacier-cut garden of traditional Swiss lifestyles. This scenic rut has kept me from exploring the rest of Switzerland. From the Alps, I need nothing better.

The train drops me across from a grassy patch of land

cleared by an avalanche. I remember bringing a tour group here. My group had seven days of Italy ground into their clothes. I had been lifting spirits all day with promises of a self-serve



Rick Steves

laundry. As we approached the corner where I would reveal Lauterbrunnen's launderette, we saw its freshly crumpled remains. Our launderette had been crushed under an avalanche. Everyone on our tour was heartbroken.

Hiking past the bare patch of land where the launderette once stood, I head out of town and up the valley to a mighty waterfall.

For years, I've marveled at Staubbach Falls from a distance. Today, I climb for a close-up look. Scrambling up a pile of glacial gravel — as if struggling up a sand dune — I eventually work my way to the roaring base of the waterfall.

Through the noisy storm, a black rock face soars 600 feet straight up. What was a river bursts over the cliff into a galaxy of excited drops. The sun glints through the mist as wet and fleet-



CAMERON HEWITT/Rick Steves' Europe

Switzerland's Lauterbrunnen Valley looks pastoral — but hides a powerful dose of natural wonder.

ing prisms of color break into liquid fireworks.

I feel alone, engulfed in the roar. Then I notice a gray silhouette — a man — on the far side of the rainstorm. Suddenly, he grabs his head and falls to the ground. Racing to help him, I realize that Staubbach Falls hurls rocks (and that the small mountain of rocks he and I had climbed hadn't gotten here by

dump truck). I feel under attack.

As I help the injured man climb down the glacial gravel, we pass a sign that causes us both to pause. It says, in very clear German: "Vorsicht: Steinschlag." Looking up past the hand holding his wounded head, he translates it for me: "Beware: falling rocks."

Hiking down the switchbacks to the valley floor, I look back

and notice a Swiss flag. While many flags signal conquest, to me this tiny red-and-white Swiss flag signals surrender.

When I see nature flexing its muscles, it seems determined to teach us that the best way to control her is to obey her.

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.

It's a great year to observe D-Day right where it happened

Should attending D-Day commemoration ceremonies in Normandy, France, have been pinging on your travel radar for some time, there's perhaps no better year than this one to finally make it happen. This year marks the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings, and regional authorities are pulling out all the stops to make it a memorable one. Add to that the fact that the veterans who took part in the military action of June 6, 1944, are by now well into their 90s at the least, the chance to take part in commemorations in the presence of firsthand witnesses is an ever-diminishing possibility.



Karen Bradbury

There are many parts to this year's D-Day Festival, to be celebrated June 1-16 throughout Normandy. The region still bears the scars from this moment in history, and each year, it remembers and pays tribute not only to veterans from the U.S., but those hailing from Britain, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland and Australia, as well as to France's own men and women.

In addition to the solemn official ceremonies for heads of state and dignitaries, some activities will be accessible to the general public. One such happens on the night of June 1, when more than 20 huge fireworks displays will be launched from the five famed D-Day landing beaches — Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword — Allied code names given to beaches found along a 50-mile stretch of Normandy coast.

The official international ceremony to take place June 6 on Omaha Beach will be a high-level, invitation-only event. For security reasons, many beaches and sectors will be cordoned off. A map on the Normandy tourism website illustrates the closed-off areas. Official ceremonies continue the next day, when U.S. President Joe Biden will be attending an event in Cherbourg. Online: tinyurl.com/2pdzaf8



iStock

Omaha Beach is one of the famed D-Day landing beaches along a 50-mile stretch of Normandy coast in France.

The Normandy American Cemetery will also be the site of a D-Day commemorative event for ticket holders only on June 6. Family members of an individual buried or memorialized in the Normandy American Cemetery, or those traveling with a World War II veteran, can send an email to dday80@abmc.gov. The cemetery will be closed to the public on June 5 as well. Online: abmc.gov/d-day80

The D-Day Festival Normandy is the name given to an event organized annually between the end of May and into mid-June by the tourist offices of the landing beaches. Some 200 events, exhibitions and activities are slated to unfold along the coastline between Pegasus Bridge and Sainte-Mère-Eglise from June 1-16, from parades to balls to historical re-enactments. The following information represents only a small fraction of what's on.

A "Picnic Concert of Freedom of Omaha Beach" is planned at Vierville-sur-Mer from 6 p.m. June 1. Five hours of concerts will help build anticipation for the day's

main event, the fireworks display scheduled for 11:30 p.m. Entry is free and no tickets are required.

A concert titled "Tribute to the Heroes" takes place at Sword Beach starting at 9 p.m. on June 1. Entry is free and no tickets are required.

"The Forgotten Heroes of Utah Beach," a re-enactment of an air and sea landing including a demonstration by the Navy Seals accompanied by 150 re-enactors and amphibious vehicles, is set to take place opposite the museum in Sainte-Marie-Du-Mont on June 6 starting at 6 p.m.

France's largest gathering of C-47 airplanes will take place June 6-9 in Gonneville-Le Theil. Enthusiasts can enjoy watching these huge aircraft take off and land, particularly on June 9, when parachutists will jump into the surrounding marshes, weather permitting.

Grandchamp-Maisy is the site of the re-enactment of a 1940s-era village on June 8-9. More than 300 military vehicles, a wedding ceremony and more than 100 town residents dressed in period clothing will take part.

An air show June 8 featuring the Patrouille de France and many vintage aircraft in the air and on the ground will occur at Arromanches-Les-Bains from 3 p.m.-6 p.m.

Mass parachute drops are on the agenda at La Fièvre, Sainte-Mère-Eglise on June 9 from 9:45 a.m.-4 p.m., weather permitting. Parachutists dressed in period costume will jump from C-47s and other historical aircraft, followed by military troop drops.

A pdf copy of the entire program of events is available online at tinyurl.com/yybnh7pj.

A fortunate collision with another of France's great events slated for the summer of 2024 will occur in Normandy on May 30-31, as the Olympic Torch Relay passes through Omaha Beach, Cherbourg-en-Cotentin, Sainte-Mère-Eglise, Saint-Lô and numerous other villages. The Olympic Torch is presently making a 68-day tour through the various territories of France prior to the kickoff of the Olympic Games on July 26. Online: tinyurl.com/yaSun539

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

6 Airbnb red flags

Travel writer recounts some of her own rental fails so readers don't make the same mistakes

NATALIE B. COMPTON

The Washington Post

In the new Wild West of artificial intelligence-generated hotel photos and fake reviews, travelers are being tested more than ever when searching for accommodations online. After all, an Airbnb scam or dud can ruin a vacation. But some rental fails may be avoidable if you're a little more discerning in your hunt.

In my decade of travel writing, I have a pretty solid track record when it comes to Airbnb reservations — and I've also had my fair share of flops. Sometimes it was the fault of a dubious host. Other times it was my bad for missing the fine print. I'm confessing both kinds to you here, so that you can learn from my mistakes. Here are six Airbnb red flags I've gathered from unfortunate experiences:

It doesn't have a bed

Paris, 2018. I'd found a steal of an Airbnb apartment all to myself, around the corner from the famous Sacré-Coeur church, for just under \$60 a night. I whooshed through the online listing, dazzled by the price, the big windows, the washing machine, the location — sold. I booked it for seven nights.

When I arrived at the address, I opened the door to a shock. It was a narrow sliver of a studio, and it was dark despite the sunny afternoon outside. The apartment was off a charming public stairway on a steep hill, so those big windows didn't get much light.

But, more importantly, it didn't have a bed. In my hurried examination of the listing, I'd failed to notice there was only a picture of a sofa. After a week, I learned the only thing my back enjoys less than a European mattress is a European pullout couch.

It's above a strip of bars

Beirut is a legendary nightlife capital. I knew this when traveling for a wedding there last summer, but I didn't factor it into my Airbnb selection. I reserved a beautiful, historic apartment in a fun part of town close to restaurants, shops, bars — maybe a little too close to the bars. They were right downstairs.

Even if we stayed out late, the bars stayed open much later. Music throbbed through the walls, shaking the furniture of our third-floor apartment into the wee hours. Thank the heavens for earplugs.

It doesn't have a window

The price was too good to be true: \$30 a night for a bright-looking hotel room in the heart of Hanoi. But the photos and reviews on the Airbnb listing were encouraging, so I took a chance and booked the place in spring last year.

Exhausted and dirty after a few days on a train through the country, I arrived at the front desk, got my key card and heaved my backpack up the elevator to find my room. It looked like the one I'd seen online, but it also didn't. Namely, it was missing a window.

I've tried the no-window life a few times over the course of some cheap hostel stays in Bangkok and Malaysia, and one five-day windowless Airbnb in Lisbon nearly broke me. Windows are a nonnegotiable for me these days, and I'm usually good about checking for them before I book. What happened this time? It turns out the listing featured photos of multiple room types, one with a window and apparently one without.



PHOTOS BY NATALIE B. COMPTON/The Washington Post

The reporter's Paris Airbnb apartment in March 2018, featuring no actual bed. Natalie Compton says she overlooked the fact that there was only a picture of a sofa in the listing: She was dazzled by its location near Sacré-Coeur church and its mention of big windows and a washing machine — for under \$60 a night.

Maybe I could have looked harder at the photos and spotted that they were featuring at least two different rooms, but in this case, I'm putting the blame on the Airbnb host, not me. Mostly, I think, I'll be wary of \$30 hotel rooms.

It doesn't have air conditioning

In May 2021, I paid almost \$400 to rent a camper van for a few nights and test out #vanlife on the Hawaiian island of Maui. I checked to see whether there was enough space for me to sleep. I checked where I was allowed to park. What I did not check to see was whether the van had air conditioning, a critical misstep in a tropical rainforest biome.

It was fine driving with the windows down, but the minute I hit a red light or parked, the van turned into a sauna.

It doesn't have a private toilet

A vacation can be a wonderful way to connect with your roman-



For their honeymoon this month, Compton and her husband booked a fifth-floor Paris walk-up with 92 stairs. Even worse, the Airbnb was located right above a slew of smelly meat and fish markets.

SEE AIRBNB ON PAGE 21

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Airbnb: Trips underscore importance of reviewing unit listings very carefully

FROM PAGE 20

tic partner. You're off the clock, free to let your hair down and relax, explore a new place or return to a favorite home away from home. It's a recipe for romance — unless your hotel room has a toilet in the middle of it.

The listing I booked last summer, a block away from a popular beach, promised a freshly remodeled interior with modern fixtures and a lovely balcony. It hid the fact — by way of misleading close-up photos — that only a few parts of the studio had been updated and the bathroom was not in its own sealed-off room but was, instead, an 8-foot-tall glass enclosure that didn't reach the ceiling.

It had just enough frosting on the glass to keep parts, but not all, of your body obscured while you were inside. That meant while you were on the bed, you could see your beloved's shins posted up by the john, and sounds best kept private traveled freely.

It's above open-air meat markets

The day after my wedding this month, my newly minted husband and I hopped on a red-eye

to Paris for six days to celebrate. It wasn't a big honeymoon blow-out: We flew economy with a connection and had booked a reasonably priced Airbnb. The apartment seemed much nicer than our usual budget picks — with a quintessentially Parisian balcony and large living room — but somehow not much more expensive. There had to be a catch.

And there was. For starters, it was a fifth-floor walk-up, meaning that at least twice a day we had to ascend and descend 92 steps. (We counted.) But we knew that when we booked it.

The real catch was the apartment's location in a chaotically bustling neighborhood, right above a slew of meat and fish markets.

Not petite, specialty charcuterie stores, but open-air stalls with bloody piles of pig hoofs by the dozen, Styrofoam towers of fish and liquids from all of the above flowing in front of our building's front door. In the warmer part of the day, when the wind was hitting just so, musky meat odors would waft up to our Airbnb's balcony.

We kept the windows shut to stave off the flies.



NATALIE B. COMPTON/The Washington Post

The reporter's husband sits on a bed in their Airbnb in June. Next to the bed is a toilet behind some glass that doesn't reach the ceiling.

Flying on a budget

What travelers should be aware of when booking flights on cheap airlines like Spirit and EasyJet



iStock

BY SOFIA ANDRADE

The Washington Post

Some flight deals seem too good to be true: \$26 for a one-way ticket from London to Rome, \$29 from Boston to Miami, \$44 from Denver to New York?

Such flights, all on budget airlines, are popular because they offer fast travel to in-demand locations at a lower price point.

But between the extra baggage and seat fees, the limited flight options and the lack of amenities, the costs of flying budget can become much more than expected.

Tom Varghese, owner of the travel agency Travel Tom, said he tries not to book budget airlines for his clients for that reason.

"Sometimes it can work out, if the cost differential can be dramatic, but these days that's not the case," Varghese said. "When things go wrong, it can go really, really wrong."

That's not to say budget airlines are always a bad option. Here's what travelers should keep in mind when deciding whether to book a budget-airline flight:

What is a budget airline?

According to travel experts, airlines fall into one of three rough categories. Legacy carriers, like American Airlines, Delta and United, offer more varieties of ticket and seat options, and are often higher-end. Low-cost carriers (think Southwest and JetBlue) still provide competitive amenities like Wi-Fi or better legroom.

Budget airlines are the cheapest of the three, offering savings that typically accompany little to none of the usual free flight perks, such as carry-on bags or refreshments. Often, budget carriers also will have less legroom and more limited routes and flight times.

In the United States, popular budget airline options include Spirit and Frontier. In Europe, customers can book EasyJet, Ryanair, Vueling, Wizz Air and a host of other carriers. And in Latin America, travelers can look at Viva Air Colombia, Sky Airline and Amazonas, among others.

How fees can 'really quickly' add up

While budget airlines can offer flights with 50% savings on a ticket, those sticker prices aren't the whole story.

Budget carriers almost always charge travelers extra to pick seats, get a drink or snack on the plane, or print their boarding pass in the airport. In addition, virtually all budget airlines require passengers to pay extra for their checked luggage and carry-on, regardless of the length of the flight.

These luggage charges can sometimes cost more than the flight itself. Charges can get even more dramatic if travelers don't conform to the often

smaller bag-size standards that budget airlines set. On Spirit, for example, checked bags that weigh more than 40 pounds can cost up to \$125 — and oversized bags are an additional \$150. And on Frontier, bags between 41 and 100 pounds come with a charge of \$75 to \$100.

"These things add up really, really quickly," Varghese said.

Budget airlines can also cause problems in the case of canceled or delayed flights. Because these carriers have fewer flights per day and more limited routes, getting on a new flight in the case of a cancellation can take a day or more during busy season.

"If you're going during peak weeks ... you better pray that everything goes well, because there's not a chance in heck that you're going to get your issue resolved in a timely manner," Varghese said. It's almost like "canceling your whole vacation."

You should also consider that for many budget airlines, especially in Europe, service airports are far from the city center. In London, for example, EasyJet and Ryanair often use Gatwick and Stansted airports rather than the much larger Heathrow. The cost of taxis or other transit from these airports can be high, in some cases outweighing the money saved by booking a budget flight.

Are budget flights right for you?

Budget airlines can be a sound financial choice for a specific traveler.

Betsy Ball, co-owner of the Wisconsin-based agency Euro Travel Coach, said she often uses Ryanair and EasyJet to hop between European cities, since these flights can sometimes be faster and cheaper even than other forms of transportation.

"Depending on what it is you're trying to do, you can save a lot of time by getting a flight," she said.

While the cheap Frontier or EasyJet flight can make financial sense for the lone backpacker, the same won't be the case for families or couples traveling with carry-ons and luggage.

Mike Heck, a vice president at Fox World Travel, where he's responsible for liaising between Fox and its travel partners, said it comes down to the type of traveler and the trip they have in mind.

"If you're looking for the absolutely lowest ticket price — no seat assignment, no baggage, no amenities, no food or beverage — budget is a good thing to do," he said. "It's when you start to upgrade things — getting baggage, seat assignment, a snack on board, access to Wi-Fi — that's when it starts to increase the cost and it isn't as affordable as people think when buying the ticket."

It helps if you're flexible, too. Budget flights, Heck said, are "generally not for business travelers and generally not for people who don't want to have the inconvenience" of having to reschedule a flight.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY MATT WAGNER/Stars and Stripes

This view from the Donnersberg near Dannenfels, Germany, shows the landscape to the east. Donnersberg means “Thunder Mountain.”

Climb every mountain

Hike up Donnersberg in Dannenfels offers ‘thundering’ views of the Pfalz

BY MATT WAGNER
Stars and Stripes

Anyone driving north of Kaiserslautern has seen the Donnersberg, or “Thunder Mountain,” even though they might not realize it.

Signage on the A63 autobahn doesn’t allude much to the mountain, which looks more like a huge hill and is easily distinguishable thanks to its signature TV tower. Reaching an elevation of 2,254 feet above sea level, it’s the highest point in the Pfalz.

Living just a handful of miles away, I see the mountain every day and almost feel as if it has been taunting me to explore.

Still, it took me 17 months to build up the courage and the stamina to hike up the mountain, which often is enveloped in clouds during inclement weather and surrounded by a haze during the warmest days.

A buddy and I chose a mid-spring Sunday when, despite a slight chance of light rain, the views wouldn’t be affected. We started our trek from a parking area just south of the town of Dannenfels, nestled on the east face of the Donnersberg.

Two things immediately stuck out. The first was how well-marked most trails are. The second was that I didn’t prepare enough for the incline. But still, I carried on.

On the QT

Where: Dannenfels, Germany
Directions: From Kaiserslautern, take the A63 north to the Göllheim exit, take the L397 west into Dannenfels. To drive to the top, continue to Mittelstrasse and Bastenhausenstrasse before turning into L394. After a mile, take the third exit on the roundabout onto the K82. Parking is available after driving 1.5 miles.

Information: www.donnensberg-touristik.de

Matt Wagner

And I’m glad I did. The three-hour-long, 5-plus-mile adventure was a breath of fresh air, and when we got to the top, the views were worth it.

On the east side sits the Adlerbogen, a monument built in 1880 commemorating Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke, celebrated for his prowess in the Prussian army during the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian wars.

From there, you can see miles and miles, which on that day included so many golden fields of rapeseed plants, as well as my village, which looked the size of a postage stamp.

The Adlerbogen also has an American connection. In 1945, before the end of World War II, U.S. troops shot down the eagle that sits atop the structure. A restoration in 1981 returned the bird to its perch.

In addition, the Donnersberg

once hosted the largest U.S. radio station in Western Europe. The station was a primary hub for U.S. military communications from after World War II until its close in 2011.

I may have walked by the old station on the half-mile stretch between the Ludwigsturm and the Königstuhl, or “King’s chair,” a rock formation. Composed of rhyolite, a silica-rich volcanic rock, it is on the west side of the mountain and marks the summit.

There, many hikers took a break, sitting down and staring into the distance or reenergizing with a snack.

Still, the best part was getting “lost” in the woods. The Donnersberg has 5,830.5 acres of land, and people can traverse the numerous paths.

The terrain of the paths varies, with some being more wild than others. Most were well-kept, be it gravel, a natural footpath or even paved road. We also encountered mountain biking paths, which were narrower and muddier than the rest.

Climbing the Königstuhl can be dicey, as I discovered while watching an older man struggle coming down, even with the aid of a pair of trekking poles.

I suggest wearing the right footwear and not just any pair of sneakers. Boots are the best option, but my trail runners did the trick.



The Ludwigsturm, or Ludwig’s Tower, standing 88.5 feet tall, rises from the Donnersberg near Dannenfels. It has a refreshment kiosk located next to it.



This sculpture, “Wild Boar,” sits on the Celtic Sculpture Path. The path consists of 13 pieces of art and pays homage to the Celtic settlement on the mountain thousands of years ago.



Hikers climb up the Königstuhl on April 28. Composed of rhyolite, a silica-rich volcanic rock, the formation sits at an elevation of 2,254 feet, making it the highest point in the Pfalz region of Germany.

My friend and I also came across paths not marked on maps, “shortcuts” as a person from the area described to us, as we were lost trying to get back to the car at the end. She gave us directions, going well above and beyond the usual German “hallo” to passersby.

There is homage to ancient history on the mountain as well. The Celtic Sculpture Path runs for more than 4 miles and features various replicas of Celtic

structures, harkening back to a Donnersberg settlement from more than 2,000 years ago.

Overall, it’s a great place to spend a couple of hours in nature.

And if you aren’t into hiking uphill, no worries; you can start near the top by driving to a parking lot near the Ludwigsturm and still get in some miles on a much flatter landscape.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Eat like cowboys in Fiume Veneto

Italy's Old Wild West restaurant chain has old-time saloon feel, minus the gunslingers

BY BRIAN ERICKSON
Stars and Stripes

For as long as I can remember, I have loved portrayals of the Old West. My favorites are the ones where the actors convincingly channel its spirit and the saloon embodies classic towns of the era.

In a mall in the Italian city of Fiume Veneto, I happened on a restaurant actually named Old Wild West and decided I just had to check it out. My initial thought was, "How interesting. I wonder if it is any good."

Old Wild West is a chain with locations throughout Italy and France, and even one in Monaco. The Fiume Veneto restaurant is approximately 30 minutes from Aviano Air Base.

After seeing a post on the Aviano Rant and Rave Facebook page saying the restaurant is Italy's equivalent for the U.S. of the stereotype Americans have of Olive Garden fare being Italian food, I took the plunge and dined there with my family. We pulled on a door handle made to look like a six-shooter and stepped inside. Straight ahead through the entrance was a long wooden bar reminiscent of the ones in saloons of yore.

Although no one was playing cards or drinking whiskey at the bar, lively conversation filled the restaurant.

After some contemplation, I decided to start with the Mexican nachos under the Tex-Mex options. As I bit into the first golden tortilla chip, I was pleasantly surprised by its fresh crunch.

To solidify my opinion of the place, I made sure to select something other than what my wife and children ordered.

My wife went with a simple option, the Dakota burger, which is essentially a bacon cheeseburger. It reminded her of a backyard burger, and the ½ pound of all-Italian beef was both flavorful and juicy.

My daughter was not happy with the kids menu choices, so she ended up ordering a chicken wrap. My son went with the hot dog and fries off the kids menu.

When asked her opinion on the wrap, she responded simply "it's really good."

She couldn't find the right words to elaborate, but the portion was enough for her to leave



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Old Wild West

Address: Via Maestri del Lavoro 42, Fiume Veneto, Italy

Hours: Sunday through Friday, 12-3 p.m. and 6:30-10 p.m.; Saturday, 12-3 p.m. and 6:30-10:30 p.m.

Prices: Appetizers from 4 to 11 euros. Main dishes range from 6 to 22 euros. Desserts from 3.50 to 6 euros. Non-alcoholic beverages range from 2 to 4.50 euros; alcoholic beverages, 5 to 25 euros.

Information: Phone: +39 0434 957802; Online: www.oldwildwest.it/ristoranti/fiume-veneto

Brian Erickson

full. I do not think it was big enough to fill a hungry adult, though.

I ordered the pulled barbecue chicken, as I have always liked the dripping mess it creates that needs a roll of paper towels to mop up.

But this menu item appeared to be mislabeled because the chicken on the bun was chopped into chunks, not shredded.

