

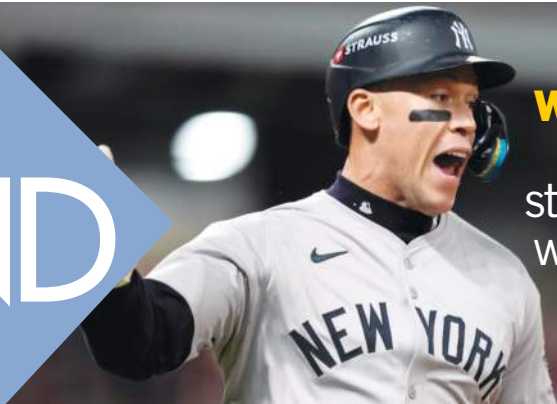
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PHOTOS BY SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

U.S. Marines man a tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided, or TOW, anti-tank missile during counter-landing drills on the west coast of Palawan, the Philippines, on Tuesday.

Marine commander: Palawan 'key terrain' to defend, operate from

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

PUERTO PRINCESA, Philippines — U.S. Marines are strengthening ties with their Philippine counterparts on an island that borders the South China Sea as the U.S. ally faces an ever-assertive Beijing.

The strategic importance of Palawan, a narrow, 280-mile-long island where Marines have been training this month with the Philippine 3rd Marine Brigade, is "obvious," said 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit commander Col. Sean Dynan.

"It controls the straights into the Sulu Sea and into the South China Sea and West Philippine Sea," he told Stars and Stripes while standing on Palawan's western shore



U.S. and Philippine marines carry out live-fire defense drills facing the South China Sea in Palawan, Philippines, on Tuesday.

Tuesday.

American and Filipino marines spent that morning on live-fire coastal defense training there as part of the annual Kamandag exercise.

This year's training involves more than 1,000 Marines and sail-

ors of Marine Rotational Force-Southeast Asia and the 15th MEU from Camp Pendleton, Calif. Kamandag began Oct. 15 and concludes Friday.

The live-fire training on Palawan took place in Aborlan, a municipality facing the South China

Sea that's about 125 miles east of Sabina Shoal, where Philippine and Chinese coast guard vessels collided Aug. 31.

Philippine authorities allege a Chinese vessel rammed a Philippine ship three times; China claims the Philippine ship instigated the clash. It was the latest in a series of incidents involving the two nations' vessels in or near the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

"It's key terrain to defend from and key terrain to operate from," Dynan said of Palawan, noting that the island hosts two sites approved for use by American forces.

Antonio Bautista Air Base in

SEE ISLAND ON PAGE 5

North troops in Russia seen as 'cannon fodder'

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The 12,000 North Korean troops sent to Russia in support of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine are not a legitimate force, only cannon fodder, South Korea's national defense minister said Thursday.

To refer to the North Koreans as "deployed troops" is "merely a phrase," National Defense Minister Kim Yang-hyun told lawmakers during a televised parliamentary hearing in Seoul.

"Normally when troops are deployed, they ... proudly perform wearing their country's military uniforms, insignia and national flag," he said.

The North Koreans, Kim said, are instead disguised in Russian uniforms, are under Russian military control and doing as they are told.

"I believe that, in reality, the North Korean troops are cannon fodder mercenaries," he said.

Approximately 1,500 North Korean special forces troops arrived in Russia earlier this month via Russian navy vessels, according to the South Korean National Intelligence Service on Oct. 18. They were the first wave of 12,000 troops and were issued Russian uniforms, weapons and fake identification cards, according to the spy agency.

A North Korean representative to the U.N. General Assembly on Monday said his country's cooperation with Russia is "friendly, legitimate" and attempts to suggest otherwise were "groundless, stereotyped rumors aimed at smearing the image" of North Korea.

The Korean Central News Agency, the North's state-run media organization, by Thursday had yet to address reports of the country's troop deployment.