Instead of feeling disappointed in having been misled, I went ahead and gave the sandwich a shot. The tender, barbecue-soaked chicken had a savory balance of sweetness and spiciness, which was complemented very well by the slight crunch of the toasted bun.

I decided against ordering an espresso to end my meal, although I did give in to the urge for one of the mini desserts. We are in Italy, so what could go wrong with gelato?

The Coppetta Caramello was indeed small, but the caramel-drizzled whipped cream on top of the small scoop of vanilla gelato was enough to satisfy my craving.

After finishing dessert, I walked around the place a little bit, and with its abundance of wooden trappings and cowboy-and-Indian decor, it really did give off an Old West vibe.

Overall, my experience was pleasant and I would recommend the place. I'll be going back sometime to give its steak dishes a try.

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@BrianErickson_



PHOTOS BY BRIAN ERICKSON/Stars and Stripes

The saloon-style bar inside the Old Wild West restaurant in Fiume Veneto, Pordenone, Italy. The chain has an abundance of wooden trappings and cowboy-and-Indian decor.



Mexican nachos served next to the Dakota burger with fries at Old Wild West in Fiume Veneto.



The pulled chicken sandwich served with fried potato slices. In the upper corner are the fried green olives, or "green balls."



The Coppetta Caramello mini dessert from Old Wild West in Fiume Veneto.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL



PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

The fireworks company Nomura Hanabi Kougyou has been lighting up the night sky since 1875; its fireworks displays have earned an award from the prime minister 21 times. Nomura Hanabi Kougyou's fireworks are made by hand of tiny lumps of powder called hoshi, or "stars," that scatter light in all directions.

Moving and soothing

Fireworks maker has been lighting up Japan's night sky since 1875



nese prime minister 21 times. Some festivals they provide fireworks for are the Mito Kairakuen fireworks festival, an annual event held in late July in Mito that attracts thousands of visitors; the annual Tokai Festival

By KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

With summer approaching, it's time to anticipate another season of cultural festivals in Japan, and the exciting displays of hanabi, or fireworks, that accompany them. Fireworks have been a big part of Japanese culture for centuries. At the forefront of many of those displays is Nomura Hanabi Kougyou, of Mito city in Ibaraki prefecture, which provides the firepower for about 40 events each year. "Only fireworks can gather thousands of people at once," company president Yoichi Nomura told Stars and Stripes during a recent tour of his operations. "They can move you and soothe you."

The company is constantly innovating, coming up with new ways to improve its fireworks shows, Nomura said. Innovation is a challenge. "It's not easy to come up with new ideas for fireworks," he said. "That is one of the reasons why we want new, young people, to come up with new ideas." Nomura is the fourth-generation president of Nomura Hanabi Kougyou, where firework-making skills were passed down to him. His fireworks are made by

hand of tiny lumps of powder called hoshi, or "stars," that scatter light in all directions. The hoshi are lined up, side by side, inside concentric bowls made of paper. The oldest fireworks festival on record in Japan was in 1733, organized by Yoshimune Tokugawa, the eighth shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate. It was organized to comfort the spirits of the Kyoho famine and cholera outbreak victims, according to Fujita Kanko, a Japanese tourism company. Nomura Hanabi Kougyou has been lighting up the night since 1875; its fireworks displays have earned awards from the Japa-

al Fireworks; and the Hitachinaka Fireworks Festival, a two-day summer festival held in Ibaraki prefecture that features more than 3,000 fireworks set to music. agee.kelly@stripes.com @KellyA_Stripes

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SHIRLEY LANHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Month of the Military Child

The PTO of Shirley Lanham Elementary School at Atsugi received a \$250 NEX Gift Card as the prize recipient of Stars and Stripes Pacific's Month of the Military Child 2024 promotion. Every student at Shirley Lanham submitted a story or drawing during this year's MOMC campaign. Great job, kids!

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WEEKEND: FOOD

A stuffed treat you'll flip over

McDonald's in Japan selling a decadent pancake-flavored pie for a limited time

By **JUAN KING**
Stars and Stripes

A sweet new item offered by McDonald's Japan is sure to pep up your taste buds, but time is running out.

The Maple Butter Hotcake Pie debuted on April 24, and seems to be a hit with customers sampling the fast-food icon's menu modeled after a kissaten, or Japanese retro-style coffee shop.

This compact hotcake is packaged in a thin cardboard pouch, just like the iconic Hot Apple Pie. Tear the perforation to conveniently eat your treat without burning your hands or getting messy.

The crust appears to be chocolatey, but don't judge this book by its cover. The first crispy bite

yields the flavors of a soft, rich pancake, including an explosion of salted butter.

This pie was definitely a hit with me. I enjoyed the crunchy, flaky, just-thick-enough crust, and it featured just the right amount of maple syrup — not overwhelmingly sweet.

This will go well with a coffee or other breakfast beverage.

Other kissaten menu items include a Coffee Jelly Parfait for 380 yen and Cream Soda for 320 yen.

The Maple Butter Hotcake Pie costs 200 yen, or about \$1.28, including tax. It's available at McDonald's Japan through the end of May.

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JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes



AARON KIDD/Stars and Stripes

Time is running out to try the Maple Butter Hotcake Pie from McDonald's locations in Japan.

JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL



The Japan News

Statues created by skilled artists are on display at the Sand Museum in the Tottori Sand Dunes in Tottori.

Crafty French connection

Sand sculpture museum in Tottori, Japan, honors site of 2024 Olympics

By TAKUYA KAMIDE
Japan News

A unique museum in Tottori, Japan, that exhibits sculptures made from sand is holding an exhibition linked to France, to mark the year of the Paris Olympics and Paralympics.

The exhibition at the Sand Museum in Tottori Sand Dunes, titled “Travel around the World in Sand, France,” displays 18 sand sculptures depicting the turbulent history of France and its glamorous art and culture. The exhibition will run until Jan. 5, 2025.

This is the 15th exhibition since the museum opened. The previous one about Egypt attracted a record 580,000 visitors.

“We’ll be able to hold this exhibition without limiting the number of visitors as we did during the coronavirus pandemic,” said a staff member. “We hope visitors fully appreciate the many delicate and beautiful works of art.”

Twenty sculptors from 12 countries created the works.

A reproduction of the Palace of Versailles of King Louis XIV is the largest work in the exhibition, measuring 22 meters wide by five meters high. It expresses the grand scale of the Baroque architecture with meticulous attention paid to detail. The way the Greek sun god Apollo is depicted riding a carriage is reminiscent of paintings on the ceiling of the palace.

A sculpture of Notre-Dame cathedral is created at 20:1 scale. The actual cathedral is currently being restored from a 2019 fire, and the sculpture is based on its pre-blaze facade.

A sculpture depicting the coronation of emperor Napoleon Bonaparte is based on Jacques-Louis David’s famous painting hanging in the Louvre. The rearrangement of the direction and position of each figure from the painting creates realistic sensations, heightening their impact.

Other works depict the King of the Franks Clovis I, the Hundred Years’ War (1337–1453), French

If you go

The museum is a 20-minute taxi ride from JR Tottori Station. Local buses are also available. It is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (entry until 5:30 p.m.) on weekdays and holidays. Admission is 800 yen (600 yen for groups) for adults and 400 yen (300 yen for groups) for elementary, junior high and high school students. A passport valid for the entire exhibition period is available for 1,400 yen for adults and 700 yen for elementary, junior high and high school students.

national heroine Jeanne d’Arc, a scene from Victor Hugo’s classic novel “Les Miserables,” the scenery in Paris, French fashion and food culture.

Executive producer and sand sculptor Katsuhiko Chaen said, “By all means, come and see the powerful works produced by top-notch sculptors.”

The Sand Museum was opened by the Tottori city government in November 2006 as a new tourist attraction at the famous Tottori Sand Dunes. Chaen has been in charge since its first exhibition “Italy/Renaissance,” with artists from overseas. The two-monthlong “Italy/Renaissance” exhibition attracted 110,000 visitors.

Works had initially been exhibited in a temporary tent set up outdoors, but a permanent indoor museum was completed in 2012. The fifth exhibition, with the theme of the United Kingdom, held that year attracted more than 500,000 visitors.

The 14th exhibition — “Travel around the World in Sand, Egypt” — that ran through January featured giant sand sculptures of the Pyramids and the Sphinx, attracting a record 585,762 visitors. A questionnaire showed that 91.2% of the visitors came from outside Tottori Prefecture, and the economic effect for the prefecture was calculated at a record 17.12 billion yen.

Until then, the sixth exhibition with the theme of Southeast Asia, which ran from April 2013 to January 2014, had the highest economic effect of 13.36 billion yen and a record 555,355 visitors.

Climbing limits being set on Mount Fuji to rein in crowds

By MARI YAMAGUCHI
Associated Press

Those who want to climb one of the most popular trails on Japan’s iconic Mount Fuji will have to book a slot and pay a fee as crowds, littering and climbers who try to rush too fast to the summit cause safety and conservation concerns at the picturesque stratovolcano.

The new rules for the climbing season, starting July 1 to Sept. 10, apply for those hiking the Yoshida Trail on the Yamanashi side of the nearly 12,300-foot-high mountain that was designated a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 2013.

Only 4,000 climbers will be allowed to enter the trail per day for a hiking fee of 2,000 yen (about \$18). Of those slots, 3,000 will be available for online booking and the remaining 1,000 can be booked in person on the day of the climb, Yamanashi prefecture said in a statement via the Foreign Press Center of Japan on Monday. Hikers also have an option of donating an additional 1,000 yen (about \$9) for conservation.

Climbers can book their slots via the Mount Fuji Climbing website, which is jointly run by the Environment Ministry and the mountain’s two home prefectures, Yamanashi and Shizuoka.

Mount Fuji is divided into 10 stations, and there are four “5th stations” halfway up the mountain from where the Yoshida, Fujinomiya, Subashiri and Gotemba trails start to the top.

Under the new system, climbers must choose between a day hike or an overnight stay at the several available huts along the trail. The day of their climb, they are given a QR code to be scanned at the 5th station. Those who have not booked an overnight hut will be sent back down and not allowed to climb between 4 p.m. and 3 a.m., mainly to stop “bullet climbing,” or rushing to the summit without adequate

rest, which authorities are worried puts lives at risk.

A symbol of Japan, the mountain called “Fujisan” used to be a place of pilgrimage. Today, it especially attracts hikers who climb to the summit to see the sunrise. But the tons of trash that’s left behind, including plastic bottles, food and even clothes, have become a major concern.

In a statement, Yamanashi Gov. Kotaro Nagasaki thanked people for their understanding and cooperation in helping conserve Mount Fuji.

Shizuoka prefecture, southwest of Mount Fuji, where climbers can also access the mountain, has sought a voluntary 1,000-yen (\$6.40) fee per climber since 2014 and is considering additional ways to balance tourism and environmental protection.

The number of Mount Fuji climbers during the season in 2023 totaled 221,322, according to the Environment Ministry. That is close to the pre-pandemic level and officials expect more visitors this year.

Recently, the town of Fujikawaguchiko in Yamanashi prefecture began setting up a huge black screen on a sidewalk to block a view of Mount Fuji because tourists were crowding into the area to take photos with the mountain as a backdrop to a convenience store, a social media phenomenon known as “Mount Fuji Lawson” that has disrupted business, traffic and local life.

Overtourism has also become a growing issue at other popular tourist destinations such as Kyoto and Kamakura as foreign visitors have flocked to Japan in droves since the coronavirus pandemic restrictions were lifted, in part due to the weaker yen.

Last year, Japan had more than 25 million visitors, and the figures in 2024 are expected to surpass nearly 32 million, a record from 2019, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization.



AP

A group of hikers climb to the top of Mount Fuji just before sunrise as clouds hang below the summit Aug. 27, 2019, in Japan. Those who want to climb one of the most popular trails of the iconic Japanese Mount Fuji will now have to reserve ahead and pay a fee.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Owning his story

Soulful singer McDonald reflects on his career highs, lows in humble 'What a Fool Believes'

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Something stopped Michael McDonald from telling his story publicly — him. The Rock & Roll Hall of Famer with multiple Grammys just didn't think he had one.

McDonald, a member of both Steely Dan and The Doobie Brothers who became a singular soul solo artist with such hits as "On My Own" and "Sweet Freedom," believed he was just a small player in the history of rock.

"I was afraid that, 'Well, how much of a story is here, really?' My experience is pretty much me living vicariously through other people's accomplishments," McDonald said in an interview.

Prodded by a friend — actor and comedian Paul Reiser — McDonald is finally owning his story this spring in the unvarnished and humble memoir "What a Fool Believes," out now.

It's the portrait of a remarkable singer-songwriter who had career highs and terrible lows, who battled alcoholism and self-doubt, endured popularity, mocking and then rejuvenation.

"I think we both discovered that this is really just a story about how random life really is — no matter how much we think we have a plan, and no matter how much we think we have a direction we want to go," he said. "What we really have to do is be ready to let life change on a dime and go with the flow."

Reiser said in a separate interview that the book grew from conversations the two had, mainly him asking lots of questions about McDonald's life.

"It's entirely selfish. I just wanted to read it," Reiser said.

"Everybody's in awe of his voice. Everybody loves the music he's done. But I don't think anybody knows anything about him," he added. "He just sort of floats on this frequency that doesn't get a lot of attention."

The book opens in 1971 with the author hung over in county jail. A 19-year-old McDonald has been arrested after falling asleep in a pancake house following a 48-hour cocaine and Jack Daniel's binge. It is foreshadowing.

It then goes chronologically, tracing the path McDonald took from humble roots in St. Louis to

touring around the world with two classic rock outfits despite a "propensity for making poor choices."

McDonald went from his first band at 12 playing picnics and civic events with a homemade guitar, to the local pro band Jerry Jay and the Sheratons and then touring with The Del Rays. At 18, RCA Records flew him to Los Angeles, but his debut album was scrapped and he was dropped from the label.

"My quickly rising star came crashing down to earth," he writes.

He would return to California a few months later — by car this time — with a more secure offer of session work.

"I was determined not to return to St. Louis until I had something to show for my efforts," he writes.

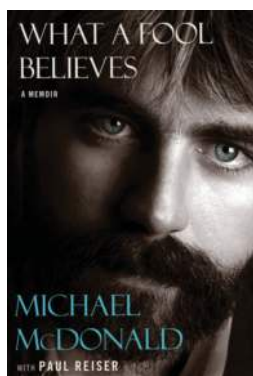
His career took an upswing when he was asked to sing backing vocals and play keys for Steely Dan. His distinctive, soulful voice graced memorable tracks on classic Steely Dan albums, including "Katy Lied," "The Royal Scam," "Aja" and "Gaucho." (That's him singing background on "Peg.")

When Steely Dan stopped touring, McDonald jumped to another '70s icon, The Doobie Brothers. In 1975 — on the eve of the release of its fifth album — its original lead singer, Tom Johnston, was hospitalized and unable to tour. The band drafted McDonald into the lineup to replace him, giving him 48 hours to learn its entire set.

McDonald was asked to join the Doobies permanently — \$1,500 a week plus a \$100 per diem — and would become somewhat divisive for changing its direction from country rock and blues boogie to a smoother, more soulful sound.

"There was an undeniable atmosphere of internal strife building within our ranks. And I will be the first to claim my share of the blame in that department," McDonald writes.

McDonald isn't shy about showing life's ugly parts — from having crabs as a young man to acid reflux as an older one. He admits to showing up drunk to a rehab support group two days in a row and once could be found in a bathrobe, a joint in his mouth and a salad bowl full of Lucky Charms on his chest.



INVISION/AP

"If you're going to tell a story, tell the whole story," says singer Michael McDonald about his memoir.

"If you're going to tell a story, tell the whole story," he says in the interview. "We all get where we're going in spite of ourselves, you know? And I think that's what the story is kind of about."

Musicians who read the book will get lessons in touring etiquette and songwriting, including hyperspecific details like chromatically descending II-V passing chord progressions.

Fans will also get stories about playing basketball with James Taylor and opening for Cher.

In addition to his solo albums, McDonald sang on songs by Elton John, Luther Vandross,

Kenny Loggins and Christopher Cross (that's McDonald singing "Such a long way to go" on Cross' "Ride Like the Wind"). He earned a Grammy nod for "Sweet Freedom" from the movie "Running Scared" and teamed up with James Ingram on "Yah Mo B There" and Patti LaBelle on "On My Own."

Eventually, McDonald became a butt of jokes for his propensity to show up on other artists' tracks.

"No one wanted to hear another Michael McDonald background vocal — I had dipped into that well perhaps once too often,

somewhere between 50 and a thousand times," he writes.

Redemption occurred in the 2000s when McDonald began issuing well-received albums of Motown covers. He recorded with Solange Knowles and Grizly Bear and showed up at the Coachella festival in 2017 with the jazz-funk bassist Thundercat.

McDonald, 72, says that writing the book gave him the chance to look back and let go of resentments to people he long perceived as standing in his way.

"I probably owe those people more than I have a reason to hold a grudge," he says.

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WEEKEND: MUSIC

Artistic rebirth

Rock band Cage the Elephant emerges from loss and hospitalization with new album, 'Neon Pill'

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

To say that Cage the Elephant's latest album had a turbulent birth would be an understatement. The band dealt with the deaths of loved ones, the pandemic and their lead singer's arrest and hospitalization.

"It's no secret that I had a medical crisis," Matt Shultz tells The Associated Press from Nashville on the eve of the May 17 release of the 12-track "Neon Pill." "I'm fully recovered. It definitely left a scar, but it's one that can be walked away from."

In January 2023, the Kentucky-raised singer-songwriter was charged with criminal possession of firearms after police found Shultz's guns inside his room at the Bowery Hotel in Lower Manhattan.

Shultz says that in the aftermath he discovered that for the previous three years or so he'd been having a bad reaction to a set of prescribed medications (Shultz didn't specify which), leading to episodes of psychosis.

"It's shocking how night and day the difference is from being on whatever medication is causing psychosis and being off of it," he says. "As I got off the medication, I went back to my normal self. And that was very odd because it was like having your life hijacked by another person."

That so-called other person had contributed to the five-year recording of "Neon Pill" and it was up to Shultz — who was hospitalized for two months and had about six months of outpatient therapy — to untangle the music.

"I went back to the lyrics, obviously to finish the album, and it was like reading the words of a totally different person and trying to decode what they meant," he says. "A lot of it was going back and trying to find the sentiment of what I was trying to communicate."

Shultz avoided jail time by pleading guilty to three weapons charges.

"I'm so blessed it wasn't worse than it was," he says. "And blessed that I got the medical attention I needed. I'm incredibly blessed to be surrounded by my family, my wife. Definitely, God got me through it for sure. I would be dead several times over."

"Neon Pill" sees the band reunited with producer John Hill, who worked on 2019's Grammy-winning

SEE REBIRTH ON PAGE 29

Matt Shultz of Cage The Elephant performs at the All In Music & Arts Festival at the Indiana State Fairgrounds on Sept. 4, 2022, in Indianapolis.

AMY HARRIS, INVISION/AP



WEEKEND: MUSIC

Rebirth: Cage singer addresses struggles head-on in album's lyrics

FROM PAGE 28

"Social Cues," and offers a kaleidoscope of rock, from the strutting glam of "Ball and Chain" to the piano ballad of "Out Loud" and the airy alt-rock of "Float Into the Sky." One song, "Rainbow," is infectiously poppy, as if Cage did a Dead or Alive track.

"It was very much like a culmination of all the Cage records combined," says Shultz. "John Hill definitely had a greater impact on this album, for sure. Not that he didn't have an impact on 'Social Cues,' but with this one, he definitely was pushing us harder to reach within ourselves and to

write the best material that we possibly could."

The album doesn't shy away from Shultz's experiences and the title track drives straight into them, with the lyrics

"Double-crossed by a neon pill / Like a loaded gun, my love, I lost control of the wheel." The song has become the band's 11th No.



RCA Records/AP

Cage the Elephant singer Matt Shultz says that "Neon Pill" is "very much like a culmination of all the Cage records combined."

1 on Billboard's Alternative Airplay chart.

"We definitely felt like that was the title track once everything came to be," says Shultz, whose bandmates are his guitarist brother, Brad; bassist Daniel Tichenor; drummer Jared Champion; guitarist Nick Bockrath; and keyboardist Matthan Minster.

Two songs connect to Matt and Brad's father, Brad Shultz Sr., including "Out Loud," which is based on the time the elder Shultz and his father had a terrible fight and their dad ran away, hitchhiking all the way to Florida. Feeling remorseful after a year, the younger man wrote a song of apology and hitchhiked back to Kentucky to play it for his father.

Matt Shultz says he was moved by the story and "so I wrote a song about the song he wrote." That song has the lines: "Man, I really messed up now / Clipped those wings and I came back home / Tried my best just to carry on."

The album's last track, "Over Your Shoulder," mourns his father's death in 2020. The Shultz brothers inherited milk crates with hundreds of their dad's songs on old cassette tapes. A new original Cage song emerged, similar to their dad's style, with the lyrics: "Don't look back over your shoulder / I'm not saying don't ask / When it feels like it gets colder / Every season will pass."

Matt Shultz says the entire album marks a bit of a departure for a band who he admits often in the past wore their influences on their sleeves.

"We would be in the studio and definitely at times trying to imitate and emulate. But with this record, I think, we were just really relaxed into ourselves and reaching to make something that we love."

REVIEW



VIVIEN KILLILEA, GETTY IMAGES/TNS

"Hit Me Hard and Soft" mostly upholds Billie Eilish's signature electro-goth soundspeaks as she continues to ponder the illusory nature of perception. The album clocks in at a crisp 45 minutes, a stark contrast to recent releases from Beyoncé and Taylor Swift.

All of Eilish's senses are alive on the ravishing 'Hit Me Hard and Soft'

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

Billie Eilish has been singing about looking — and being looked at — for nearly half her life.

Now 22, she broke out at 13 when her song "Ocean Eyes" went viral on SoundCloud; "Bad Guy," the smash single from her star-making 2019 debut album, scoffed at the suspicions of a crush's girlfriend: "You said she's scared of me? I mean, I don't see what she sees."

Eilish is still pondering the illusory nature of perception on "Hit Me Hard and Soft," her third studio LP in a career that's already brought her nine Grammys, two Oscars and more than 100 million followers on Instagram. The album opens with "Skinny," a breathy ballad in which she observes that "people say I look happy just because I got skinny." Disappointed but not surprised, she's continuing her thoughts on celebrity from 2021's "Happier Than Ever," which arrived as part of a wave of high-profile records (including ones by Olivia Rodrigo and Lorde) questioning the healthiness of pop's social media era.

"The internet is hungry for the meanest kind of funny," she sighs in "Skinny," "And somebody's gotta feed it."

Yet as its title suggests, the ravishing "Hit Me Hard and Soft" moves beyond looking to explore the more tactile pleasures and risks of Eilish's other senses. Sequenced intentionally, no doubt, right



Billie Eilish

Hit Me Hard and Soft
(Darkroom-Interscope)

after "Skinny," "Lunch" is a funky come-on about enjoying a woman's body — "She dances on my tongue / Tastes like she might be the one" — while the rootsy "Wildflower" compares her involvement in

a love triangle to the torture of being burned alive: "You say no one knows you so well," she goes on, "But every time you touch me I just wonder how she felt."

With 10 songs in just under 45 minutes — a study in crispness here in the age of "Cowboy Carter" and "The Tortured Poets Department" — Eilish's album gives the impression of someone who's accepted the unnatural demands of stardom and wants to figure out how to lead a full life in spite of them.

"Hit Me Hard and Soft" mostly upholds Eilish's signature electro-goth sound: the blend of folky guitars, glassy synths and programmed beats she's been developing with her brother and producer, Finneas, since the two began making music in their parents' house. But the newfound emotional liberation in her storytelling extends to the adventurous structures of tunes like "L'Amour de Ma Vie," which starts out as a low-key soul shuffle before transforming

into a propulsive rave jam, and "Bittersuite," which makes good on its title with three distinct parts.

In an unusual decision for this proudly self-contained duo, Eilish and Finneas welcomed contributions in the studio from their touring drummer, Andrew Marshall, and the Attacca string quartet (though both fit seamlessly into the siblings' established sonic universe). What registers as a bigger shift is the gutsiness of Eilish's singing: Long known as a committed whisperer, she belts here in a way we've never heard from her before; it's a total thrill to witness her climb up, up, up in "The Greatest," a thrashing rock song about unrequited love in which she congratulates herself for surviving "all the times I waited for you to want me naked."

That survivor's chutzpah surfaces again in the skulking "The Diner," which she narrates from the imagined perspective of a stalker; the song is filled with unnerving details: "I came in through the kitchen looking for something to eat / I left a calling card so they would know that it was me." Yet Eilish, who presumably drew from real-life experiences she's discussed, delivers the song with a smirk. She even offers her version of a breezy summertime pop in "Birds of a Feather," with a promise of never-ending devotion over lush acoustic guitars set to an easygoing groove.

"I want you to see how you look to me," she tells her lover — a fresh application for an old instinct.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Not-so-young Sheldon looks back

Iain Armitage bids goodbye to biggest role after 7 years

BY YVONNE VILLARREAL
Los Angeles Times

If this story began with a narrator, it would go something like this: Seven years ago, just a few weeks from making his debut as the face of “Young Sheldon,” the prequel to CBS’ blockbuster comedy “The Big Bang Theory,” Iain Armitage was a spirited, baby-faced 9-year-old dangling upside down on a pair of gymnastic rings at a park in Studio City, Calif., during a break from his grown-up gig.

That’s how this reporter first met Armitage. He was a kid who skipped and hopped across the park pavement and carefully set up a deck of cards to finesse a magic trick. But even at this tender age, he already had a list of credits that included HBO’s “Big Little Lies,” where he played the son of Jane Chapman (Shailene Woodley) who sets off some mommy tension after he’s accused of bullying a classmate, as well as the Brie Larson-led family drama “The Glass Castle” (2017) and the Netflix movie “Our Souls at Night” (2017).

But Armitage’s career-making turn in “Young Sheldon,” the coming-of-age sitcom focused on the childhood of Sheldon Cooper, the egotistical and socially awkward theoretical physicist memorably portrayed by Jim Parsons in “The Big Bang Theory,” is now over. The series premiered in fall 2017, becoming the No. 1 new comedy that season, and remained one of the network’s strong performers throughout its run. It even spawned a spinoff, “George & Mandy’s First Marriage,” which will launch this fall. The series centers on Sheldon’s brother, George Cooper Jr., aka Georgie (Montana Jordan), and Mandy McAllister (Emily Osment) as they build a life together in 1990s Texas.

Now, Armitage is a couple months shy of his 16th birthday. His voice is deeper, and he’s swapped gymnastic rings for pilot lessons. And he said goodbye to Sheldon, a character he’s played for nearly half his life, with last week’s series finale of “Young Sheldon.”

The final two episodes of the series, now available to stream on Paramount+, followed the Cooper family as they grappled with the death of their patriarch, George (Lance Barber), and prepared for his funeral; and Sheldon making the move to



WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT/TNS

Iain Armitage, left, and Jim Parsons on the set of “Young Sheldon.” The series finale aired May 16.

California to attend Caltech, where he’ll meet his “Big Bang Theory” pals Leonard, Raj and Howard.

Over a video call from New York, Armitage discussed his growth as an actor, watching Sheldon reach Caltech and life after “Young Sheldon.”

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Los Angeles Times: “Young Sheldon” was not your first professional onscreen role, but it’s been your longest. How do you feel you’ve grown as an actor across the seven seasons?

Armitage: It’s funny to think about because, especially with this show, I’ve fallen into such a rhythm with this character. I’ve been doing it for seven years, so it doesn’t really feel that much like a massive acting challenge anymore because, up until three weeks ago, I was doing it every day, for five days. I go through hair and makeup, I slip on those shoes and I’m in character. The more interesting thing, to me at least, will be when I next act. How does that look?

Does this feel like the right time for you to say goodbye to Sheldon?

Yeah. For so many people on our set, myself included, it was very hard to say goodbye. But I think it would have been hard to say goodbye if it had happened tomorrow or in 10 years. I don’t necessarily think that for me it was this massive letting go where I was so mournful it was happening right now. At the end of the day, as much as I love it, and as fun as it has been, it is a job. And

all jobs like this do come to an end. I’m looking forward to what happens next.

When you got that final script, did you want to read it right away or did you put it off?

Reading it definitely was strange. And it did feel like an ending. But there’s going to be an incredible new spinoff with Georgie and Mandy (the characters played by Jordan and Osment, respectively). It’s not really an ending, it’s a beginning in a way.

Fans of the original series know that a pivotal turning point in Sheldon’s life was the death of his father, George, who died of a heart attack as we see in this show. How was it to face that moment as Sheldon?

It was interesting the way it hit me because it wasn’t how I expected. I expected to be sad or kind of touched by how long we’ve gotten to know this character. But for me, it’s less about George and more about Lance. Lance is such a wonderful guy. It was more hard having him not be on set for the finale for certain scenes. We had that dinner scene without him. He brings such a light to the set ... and he’s got such a big personality.

Sheldon is someone who’s very literal and matter of fact, not really likely to express emotions or know how to deal with social situations or relationships. What struck you about how he was processing his father’s death?

In the scene where the family gets the news that George has died, I was very impressed with myself that I managed to keep

my cool because everyone was crying. It was very hard. We love Lance so much. He made it better; he was on set that day and for one of the rehearsals, he peeked in through the window. He had a very fun time with his own death.

It was interesting because, for one of the takes, I tried to sink down the chair and not quite cry, but start to get emotional, and (“Young Sheldon” co-creator) Steve Molaro very quickly was like, “No, don’t. Not even for a second. It’s almost more heartbreaking if we don’t see any emotion on your face. You’re completely lost.” When I watched the replay on the monitors, I instantly saw what he meant. There was one take where I did it the way he wanted; I think he [Steve] started crying a little bit. I understood it after seeing it.

Obviously, Jim Parsons and Mayim Bialik are featured in the episode and we see deeper into their future. He’s writing about his memories of this time of his life, not really interested in his son’s imminent hockey game.

I love it. Throughout our earlier seasons, they would sprinkle some older Sheldon lore throughout the voice-overs of certain episodes. And Miss Mayim, she also guest voiced at least one of them. I love getting to see that because it’s a really nice reminder that this older Sheldon that we’re seeing has grown so much and come such a long way and is a dad now and kind of has a softer way of looking back on his own

dad and of growing up and his family. He’s still Sheldon, but he’s definitely very different from himself as an 8- to 14-year-old in the show. No one’s the same as when they’re that age. So I liked that.

In the finale, Sheldon decides he’ll get baptized for his mom’s peace of mind. What did that moment reveal to you about Sheldon?

I really like it just because it was Sheldon being emotionally intelligent without realizing or knowing it because all he was doing was something for his mom ... it just shows his love for his mom, at the end of the day. They went through a couple iterations of that moment. I haven’t actually seen the final episode yet, but she said something along the lines of, “Are you gonna leave too?” You could just see her face was so devastated. It was such a beautiful moment. I loved her [Zoe Perry’s] performance so much.

There’s that moment just before Sheldon sets out to California where he’s taking in his childhood home one last time. He says he’s doing it so he can remember it when he’s older. Did you do the same? Were you wistful about taking it all in one last time?

A little bit, but at the same time, if I’m being completely honest, I don’t think I have the mental capability to keep track of all the different lasts. Because every single day on set for the final three months, everyone was like, “Oh, this is the last ...” and it’s this random thing. The funniest was when it would be something that we’d never done before. Like Miss Emily Osment held a party at her house on Sunday, which was wonderful. And somebody’s like, “This is the last time we’re gonna be hanging out at Emily Osment’s house on a Sunday.”

People always pay attention to the final words of a series finale. Sheldon has the final words, as he’s arrived at Caltech, and someone asks if he’s lost. He says, “No. I’m exactly where I’m supposed to be.”

I think it’s nice because it was definitely an on-the-nose scene, in a way; he’s at Caltech very much setting up what’s to come with “The Big Bang.” He has a long way to go. There’s an episode of “Big Bang,” where Leonard’s talking about when he first moved into the apartment and how the elevator broke and Sheldon being so much worse off than now in “Big Bang.” I like seeing that because it kind of shows that, no, he wasn’t exactly where

SEE SHELDON ON PAGE 31

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Sheldon: Prequel factor makes show's close easier

FROM PAGE 30

he needed to be. I think the people that he has with him in "Big Bang" will really help them out. It's a really nice line, but he's definitely got a long way to go.

Was that actually the final shot you did?

That was not. By design, the final scene we shot was the dinner scene, unfortunately, without Lance, although he was there on set. We went around the table and wrapped everybody one by one. They wrapped me last. That was the first time I cried about the ending. And I sort of just sat there. There were a lot of people in this little dining room. I just looked around and was like, "Wow, I've known these people for seven years." Some of them are newer additions to our "Young Sheldon" crew family, but it was pretty wonderful to get to look around and see everyone and that was the kind of first time I really felt emotional about the ending. I was a bit late to the party. But I was like, "OK, I'm at peace with this."

With the series finale, the question is always where do you hope your character goes from here? This being a prequel, you have an idea of where things go. Did having that sense of Sheldon's endgame make the process of saying goodbye to the character any easier?

It was odd because, unlike with a lot of shows like this, if there was no "Big Bang," that would feel like a very unsatisfying ending, because, what does that mean? He's at Caltech, his dad's just died, and his family is no longer moving to Houston, probably. George is sort of the breadwinner of the family. There's so many unanswered questions that end up slowly over 12 seasons [of "The Big Bang Theory"] getting answered and made reference to. It's really beautiful that we have that.

How about how are you feeling about this next chapter?

I'm excited. I'm getting my student pilot's license in two months, maybe. On my 16th birthday, I'll be able to solo fly legally. And I'm doing a bunch of fun extracurricular stuff. I'm learning languages and doing a lot of travel. I do want to continue acting very much. And I do want to go to college very much. I have a lot of fun things that I'm looking forward to. But right now, I have the luxury of at least feeling like I have all the time in the world, which is nice.



CBS

The "Everybody Loves Raymond" cast: From left, Patricia Heaton, Ray Romano, Peter Boyle, Brad Garrett and Doris Roberts.

Ray Romano's secret weapon

'Everybody Loves Raymond' star says casting Peter Boyle the secret to CBS sitcom's longevity, success in syndication

BY JOHN CARUCCI
Associated Press

"Baffling" is how Ray Romano calls the continued success of "Everybody Loves Raymond," nearly 20 years after the CBS sitcom ended its nine-season run. "It goes so fast."

That success comes as a surprise to the New York City-born comedian, who admits he's always filled with doubt. So, when he started working on the series based on his comedy, he wasn't confident in his acting chops, especially during the first season.

He didn't think the show would have survived if not for an unlikely mentor: The late Peter Boyle, who played Raymond's curmudgeonly father, Frank.

"He's one of the main reasons it worked for me, because he made me feel accepted and comfortable. He was that kind of guy," Romano says.

During a recent interview with The Associated Press, Romano shared insights about the sitcom, his relationship with Boyle and his career.

Associated Press: You took a big chance casting Peter Boyle in a sitcom, didn't you?

Romano: He wasn't supposed to read. We were just supposed to have a meeting with him. But he offered to read. And in his defense, it was a rough day for him. We really couldn't gauge whether he was getting the comedy of it, and we still said, "It's Peter Boyle, let's just go with the best actor in the room."

You recently honored Peter at the International Myeloma Foundation gala?

Peter Boyle unfortunately passed away from myeloma, and his wife, Lorraine, started this charity to raise money for the International Myeloma Foundation. I love Peter and he meant a lot to me and I agreed to be part of it and I host it almost every year. It's a night of comedy and it's a little bit of music and raises money for a good cause.

You mentioned that Peter led an interesting life?

He was a monk sworn to silence for two years. I don't know if you knew that he lived in a monastery. That was his pre-Hollywood days, and I don't know, I guess that didn't work out for him. (laughs)

Who would think that the man that played Frank Barrone had such an interesting life?

His wife was a reporter for Rolling Stone. And she interviewed him, and that's how they met. She was friends with Yoko Ono. They all started hanging out. And when they got married, John Lennon was the best man at Peter's wedding. So, he's just a fascinating guy and totally different from the character that he played on my show.

How big a find was Brad Garrett?

When you're creating a sitcom, you've got to get lucky. And we got lucky that we found Peter, we found Doris Roberts and even Brad Garrett. You know, we didn't write that role. Brad brought this persona that was nowhere in our minds when we were creating the show. So, we got lucky there. All those things had to fall in place for it to be successful.

But that wasn't the case for the first season?

If I'm being brutally honest, I was filled with doubt all the time. I don't know if I'm



AP

Left: Boyle in 2005. Right: Romano in 2020.

acting well, and I know I'm not in the first season. I can look back and see I'm stiff. We're trying to kind of nail down the tone. And so it's a little bumpy in the beginning.

When did the show find its way?

We were in 110th place in the Nielsens, and then decided to put us on after "Cosby," for the last four episodes, and "Cosby" was their No. 1 show. And if we held the audience, we were going to make it. If we didn't, they were going to cancel us. That's what we knew. And we not only held his audience, I think we went up a tick for those last four episodes. That's when it starts to sink in.

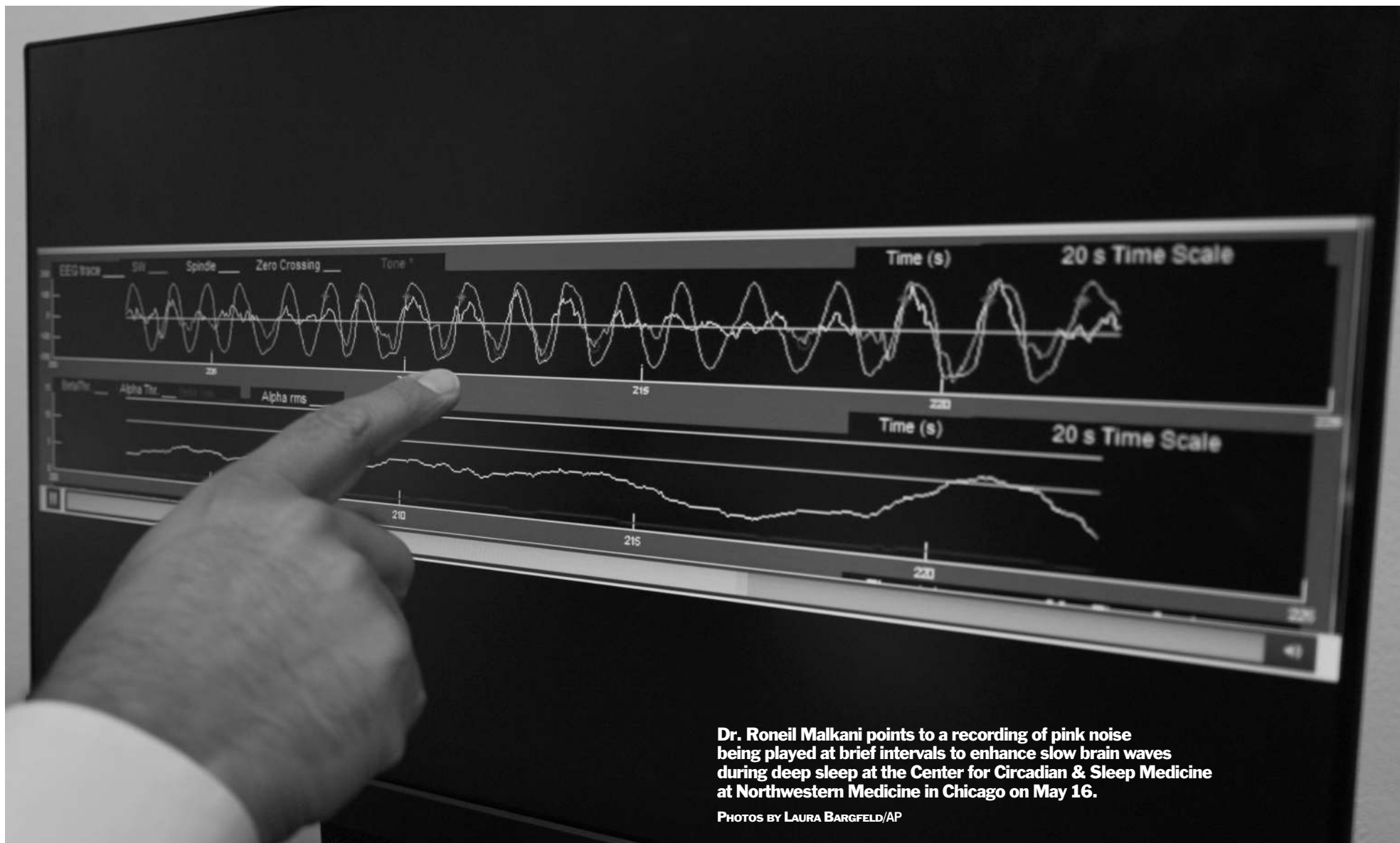
How much do you get out to the clubs these days?

I still do it. I don't get to do it as much. When I go to New York, I always go to my club, the Comedy Cellar, downtown.

Do you try your comedy on the family?

To be honest, it usually comes from the family. A lot of stuff comes from what my wife says without trying to be funny. I have this bit now in my act and it's an exact quote from my wife. She said, to me, "You don't talk a lot, but when you do, it's too much." After she said that I wrote it down: "That's going in the act."

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



Dr. Roneil Malkani points to a recording of pink noise being played at brief intervals to enhance slow brain waves during deep sleep at the Center for Circadian & Sleep Medicine at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago on May 16.

PHOTOS BY LAURA BARGFELD/AP

What's the buzz about color noise?

Early research indicates that white, pink, brown types may be beneficial for sleep, concentration, relaxation

BY CARLA K. JOHNSON
Associated Press

You may have heard of white noise used to mask background sounds. Now, it has colorful competition.

There's a growing buzz around pink noise, brown noise, green noise — a rainbow of soothing sounds — and their theoretical effects on sleep, concentration and the relaxation response.

The science is new with only a few small studies behind it, but that hasn't stopped thousands of people from listening to hours of these noises on YouTube and on meditation apps that provide a palette of color noises with paid subscriptions.

What is pink noise?

To better understand pink noise, start with white, the most familiar of the color noises.

White noise is similar to static on a radio or TV. Sound engineers define it as having equal volume across all the frequencies audible to the human ear. It gets its name from white light, which contains all the visible color wavelengths.

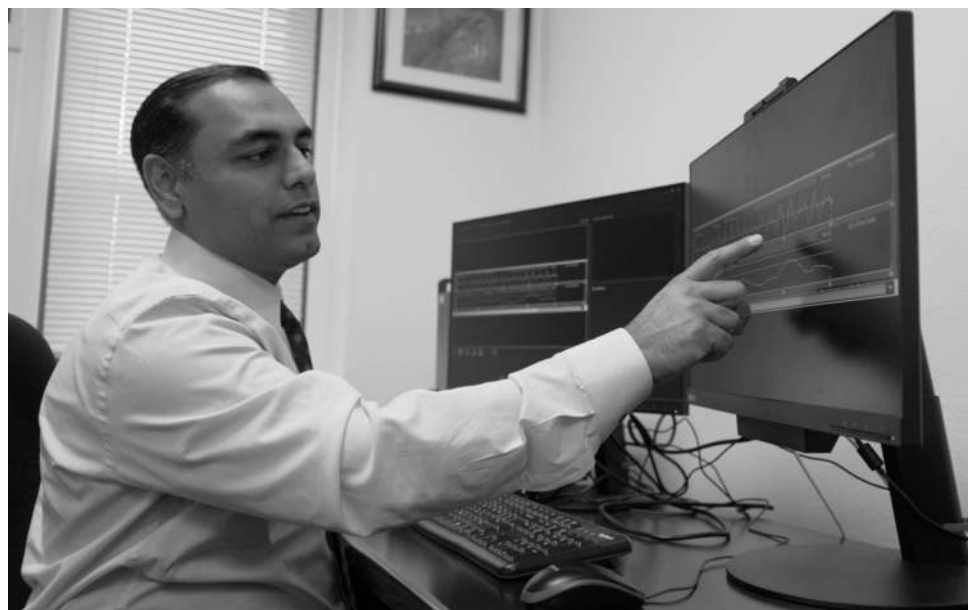
But the high frequencies of white noise can sound harsh. Pink noise turns down the volume on those higher frequencies, so it sounds lower in pitch and more like the natural sound of rain or the ocean.

Brown noise sounds even lower in pitch, giving it a pleasing, soothing rumble.

Pink and brown, like white, have standard definitions to audio experts. Other color noises are more recent creations with very flexible definitions.

The science behind color noises

White noise and pink noise may provide small benefits for people with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, according to a recent review of limited ADHD stud-



Malkani, an assistant professor of neurology at Northwestern University, says pink noise has a frequency profile "very similar to the distribution of brain wave frequencies we see in slow-wave sleep because these are large, slow waves."

ies. In theory, they wake up the brain, said ADHD researcher and co-author Joel Nigg of Oregon Health & Science University in Portland.

"The noise provides stimulation to the brain without providing information, and so it doesn't distract," Nigg said.

White noise has been used to treat ringing or buzzing in the ear, called tinnitus.

Scientists at Northwestern University are studying how short pulses of pink noise can enhance the slow brain waves of deep sleep. In small studies, these pink-noise pulses have shown promise in improving memory and the relaxation response.

Pink noise has a frequency profile "very similar to the distribution of brain wave frequencies we see in slow-wave sleep

because these are large, slow waves," said Dr. Roneil Malkani, assistant professor of neurology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

If Northwestern's research pans out, it could lead to a medical device to improve sleep or memory through personalized pulses of pink noise. But many scientific questions remain unanswered, Malkani said. "There's still a lot of work we have to do."

Any harm in trying color noises?

If color noises feel calming and help you drown out distractions, it makes sense to use them. Keep them at a quiet level, of course, to prevent hearing loss and take "plenty of breaks for the ears to rest," Nigg said.

WEEKEND: FAMILY



THE WOOBLES, THE TOY INSIDER/AP

Crochet craft projects featuring Sanrio's Hello Kitty characters. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Hello Kitty character.