SEE TROOPS ON PAGE 5

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Germany	\$3.553	\$4.109	\$4.467	\$3.962	Azores	..	..	\$4.322	..
Change in price	-2.7 cents	-1.9 cents	-1.9 cents	-7.8 cents	Change in price	..	..	-1.9 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$4.475	\$5.014	\$4.614	Turkey	..	..	\$4.138	4.286*
Change in price	..	-0.5 cents	+2.73 cents	-6.2 cents	Change in price	..	..	-1.9 cents	no change
U.K.	..	\$2.691	\$2.945	\$2.551	Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective Oct. 25. The change in price is from Oct. 18.				
Change in price	..	-1.6 cents	-1.5 cents	+1.1 cents					

PACIFIC GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Japan	..	\$4.109	..	\$3.599	South Korea	\$3.229	..	\$4.139	\$3.639
Change in price	..	-2 cents	..	-8 cents	Change in price	-2 cents	..	-2 cents	-7 cents
Okinawa	\$3.199	..	..	\$3.599	Guam	\$3.259	\$3.809	\$4.169	..
Change in price	-2 cents	..	..	-8 cents	Change in price	-2 cents	-2 cents	-2 cents	..
*DieselEFD **Midgrade									
For the week of Oct. 26-Nov. 1									

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates

Euro costs (Oct. 25)	0.90
British pound (Oct. 25)	\$1.27
Japanese yen (Oct. 25)	147.00
South Korean won (Oct. 25)	1346.00

Commercial rates

Bahrain (Dinar)	.3769
Britain (Pound)	.77054
Canada (Dollar)	1.3830
China (Yuan)	7.1181
Denmark (Krone)	6.9069
Egypt (Pound)	48.7793
Euro	1.08
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7711
Hungary (Forint)	373.41
Israel (Shekel)	3.7927
Japan (Yen)	152.21
Kuwait (Dinar)	.3064
Norway (Krone)	10.9573
Philippines (Peso)	57.94
Poland (Zloty)	4.02
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7561
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3201
South Korea (Won)	1382.17

Switzerland (Franc)	.8663
Thailand (Baht)	33.69
Turkey (NewLira)	34.2378

(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	8.00
Interest Rates Discount rate	5.00
Federal funds market rate	4.83
3-month bill	4.64
30-year bond	4.52

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MILITARY



KULANI LAKANARIA/U.S. Army

The Army plans to continue using the black-and-gold physical training uniform but other options for the clothing are being considered.

Army considering new options for PT uniform, but design to stay same for now

BY BRIAN ERICKSON
Stars and Stripes

The Army won't redesign its physical training uniforms in 2025 but is looking at allowing soldiers to purchase different shirts and shorts that use the current black-and-gold look, the service said.

The Army clarified its plans following comments by Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Weimer last week that new uniforms were coming.

"First and foremost is we're spending no Army money on new PTs ... we have so many higher priorities right now," Weimer said Wednesday in an emailed statement through his spokesman.

No decisions have been made, but by the end of 2025, the service is looking at "potentially having options to the current PTs," Weimer said.

Weimer, the Army's top enlisted soldier, likened the options to the way soldiers select their boots by brand, as long as they meet the Army's criteria.

"We don't do a 'You will buy this one pair of boots' ... because fit is incredibly important to us. That includes our PTs," Weimer said.

The Army will do some initial questioning and polling to see what's available across the clothing industry, Sgt. Maj. Rob Haynie, from the office of the assistant secretary of the Army for acquisitions, logistics and technology, said Wednesday.

Master Sgt. Daniel Carter, a spokesman for Weimer, added that soldier feedback, such as the desire for pockets, is being incorporated into the evaluation and research process.

Last week at the Association of the United States Army conference in Washington, Weimer said the uniforms would "look a little different than what we've done in the past" and be more representative of the service, according to an AUSA statement.

Former Navy supervisor cited for abuse of power

Investigation finds act of retaliation in attempt to revoke clearance

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A supervising Navy service member was cited for abuse of power after a recommendation to revoke a subordinate's security clearance was determined to be an act of retaliation, a Defense Department inspector general investigation found.