PURPLE LADYBUG, THE TOY INSIDER/AP

A Prismic art kit in the shape of a dog. The 3D lantern puzzles are geared toward crafters age 12 and up.

Crafts for digital detoxing

Exploring some of the newest kits at recent toy, consumer product fairs

By **KIM COOK**
Associated Press

Digital diversions may have us tethered to tech, but screen fatigue is real. Even my digitally-native, young-millennial kids prefer printed books these days. And a recent weekend together at home had us busting out some craft kits.

Many people, apparently, can relate. Among the innovative gadgets and gizmos at recent toy and consumer products fairs were lots of booths offering kits that explore art, science and a lot in-between.

Several newly launched craft kits caught the eye of James Zahn, senior editor of The Toy Insider. One is Purple Ladybug's groovy Prismic art, geared toward crafters age 12 and up.

"These 3D 'puzzles' are essentially works of art," Zahn said. Six styles are available; you fold and connect the pieces to form a sparkly lantern, USB-powered light string included.

New spins on classic toys

Zahn also mentioned a collaboration between two well-known toy brands: On its 50th anniversary, Playmobil has teamed up with Crayola to relaunch the Playmobil Color collection. You can use Crayola markers to color plastic clothing and vehicles for Playmobil's little figurines. Zahn himself is drawn to the Hot Rod or Motorbike set.

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of Sanrio's Hello Kitty character. Among the related new toys: The Woobles' Cuteness Overload Bundle has crochet projects to make Kitty, her friends Cinnamom-roll and My Melody, plus extras like a milk bottle, rose and star. Crochet tutorials are geared for left- and right-handers.

Traditional crafts, made more accessible

"Pottery as a classic craft picked up steam again during the pandemic," Zahn says. "Blue Marble's National Geographic Hobby Series Pottery Wheel is one recent intro that's showing some staying power."

The kit comes with everything kids and grown-ups need to throw a pot or figure, but it uses air-dry clay, so there's no need for a kiln or oven.

No wheel here, but Ooly's Creatibles Air Dry Clay Kit has 12 lumps of colorful clay plus three plastic sculpting tools; once you've made your creation, it just needs a few hours to sit and dry.

And is there a category Taylor Swift hasn't touched?

"Proving that classic play patterns always come back into vogue, the Swifties have put friendship bracelets back on the map," Zahn says. Cra-Z-Art's

Shimmer Sparkle Fashion Bead Bracelets come with embroidery yarns, elastic cord, alphabet beads, pony shapes and iridescent, frosted and metallic beads.

Kits that are handmade themselves

Lindsey Gaimei of The Dalles, Ore., started a laser engraving business in her garage several years ago, which soon morphed into a shop making homemade craft kits.

"When the pandemic hit, we wanted to create something for families to enjoy from the comfort of their home," she said.

Her Woodsy Craft Co kits come with laser-cut wood figures, pompoms, string, markers and other bits to create decorative garlands. The Wilderness Kit has wildlife and pine trees to color and string; other kits feature themes like mushrooms, feathers and llamas.

Slime

Marisa Jones Issa of Los Angeles likes the convenience of craft kits for her 10-year-old daughter.

"Samantha's obsessed with slime," Issa says. "She just received a National Geographic Mega Slime & Putty Lab Kit for her birthday, and it included DIY ingredients as well as small containers for the slime and putty. A kit's much easier for parents! When she makes slime from scratch, I find glue or shaving cream or contact solution all over the place."

The slime lab kit comes with magnetic, fluffy, color-changing and bouncy putties as well as a glow-in-the-dark slime lab.

Issa likes its source, too: "With the Nat Geo label, I know she's also learning about science."

For all ages

For budding stitchers, there are wee embroidery hoop kits with stencils of mushrooms, cats, deer, flowers, birds and a ladybug.

Skillmatics' Foil Fun gives kids a canvas background of sea, forest or outer space, and an array of colorful foil stickers to design a scene.

KiwiCo has some kits for older kids that adults also might enjoy assembling. There's a bubble machine, a walking robot, a remote-controlled snake and light-up wire-art kits, among other offerings.

You can decorate your own playing cards with a kit from Kikkerland. The back pattern's whimsical doodle is by Spanish artist Hector Serrano; the front is blank, so you can personalize it with supplied markers.

Also at Kikkerland are kits to make an old-timey, windup music box, with cylinders that play tunes like "Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star" and "Frere Jacques." There's also a kit to make a harmonica.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Try, try again, and then try some more

I arrived at the base marina 10 minutes late, setting my nerves on edge before crew practice had even started. Little did I know, the smidge of apprehension I felt would amplify into confidence-obliterating anxiety that would render me virtually useless before the day was done.

It was the first practice for the crew of Alliance, a 40-foot J122 offshore racing sailboat co-skipped by two military-connected sailing friends, Mary and Eric. I'd met Mary through the base's Navy Yacht Club, and she'd invited me to be "delivery crew" last year.

As delivery crew, I wouldn't race with Alliance, but I'd help sail the boat to and from race locations. As a sailing novice with lots to learn, this lesser status was fine by me. In fact, I was grateful to be exposed to this respectable group of lifelong sailors at all.

At age 57, my goal wasn't to become an expert offshore racer. Realistically, I'd never fully grasp the complexities of navigation, weather and tactics. My modest aim was to simply be a useful member of the overall crew.

"Hi, I'm Lisa," I said cheerfully to the crew members who were busy doing various tasks on the docked boat. When they looked in my direction, I sensed mild confusion.

"What's that frumpy, middle-aged woman doing on the boat?" their faces seemed to say.

"Delivery crew," I explained with a nervous chuckle, pointing to myself.

The race crew wore scuffed boots and sailing gear, showing wear and tear from years of races. By contrast, I was decked out in glaringly spotless boots and crispy-new foul weather gear without a smudge, wrinkle or stray thread.

Once aboard, I looked for ways to help, but it quickly became apparent that I couldn't really help without asking for help myself, which kind of defeated the purpose. When I did take a stab at tasks, I often made stupid mistakes.

"You're making this more difficult," Bill, a race crew member, blurted when I attempted to help him pack a spinnaker sail into its designated bag.

My blunders continued that day during practice maneuvers on the Narragansett Bay. I grabbed the wrong line, attached the wrong shackle, tied the wrong knot, forgot the fairlead, sheeted in when I should have eased out.

Each time I goofed or got in the way, I pivoted and carried on. However, tiny chinks formed in my self-confidence.

At 6:30 p.m., Alliance sailed out of the bay on port tack, following a rhumb line to a point just south of Block Island. The ocean was quite rough, and I was glad for the seasickness patch behind my ear. I volunteered to wash the dishes, one task I thought I couldn't screw up, but as I worked at the galley sink, the dinner I'd eaten nearly came back up.

I was assigned to first watch, 8 p.m. to midnight, along with Conor and Julija. When I took the helm, Conor pointed out a lighted beacon up ahead "just off the starboard bow." I searched in vain. "The OTHER starboard bow," Conor said.

In the windblown cockpit, my battered self-confidence gave way. For the rest of the watch, I clammed up, unable to do or say anything. I'd hit a mental wall. In all my unsuccessful attempts to be useful, I'd rendered myself useLESS.

Chilled to the bone, I huddled in my designated berth after midnight and my paralyzed brain forgot to set an alarm for the 4 a.m. watch. The entire crew was topside when I appeared in the companionway, an hour late, as Alliance re-entered the Narragansett Bay.

At home, I assumed that I was the laughingstock of the Alliance crew, and that they'd never invite me back. But I received an email from the skippers assigning me to delivery crew after a race the next weekend. In mustering the courage to try again, I recalled a quote by Henry Ford: "Failure is only the opportunity to begin more intelligently again."

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com." Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

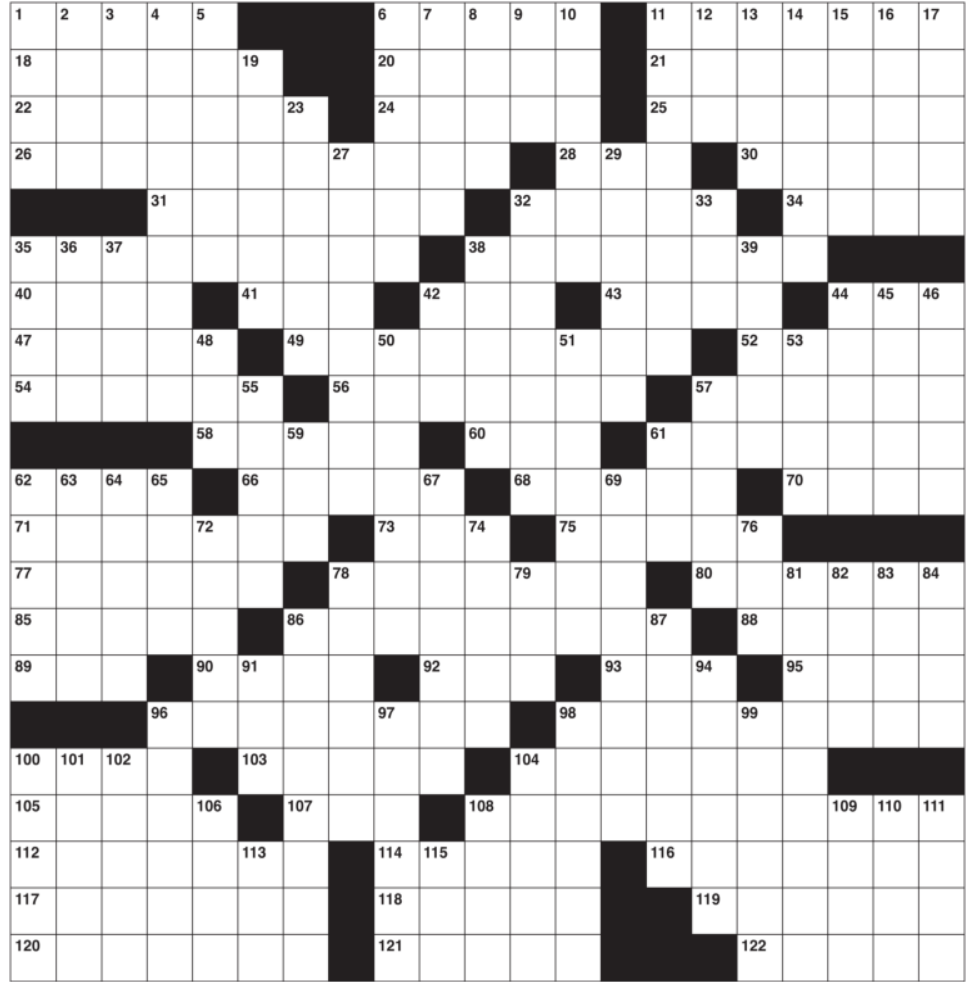
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

PIXAR BOX SET

BY AVERY GEE KATZ / EDITED BY JOEL FAGLIANO

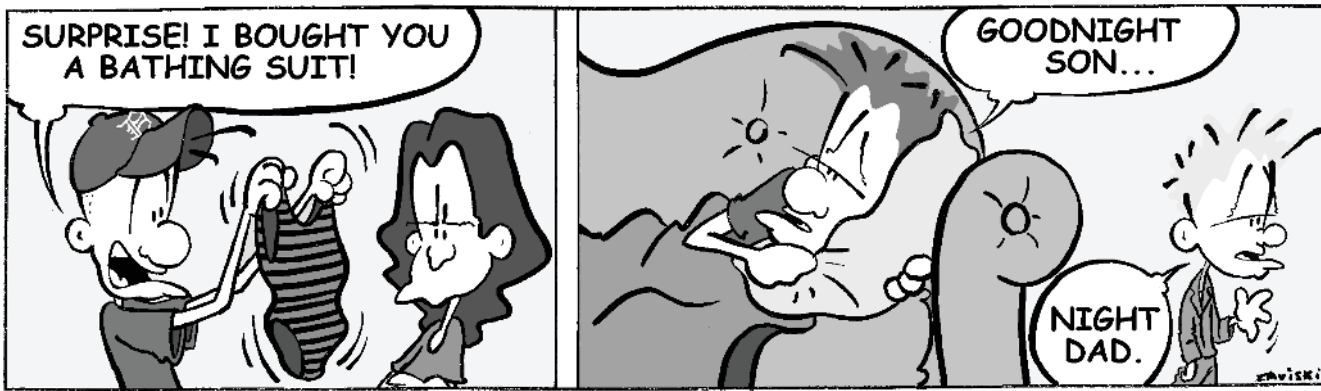
Avery Gee Katz, of Santa Clara, Calif., is a user-experience designer at a software company. She comes from a puzzle-loving family — the first crossword she ever made was a Father's Day present for her dad. A diligent constructor, she worked and reworked this puzzle for months, ultimately ending up with 19 versions of the grid. You're solving version No. 16!

- ACROSS**
- 1 Depicts unfairly
 - 6 Monitor
 - 11 Fruits exchanged on Chinese New Year
 - 18 "Moo, Baa, ____!" (classic children's book)
 - 20 Egg, in Spanish
 - 21 Where to find signs with circles, squares and diamonds
 - 22 "My only request . . ."
 - 24 Young's partner in accounting
 - 25 Original host of MTV's "Total Request Live"
 - 26 Stay cool
 - 28 Bit of body art
 - 30 They come in twice a day
 - 31 Metal ring that holds a pencil's eraser
 - 32 Title Disney character of 1998
 - 34 Overhaul
 - 35 Tourist destination in Baja California Sur
 - 38 Band shirts?
 - 40 Letter-shaped construction piece
 - 41 Zoomed, perhaps
 - 42 Beam at a bar
 - 43 Dr. ____ talk-show host with the catchphrase "Get some"
 - 44 Test for an M.A. seeker
 - 47 Hit the gas
 - 49 Lady Gaga vis-à-vis Billie Eilish, e.g.
 - 52 Multipurpose tool for a mountaineer
 - 54 Fixed
 - 56 Dal ingredients
 - 57 Note in the B major scale
 - 58 Programming language used in government and banking
 - 60 Triple ____
 - 61 Cloud nine, so to speak
 - 62 No more than
 - 66 Formula 1 tour stop since 2023, informally
 - 68 O.C.'s region
 - 70 Negative contraction
 - 71 "Sounds right to me"
 - 73 Boy band that went on hiatus in 2023 for army service
 - 75 No fan
 - 77 "____ in the Rain"
 - 78 Camper's vessel
 - 80 Struck
 - 85 Fried chicken, cornbread, collard greens, etc.
 - 86 Property at an intersection
 - 88 Actor Pascal of "The Last of Us"
 - 89 Author Rand
 - 90 Pulitzer-winning author Jennifer
 - 92 Fair-hiring inits.
 - 93 Like some kisses
 - 95 Wart-covered critter
 - 96 Digital "container" associated with Bitcoin
 - 98 Dystopian classic whose title comes from "The Tempest"
 - 100 Metonym for the U.S. Congress, with "the"
 - 103 Stuck
 - 104 Tarot card featuring a howling wolf
 - 105 Mountain nymph
 - 107 Waterproofing material
 - 108 Picture book with characters like Odlaw, Wizard Whitebeard and Woof
 - 112 Batter-fried bento dish
 - 114 Part of a princess costume
 - 116 Nike and others
 - 117 Palm-tree product used in skin care
 - 118 Statistical calculation
 - 119 Safe investment options, informally
 - 120 Secret option?
 - 121 Factory ____
 - 122 "Barbie" director Gerwig
- DOWN**
- 1 Hunk of meat
 - 2 Vegetable with a "dinosaur" variety
 - 3 Civil rights activist Baker
 - 4 Suspense-building words
 - 5 Schedules
 - 6 Ride
 - 7 Mysterious glows
 - 8 Focus for a pitching scout?
 - 9 Rx chain
 - 10 Jet setting
 - 11 Prominent figure at the Academy Awards
 - 12 Studio behind "Bringing Up Baby"
 - 13 More informal version of 70-Across
 - 14 Low points
 - 15 School group
 - 16 Fished with traps, perhaps
 - 17 Parental authority
 - 19 Spiritual hermitage
 - 23 Core
 - 27 Certain streaming library
 - 29 Push notifications, e.g.
 - 32 They're kept under wraps
 - 33 "Kidding!"
 - 35 Things to stub out, for short
 - 36 Have a side in common
 - 37 Actor Eric
 - 38 Starts to fall
 - 39 Trawl for personal information
 - 42 ____ O'Malley Dillon of the Biden White House
 - 44 Clock innards
 - 45 ____ to go
 - 46 Many an attendee of Gertrude Stein's Paris salons
 - 48 Start of a winning row
 - 50 Go on and on about
 - 51 "The cause of, and solution to, all of life's problems," per Homer Simpson
 - 53 Celebrity chef Roy
 - 55 Group of witches
 - 57 Two-family dwelling
 - 59 Frequent antagonist of Winnie-the-Pooh
 - 61 Have something
 - 62 Home to the University of Montana
 - 63 Enlighten
 - 64 Kept going and going
 - 65 Breakfast brand with a rhyming slogan
 - 67 Refused to answer questions
 - 69 One buying a stuffed mouse, perhaps
 - 72 Van Halen's contract once had one that specified no brown M&M's
 - 74 Olympic event since 1968
 - 76 Good or bad name, for short
 - 78 Against
 - 79 Not against
 - 81 It might come with a plunger
 - 82 What squiggly lines can represent
 - 83 Russia's ____ Mountains
 - 84 Maiden name of an 1860s first lady
 - 86 What can symbolize 50
 - 87 Was thick (with)
 - 91 Spot for recess on a rainy day
 - 94 Like some short tennis matches
 - 96 Keep rhythm with, in a way
 - 97 Al ____, discus thrower in the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame
 - 98 1995 blockbuster with numerous historical inaccuracies
 - 99 Blowing away
 - 100 Drink often served with marshmallows
 - 101 ____ Joliot-Curie, chemist daughter of Marie
 - 102 Primate that exists only on the world's fifth-largest island
 - 104 Pang
 - 106 Daft Punk and Outkast, for two
 - 108 Polemology is the study of them
 - 109 Word on some yogurt labels
 - 110 Bug-bite preventer
 - 111 Greek peak
 - 113 Where Simone Biles won four golds
 - 115 Source of much U.S. immigration in the 1840s: Abbr.



- 76 Good or bad name, for short
- 78 Against
- 79 Not against
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FACES



JULIETA CERVANTES/AP

From left: Sarah Pidgeon, Juliana Canfield and Tom Pecinka during a performance of "Stereophonic."

Striking the right chord

Sarah Pidgeon a rock star, Tony nominee for Broadway's 'Stereophonic'

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Sarah Pidgeon is making her Broadway debut this season in a celebrated, thoughtful show about how art is created. And getting her first Tony Award nomination. And in a play that's transformed her into a member of a rock band. And notching her first cast album.

"I'm having so many pinch-me moments," the actor says. "I am living the dream, and I didn't have the dream because I hadn't read the script yet. I didn't know it existed."

Pidgeon co-stars as rising singer-songwriter Diana in "Stereophonic," playwright David Adjmi's story of a Fleetwood Mac-like band in the mid-'70s recording music over a life-changing year, with personal rifts opening and closing and then reopening.

Diana's boyfriend is the band's perfectionist guitarist and de facto leader, and cracks soon appear in their relationship as business and personal needs clash.

"I'm breaking up with my boyfriend every night, and I'm fighting for independence and agency as an artist and as a person," says Pidgeon. "I'm not alone. I think every character in the show is under an insane amount of stress and anguish."

In one memorable moment, Diana struggles to hit a high B. She has to sing the same line over and over until she can hit that note. "Her voice is literally cracking as her relationship is also cracking," the actor says.

"Stereophonic," the most-nominated play in Tony Awards history, has become a hit as a hypernaturalistic meditation on the thrill and danger of collaborating on art — the compromises, the egos and the joys.

"Although these people are rock stars and playing Madison Square Garden, they're still very much human," Pidgeon says. "While in the frame of being world-renowned musicians, they still struggle with the same things that our audience does when they come and see us."

Pidgeon didn't set out on a Broadway career. She is a classically trained pianist who did some musicals in high school, theater in summer camp and graduated from Carnegie Mellon University in 2018. "I consider myself an actor who can sing," she says.

Pidgeon has appeared in the Hulu limited series

Sarah Pidgeon, photographed May 2, says she considers herself an actor who can sing, not a Broadway star.

CHARLES SYKES, INVISION/AP

"Tiny Beautiful Things," which earned her a Hollywood Critics Association Award nomination, and the Amazon Prime series "The Wilds." She auditioned for "Stereophonic" when it was off-Broadway, not expecting a Broadway transfer or cast album.

"What drew me to this play was just how it fearlessly went towards humanity and the ugly aspects of it that make it so beautiful. I think that's what I look for in my projects," Pidgeon says.

On Tony night, for the best featured actress in a play award, she's up against her co-star Juliana Canfield, Quincy Tyler Bernstine from "Doubt: A Parable," Celia Keenan-Bolger in "Mother Play" and Kara Young from "Purlie Victorious."

To sound like a '70s rock star, Pidgeon made playlists and listened to recommendations, like the Mamas and the Papas and plenty of "Rumors."

She is a little anxious about her voice but so is her character, so she uses it: "So much of this singing isn't necessarily about perfection. It has so much to do with vibe and energy and emotion," she says. "That is sort of giving me a lot of freedom to explore."

To make "Stereophonic,"

Pidgeon and her co-stars

have become a real band, some learning

to play their instrument

for the first time.

Pidgeon

learned to play the tambourine.

"You think it's

easier than it

is," she says.

The Tony

Awards will

be held

June 16.



'Tracker' becomes solid ratings success for CBS

BY STEPHEN BATTAGLIO
Los Angeles Times

In the age before streaming, there was no better prize for new series than to premiere after the Super Bowl.

Over the years, networks have used the powerful audience lead-in of the premier NFL event's 100 million-plus viewers to provide sampling for a new series. Such hits as "The Wonder Years," "Homicide: Life on the Street" and "Family Guy" received their first exposure after the broadcast.

Lately, the post-Super Bowl stunt has been used less often. The TV networks that carry the event now try to maximize ratings and revenue by putting established hits in the time period rather than take a chance with a new show.

But CBS is seeing the approach pay off this year with "Tracker," which has become the most-watched entertainment series on television for the 2023-24 season. It's the first freshman show to achieve that status since "Survivor" in 2000. The show stars Justin Hartley ("This Is Us") as a "rewardist," who travels around the country to find missing people for reward money. The series was adapted from the Jeffery Deaver novel "The Never Game."

CBS Entertainment President Amy Reisenbach said that "Tracker" was the first pilot she watched after taking over as programming chief at the network. She immediately pegged it for the time slot following the network's telecast of the big game on Feb. 11.

A record 123.4 million viewers watched the Kansas City Chiefs defeat the San Francisco 49ers.



CBS/TNS

Justin Hartley stars as Colter Shaw on the CBS hit "Tracker."

Nielsen data showed 18.4 million viewers hung around after the game to sample "Tracker." Although that's not the blockbuster number of previous post-Super Bowl shows, the true measure of success is how many of them return in subsequent weeks.