The report from the Office of the Inspector General, which was released Oct. 15, detailed a series of events dating to Oct. 28, 2020, when an employee of the Navy Cyber Warfare Development Group informed his supervisor of a potential mistake in a report provided to the U.S. Fleet Cyber Command, U.S. 10th Fleet.

The supervisor later recommended the subordinate's security clearance be revoked following months of initiating punitive action, which the report said "demonstrated animosity" toward the subordinate.

"Individuals must be free to come forward to make protected disclosures without fear of reprisal," DOD Inspector General Robert Storch said in a statement. "A culture in which a [Defense Department] official uses a security clearance action as a weapon to silence those who report alleged wrongdoing is antithetical to this core principle. Whistleblowers should be commended for coming forward, not punished."

The subordinate was a program manager from 2018-21 for the cyber command based at Fort George G. Meade, Md. The supervisor and subordinate were involved in a weekly project called Commander's Update Brief, according to the report. The updates would indicate if a "mission area" was capable, partially capable or not capable.

The subordinate voiced concerns during an October 2020 meeting about misreporting signal intelligence missions as capable when they were not.

"We are not accurately reporting," the subordinate reportedly claimed.

The supervisor responded: "There are some things you just don't want people to know."

Two witnesses interviewed by investigators who were also at the meeting were unable to recall the



Defense Department

A Navy supervisor was cited for abuse of power after a recommendation to revoke a subordinate's security clearance.

exchange between the supervisor and subordinate. The supervisor also claimed not to recall the exchange.

About a week later, on Nov. 5, 2020, the subordinate reportedly argued with an instructor during a training event about conducting queries.

The supervisor directed a preliminary inquiry in response to the incident to determine if the subordinate had violated the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The supervisor spoke to two witnesses, who said the subordinate's behavior "demonstrated his desire to circumvent policy and created confusion regarding which queries could be conducted within the boundary of law and policy," according to the investigation.

The inquiry officer found on Nov. 20, 2020, that the subordinate did not violate the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Despite the outcome absolving the subordinate of wrongdoing, the supervisor told investigators that the event caused a loss confidence in the subordinate.

On Dec. 10, 2020, the supervisor submitted a nonjudicial punishment for the subordinate, citing attempts to violate the Uniform Code of Military Justice and conduct unbecoming of an officer. The supervisor then suspended the subordinate's access to "sensitive compartmented information" for demonstrating "an unwillingness to comply with current policy and rules governing computer network operations," the report read.

In the supervisor's report to the Defense Department regarding the suspension, he failed to include the findings of the preliminary inquiry.

On Dec. 18, 2020, the subordinate declined the nonjudicial punishment and requested a court-martial.

The supervisor submitted a report of misconduct to the Navy Personnel Command, asking for the subordinate to be detached for cause from the cyber command. A

detachment for cause is when a service member is reassigned from a duty station before the normal transfer date, typically as the result of unsatisfactory performance or misconduct.

In the request, the supervisor inaccurately stated the subordinate had committed two military offenses in reference to the Nov. 5, 2020, training incident as a reason for the request, the IG report reads.

As part of the subordinate's rebuttal to the supervisor's detachment for cause request, he made two protected disclosures that accused the supervisor of abuse of power. The Personnel Command opted in July 2021 to detach the subordinate but disapproved of detaching him for cause.

The supervisor submitted a follow-up security access eligibility report in August 2021, again recommending the Defense Department revoke the subordinate's access to classified information. In the recommendation, the supervisor continued to refer to the training incident, accusing the subordinate of attempting to influence a junior operator to perform a query that the operator believed to be in violation of policy and trying to circumvent policy. The supervisor omitted that the inquiry officer did not substantiate these allegations.

Additionally, the supervisor claimed the Personnel Command decided to reassign the subordinate but did not include the decision was not "for cause," which the IG report said created an impression that this action was punitive.

"The [supervisor] appeared to selectively choose the information to create such an impression," the report reads.

The inspector general investigation determined the evidence used to justify the removal of the subordinate's security clearance was not strong enough, adding there was an abuse of authority and animosity toward the subordinate on the supervisor's part.

The Defense Department Consolidated Adjudications Facility, which handles security access reviews, initially revoked the subordinate's eligibility for access to classified information, but restored access after receiving his rebuttal.

On March 13, 2023, the Defense Department reinstated the subordinate's access to classified information. The subordinate has since retired.

The supervisor is also retired but remains subject to potential disciplinary action.

Correction

A story in Thursday's edition about laser-eye surgeries should have said contracted employees handled a monthly average of 51 procedures from 2018 through 2020 and a monthly average of 33 during the coronavirus pandemic.

MILITARY

IG slams Pentagon on Ukraine funds lapses

DOD audit: \$1.1B in payments following Russia’s invasion lacked proper documentation

**BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN**
Stars and Stripes

A Defense Department audit has found that \$1.1 billion in payments meant to support Ukraine in the months following Russia’s full-scale invasion of the country lacked proper documentation, raising concerns over financial accountability and transparency in U.S. military aid.

However, the DOD Inspector General also found that service members were largely untrained to do the paperwork and the Pentagon response to the report indicated it wasn’t particularly interested in more training.

The audit by the IG reviewed \$2.1 billion in approved funds for Kyiv in 2022. It found that 323 payments, or 67% of the total, either lacked paperwork or were improperly recorded, leaving officials

unable to confirm whether the funds were used for their intended purposes.

The unsupported payments included \$17 million the Navy spent on fuel and other expenses in Europe unrelated to Ukraine, the IG said in a report of its findings released Tuesday.

The findings have raised concerns of potential violations of the Antideficiency Act, which prohibits spending unauthorized by Congress.

Due to the urgency in distributing funds intended to bolster Ukraine’s defense following Moscow’s invasion in February 2022, DOD personnel faced pressure to execute payments quickly.

“This quick reaction led to a breakdown in internal controls,” the report said.

The DOD’s Financial Management Regulation and Joint Travel

Regulations both require a lot of paperwork to support government payments.

Each payment must be accompanied by disbursement vouchers, invoices and details that outline the purpose and accuracy of the spending. The IG found that these requirements were often ignored or incomplete.

For 264 payments, or 82% of the unsupported transactions, the DOD failed to properly justify the use of supplemental funds for Ukraine.

Communication challenges contributed to the issues, the report said.

Personnel didn’t receive clear or detailed guidance on how to document the purpose of funds, the IG found, adding that in some cases, DOD personnel interpreted high-level directives and laws on their own.

In June, defense officials provided the IG with additional documents for 27 of the 323 unsupported transactions.

Of those, only 12 were deemed properly executed, while the remaining 15 were said to be inadequate or unrelated to Ukraine’s defense.

Some of the deficiencies identified underscored how confusing the rules might be to the untrained.

For example, the IG report stated that \$2 million spent by the Air Force on the European Deterrence Initiative was “unrelated to the Ukraine mission,” even though the initiative was created because of Russia’s 2014 invasion of Ukraine.

As the audit examined only a portion of all Ukraine-related transactions, the IG warned that similar issues could affect the re-

maining \$76.3 billion in additional appropriations approved through April 2024.

Defense officials agreed to review documentation to determine whether the \$1 billion in questioned costs supported the Ukraine assistance mission and were accurate, and to take appropriate action if not.

However, the Pentagon’s comptroller mostly disagreed with the IG’s recommendations, which included more training on documentation procedures and clearer guidance.

Calls by the IG for Navy and Air Force officials to review potential violations of the Antideficiency Act also remain unresolved.

The IG said it will track its recommendations until “management has agreed to take actions that we determine to be sufficient.”