On that score, "Tracker" held on with solid ratings. The show settled into CBS' Sunday night lineup averaging more than 11 million viewers a week, including live viewing and DVR. When playback and streaming on Paramount+ is added in, the show is watched by more than 19 million people.

"Tracker" is a one-hour procedural drama that gives viewers a story with a satisfactory conclusion at the end of every episode.

Reisenbach believes the serialized element helps "Tracker" play well.

"It still really fits into what I would describe as the CBS brand box," said Reisenbach, who gave "Tracker" a full 22-episode order for its second season. "I think it also feels very fresh for us."

Venus Williams among new athlete Barbie dolls

Barbie dolls will honor tennis champion Venus Williams and eight other athletes as part of a project announced by Mattel on Wednesday.

The others being depicted as dolls are gymnasts Rebeca Andrade and Alexa Moreno, soccer players Mary Fowler and Christine Sinclair, boxer Estelle Mossely, swimmer Federica Pellegrini, paratriathlete Susana Rodriguez and track and field sprinter Ewa Swoboda.

"Throughout my career, I've always been driven by the idea of shattering glass ceilings and staying true to myself, and Barbie's mission couldn't resonate more deeply with that ethos," said Williams, who has won seven Grand Slam singles titles.

The brand wanted to note "the impact of sports in fostering self-confidence, ambition, and empowerment among the next generation," Mattel's Krista Berger said.



MATEL INC./AP

Venus Williams holds a Venus Williams Barbie doll.

Other news

■ **Charlie Colin**, bassist and founding member of the American pop-rock band Train, best known for their early-aughts hits like "Drops of Jupiter" and "Meet Virginia," has died. He was 58. Colin's sister Carolyn Stephens confirmed her brother's death to The Associated Press Wednesday. He died after slipping and falling in the shower while house-sitting for a friend in Brussels, website TMZ.com reported.

From The Associated Press

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Billionaire rains cash on grads, but with a catch

NH MEREDITH — The clouds weren't alone in making it rain on the commencement ceremony at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth last week. On stage, billionaire philanthropist Rob Hale surprised the graduating class of more than 1,000 by pointing to a nearby truck holding envelopes stuffed with cash.

Huddling under ponchos and umbrellas at the soggy ceremony, the graduates yelled and cheered, their mouths agape, as Hale announced he was showering money upon them. Security guards then lugged the cash-filled duffel bags onto the stage.

Hale told the students each would get \$1,000. But there was a condition: They were to keep \$500 and give the rest away.

Hale said the greatest joy he and his wife Karen had experienced in their lives had come from the act of giving.

It's the fourth year in a row that he has given a similar gift to a group of graduating students.

Governor vetoes bill to restrict pesticide

VT MONTPELIER — Vermont's Republican Gov. Phil Scott has vetoed a bill to severely restrict a type of pesticide that's toxic to bees and other pollinators, saying the legislation "is more anti-farmer than it is pro-pollinator."

The bill would have banned uses of neonicotinoids — commonly called neonics — as well as selling or distributing soybean and cereal grain seeds that are coated in the substance. The pesticides are neurotoxins and are the most widely used class of insecticides in the world, lawmakers have said.

The Democrat-controlled Vermont legislature may consider overriding the governor's veto during a special session next month.

Scott wrote in his veto message that nearly all corn seed sold in the country is treated with EPA-approved neonics, and Vermont grows about 90,000 acres of corn while the U.S. grows 90 million acres.

"This would put Vermont farmers at a significant disadvantage," he wrote.

Petrochemical company fined for 2019 explosions

TX BEAUMONT — A Texas petrochemical company has pleaded guilty to a violation of the Clean Air Act and agreed to pay more than \$30 million in connection with two explosions that injured workers and caused the evacuation of thousands, the U.S. Justice Department said Tuesday.

The explosions at a TPC Group plant in the coastal city of Port Neches the day before Thanksgiving 2019 prompted the evacuation of more than 50,000 people from the area, about 100 miles from Houston.

Those explosions released more



KIICHIRO SATO/AP

Embracing the City of the Big Shoulders

A man rides a bike on a breakwater along Lake Michigan against the downtown Chicago skyline, on Tuesday.

than 11 million pounds of extremely hazardous substances and caused more than \$130 million in offsite property damage and other impacts to human health and the environment, according to a news release from the DOJ.

The company entered into a plea deal with the government on Monday and agreed to pay over \$30 million in criminal fines and civil penalties. The plan also includes spending about \$80 million to improve its risk management program and improve safety issues.

Climber found dead on continent's tallest peak

AK ANCHORAGE — A climber was found dead on North America's tallest peak, Denali, on Monday, a day after a family member told rangers they had not heard from them in days, authorities said.

The climber was using a satellite communication device to keep in contact with their family during a solo attempt to climb Denali, according to a statement from Denali National Park and Preserve. Rangers found the climber's tent and used information gathered from interviews and location data from their satellite device account to identify where they may be.

A climbing team had reported seeing the climber traversing from a 17,200-foot plateau to Denali Pass at 18,200 feet on May 15, the park said.

Data indicated the device had not

changed locations since May 16, "suggesting a fall from the Denali Pass traverse took place on that day," the park said.

The park said recovery efforts would be made when weather conditions allowed. The climber's name has not been released.

Lawsuit: Monument to 'faithful slaves' must go

NC COLUMBIA — A federal lawsuit filed Tuesday seeks the removal of a Confederate monument marked as "in appreciation of our faithful slaves" from outside of a North Carolina county courthouse.

The Concerned Citizens of Tyrrell County, a civic group focused on issues facing local Black residents, and several of its members filed the lawsuit against the county's commissioners. The legal complaint argues that the monument constitutes racially discriminatory government speech in violation of the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause.

Tyrrell County includes a few thousand residents in eastern North Carolina. The monument, which was erected on the courthouse grounds in 1902, features a Confederate soldier standing atop a pedestal, with one of the markings below mentioning "faithful slaves." The lawsuit argues that the monument conveys a racist and offensive message that Black people who were enslaved in the county preferred slavery to freedom.

North Carolina legislators enacted a law in 2015 that limits when an "object of remembrance" such as a military monument can be relocated. Still, the lawsuit says more than a dozen Confederate monuments have been taken down in North Carolina in the past five years.

Report: 'Utter chaos' during search for gunman

ME PORTLAND — The search for the gunman behind last October's mass shooting in Maine was marked by "utter chaos," including one group of deputies who had been drinking nearly crashing their armored vehicle and others showing up in civilian clothes who could have been mistaken for the suspect, according to an after-action report obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press.

The Portland Police Department report describes how officers rushed to secure the scene where the gunman abandoned his car after killing 18 people in the state's deadliest shooting. Tactical team leader Nicholas Goodman said in the report that the officers who showed up without any orders risked doing more harm than good.

A second tactical team that was also responding to the incident, from Cumberland County, nearly crashed their vehicle into his, according to Goodman.

"You could smell the aroma of intoxicants" wafting from the Cumberland vehicle, whose occupants told him they had come from a fu-

neral, he said.

Both the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office and Portland Police Department tactical teams were responding to a location where the shooter's vehicle was abandoned by the Androscoggin River the evening of Oct. 25, after the gunman, an Army reservist, killed 18 people and wounded 13 others at a bowling alley and a bar in Lewiston.

The gunman's body was found nearby two days later after he died by suicide.

Regulators: Manure spill caused mile-long fish kill

WI MADISON — A manure spill in west-central Wisconsin has resulted in a fish kill stretching more than a mile, state environmental regulators said Tuesday.

An angler reported the fish kill in Moore Creek in Monroe County on Saturday, state Department of Natural Resources officials said.

The DNR traced the kill to a manure spill at Spring Valley Holstein Inc., a dairy farm east of Norwalk. They said the farm's manure transfer system failed but did not elaborate. An investigation is ongoing.

The spill affected at least 1.2 miles of Moore Creek and an adjacent tributary. DNR officials said they didn't have an estimate of how much manure has been spilled but drinking water supplies shouldn't be affected.

STARS AND STRIPES SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market



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Web

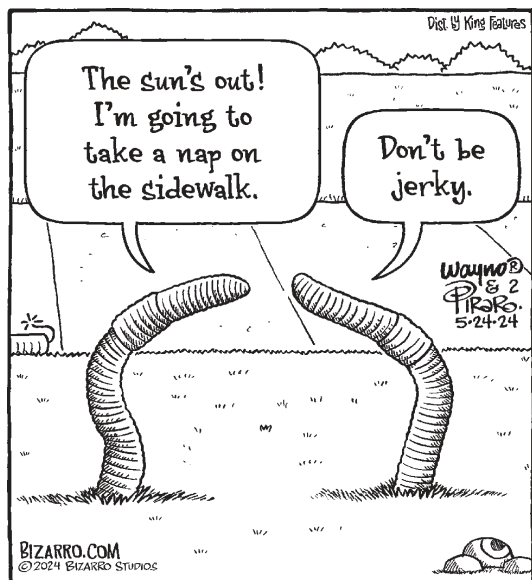


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UNBIASED NEWS WHATEVER WAY YOU WANT IT.

Bizarro

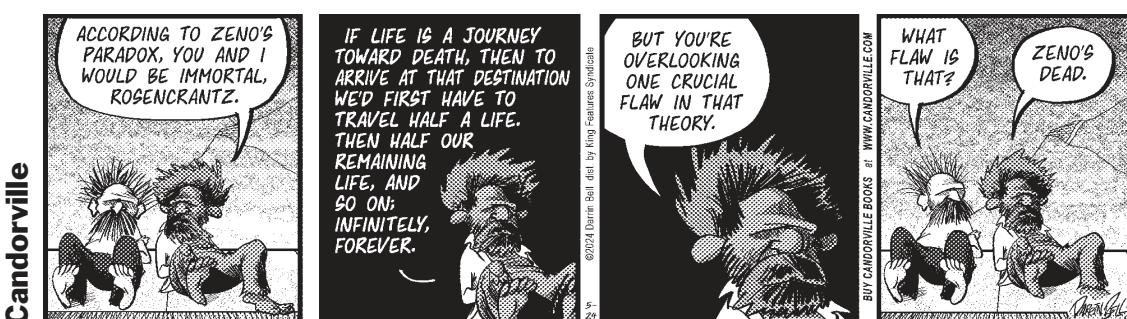
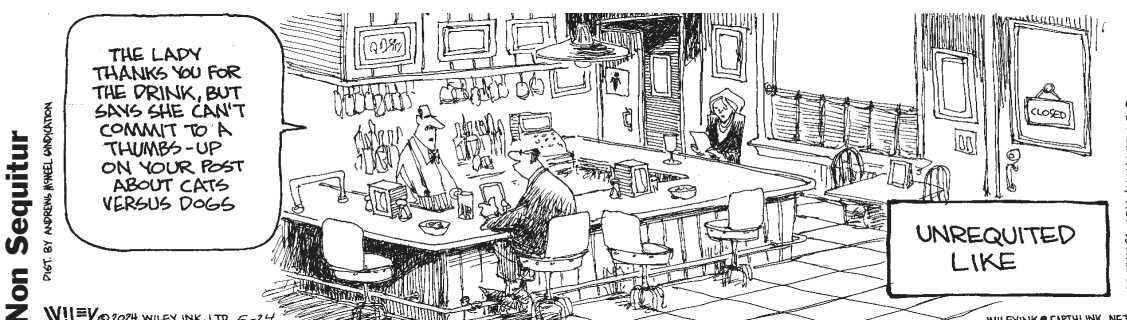
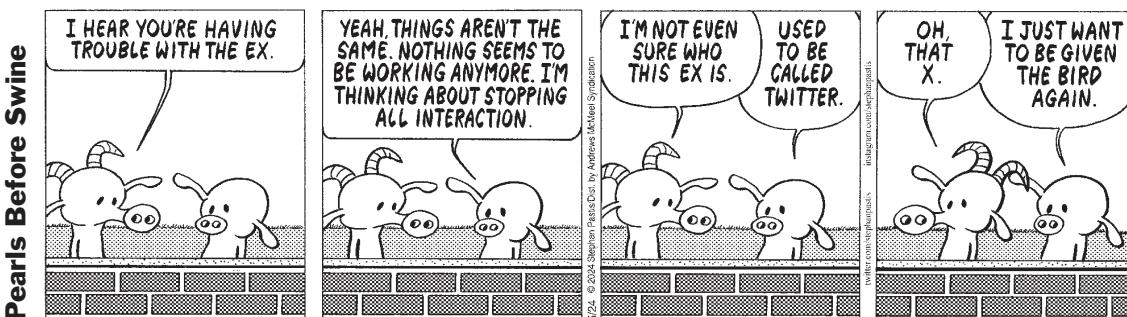
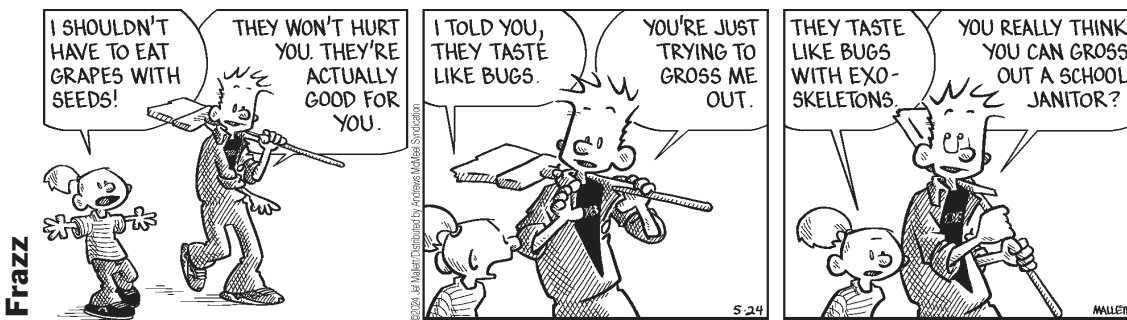


Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11
12				13				14				
15				16				17				
18				19								
20			21		22				23	24	25	26
			27	28				29	30			
31	32	33						34				
35					36			37				
38					39	40			41	42	43	44
					45				46		47	
48	49	50	51								52	
53							54				55	
56							57				58	



ACROSS

- 1 "You've got mail" co.
- 4 "Survivor" aier
- 7 In a way, slangily
- 12 Hindu honorific
- 13 Grazing tract
- 14 Wanted poster info
- 15 D.C. figure
- 16 Fragrant moisturizer
- 18 — tizzy (worked up)
- 19 Reverent
- 20 Designer Chanel
- 22 Computer key
- 23 Antitoxins
- 27 "Way cool!"
- 29 Fry cook's need
- 31 "Encore!"
- 34 Tennis legend Ivan
- 35 Group that includes ExxonMobil and Shell
- 37 R&B singer Des'
- 38 Flair
- 39 Ab — (from the start)
- 41 Drudge
- 45 Crop up
- 47 Payable
- 48 Discover black gold
- 52 Econ. measure
- 53 Texas cook-off dish
- 54 Author Tolstoy

- 55 Obamacare initialism
- 56 Macho types
- 57 Shapiro of NPR
- 58 Seminary subj.

DOWN

- 1 Jellied entree
- 2 Maine college town
- 3 Pale purple
- 4 Applaud
- 5 Contradicted
- 6 Aegean island
- 7 Without
- 8 — Faithful
- 9 2016 Olympics city
- 10 — chi
- 11 Visual communication syst.
- 17 "I stubbed my toe!"
- 21 Hunter in the sky
- 23 Pricely
- 24 A gazillion years
- 25 Free (of)
- 26 100%
- 28 Blackbird
- 30 Flamenco cheer
- 31 Copper head?
- 32 Baseball's Hodges
- 33 Khan title
- 36 Traditional tales
- 37 More promising actress Davis
- 40 "Fences" award
- 42 Mystery-writing
- 43 Pound fraction
- 44 Kathmandu's land
- 45 Similar
- 46 Sci-fi race
- 48 Learning ctr.
- 49 Common title start
- 50 Crater part
- 51 — -de-France

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	P	A		D	I	S	C		B	F	F	S	
E	A	R		R	O	A	R		A	L	E	E	
A	R	T	H	O	U	S	E		R	A	M	A	
		E	I	N		S	E	N	E	G	A	L	
T	O	R	T	E	S		P	A	X				
A	R	I		S	I	A		P	A	P	A	L	
L	E	E	S		T	O	V		M	L	I	I	
C	O	S	T	A		L	O	S		U	R	L	
				A	N	N		W	H	I	M	S	Y
F	L	A	T	T	E	N		A	C	T			
E	I	R	E		E	Y	E	C	H	A	R	T	
N	A	I	L		D	A	N	K		R	O	O	
D	R	A	Y		A	D	O	S		T	E	E	

5-24

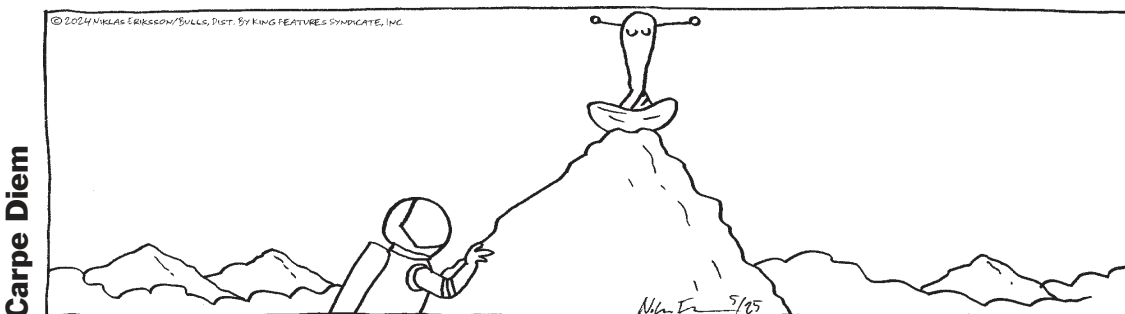
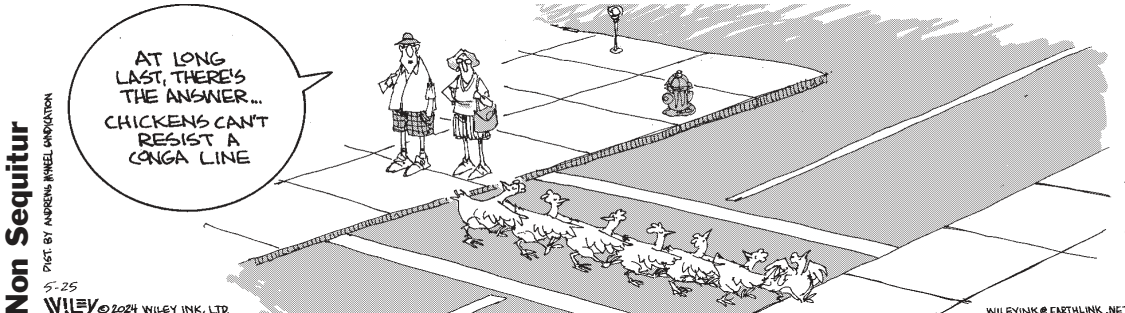
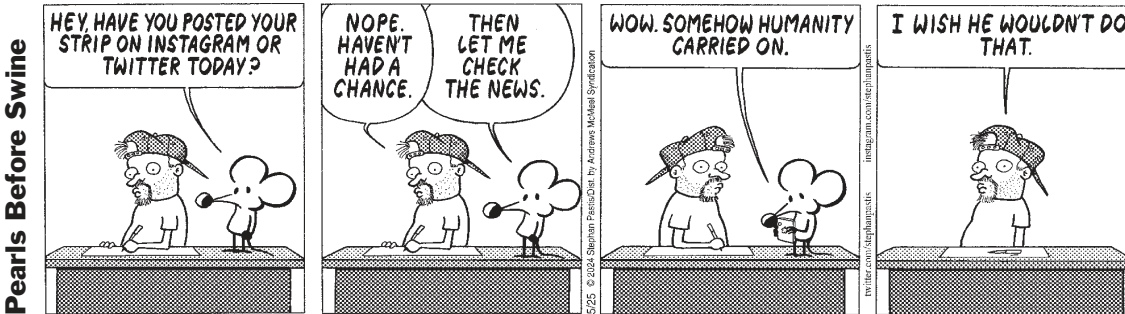
CRYPTOQUIP

ATGD CV VXINDTCKJ MXO
 WXOHR LYXQGQHMGHAGMV
 VGM WXKWNKCKJ IGLHN DYN
 LOKV? DTNM'YN VGLLM.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: GUY WHO ALWAYS RIDES HIS STEED WITHOUT PAYING MIND TO OTHER PEOPLE: THE HEEDLESS HORSEMAN.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals P

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

Grid for Eugene Sheffer Crossword with numbered squares.

ACROSS

- 1 Witty one
4 Online auction site
8 Seize
12 Expert
13 Misplace
14 Angelic light
15 Author Fleming
16 'The Black Prince' author Murdoch
17 Aware of
18 All that one can see
21 Poetic dusk
22 Non-dairy milk type
23 Serengeti antelope
26 Cash dispenser
27 Future flower
30 Pleads
31 Citric beverage
32 Melody
33 Sweetie, in slang
34 Plastic - Band
35 Brick worker
36 Flight stat
37 Fine, to NASA
38 1989 sports fantasy film
45 Leer at
46 Christen
47 Average guy
48 Caboose
49 Mother of Horus
50 Oklahoma city

- 51 Bond foe
52 Director Preminger
53 Ballot markings

DOWN

- 1 Ragamuffin
2 Antioxidant berry
3 Actor Hackman
4 Omitted phonetically
5 Element No. 5
6 'A likely story!'
7 Legislative thumbs-up
8 Specter
9 Hindu royal
10 Sax range
11 Benefit
19 Camera part
20 Billie Eilish's 'Therefore -'
23 Recede

Answer to Previous Puzzle

Answer grid for the previous puzzle with words like AOL, CBS, SORTA, etc.

5-25

CRYPTOQUIP

FZ IVB ACUC GV PBI X LVECQ
JCUI KTCXY UXEVU PWXLCR
ZVU GAV LVW WXUR, IVB'L
RKUFHY XQL RTXJC.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU COULD PROBABLY ALWAYS SAY CONCERNING MAPLE TREE PUNS? THEY'RE SAPPY.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals W

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OPINION

More turbulence is shaking airlines' bottom line

BY LARA WILLIAMS

Bloomberg Opinion

Tens of thousands of flights take off and land without incident every day, all around the world. So when something tragic does happen, the world's eyes become glued to the story — especially if it reveals the deadly side of an extremely common flight experience.

One man was killed and many others injured when a Singapore Airlines flight encountered severe turbulence en route to Singapore from London on Tuesday. The airplane, a Boeing 777-300 ER, had to make an emergency landing in Bangkok. The deceased had a heart condition, which officials think may be behind his death.

We don't yet know exactly what caused the agitated air currents, and an investigation is underway. It's currently the monsoon season in Southeast Asia, and the resulting stormy skies may have contributed to the turbulence experienced by the plane. But we'd be foolish to ignore the role that the climate crisis is playing in making air travel choppier.

Most commonly caused by mountains, storms and jet streams, turbulence can be described simply as rough air. At its mildest, an aircraft may only experience slight erratic changes in altitude, but at the severe end, turbulence can cause large abrupt changes in altitude and angle of the plane. Extreme turbulence could even cause structural damage to the body of the aircraft, though modern planes are built to withstand a lot.

In the case of mountains and storms,

rough air is fairly easy to avoid, but it's possible to bump into turbulence where there are no clouds in sight. This clear-air turbulence (CAT) is impossible to see or predict, and yet can cause damage to aircraft and harm those inside. These sudden unexpected jolts are the most dangerous as they can occur while passengers and staff are moving around. In April, a man broke his leg as he returned from the toilet when an Air New Zealand flight to Auckland from Bali hit some turbulence and suddenly "dropped." It therefore is the sort of thing that might keep a pilot up at night — and it's been getting worse.

As our planet's atmosphere warms, wind shears — variations in wind direction or speed — within jet streams are increasing and therefore strengthening clear-air turbulence. A 2023 study from researchers at the University of Reading showed that in the past 40 years, severe clear-air turbulence increased to 27.4 hours in 2020 from 17.7 hours in 1979 for an average point over the North Atlantic.

Last year, I wrote about all the ways in which the need to decarbonize flying was going to make air travel more expensive. But it's clear large investments are needed to help aviation cope with the meteorological effects of climate change too.

Aircraft are designed to withstand the worst that turbulence might throw at them. But as researchers point out in a 2017 study, many of the aircraft that will be flying in the second half of the century are currently being designed, so work ought to be done to determine whether projections for turbulence

necessitate any design or operational changes. A 2021 report from the National Transportation Safety Board made 24 recommendations aimed at reducing the incidence of turbulence accidents and associated injuries, including having flight attendants — who are seriously injured more often than passengers — be seated and belted earlier during the descent phase.

More significant investments should also be made into remote sensing of CAT and improved forecasts. On the detection front, there's promise being found in updated radar systems, including laser-based radar (also known as lidar), as well as a new type of infrasound microphone developed by NASA.

Any investments will be worth it for the safety and comfort of passengers alone, but aviation executives will also be happy to know that the investments could lead to savings — or at least stop potential losses escalating. After all, turbulence isn't cheap. The cost of choppy air to U.S. airlines is estimated to be as much as \$500 million annually, thanks to injuries, aircraft damage and flight delays, according to the National Center for Atmospheric Research. That will only shoot up as severe turbulence increases.

In a way, aviation is its own worst enemy: What it contributes in greenhouse gas emissions, it gets back in heightened dangers, costs and difficulties. The industry — and its passengers — will need to buckle up.

Lara Williams is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering climate change. This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

ScarJo's ChatGPT face-off confirms our fears about AI

BY MOLLY ROBERTS

The Washington Post

Sam Altman has promised creators that ChatGPT comes in peace. This week, he showed us what he really thinks.

The OpenAI chief executive recently introduced a new audio chatbot equipped with five "personas" capable of deciphering confusing questions, telling bedtime stories and engaging in plain old small talk. One thing, however, didn't seem new at all: the voice of the "Sky" persona. It sounded an awful lot like Scarlett Johansson. Her fans, her friends, her family — even Johansson herself — agreed.

The company claimed that the throaty, flirty voice "belongs to a different professional actress using her own natural speaking voice." But OpenAI wouldn't name the actress, and the thought that the startling similarity was just a coincidence is more fantastical than the robot apocalypse.

Johansson says Altman asked her in September to lend her voice to his soon-to-be released tool. She considered the offer, but said no. Two days before the technology's demonstration, Altman asked again, but before she responded, the system was released.

As if that weren't enough grounds to cry "thief!," the 2013 Spike Jonze film "Her" features Johansson as a super-intelligent AI assistant called "Samantha" who — or that — enamors a lonely and love-starved Joaquin Phoenix. (Spoiler: The affair ends poorly.) And there's more: Altman counts the flick as his favorite movie.

Johansson's lawyers have fired off a let-

ter threatening ChatGPT with legal action, and the company has put access to Sky on pause. It maintains it did nothing wrong.

There are many methods by which OpenAI could have crafted Sky. The worst? Training its system on snippets of Johansson's professional or otherwise public output. The best? Instructing this supposed different actress to mimic the style and syntax of a movie robot who, it turns out, is romancing thousands of oblivious users at the same time. None of the in-betweens — synthetic voice manipulated to imitate Johansson; real voice altered by AI to resemble a Hollywood-generated male fantasy — flatters OpenAI, either.

When ChatGPT first emerged, the key question was about what the new technology would mean for blue- and white-collar workers who perform the kinds of rote tasks that AI could likely learn to do far more efficiently. Next came worries about the effects on more specialized areas, such as writing legal briefs or research papers.

The Johansson saga taps into something perhaps more visceral: a fear that large language models such as ChatGPT will take the very thing that defines us as human: our creativity. Until now, our ability to dream something up in our minds or souls and express it in the real world was unique to us. This sentiment motivated the Writers Guild of America strike that plagued studios all last summer — or, less noticed, the uprising among fanfiction authors when they discovered their opuses riffing on popular works were included in massive AI training data sets.

The makers of AI technology understandably want to assure our anxious species that these fears are unwarranted. So they've been saying they have no intention of hoovering up human creations to turn AI systems into hyper-optimized creators in their own right: OpenAI said Monday that "we believe that AI voices should not deliberately mimic a celebrity's distinct voice." Altman has said before that AI shouldn't be anthropomorphized at all. But what they are doing, it seems, is just the opposite.

By so brazenly borrowing Samantha to build Sky, OpenAI proved not only that they can indeed replicate a celebrity's distinct voice, but that they will — with or without consent. Either OpenAI's leaders lacked even the awareness of the reaction they'd elicit or they didn't care. Altman was supposed to send the message that AI is for humans to harness, not to be harnessed. Instead, he sent the message that our nightmares are about to come true.

As a technology we don't and can't understand encroaches on daily life, we're relying on the integrity of the people who are building it to do so for our benefit. Historically, this has been a bad bet: Silicon Valley's darlings such as Facebook and Google, after all, proved in scandal after scandal to be more devoted to their bottom lines than their lofty missions of improving the world.

Worse still, dystopia is exactly what Altman's beloved film depicts. He told on himself in more ways than one last week when he tweeted a single word: "her."

Molly Roberts writes about technology and society for The Washington Post's Opinions section.

SCOREBOARD/SPORTS BRIEFS

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	4	0	1.000	—
Connecticut	3	0	1.000	½
Atlanta	2	1	.667	1½
Chicago	1	1	.500	2
Washington	0	4	.000	4
Indiana	0	5	.000	4½

WESTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	2	0	1.000	—
Las Vegas	2	1	.667	½
Phoenix	2	1	.667	½
Seattle	2	3	.400	1½
Los Angeles	1	2	.333	1½
Dallas	1	2	.333	1½

Tuesday's games

Atlanta 83, Dallas 78
Phoenix 98, Las Vegas 88
Los Angeles 70, Washington 68

Wednesday's games

Seattle 85, Indiana 83

Thursday's games

Chicago at New York
Minnesota at Connecticut
Washington at Phoenix

Friday's games

Indiana at Los Angeles

Saturday's games

New York at Minnesota
Connecticut at Chicago
Indiana at Las Vegas
Washington at Seattle
Dallas at Phoenix

PRO HOCKEY

PWHL playoffs

Finals
(Best-of-five; x-if necessary)
Boston 1, Minnesota 1

Boston 4, Minnesota 3
Minnesota 3, Boston 0
Friday: at Minnesota
Sunday: at Minnesota
x-Wednesday: at Boston

AUTO RACING

NASCAR Cup points leaders

Through May 20

1. Kyle Larson	486
2. Martin Truex Jr	456
3. Denny Hamlin	447
4. Chase Elliott	437
5. William Byron	400
6. Tyler Reddick	396
7. Ty Gibbs	390
8. Ryan Blaney	371
9. Alex Bowman	365
10. Ross Chastain	358
11. Brad Keselowski	344
12. Chris Buescher	331
13. Kyle Busch	324
14. Chase Briscoe	322
15. Christopher Bell	320
16. Bubba Wallace	316
17. Joey Logano	292
18. Daniel Suárez	263
19. Noah Gragson	239
20. Austin Cindric	232
21. Josh Berry	230
22. Todd Gilliland	217.
23. Michael McDowell	212
24. John H. Nemechek	211
25. Carson Hocevar	211

GOLF

World rankings

Through May 20

1. Scottie Scheffler	14.71
2. Xander Schauffele	8.66
3. Rory McIlroy	8.20
4. Wyndham Clark	6.21
5. Viktor Hovland	5.78
6. Ludvig Aberg	5.59
7. Jon Rahm	5.58
8. Patrick Cantlay	4.60
9. Collin Morikawa	4.28
10. Max Homa	4.10
11. Brian Harman	4.08
12. Sahith Theegala	4.02
13. Tommy Fleetwood	3.95
14. Hideki Matsuyama	3.56
15. Matt Fitzpatrick	3.52
16. Russell Henley	3.45
17. Cameron Young	3.36
18. Tyrrell Hatton	3.31
19. Jason Day	3.20
20. Keegan Bradley	3.11

COLLEGE SOFTBALL

NCAA Division I Super Regionals

(Best-of-three; x-if necessary)

At Austin, Texas
Friday: No. 1 Texas (48-7) vs. No. 16 Texas A&M (41-13)
Saturday: Game 2
x-Sunday, May 26: Game 3
At Stanford, Calif.

Friday: No. 8 Stanford (43-13) vs. No. 9 LSU (41-15)
Saturday: Game 2
x-Sunday, May 26: Game 3
At Stillwater, Okla.

Friday: No. 5 Oklahoma St. (45-10) vs. Arizona (35-16-1)
Saturday: Game 2
x-Sunday, May 26: Game 3
At Gainesville, Fla.

Friday: No. 4 Florida (47-12) vs. Baylor (34-21)
Saturday: Game 2
x-Sunday, May 26: Game 3
At Knoxville, Tenn.

Friday: No. 3 Tennessee (41-10) vs. No. 14 Alabama (34-17)
Saturday: Game 2
x-Sunday, May 26: Game 3
At Los Angeles

Thursday: No. 6 UCLA (38-10) vs. No. 11 Georgia (40-16)
Friday: Game 2
x-Saturday: Game 3
At Columbia, Mo.

Friday: No. 7 Missouri (45-16) vs. No. 10 Duke (48-6)
Saturday: Game 2
x-Sunday, May 26: Game 3
At Norman, Okla.

Thursday: No. 2 Oklahoma (50-6) vs. No. 15 Florida St. (45-14)
Friday: Game 2
x-Saturday: Game 3

TENNIS

Geneva Open

Wednesday
At Tennis Club de Geneve Eaux-Vives
Geneva
Purse: Euro 579,320
Surface: Red clay
Men's Singles
Round of 16

Sebastian Baez (5), Argentina, def. Roberto Carballes Baena, Spain, 6-3, 6-0.
Tomas Machac, Czech Republic, def. Nicolas Moreno de Alboran, United States, 4-6, 7-5, 6-0.
Alex Michelsen, United States, def. Taylor Fritz (3), United States, 6-4, 4-6, 7-5.
Casper Ruud (2), Norway, def. Sebastian Ofner, Austria, 4-6, 6-2, 6-2.
Novak Djokovic (1), Serbia, def. Yannick Hanfmann, Germany, 6-3, 6-3.

Strasbourg Open

Wednesday
At Strasbourg Tennis Club
Strasbourg, France
Purse: \$802,237
Surface: Red clay
Women's Singles
Round of 16

Madison Keys (4), United States, def. Wang Xinyu, China, 7-5, 6-0.
Beatriz Haddad Maia (2), Brazil, def. Emma Navarro, United States, 6-4, 7-6 (1).
Magda Linette, Poland, def. Ekaterina Alexandrova (6), Russia, 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-3.
Marketa Vondrousova (1), Czech Republic, def. Magdalena Frech, Poland, 5-7, 6-1, 6-0.
Anhelina Kalinina, Ukraine, def. Fiona Ferro, France, 6-3, 3-6, 6-0.
Clara Burel, France, def. Elina Svitolina (7), Ukraine, 7-6 (1), 4-6, 6-1.
Danielle Collins (3), United States, def. Katerina Siniakova, Czech Republic, 6-1, 6-2.

Lyon Open

Wednesday
At Parc de la Tete d'Or
Lyon, France
Purse: Euro 579,320
Surface: Red clay
Men's Singles
Round of 16

Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, France, def. Yoshihito Nishioka, Japan, walkover.
Tomas Martin Etcheverry (6), Argentina, def. Thiago Seyboth Wild, Brazil, 7-5, 3-0, ret.
Luciano Darderi, Italy, def. Adrian Panarino (3), France, 7-6 (4), 6-3.
Dominik Koepfer, Germany, def. Ugo Humbert (1), France, 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.
Arthur Rinderknech, France, def. Frances Tiafoe (5), United States, 7-6 (7), 6-4.
Hugo Gaston, France, def. Francisco Cerundolo (4), Argentina, 6-2, 2-6, 6-3.

Morocco Open

Wednesday
At Club des Cheminots
Rabat, Morocco
Purse: \$267,082
Surface: Red clay
Women's Singles
Round of 16

Lucia Bronzetti (4), Italy, def. Martina Trevisan, Italy, 6-2, 6-3.
Viktoria Tomova, Bulgaria, def. Wang Yafan, China, 7-6 (4), 6-0.
Peyton Stearns, United States, def. Wang Xiyu (6), China, 6-3, 6-1.
Laura Siegemund, Germany, def. Camila Osorio, Colombia, 6-4, 6-4.
Mayar Sherif, Egypt, def. Maria Carle, Argentina, 6-3, 6-2.
Kamilla Rakhimova, Russia, def. Camilla Rosatello, Italy, 4-0, ret.

PRO SOCCER

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Inter Miami CF	9	2	4	31	36	20
Cincinnati	9	2	3	30	19	11
NYFC	7	5	2	23	18	16
New York	6	3	5	23	25	21
Toronto FC	7	6	1	22	21	20
Charlotte FC	6	5	3	21	14	13
Columbus	5	2	6	21	19	13
Philadelphia	4	4	5	17	25	21
D.C. United	4	5	5	17	20	24
Orlando City	4	5	4	16	15	20
Nashville	3	4	6	15	17	20
Atlanta	3	6	4	13	17	16
CF Montréal	3	7	3	12	17	31
Chicago	2	8	4	10	13	26
New England	2	9	1	7	9	25

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Real Salt Lake	8	2	4	28	27	14
Minnesota	7	2	3	24	21	14
Austin FC	6	4	4	22	19	17
LA Galaxy	5	2	7	22	25	21
LAFc	6	4	3	21	24	19
Colorado	6	5	3	21	24	23
Vancouver	5	4	4	19	19	15
Houston	5	5	3	18	12	13
St Louis City	3	3	7	16	19	20
Seattle	3	6	5	14	16	17
Portland	3	7	4	13	26	29
FC Dallas	3	6	3	12	13	17
Sporting KC	2	6	5	11	21	24
San Jose	3	10	1	10	22	33

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Saturday's games

Los Angeles FC at Atlanta
Philadelphia at Charlotte FC
Chicago at D.C. United
Nashville at CF Montréal
New York City FC at New England
Columbus at Orlando City
Cincinnati at Toronto FC
Real Salt Lake at FC Dallas
Seattle at St Louis City
Minnesota at Colorado
Miami at Vancouver
Houston at LA Galaxy
Sporting Kansas City at Portland
Austin FC at San Jose

Wednesday, May 29

Nashville at Cincinnati
New England at Columbus ppd.
Atlanta at Miami
D.C. United at CF Montréal
Charlotte FC at New York
Toronto FC at Philadelphia
Portland at Austin FC
Orlando City at Chicago
Colorado at Houston
Vancouver at Sporting Kansas City
FC Dallas at LA Galaxy
Real Salt Lake at Seattle
Minnesota at Los Angeles FC

Friday, May 31

San Jose at New York City FC

Saturday, June 1

Colorado at Vancouver
Seattle at Columbus
Toronto FC at D.C. United
St Louis City at Miami
Orlando City at New York
CF Montréal at Philadelphia
LA Galaxy at Chicago
Sporting Kansas City at Minnesota
New England at Nashville
Austin FC at Real Salt Lake
FC Dallas at Los Angeles FC
Houston at Portland

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Orlando	7	0	3	24	18	9
Kansas City	6	0	4	22	25	15
Washington	7	3	0	21	22	14
Portland	6	3	1	19	23	14
Chicago	5	4	1	16	15	14
North Carolina	5	5	0	15	13	11
Gotham FC	4	2	3	15	8	7
San Diego	3	4	2	11	9	9
Angel City	3	5	1	10	11	16
Louisville	1	2	6	9	14	12
Bay FC	3	7	0	9	15	21
Houston	2	5	3	9	8	18
Seattle	2	7	1	7	9	17
Utah Royals FC	1	8	1	4	6	19

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Thursday's game

San Diego at Angel City

Friday's games

Portland at Orlando
Seattle at Washington
North Carolina at Houston
Gotham FC at Bay FC

Saturday's games

Louisville at Chicago
Kansas City at Utah Royals FC

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Recalled LHP Nick Vespi from Norfolk (IL) and added as the 27th man for a doubleheader. Acquired C Blake Hunt from Seattle in exchange for RHP Mike Baumann and C Michael Perez and optioned him to Norfolk (IL).

BOSTON RED SOX — Sent RHP Isaiah Campbell to Worcester (IL) on a rehab assignment.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Recalled OF Zach DeLoach and RHP Nick Nastrini. Placed OF Eloy Jimenez on the 10-day IL. Placed RHP Steven Wilson on the 15-day IL, retroactive to May 20.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Reinstated RHP Tommy Kahnle from the 15-day IL. Optioned LHP Clayton Andrews to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL).

SEATTLE MARINERS — Selected the contract of LHP Jhonathan Diaz from Tacoma (PCL) and optioned him to Tacoma.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Reinstated RHP Ryan Peipiot from the 15-day IL. Designated RHP Erasmo Ramirez for assignment.

TEXAS RANGERS — Reinstated RHP Dane Dunning from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Cole Winn to Round Rock (IL). Agreed to terms with RHP Nabil Crismatt on a minor league contract and assigned him to Round Rock.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Recalled LHP Brandon Hughes from Reno (PCL). Optioned RHP Slade Cecconi to Reno.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Recalled RHP Chris Roycroft from Memphis (IL).

SAN DIEGO PADRES — Selected the contract of LF David Peralta from El Paso (PCL). Transferred RHP Luis Patino from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Placed SS Xander Bogaerts on the 10-day IL, retroactive to May 21.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Reinstated LHP Blake Snell from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Nick Avila to Richmond (EL).

FOOTBALL

National Football League

ATLANTA FALCONS — Waived TE Tucker Fisk with an injury designation. Signed WRs Daylen Baldwin and Odieu Hiliare.

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Named George Kokinis vice president of player personnel, David McDonald vice president of research and development, Mark Azevedo director of player personnel, Andrew Raphael director of college scouting, Derrick Yam director of data and decision science, Joey Cleary assistant director of college scouting and Corey Frazier assistant director of pro personnel. Released DT Bravvion Roy.

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Signed WR Alex Bachman.

NEW YORK JETS — Signed TE Kevin Foelsch. Waived QB Colby Suits.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Signed draft pick TE Theo Johnson.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Placed WR Devante Parker on the reserve/retired list.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Signed draft pick S Tykee Smith. Signed DL Earnest Brown. Waived RB Patrick Laird.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

SAN JOSE SHARKS — Signed D Luca Cagnoni to a three-year, entry-level contract.

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Signed D Dylan Gill to a three-year, entry-level contract.

WASHINGTON CAPITALS — Returned D Vincent Iorio to Hershey (AHL) from loan.

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

MLS — Fined LA Galaxy M Riqui Puig and undisclosed amount for violating the hands to the face/head/neck of an opponent in a match on May 18 against Charlotte FC. Fined New York Red Bulls D Ryan Spaulding and undisclosed amount for failing to leave the field in a timely manner in a match on May 18 against New England. Fined New York Red Bulls D Sean Nealis an undisclosed amount for re-entering the field of play after a red card in a match on May 18 against NYFC. Fined Houston Dynamo D Erik Sviatchenko for violating the simulation-embellishment policy in a match on May 18 against Dallas. Fined Minnesota United D Miguel Tapias an undisclosed amount for failure to leave the field in a timely manner in a match on May 18 against Portland. Found Real Salt Lake in violation of the mass confrontation policy in a match on May 18 against Colorado and issued a warning to the club and head coach Pablo Mastroianni for a first violation. Fined G Zac MacMath, Ds Alexandros Katranis and Brayan Vera and M Nelson Palacio an undisclosed amount for inciting and/or escalating this mass confrontation. Found Colorado Rapids in violation of the mass confrontation policy in a match on May 18 against Real Salt Lake and issued an undisclosed fine to head coach Chris Armas for a second team violation. Fined Ds Mois Bombito and Andreas Maxso and F Darren Yapi an undisclosed amount for inciting and/or escalating a mass confrontation. Fined Real Salt Lake M Matt Crooks an undisclosed amount for entering the field of play during a confrontational incident in a match on May 18 against Colorado.

MINNESOTA UNITED — Loaned D Derek Dodson to Birmingham Legion FC of the USL Championship for the 2024 season.

National Women's Soccer League

WASHINGTON SPIRIT — Signed D Waniya Hudson to a one-year contract through the end of the 2024 season.

COLLEGE

HOFSTRA — Named Lance White assistant coach for women's basketball.

RUTGERS — Announced Brendan Monaghan resigned as baseball's pitching coach and recruiting coordinator.

BRIEFLY

Devils hire former Maple Leafs coach Keefe

OLYMPICS

Family members share dreams of gold

Sets of siblings set sights on making US water polo teams for Paris Olympics

By JAY COHEN
Associated Press

WALNUT, Calif.

Chase Dodd started swimming when he was just a kid. Once he began playing water polo, he was hooked.

When Ryder Dodd got a chance to follow his older brother, he was in.

“When I was around 6 years old, my mom was just like, ‘You want to hop in and play?’” Ryder Dodd said. “And I was like, ‘Yeah, of course I do.’”

That’s how it started for the Dodds, the very beginning of their road to USA Water Polo and, quite possibly, the Paris Olympics this summer. For Dylan, Quinn and Ella Woodhead, it’s a similar story.



E. Woodhead

The U.S. water polo teams for this year’s Olympics could have a much deeper connection than just a mutual love of their grueling sport. Chase and Ryder Dodd are trying to make the

men’s roster, alongside Dylan and Quinn Woodhead, while Ella Woodhead is in the mix for the loaded women’s squad.

The women’s team is going to be announced on May 30, and the men’s team will be unveiled on June 18.

“It’s interesting, just seeing the brotherly dynamic,” U.S. men’s captain Ben Hallock said, “how they’re different, how they’re similar, what makes them special. ... So sort of seeing the traits that make them so good, but also a little bit of bickering and competitiveness is also fun to see.”