US Navy, UAE wrap up 10-day drone-focused drills in Persian Gulf

BY SHANNON RENFROE
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — U.S. Navy and United Arab Emirates drone operations wrapped up Thursday after a 10-day exercise in the Persian Gulf, where Iran was hosting its own maritime showcase on the opposite side of the strategic waterway.

The drills at Iron Defender included the Arabian Fox Mast 13, a joint venture between the Emirati company AlSeer and U.S. contractor L3 Harris Technologies.

Last year, the vessel was the first Navy drone boat to sail through the Strait of Hormuz, where the U.S. has accused Iran’s military of harassing multiple vessels in recent years. About one-fifth of the world’s oil passes through the narrow strait bordering Iran, according to U.S. government figures.

The exercise included search and seizure operations, diving missions and medical response drills, according to U.S. 5th Fleet,



Navy Lt. Cmdr. Alex Turner, right, commanding officer of USS Devastator, welcomes a United Arab Emirates officer aboard the ship during Iron Defender, which ended Thursday.

which is headquartered in Bahrain.

The U.S. naval base in Bahrain is also home to Task Force 59, which focuses on drones and high-tech innovation.

The Navy once had ambitions of assembling a 100 vessel drone fleet in the Middle East in partnership with other nations. Those goals



PHOTOS BY CHRIST-CLAUDE MOWANDZA-NDINGA/U.S. Army

U.S. and Emirati forces survey the Arabian Fox Mast-13 drone boat last week, during exercise Iron Defender in the United Arab Emirates. Unmanned vessels were a focus of the 10-day bilateral exercise.

have since been scaled back as the service works with regional partners and focuses on combat operations in the region, naval analysts told Stars and Stripes in May.

The service has continued testing new technologies in the Middle East and in Africa, including the TRITON drone, which can sub-

merge to avoid detection and loiter for as many as eight days, Navy officials said.

Meanwhile, Iran is developing its own drone technology, some of which has been used extensively by Russia in its war with Ukraine.

Iran showcased its goods last weekend along its southern coast

during the International Maritime Exercise 2024, which was part of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium. The event included participation from Russia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, Qatar, Bangladesh and Thailand, according to Iran’s state-sponsored Press TV.

Navy to name submarine for Atlanta, 5th vessel honoring Ga. capital

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Atlanta is far from the ocean, but it will have a naval vessel named for it again.

U.S. Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro announced Wednesday that the Navy will build a nuclear attack submarine that will be known as the

USS Atlanta.

It wasn’t immediately clear Wednesday when the construction will start on the submarine, when it will enter service, or how much it may cost.

In August, the Navy awarded a \$1.3 billion contract to the General

Dynamics Electric Boat shipyard in Groton, Conn., to start buying materials for that and other submarines it will eventually build.

The Navy has recently been naming new submarines in its Virginia class for cities, including Baltimore, San Francisco and Miami.

It would be the fifth U.S. Navy vessel named for Georgia’s largest city. The first was a Confederate ironclad captured in 1863 and converted to Union service during the Civil War. The most recent was a Los Angeles-class nuclear attack submarine that served from 1982 to 1999.

“It has been 25 years since the Navy has had a ship named after the proud legacy of the city of Atlanta,” Del Toro said in a speech at the Carter Center in Atlanta.

Former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms will be the ship’s sponsor.

PACIFIC



YTN via YouTube

A fire burns at a U.S. Army quartermaster depot in Busan, South Korea, on Thursday.

Fire burns USFK warehouse in Busan

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

A fire Thursday night consumed a warehouse at the U.S. Army's Busan Storage Center in Beomil-dong, a section of Busan city in southeastern South Korea, according to local news reports and U.S. Army Garrison Daegu.

The fire of unknown origin was reported at 6:35 p.m. at a

warehouse in the center, according to email Thursday night from Daegu garrison spokesman Phil Molter. The garrison called on mutual aid agreements with the Busan Fire Department to fight the blaze, he said.

By 8 p.m. authorities had mobilized as many as 11 fire stations to respond, according to YTN broadcast news. No injuries were reported as of 10 p.m.