An invaluable connection

Dylan Woodhead, a 6-foot-7 defender who turned 25 in September, made his Olympics debut when the U.S. finished sixth in Tokyo. Quinn, a 6-4 attacker, turns 24 next month, and Ella, a 5-10 defender, is 20.

“To have my brother here who I grew up playing with basically my whole career, it’s just special,” Dylan Woodhead said. “My sister, too, going through the same process, it’s just people that you’re more comfortable with. ... Playing with Quinn and talking through things with Ella, you can be brutally honest and that’s invaluable in this line of work.”

The Woodhead siblings are from Northern California. Their mother, Laura, was a swimmer at Stanford, and their father, Jeff, was a rower at Cal. Dylan and Quinn helped Stanford win the CAA title in 2019, and Ella will go back to Stanford after redshirting this season to try out for the U.S. team.

The siblings grew up going to the Big Game — the annual college football showdown between Stanford and Cal. Dylan and his dad rooted for the Bears, and Ella and Quinn joined their mom in cheering for the Cardinal.

“(Dylan) was the first one to decide on Stanford, so kind of flipped the tide right there,” Quinn said.



PHOTOS BY DAMIAN DOVARGANES/AP

Chase Dodd practices during a training session Jan. 17 at Mount San Antonio College in Walnut, Calif. Chase and younger brother Ryder Dodd are trying to make the U.S. men’s water polo roster for the Paris Olympics this summer.



Quinn Woodhead, left, and Dylan Woodhead, right, are another set of siblings trying to make the U.S. men’s team, while sister Ella is trying to make the women’s team.

A grinning Dylan offered a careful description of his father’s reaction to his college choice.

“I don’t know if he ever told me, but my mom said, ‘You know, it really hurt him,’” he cracked. “I think he’s OK with it now. There are worse schools to pick than Stanford in his eyes.”

A family falls for water polo

Dylan, Quinn and Ella got an early start on swimming through their mother. They had a pool in their backyard, and they played water basketball games that occasionally resulted in Ella being put in a headlock by one of the brothers to keep her from scoring.

With water polo, the brothers “found a really good community when we first started playing that we really enjoyed,” Quinn said. Ella vividly remembers going to their games as a kid.

“I was like 7 and 8, up in the stands, watching Dylan and Quinn play, taking stats on my own. Homemade stat sheet that I made,” she said. “So I think before I started playing, I kind of just fell in love with the tactical aspects of the game.”

The Woodhead siblings act as a sounding board for each other as they try to get better at water polo. Dylan and Ella talk about playing defender, and Quinn offers tips on shooting.

Dylan and Quinn also are very competi-

tive, especially when they run into each other at U.S. practice. It’s a similar dynamic with Chase and Ryder Dodd, who are from Southern California.

Chase Dodd, a 6-3 attacker who turned 21 last month, scored 39 times for UCLA during the 2022 season before taking this year off to train with the U.S. team. Ryder, an 18-year-old attacker, is considered one of the sport’s rising prospects.

“We have a really competitive relationship. Almost everything we do is a game,” Chase Dodd said. “Everything we do is competition. It’s always go, go, go, go, go. I think that’s perfect for us playing this game.”

Other siblings to watch

The U.S. track team might have its own family ties.

Noah Lyles likely will be among the 200-meter favorites, and his younger brother, Josephus, another sprinter, also is looking to make the U.S. team. The American roster also could have Devon Williams for the decathlon and his sister, Kendell, in the heptathlon.

Siblings Karolien and Finn Florijn are looking to row for the Netherlands in Paris, following in the footsteps of their father, Ronald, who won gold at the Seoul and Atlanta Olympics. Tom and Emily Ford, two more rowing siblings, are hoping to medal for Britain.

Brothers Henrik, Filip and Jakob Ingebrigtsen of Norway are hoping to run in Paris this summer.

Ron Polonsky and his sister, Leah, are looking to swim for Israel.

MLB

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	34	17	.667	—
Baltimore	29	18	.617	3
Boston	26	24	.520	7½
Tampa Bay	25	26	.490	9
Toronto	22	26	.458	10½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	33	17	.660	—
Kansas City	32	19	.627	1½
Minnesota	26	23	.531	6½
Detroit	23	26	.469	9½
Chicago	15	35	.300	18
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	27	23	.540	—
Texas	24	26	.480	3
Houston	22	28	.440	5
Los Angeles	20	30	.400	7
Oakland	20	31	.392	7½
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	36	14	.720	—
Atlanta	28	18	.609	6
Washington	21	27	.438	14
New York	21	28	.429	14½
Miami	17	34	.333	19½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	28	21	.571	—
Chicago	27	23	.540	1½
St. Louis	23	26	.469	5
Pittsburgh	23	27	.460	5½
Cincinnati	20	29	.408	8
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	33	19	.635	—
San Diego	26	26	.500	7
Arizona	24	26	.480	8
San Francisco	24	26	.480	8
Colorado	16	32	.333	15
Wednesday's games				
St. Louis 3, Baltimore 1, 1st game				
Minnesota 3, Washington 2				
Cleveland 6, N.Y. Mets 3				
St. Louis 5, Baltimore 4, 2nd game				
L.A. Angels 2, Houston 1				
Kansas City 8, Detroit 3				
Philadelphia 11, Texas 4				
Boston 8, Tampa Bay 5				
N.Y. Yankees 7, Seattle 3				
Toronto 9, Chicago White Sox 2				
Colorado 4, Oakland 3, 12 innings				
Miami 1, Milwaukee 0				
San Diego 7, Cincinnati 3				
Atlanta 9, Chicago Cubs 2				
San Francisco 9, Pittsburgh 5, 10 innings				
Arizona 6, L.A. Dodgers 0				
Thursday's games				
San Francisco at Pittsburgh				
Seattle at N.Y. Yankees				
Texas at Philadelphia				
San Diego at Cincinnati				
Atlanta at Chicago Cubs				
Colorado at Oakland				
Toronto at Detroit				
Baltimore at Chicago White Sox				
Friday's games				
Toronto (Manoah 1-1) at Detroit (Maning 0-1)				
Atlanta (TBD) at Pittsburgh (Falter 2-2)				
Seattle (Kirby 4-4) at Washington (TBD)				
Kansas City (Lugo 7-1) at Tampa Bay (TBD)				
Milwaukee (Wilson 2-1) at Boston (Crawford 2-2)				
Texas (TBD) at Minnesota (Ober 4-2)				
L.A. Dodgers (Paxton 5-0) at Cincinnati (Ashcraft 3-3)				
San Francisco (Harrison 4-1) at N.Y. Mets (Scott 0-2)				
Baltimore (Burnes 4-2) at Chicago White Sox (Flexen 2-4)				
Chicago Cubs (TBD) at St. Louis (Mikolas 3-5)				
Philadelphia (TBD) at Colorado (TBD)				
Cleveland (Allen 5-2) at L.A. Angels (Sandoval 2-6)				
Houston (Verlander 2-2) at Oakland (TBD)				
N.Y. Yankees (Rodón 5-2) at San Diego (Darvish 4-1)				
Miami (Garrett 0-0) at Arizona (Gallen 5-3)				
Saturday's games				
Toronto at Detroit				
San Francisco at N.Y. Mets				
Texas at Minnesota				
Baltimore at Chicago White Sox				
Seattle at Washington				
Atlanta at Pittsburgh				
Houston at Oakland				
Kansas City at Tampa Bay				
Milwaukee at Boston				
L.A. Dodgers at Cincinnati				
Chicago Cubs at St. Louis				
Philadelphia at Colorado				
Cleveland at L.A. Angels				
N.Y. Yankees at San Diego				
Miami at Arizona				

Soto already sparking 'M-V-P!' chants

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

Fifty-one games into the season, Juan Soto is sparking chants of "M-V-P!" at Yankee Stadium.

"Way too early," Soto said after his second two-homer game of the homestand led the Yankees over the Seattle Mariners 7-3 on Wednesday night and stopped New York's first two-game losing streak in three weeks.



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

The New York Yankees' Juan Soto, left, celebrates with Aaron Judge after hitting a two-run home run against Seattle during the third inning Wednesday in New York. Soto is hitting .313 with 13 homers and 40 RBIs.

Soto drove a full-count sinker into the visitors' bullpen in left in the third for a two-run homer and a 4-0 lead, a 414-foot drive off Bryce Miller that hit the back wall on a hop. Soto connected on another sinker on Miller's first pitch of the sixth inning, a 369-foot shot into the left-field stands.

That prompted the "M-V-P!" chorus from the crowd of 40,224.

"I love when the Bronx gets behind our guys," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "Obviously showing their appreciation for him."

In his first season since the Yankees acquired him from San Diego, Soto is hitting .313 with 13 homers, 40 RBIs and a .978 OPS. The 25-year-old Dominican repeatedly responds to the admiration and affection from the fans behind him in the right-field seats.

"I just got to turn around and they go crazy," he said. "I know it's a lot of Dominicans. They all want me to say hi. I tried to say hi to everybody, but I got to be focused in the game, too."

Soto, who can become a free agent after the World Series, has helped boost the Yankees to an

AL-best 34-17 record.

"I'm enjoying every part of every part of it," he said. "You never know how long this is going to be like that, so you do try to enjoy it every second. So I just soak it all in."

Judge, the 2022 AL MVP, loves hearing Soto getting a fan response similar to the one the Yankees captain has long received.

"It gives me chills," Judge said. "The fans are definitely loving the show he's putting on."

Judge hit an opposite-field, two-run homer to right in the first off Miller and is batting .268 with 14 homers — 11 since late April — and 34 RBIs.

Judge credits Soto with boosting the entire batting order.

"It's entertaining. It's fun to watch. It gives everybody behind him a good look at all the guy's pitches, what he's trying to do that day," Judge said.

After Nestor Cortes pitched five scoreless innings, Luke Weaver allowed a three-run homer to Cal Raleigh that cut the lead to 5-3 in the eighth. Alex Verdugo hit a two-run homer in the bottom half.

Entertaining the crowd, Judge, Soto and Verdugo urged on different sections of the bleachers in a cheering competition during an eighth-inning pitching change.

"It's just a good way to get the

crowd into it," Judge said. "Get them a little rowdy, man, they just want to cheer."

Soto has 19 career two-homer games but has never hit three. He came to the plate with the bases loaded in the seventh against Cody Bolton but struck out on three big swings.

"I think I went too far," Soto said. "I got too happy with it."

He leaves the stadium with the sounds of the fans in his head.

"At the end of the day, they're part of the game, they're part of the team," he said. "They put pressure on the other team. And whenever they go crazy like that, that other team feels the pressure."

For Cubs' Hendricks, bullpen is 'opportunity'

By JAY COHEN
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Kyle Hendricks is looking at his transition to the bullpen as an opportunity.

Hendricks was pushed out of Chicago's rotation after he went 0-4 with a 10.57 ERA in his first seven starts of the season. The Cubs were expected to go with a bullpen day in Hendricks' regular slot on Thursday against Atlanta.

The 34-year-old right-hander has made just two relief appearances in his 11 years in the majors, one during the 2016 season and when he got the loss during a 13-inning 2018 NL Wild Card Game against Colorado.

"We all know what's been going on," Hendricks said Wednesday. "I think just trying to give the team the best chance to win, at the end of the day. And that's all I'm trying to be about, too."

"So I'm honestly excited for the opportunity and the challenge in a way. ... Just a big opportunity, obviously, to try and turn things around."

Hendricks, who is eligible for



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP

Chicago Cubs pitcher Kyle Hendricks had a career 3.48 ERA going into the year after 10 seasons, but has struggled mightily in 2024 to the tune of a 10.57 ERA, resulting in his demotion to the bullpen.

free agency after this season, is the last roster link to Chicago's 2016 World Series championship. He was acquired in a July 2012 trade with the Texas Rangers.

Over a five-year stretch from 2016 to 2020, Hendricks went 54-39 with a 3.00 ERA and four complete

games. He struck out 668 batters and issued 168 walks in 787 innings.

He was sidelined by a capsular tear in his right shoulder in July 2022 and then began last season on the injured list as he continued his rehab. He returned to the mound last May and finished last year with

a 3.74 ERA in 24 starts.

But the beginning of this season has been rough.

"You can't put up those kind of results," Hendricks said. "We're in a win now kind of mode, and that's exactly where I want to be. I want to be part of a team that's winning. I just want to be doing my part to contribute to that winning. So I wasn't doing that."

Hendricks was placed on the 15-day injured list on April 23 with a low back strain. He returned on May 12 and pitched five effective innings at Pittsburgh, but he surrendered seven earned runs in 4⅓ innings to the Pirates on Friday.

"I think there's a lot of positives you can take from the way he's throwing the ball. He hasn't put it together yet," president of baseball operations Jed Hoyer said Tuesday.

Asked if his goal was to return to the rotation, Hendricks responded: "My goal is just honestly to make good pitches, make good pitches and get some outs, see the results that come from it."

FRENCH OPEN

Potential finale for Nadal will get proper reverence

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

If this is, as expected, Rafael Nadal's final French Open, it will be one that everyone — the 37-year-old Spaniard included — will surely remember vividly.

No matter how healthy the guy everyone calls "Rafa" might be. No matter how long his stay in the bracket lasts. No matter whether he somehow adds another championship at Roland Garros to the record 14 he owns.

Not even Nadal truly believes that is possible. Indeed, it was not certain he'd be in the draw until it was announced Thursday afternoon. He'll face a tough opener in No. 4 Alexander Zverev.

"I am not negative," he explained. "I am just realistic."

Think back just a couple of years ago to Serena Williams' farewell at the U.S. Open. That's the sort of atmosphere and adoration likely to be on display whenever Nadal swings a racket or simply strolls around the compact-for-a-Grand-Slam-grounds in the southwest section of Paris where the clay-court tournament begins Sunday.

"I cannot predict what kind of emotions I am going to have there," said Nadal, who has been saying for a while that he thinks 2024 will be his final season before retirement. "I just want to enjoy every day."

That's been difficult lately because of hip and abdominal muscle injuries that limited him to 20 matches, and a 9-11 record, in the past 20 months.

Nadal missed nearly all of 2023 after hurting his hip during a loss at the Australian Open that January. He had surgery almost exactly a year ago and sat out the French Open for the first time since mak-

ing his debut there in 2005, when, naturally, he claimed the trophy at age 19.

A torn hip muscle this January forced Nadal to miss the Australian Open; an ab problem sidelined him later. He returned in April, but in three places he's won a total of 27 titles — Barcelona, Madrid, Rome — Nadal made it no further than the fourth round and called himself "unpredictable."

That stretch was capped by a 6-1, 6-3 loss to Hubert Hurkacz at the Italian Open, a result so dispiriting that Nadal wondered aloud whether he should bother showing up at Roland Garros, although did say he was reluctant to skip "the most important event of my tennis career."

The 22-time major champion is not able to run at full speed or compete with full force. He does not have the match-readiness required to succeed.

"For him to feel like he's going in with his 'C' game — not 'B' game; 'C' game — and maybe fearing almost that he could lose first or second round?" said Chris Evert, who won seven of her 18 Grand Slam titles in Paris. "He's been such a perfectionist on that surface, why would he want to expose himself at that level?"

No man has won even half as many French Opens as Nadal. His winning percentage there is .974. He had streaks of five titles in a row, four in a row and three in a row.

There's already a statue of him near the main stadium.

"It's really a paramount challenge to play him in Roland Garros," Novak Djokovic said. "He's an incredible athlete. The tenacity and intensity he brings on the court, particularly there, is something that was very rarely seen, I think, in the history of this sport."



DAVID VINCENT/AP

Rafael Nadal, left, has played Novak Djokovic 59 times, more than any two other men have met in the Open era of tennis, which dates to 1968. Djokovic leads 30-29 overall but Nadal is 8-2 at Roland Garros.

Many of 14-time champ's rivals offer thoughts on his excellence

BY HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

At this point in Rafael Nadal's career, he is most eager for one particular spectator to get to watch him play: His 1-year-old son.

As the start of the French Open approaches Sunday, no one knows with any certainty how much longer the clay-court tournament's 14-time champion will try to compete after a series of injuries that limited his ability to play for most of 2023 and 2024.

"Well, I would love to play a little bit longer and give him a memory of myself playing tennis. That's what will be the ideal thing for me and for my wife and family," Nadal, who turns 38 on June 3, said about Rafael Jr. "But probably, I will not be able to make that happen."

Plenty of other folks have vivid recollections of seeing Nadal display his relentless excellence on a tennis court. That includes the many players who have been on the other side of the net for at least one of his 1,299 professional matches.

No one has taken on Nadal more than Novak Djokovic, one of his rivals in the so-called Big Three of men's tennis, which also featured the now-retired Roger Federer. There have been 59 installments of Nadal vs. Djokovic, more than between any two other men in the Open era of tennis, which dates to 1968.

Djokovic leads 30-29 overall, while Nadal leads 11-7 in Grand Slam matches — including 8-2 at Roland Garros.

Worth noting: Djokovic is responsible for two of Nadal's three losses in his French Open career.

"It's probably one of the biggest challenges that you can have in the tennis tour, playing Rafa at Roland Garros. We know his records there. I played him probably more than any other player has played him on that court. The court is bigger. There is more space, which affects visually the play a lot and the feeling of the player on the court. He likes to stand behind quite far back (to) return. You have some times when he's really in the zone and in the groove, not making many errors," Djokovic said. "You feel like he's impenetrable. He's like a wall."

Plenty of other players have their own perspectives on what it's like to face Nadal, and some of the sport's top women have their own observations as well:

"The thing is that, no matter which form Rafa is (in) or how he's feeling, when he steps, especially, on clay — I would say it doesn't matter if it's clay or hard court, but especially on clay — you're still scared. You're still scared of Rafa." — Daniil Medvedev, the 2021 U.S. Open champion and twice the runner-up to Nadal in Grand Slam finals.

"I'm going to be depressed when Rafa retires. He's my favorite player. He's my No. 1 inspiration. I admire him so much. His whole personality is unique." — Maria Sakkari, a two-time Grand Slam semifinalist.

"Somehow you feel like you're winning, but then somehow you end up not." — Alexander Zverev, the 2020 U.S. Open runner-up.

"Playing Rafa is something special. It's just different, especially on clay, the surface that he just dominated over the past 20 years. No one will ever have a record like him on this surface. He's just bigger than the sport, at the end of the day." — Hubert Hurkacz, who beat Na-

dal on clay at the Italian Open in May.

"When I was younger, he was basically the only player I looked up to — but not because of his game on clay. More because of the way he is off the court, as well, and how he never gives up." — Iga Swiatek, a three-time French Open champion and the No. 1-ranked woman.

"His legacy will live on forever. He has done some absolutely stellar performances and broken records that I don't think will be broken again in tennis." — Stefanos Tsitsipas, a two-time Grand Slam finalist.

"I feel a little bit sad about it, because he's definitely one of my favorite players to watch. His mentality and intensity is something I admire." — Coco Gauff, the reigning U.S. Open champion.

"Rafa has given so much to the sport, no? A different mentality. How to approach practice sessions. How to approach matches. How to come out from difficult situations." — Jannik Sinner, the 2024 Australian Open champion.

"He's the best one who ever walked this planet, if we speak about playing on clay." — Jiri Lehecka, after beating Nadal on clay in Rome in May.

"It's very overwhelming to play him. ... The intensity he can give sometimes with his forehand and backhand — it's brutal." — Zizou Bergs, who lost to Nadal in Rome.

"He's as comfortable as someone can be on a tennis court." — Sebastian Korda, who lost to Nadal in the French Open main's stadium in 2020.

"We cannot play like him or have the spin he does, of course, but we can try to pick up small things that can work for our game. Like, for example, the placement of the ball. The buildup of the point. The footwork. Everyone can learn something. It just depends what you see." — Elina Svitolina, a three-time Grand Slam semifinalist.



TERTIUS PICKARD/AP

If Rafael Nadal competes in next week's French Open, it will likely be the last for the record 14-time winner at the tournament.

NHL PLAYOFFS/NFL

Bobrovsky shuts out Rangers in Game 1

BY VIN A. CHERWOOD
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Sergei Bobrovsky had a long stretch without seeing a shot on goal in the middle of the game, and then there was a flurry in the third period.

No matter, he stopped everything that came his way.

Bobrovsky had 23 saves for his first shutout of the postseason, and the Panthers beat the New York Rangers 3-0 on Wednesday night in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals.

"I think you have to be a veteran goalie to do what he did tonight," Panthers coach Paul Maurice said. "Sit for a while, make huge saves, and sense the last 10 minutes of the game that's where he has to be Sergei."

Matthew Tkachuk had a goal and an assist, and Carter Verhaeghe and Sam Bennett also scored for Florida.

Bobrovsky, who had six shutouts during the regular season, had five saves in the first period, seven in the second and 11 in the third for his second career shutout in the playoffs.

"They are a good team, we did a really good defense, we executed our system," the 35-year-old goalie said. "It's a big win for us. A game we can build on. ... It's one game. There's still a lot of hockey to play. We have to keep grinding."

Igor Shesterkin finished with 24 saves for the Presidents' Trophy-winning Rangers. They lost for the third time in four games after opening the postseason with seven straight victories.

"We can play better, that wasn't the best version of ourselves,"



JULIA NIKHINSON/AP

Panthers goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky deflects a shot by the Rangers' Mika Zibanejad as Florida's Sam Reinhart looks for the rebound in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals on Wednesday in New York.

Rangers coach Peter Laviolette said. "We'll look to see what they did, see what we can do better in all areas of the game. There's more for us to give, more for us to do out there."

Game 2 is Friday night in New York.

With Florida leading 1-0, Bobrovsky slid to his left to deny a one-timer from Kaapo Kakko 6½ minutes into the third period.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson appeared to add to the lead when he beat Shesterkin from the left side several minutes later. However, the goal was overturned after a challenge for goalie interference because the Panthers' Ryan Lomberg bumped into Shesterkin in

the crease.

"I thought it was right because it's the call I would want to see on Bobrovsky," Maurice said.

The Rangers had a flurry of chances with about seven minutes remaining. Alexander Wennberg was denied on two attempts in close, Jacob Trouba had a shot blocked and Wennberg missed on another shot seconds later.

Bobrovsky made a kick save on a drive by Adam Fox during a New York power play with 5:25 remaining.

"He was really good," Tkachuk said about Bobrovsky. "We did a good job of blocking shots, and when we needed him he was huge, especially with a couple of break-

aways. So yeah, he gives us a lot of confidence."

The Panthers made it 2-0 when Verhaeghe's centering pass for Tkachuk was deflected past Shesterkin by Lafreniere with 3:48 to go. Verhaeghe got credit for his seventh of the playoffs.

The Rangers pulled Shesterkin for an extra skater with 3½ minutes remaining, but could not beat Bobrovsky.

The goalie stopped a slap shot by Mika Zibanejad to preserve the shutout, and Bennett sealed the victory with an empty-netter with 1:19 left.

Bobrovsky made a right pad save on Will Cuyllé's breakaway attempt in the opening minute of

NHL scoreboard

Conference finals

(Best-of-seven; x-if necessary)

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Florida 1, N.Y. Rangers 0

Wednesday: Florida 3, N.Y. Rangers 0

Friday: at N.Y. Rangers, AFN-Sports2, 2 a.m. Saturday JKT

Sunday: at Florida, AFN-Sports2, 9 p.m.