The empty warehouse was under renovation and unoccupied when the fire broke out, Molter said.

The U.S. Army established the site as a supply depot at the start of the Korean War in 1950.

Busan, South Korea's second largest city, is roughly 200 miles southeast of Seoul. The coastal city includes South Korea's largest port.

Island: Marines see capabilities grow on Palawan

FROM PAGE 1

Puerto Princesa, the provincial capital, and Naval Station Narciso Del Rosario, on Balabac Island in the southern part of the province, are two of nine sites identified for U.S. use under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

U.S. Marine units have been on Palawan often in recent years, while the 3rd Marine Brigade, based on the island, has grown in capabilities, Dynan said.

"The majority of countries around this area recognize that amphibious capability is a requirement in this environment," he said. "The U.S. has the longest-standing amphibious force, so this is our time to shine and help."

Philippine forces on Palawan have asked for help building skills to coordinate fires, counter-drone training, nonlethal training and establishing ranges, Dynan said.

Those forces are also focused on Palawan, said Vice Adm. Alfonso Torres, head of the Western Command at Puerto Princesa, which oversees operations on the island



SETH ROBSON/STARS AND STRIPES / Seth Robson/Stars and Stripes

U.S. and Filipino marine commanders attend a briefing ahead of defense drills facing the South China Sea in Palawan, Philippines, Oct. 22, 2024.

and in the disputed bits of territory in South China Sea.

"We are not just monitoring (the disputed waters)," he said at the coastal defense training event. "We are operating also."

Palawan's strategic importance is growing as the Philippine armed forces shift focus from internal to external security, Torres said.

Western Command is at the forefront of that shift, he added.

"We are slowly shifting our forces from the south to the west because of the declining issues with insurgency," he said.

The Philippine forces on Palawan will receive new equipment, not only to conduct operations, but also for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, Torres said.

The Philippines plans to spend \$35 billion over a decade modernizing its military, with most of that going to the navy to strengthen the country's capabilities in western waters, the Philippine Star reported May 2, quoting Philippine navy spokesman Commodore Roy Vincent Trinidad.

"This is the west side of the Philippines," Torres said of Palawan. "We are protecting the peace and security of the West Philippine Sea."

Trash balloon pops over Seoul leader's office

By SAM KIM
Bloomberg News

A North Korean balloon carrying trash exploded over the South Korean presidential office in Seoul on Thursday, dumping filth over one of the capital city's most heavily guarded premises.

The explosion happened in early morning and the contents were scattered across the compound where Yoon works, according to a statement from the presidential security agency. No contamination or security risk has been detected in the rubbish and the presidential office is working with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to keep an eye on further threats, it said.

North Korea's actions come at a sensitive time. Pyongyang has angered South Korea and its allies, who have accused Kim Jong Un of dispatching soldiers to Russia to help Moscow's war on Ukraine. Seoul has demanded North Korea and Russia end their cooperation and withdraw troops, and raised the prospects of sending arms to Ukraine in response.

North Korea has sent more than 5,000 balloons with leaflets and debris since May in retaliation for

South Korea's military drills with the U.S. and other actions it deems as a threat to its sovereignty.

Many of the balloons from North Korea have contained items such as wastepaper, cigarette butts and shoe parts. Last month, South Korea warned of possible military actions if North Korea continues to fly more trash balloons across the border, a rare direct threat of retaliation since Pyongyang started sending them in May.

Tensions between the two countries have escalated over the past few months, with South Korea complaining about the trash balloons sent by North Korea, and Pyongyang accusing the South of sending drones over its capital and the North's blowing up of roads connecting the two countries.

The growing animosity comes as Kim Jong Un bolsters his ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin. After supplying Russia with artillery shells, Kim is now deploying his own troops with a "very serious" possibility that they will take part in combat against Ukraine, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on a trip to Europe.

Troops: South Korea says North's forces not legitimate

FROM PAGE 1

Kim Yang-hyun told lawmakers he believed North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had "sold out" his forces to Russia and was "not informing his people to prevent it from being exposed."

Russia may have supplied the North with food and weapon manufacturing supplies in exchange for around 3 million artillery rounds, Shin Won-sik, the previous South Korean national defense minister, said in February.

In June, Kim and Russian President Vladimir Putin pledged mutual support in the event either country went to war.

The U.S. State Department and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's office have alleged the North had been exporting ballistic missiles and artillery shells to Russia for use against Ukrainian forces since 2023.

The U.S. confirmed the existence of North Korean forces in

Russia for the first time Wednesday. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said at least 3,000 troops were shipped to eastern Russia, where they went on to "multiple Russian military training sites."

It's not clear that those troops will fight alongside the Russian military, but that is "certainly a highly concerning probability," Kirby said at a news conference.

"But let's be clear, if North Korean soldiers do enter into combat, this development would demonstrate Russia's growing desperation in its war against Ukraine," he said.

Putin appears intent on continuing the war despite Russia suffering "extraordinary casualties," Kirby added.

"If Russia is indeed forced to turn to North Korea for manpower, this would be a sign of weakness, not strength, on the part of the Kremlin," he said.

MILITARY

Master sergeant hangs tough on reality show

By Kelly Agee
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Straining to conquer a peak in the snowcapped Southern Alps of New Zealand with 16 strangers and \$1 million at stake, Master Sgt. Ladeania Jackson felt right at home.

Jackson, aka “Punkin Jackson” on the CBS reality TV show, “The Summit,” had survived three episodes of physical and mental challenges as of Wednesday, with more to come.

Her military experience gives her an edge, including her fitness, training in things like map reading and ability to cope with change, she told Stars and Stripes by phone Tuesday.

“We’re always having to adapt, and we’re always changing locations, and so just being able to go with the flow and adapt to different situations,” Jackson said. “We’re sleeping outside, we’re having to read maps. Everything that I’ve learned in the military played a



Ladeania Jackson

Air National Guard Master Sgt. Ladeania Jackson is known as “Punkin Jackson” on the CBS reality TV show, “The Summit.”

big role in being able to help me on the mountain.”

A native of Columbus, Miss., Jackson serves with the Air National Guard and the 194th Air Support Operations Group at Camp Murray, Wash. But her home is at Yokota

with her spouse, Senior Master Sgt. Tamika Boler of the 374th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Jackson joined the Air Force in 2011, served eight years and joined the Guard in 2020.

When Jackson learned she’d made the cut for “The Summit,” she could barely restrain her joy, she said.

“I was super, super, super excited,” she said. “I was jumping around screaming. I am a reality TV junkie, and it was just something that I’ve always wanted to do. To hear I was chosen was just an amazing feeling.”

“The Summit” first aired with a sneak peek on Sept. 29; new episodes air Wednesdays, according to the network’s website.

“We have 14 days to reach it to the summit of the mountain, and each of us are carrying our share of a million dollars in our backpacks as we hike up the mountain,” Jackson said. “We get to a checkpoint almost every

day, and at every checkpoint, you are voting someone off the mountain and stealing their share of the prize pot.”

The show is set in the largest mountain range in New Zealand. The Southern Alps include the country’s tallest peak, 12,218-foot Mount Cook, and run the length of the South Island. The 310-mile chain has another 15 peaks over 10,000 feet.

“I’m definitely terrified of heights,” Jackson said. “Every obstacle that has aired so far has been heights. I was constantly having to face my fear and get over it to accomplish the task at hand.”

Who will conquer “The Summit?” Jackson is legally bound to give nothing away.

“It’s definitely going to take a person that does not take no for an answer and does not give up,” she said. “Climbing a mountain is not easy by any means and then you add the mental aspect of playing a game. It takes a tough person for sure.”

Home Depot helps get 12-foot ‘Skelly’ to base in Japan for Halloween

By Jonathan Snyder
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — A Navy spouse determined to bring a towering skeleton from the United States to her home on this base south of Hiroshima reached a dead end in every possible way.