Sunday CET; 4 a.m. Monday JKT

Tuesday, May 28: at Florida

x-Thursday, May 30: at N.Y. Rangers

x-Saturday, June 1: at Florida

x-Monday, June 3: at N.Y. Rangers

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Dallas vs. Edmonton

Thursday: at Dallas

Saturday: at Dallas, AFN-Sports2, 2 a.m.

Sunday CET; 9 a.m. Sunday JKT

Monday: at Edmonton, AFN-Sports2,

2:30 a.m. Tuesday CET; 9:30 a.m. Tuesday

JKT

Wednesday, May 29: at Edmonton

x-Friday, May 31: at Dallas

x-Sunday, June 2: at Edmonton

x-Tuesday, June 4: at Dallas

the second period to preserve the lead.

The Rangers had four shots on goal in the first 1:55 of the second period, and then went nearly 14½ minutes without one until Adam Fox's attempt with 3:42 left.

Tkachuk opened the scoring late in the first period. Forsling brought the puck up the left side, dropped a pass to Tkachuk, who beat Shesterkin from the left circle over the goalie's glove with 3:34 left. It was his fifth goal and 15th point of the playoffs.

About 1:15 later, Schneider got a breakaway and fired a shot past Bobrovsky that hit off the goalpost.

The Rangers had forward Filip Chytil back for the second time in the postseason. He missed the final 72 games of the regular season because of an injury believed to be a concussion before returning for Game 3 of the second round against Carolina and then was out for the rest of the series.

Mahomes, Reid say Butker is entitled to his beliefs

BY DAVE SKRETTA
AND TERESA WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Patrick Mahomes said Wednesday that while he doesn't agree with all the beliefs espoused by kicker Harrison Butker during a recent commencement address, the Chiefs quarterback nevertheless respects his teammate's right to make them be known.

Butker delivered what has become a polarizing speech May 11 at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, where the three-time Super Bowl champ said most women receiving degrees were probably more excited about getting married and having kids, and that some Catholic leaders were "pushing dangerous gender ideologies onto the youth of America."

Butker also assailed Pride month, an important time for the LGBTQ+ community, and President Joe Biden's stance on abortion.

"I've known Harrison for seven years. I judge him by the character he shows every

single day," Mahomes said after one of the Chiefs' voluntary practices in Kansas City, Mo.. "We're not always going to agree, and

there are certain things he said that I don't necessarily agree with. But I know the person he is and he's doing what he can to lead people in the right direction."

Butker's comments were delivered the same week Mahomes offered a toast to the future of women in sports at the TIME100 Gala: "I'd like to raise a glass to a new era in sports, an era when the women's game is finally getting the attention it deserves."

"It was pretty bad timing, I guess you would say. I shot that a couple weeks before," Mahomes said of the film spot. "That's what makes this country so great is you're able to get as much knowledge as you can and make your own decisions."

But, Mahomes admitted, "it gets a little divisive sometimes when you get to social media and outside the (practice) building."

"I judge him by the character he shows every single day."

Patrick Mahomes
on teammate Harrison Butker

Earlier in the day, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell declined to expand on the NFL's statement distancing the league from Butker's comments. The league said that the comments and "views are not those of the NFL as an organization."

Still, the commencement address from the 28-year-old Butker in which he said that women "have had the most diabolical lies told to you" has become a flashpoint for a number of discussions, including women in the workplace.

"Some of you may go on to lead successful careers in the world, but I would venture to guess that the majority of you are most excited about your marriage and the children

you will bring into this world," Butker said. "I can tell you that my beautiful wife Isabelle would be the first to say that her life truly started when she started living her vocation as a wife and as a mother."

Butker said his wife embraced "one of the most important titles of all. Homemaker."

Chiefs coach Andy Reid said after Wednesday's practice that while he "talks to Harrison all the time," he didn't believe he needed to discuss the address.

"We're a microcosm of life here," Reid said. "We're from some different areas. Different religions. Different races. But we get along. We all respect each others' opinions, and not necessarily do we go by those, but we respect everyone to have a voice."

Mahomes doesn't believe Butker's viewpoints will become a divisive issue in the locker room.

"There are certain values that some people emphasize more than others. There are certain things I don't necessarily agree with," Mahomes said. "I know what kind of person he is. I'm going to look at that first."

AUTO RACING

Larson carefully watching weather

Rain could impact his attempt to run both races Sunday

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Kyle Larson eyeballed his assigned teammates and plotted a strategy to try to score his first win of Indianapolis 500 week.

He was at Wheeler Elementary School early Wednesday in Speedway for the annual “Community Day” and alongside Scott Dixon, Scott McLaughlin and Will Power, Larson was there to entertain the students ahead of “The Greatest Spectacle in Racing.”

He grinned and cheered through the series of games played with selected students — many of whom were taller than the 5-foot-6 NASCAR star. And if it hadn't been his first-ever time participating in the event with local students, Larson might have won a few rounds racing scooters around cones, the relay race to collect messages in a bottle or any of the other games.

But the other IndyCar drivers present are “Community Day” veterans and already knew all the hacks on how to win. Larson didn't mind and after heading back to Indianapolis Motor Speedway, he and wife, Katelyn, enjoyed a photo shoot in the midway using the iconic NDY sign in which Larson



COLIN E. BRALEY/AP

Kyle Larson will try to race in the Indy 500 early Sunday, then fly to Charlotte for NASCAR's Coca-Cola 600.

raised his arms in the air to be the “I” and complete the word.

His only complaint eight days into Indy 500 prep is the forecast for Sunday, which is calling for rain. Larson is trying to become the fifth driver to run the Indy 500 and the Coca-Cola 600 on the same day, and he doesn't want weather spoiling a year's worth of preparation.

“If it's going to rain here Sunday, then I just want it to rain all day and the (Indy 500) to be on Monday,” Larson said. “I don't even want to think about what could happen if we're sitting in the rain Sunday.”

That's because his real job is in NASCAR and he's not supposed to miss the race Sunday night at Charlotte Motor Speedway. So Larson grew a bit excited Wednesday when he learned of NASCAR team owner Rick Hendrick's indecisiveness a day earlier over how to handle the weather forecast.

Larson is scheduled to start fifth in the Indy 500 in a joint entry between Arrow McLaren Racing and Hendrick Motorsports.

“We've talked about it many times, and we know we need to be at Charlotte for the points,” Hendrick said Tuesday. “We're just

going to let it play out ... we'll make that decision Sunday.”

Hendrick acknowledged he didn't want to pull Larson out of the Indy 500 just to get him to Charlotte on time.

“It would be very hard. It would be very tough,” Hendrick said. “Would be very disappointing because of all the effort that everyone has put in. We've got a tremendous amount of folks there at Indy, and he's in such a good position, it would be extremely hard.”

The decision will fall to Hendrick come Sunday. Until then, Larson is just crossing his fingers and hoping to see sunshine.

Scoreboard

Indianapolis 500 lineup

IndyCar Series
After qualifying; race Sunday
At Indianapolis Motor Speedway
Indianapolis

Lap length: 2.5 miles

- (3) Scott McLaughlin, D/C/F, 02:33.7017 (234.22 mph).
- (12) Will Power, D/C/F, 02:33.9007 (233.917).
- (2) Josef Newgarden, D/C/F, 02:33.9726 (233.808).
- (7) Alexander Rossi, D/C/F, 02:34.4469 (233.09).
- (17) Kyle Larson, D/C/F, 02:34.6083 (232.846).
- (14) Santino Ferrucci, D/C/F, 02:34.7110 (232.692).
- (21) Rinus VeeKay, D/C/F, 02:34.7657 (232.61).
- (5) Pato O'Ward, D/C/F, 02:34.7829 (232.584).
- (60) Felix Rosenqvist, D/H/F, 02:34.9686 (232.305).
- (75) Takuma Sato, D/H/F, 02:35.0578 (232.171).
- (27) Kyle Kirkwood, D/H/F, 02:35.8490 (230.993).
- (23) Ryan Hunter-Reay, D/C/F, 02:36.1367 (230.567).
- (26) Colton Herta, D/H/F, 02:34.9616 (232.316).
- (10) Alex Palou, D/H/F, 02:34.9682 (232.306).
- (6) Callum Iott, 02:35.0184 (232.23).
- (11) Marcus Armstrong, D/H/F, 02:35.0504 (232.183).
- (20) Ed Carpenter, D/C/F, 02:35.1608 (232.017).
- (4) Kyffin Simpson, D/H/F, 02:35.2069 (231.948).
- (98) Marco Andretti, D/H/F, 02:35.2458 (231.89).
- (6) Helio Castroneves, D/H/F, 02:35.2587 (231.871).
- (9) Scott Dixon, D/H/F, 02:35.2723 (231.851).
- (78) Agustin Canapino, D/C/F, 02:35.2750 (231.847).
- (41) Sting Ray Robb, D/C/F, 02:35.2888 (231.826).
- (20) Christian Rasmussen, D/C/F, 02:35.3852 (231.682).
- (66) Tom Blomqvist, D/H/F, 02:35.4554 (231.578).
- (77) Romain Grosjean, D/C/F, 02:35.4982 (231.514).
- (8) Linus Lundqvist, D/H/F, 02:35.5034 (231.506).
- (45) Christian Lundgaard, D/H/F, 02:35.5308 (231.465).
- (24) Conor Daly, D/C/F, 02:35.6803 (231.243).
- (30) Pietro Fittipaldi, D/H/F, 02:35.7768 (231.1).
- (51) Katherine Legge, D/H/F, 02:36.4590 (230.092).
- (28) Marcus Ericsson, D/H/F, 02:36.5037 (230.027).
- (15) Graham Rahal, D/H/F, 02:36.5396 (229.974).
- (18) Nolan Siegal, D/H/F, 02:36.8174 (229.566).

Star: van Gisbergen made NASCAR drivers look bad in Chicago

FROM PAGE 48

debut in “The Greatest Spectacle in Racing” in 2016.

“Wow, damn. I'll be so annoyed,” Rossi said of a Larson win. “I'll understand how everyone else felt when I won. Is he capable of doing it? Yeah. Would I be happy for the team? Yeah. Would I be internally annoyed? Yeah.”



Palou

Larson had the same feelings a year ago following NASCAR's street-course race in Chicago, which was won in the rain by Shane van Gisbergen in the New Zealander's debut.

After van Gisbergen won NASCAR's first-ever street race, Chase Elliott said the Kiwi “made me look bad,” and Larson wondered whether van Gisbergen “thinks we all suck.”

Rossi said a win by Larson would have the same effect. “We know he's good,” Rossi said, “but for him to come into our world, and in his first event win, like, that doesn't reflect well on us.”

Two-time IndyCar champion Alex Palou disagreed, saying Larson could add even more cache to the Indy 500.

“It's Kyle Larson. I don't think it would hurt,” Palou said. “If Kyle Larson wins, it's



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

New Zealand's Shane van Gisbergen, left, won the Chicago street race last year in his NASCAR Cup Series debut. Chase Elliott said van Gisbergen “made me look bad.”

Kyle Larson, so whatever. He wins everything. So I don't think it would make us look as idiots. It's not that I'm like, ‘Oh yeah, if he wins, that's cool.’ I don't want him to win. But I think he will be there, for sure.”

Larson was back at Indianapolis Motor Speedway early Monday after the All-Star race, walking onto the front stretch to take the traditional photograph of the 33-driver field with the Borg-Warner Trophy in the midst of them.

As he sat on the pit wall in casual conversation, The Associated Press asked him about comparisons to Verstappen. Larson's dark sunglasses masked what appeared to be shock on his face, almost as if he seemed to think the idea ludicrous.

“Not in an F1 car!” Larson replied. “I can't beat him in an F1 car. And I bet he can beat me in an Indy car, just based off his street and road course experience.”

So, where could Larson hold his own against the Dutchman?

“I mean, I hope I can beat him in a sprint car,” Larson said.

He thought the entire conversation was hypothetical — a waste of time. “I don't understand how this can even be a thing,” he said. “If you don't run multiple disciplines, how can anyone say you are the best?”

Like it or not, Larson will make his case for consideration on Sunday.

NBA



MATT KROHN/AP

Dallas Mavericks guard Luka Dončić is pressured by Minnesota Timberwolves center Rudy Gobert, left, and forward Jaden McDaniels during Game 1 of the Western Conference finals Wednesday in Minneapolis.

Dončić's late surge leads Mavericks over T-wolves

By DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS—Luka Dončić led a strong finish for the Dallas Mavericks, swishing crucial shots down the stretch, drawing a couple of fouls and even playing strong defense.

The Mavericks might not be the favorites in yet another series, but they stole home-court advantage from the Minnesota Timberwolves with this promising start.

Dončić had 15 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter and Kyrie Irving scored 24 of his 30 in the first half to lift the Mavericks to a 108-105 victory over the Timberwolves in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals on Wednesday night.

Dallas had a 62-38 advantage in points in the paint to offset a 6-for-25 shooting performance from deep.

"We made important ones," said Dončić, who scored seven straight points over 63 seconds early in the fourth quarter to fuel a 13-0 run by the Mavericks for a 97-89 lead.

The Mavericks trailed 102-98 after a 3-pointer by Anthony Edwards with 3:37 left, before an 8-0 run the Wolves didn't stop until a tip-in with 10.5 seconds to go. For the first time in six tries under coach Jason Kidd, the Mavericks won the first game of a playoff series.

Jaden McDaniels had his third straight 20-plus-point game with 24 points for the Wolves, but Edwards — who earned his first All-NBA selection prior to the game, on the second team — was stifled for 19 points in a team effort from the

Scoreboard

Conference finals	
(Best-of-seven; x-if necessary)	
EASTERN CONFERENCE	
Boston 1, Indiana 0	
Boston 133, Indiana 128, OT	
Thursday:	at Boston
Saturday:	at Indiana, AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m. Sunday CET; 9:30 a.m. Sunday JKT
Monday:	at Indiana, AFN-Sports, 2:10 a.m. Tuesday CET; 9:10 a.m. Tuesday JKT
x-Wednesday, May 29:	at Boston
x-Friday, May 31:	at Indiana
x-Sunday, June 2:	at Boston
WESTERN CONFERENCE	
Dallas 1, Minnesota 0	
Wednesday:	Dallas 108, Minnesota 105
Friday:	at Minnesota, AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m. Saturday CET; 9:30 a.m. Saturday JKT
Sunday:	at Dallas, AFN-Sports, 2 a.m. Monday CET; 9 a.m. Monday JKT
Tuesday:	at Dallas
x-Thursday, May 30:	at Minnesota
x-Saturday, June 1:	at Dallas
x-Monday, June 3:	at Minnesota

Mavericks. Karl-Anthony Towns needed a late burst to get to 16 points and finished 6-for-20 from the floor.

The star power in this series is strong, and for the first night at least the Mavericks got what they needed from their leading duo while the Wolves largely struggled to run the offense around theirs.

"Terrible offense down the stretch: bad shots, turnovers, no composure," Wolves coach Chris Finch said. "We've got to be better in clutch moments."

Towns came to life with a long jumper, a lob to Rudy Gobert for a slam and a 3-pointer on a 2-minute burst to give the Wolves the lead back with 4:39 to go on the way to a 10-0 run that Dončić ended with a 3-pointer. P.J. Washington, who had 13 points and seven rebounds, hit from deep to put the Mavericks back in front with 1:56 to go.

Towns thought he tied the game with a putback dunk on the next possession, but that was waved off for basket interference.

Minnesota hosts Game 2 on Friday night.

Edwards, who went scoreless in the third quarter, added 11 rebounds and eight assists.

"He's an amazing player. We have to put multiple bodies on him," Dončić said. "If he's going 1-on-1, it's kind of tough to stop him."

Naz Reid had 15 points and Kyle Anderson added 11 points off the bench for the Wolves, who had two days off after dethroning defending champion Denver with a Game 7 comeback from a 20-point deficit to win the second-round series.

The transition was sharp from the Nuggets and NBA MVP Nikola Jokic's deliberate and powerful style to the pick-and-roll-heavy Mavericks, who frequently lost their opponents off screens for wide-open dunks. They moved with a purpose that kept the Wolves from consistently setting their half-court defense around the NBA Defensive Player of the Year Gobert at the rim.

Irving's stunning burst on the break and on the drive presented a unique challenge the Wolves and their league-leading defense didn't face in the last round, when they held the Nuggets to an average of 85 points over their four wins.

"He got us going. Without him, we would probably be down 20 at halftime," Dončić said. "I had to help him in the second half a little bit. So we switched roles this time."

James boosts All-NBA record as others set for supermax deals

Associated Press

NEW YORK — LeBron James is now the youngest — and the oldest — player to make an All-NBA team. And Dallas' Luka Dončić and Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander are in position to make around \$1 million per game a few years from now.

Denver's Nikola Jokic and Gilgeous-Alexander were the only unanimous first-team selections on this season's All-NBA team, which was revealed by the league Wednesday night. They were joined on the first team by Dončić, Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo and Boston's Jayson Tatum.

On the second team: New York's Jalen Brunson, Minnesota's Anthony Edwards, Phoenix's Kevin Durant, the Los Angeles Clippers' Kawhi Leonard and James' Los Angeles Lakers teammate, Anthony Davis.

The third team had James, Golden State's Stephen Curry, Sacramento's Domantas Sabonis, Indiana's Tyrese Haliburton and Phoenix's Devin Booker.

The NBA changed the rules starting with this season and All-NBA voting is now positionless — as opposed to having two guards, two forwards and one center on each of the teams, a formula that had been in place since the 1950s. Players also had to appear in a minimum number of games, in most cases, to be eligible for award consideration from the panel of 99 broadcasters and writers who served as the voting panel.

For James, who was the youngest player to make All-NBA when he was voted onto the team for the 2004-05 season, another selection only added to his list of accomplishments.

The 20 All-NBA overall picks

extended his record, a total that's now five more than Kobe Bryant, Tim Duncan and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. His 20 consecutive selections is obviously another record, and he's the first player to be age 39 or older during what became an All-NBA regular season.

Abdul-Jabbar and Duncan were both just a few days from turning 39 when the regular seasons ended in what became their final All-NBA campaigns, Abdul-Jabbar's being 1985-86 and Duncan's being 2014-15. James — the NBA's career scoring leader — played in 71 games this season, the last 42 of those coming after he turned 39.

And for Dončić and Gilgeous-Alexander, the All-NBA nods mean they are poised for supermax extensions that can be signed in 2025, both of which would set records.

Dončić can sign a five-year deal worth about \$347 million, starting at nearly \$60 million in 2026-27 and ending at about \$79 million in 2030-31. Gilgeous-Alexander will be eligible to sign a four-year extension worth about \$294 million. His would start in 2027-28 at around \$65 million — and the final year, 2030-31, would see him earning just over \$81 million, or nearly \$1 million per game. It would be the first time an NBA player's annual salary has topped \$80 million.

Also seeing major financial boosts from their All-NBA selections were Edwards and Haliburton, both of whom agreed to extensions last summer that were to be worth about \$205 million — and now will be worth about \$245 million over the next five seasons.

Durant made All-NBA for the 11th time, tying for the 12th-most in NBA history.



NAM Y. HUH/AP

LeBron James became both the youngest and oldest player named to an All-NBA team with his record-extending 20th selection Wednesday.

SPORTS



Dallas takes series lead

Doncic, Mavericks win Game 1 from Minnesota » **NBA playoffs, Page 47**

ANALYSIS



DARRON CUMMINGS, ABOVE, AND DARKO BANDIC, BELOW/AP

Listed as one of the favorites to win both the Indy 500 and the Coca-Cola 600, Kyle Larson, above, is drawing comparisons to Formula 1 superstar Max Verstappen, below.

US racing's rock star?

Larson stacks up favorably against F1 champion Verstappen

BY JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Ask almost any hardcore motorsports fan who the best driver in the world is right now and the answer is probably going to be Formula 1's three-time reigning champion.



Rossi

But Alexander Rossi has raced against Max Verstappen, just as he has raced against NASCAR star Kyle Larson. And now that he is teammates with Larson for his Indianapolis 500 debut, Rossi firmly believes Larson

can hold his own with anyone.

"Dude," Rossi said, "I think he's already towards the top, so I don't know. Put him at the top? Like, he's 'The Man.'"

As good as Verstappen, who has won 48 of 72 races in F1 since 2021?

"I would say they're on the same level," Ros-

INSIDE

Larson watching weather Page 46

si replied, "which is like, yeah, that's a pretty big deal."

Larson qualified fifth on Sunday for his first Indianapolis 500, then flew to North Carolina, where he finished fourth at North Wilkesboro Speedway in NASCAR's \$1 million All-Star race that night. This Sunday, he will be the fifth driver in history to attempt "The Double" by running both the Indy 500 and the Coca-Cola 600 in Charlotte on the same day.

Tony Stewart in 2001, his second attempt, remains the only driver to complete all 1,100 miles. He finished third in the NASCAR nightcap, the best showing by any of the Double drivers.

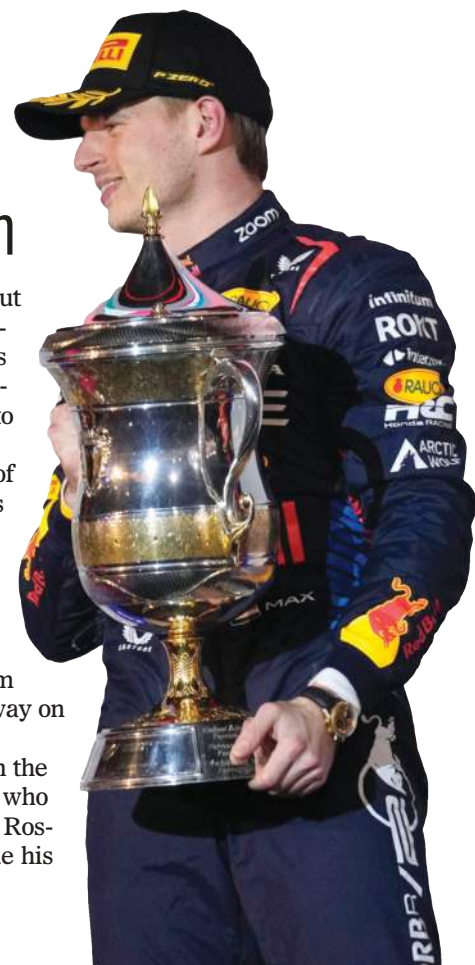
Not only is Larson capable of completing the grueling feat of two races in two wildly differ-

ent race cars in two different states, but people believe he might be a contender to actually win both races. He is among the betting favorites for the Indy 500 and the Coke 600, according to BetMGM Sportsbook.

Larson won what has become one of NASCAR's crown jewels in 2021, his championship season. His two-year Indy 500 deal is a joint effort between Arrow McLaren Racing and Hendrick Motorsports, his NASCAR team, with Jeff Gordon among the Hendrick executives who watched him qualify at Indianapolis Motor Speedway on Sunday.

Still, the idea that Larson could win the Indy 500 was mind-blowing to Rossi, who knows what it's like to do it as a rookie. Rossi reached victory lane when he made his

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