Skelly, a 12-foot-high Halloween decoration sold for \$299 at Home Depot, is so popular it’s been written about in USA Today, the New York Post and other publications. But it exceeds the 130-inch, 70-pound limit on parcel size set by the U.S. Military Postal Service Agency.

Asemoon Amirazodi worked for the past three months figuring out how to get Skelly to MCAS Iwakuni. Shipping it via commercial carrier would cost more than four times the purchase price, she told Stars and Stripes at her home on Monday.

“I truly love decorating in general, for Christmas, Halloween ... everything,” she said. “So, I said, you know what, my husband’s deployed right now, what else am I doing with my time? So, I just fixated on getting the Skelly here.”

Amirazodi explored other avenues — the Marine Corps Exchange, Defense Commissary Agency, United Service Organization or space-available flights — but none panned out.

In a last-ditch effort, she contacted Lance Allen, a senior merchant at Home Depot. Allen and his team helped create Skelly, he told USA Today for a recent story.

“He’s come back for five seasons now, and he sold out every year,” he told the paper.

Amirazodi knew her house in

front of Matthew C. Perry Elementary School was the right spot for such a large display, and to her surprise, Allen agreed.

“You definitely have the perfect location,” he told her by email late last month. “I’ll keep working on this for you. Hopefully I can find a way.”

Not long after, the giant skeleton arrived at Amirazodi’s front door, shipped free of charge through DHL by Home Depot and the vendor who manufactures Skelly. They also threw in Skelly’s 7-foot-long skeleton dog as a bonus.

“I’m so glad he made it,” Allen wrote in a follow-up email to Amirazodi. “It took a little longer than I wanted, but I figured the surprise would be worth it. I can’t wait to see him up and how much the kids love him and the dog together. I hope it’s an extremely memorable Halloween this year.”

Allen, in an email to Stars and Stripes on Tuesday, said Amirazodi had obviously tried everything to get a Skelly to Japan. “So, I knew we were probably her last chance for this season,” he said.

“Fortunately, we have leveraged DHL for some large shipments in the past and we knew they’d be able to get it there,” he said.

When the massive decorations arrived, Amirazodi went to work creating Navy-themed accessories for them: two giant Navy hats, dog tags with the name “Skelly Bone O” and a dog collar with a tag labeled “Chew-Hi,” a take-off on the popular Japanese alcoholic beverage.

“I just love Halloween — just everything about him is so over the top and it’s so opposite of me,



PHOTOS BY JONATHAN SNYDER/Stars and Stripes

Navy spouse Asemoon Amirazodi poses with Skelly, a 12-foot-high Halloween decoration, and his skeleton dog outside her home at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, on Monday.



Children crowd around Skelly and his skeleton dog.

because I’m so little,” she told Stars and Stripes. “You can’t walk by and not smile.”

After school ended Monday, children and their parents came by to see the display and pet Amirazodi’s two dogs.

The skeletons have been a huge hit in the community, for the young and young at heart, Marine spouse Gloria Mackinnon told Stars and Stripes at the display on Monday.

“My husband’s platoon came

and took pictures this morning,” she said.

Skelly is not coming down anytime soon, said Amirazodi, who plans to make use of the decorations for other holidays, including arranging them for Christmas as the Grinch and his dog Max.

“It’s a pretty tight-knit community,” she said. “Just seeing so many people stop and say hi or smile on their nightly walks or to say thank you. This has made my day.”

Amirazodi has shared with Allen photos and video of people enjoying Skelly at Iwakuni.

“It’s been fun to see the joy and excitement our Halloween items can bring halfway around the globe,” Allen told Stars and Stripes. “It’s great to be able to give back just a little as our service members and their families give so much.”

NATION

Harris: Trump a ‘fascist’ after Hitler comments

By DAN MERICA
Associated Press

ASTON, Pa. — Vice President Kamala Harris said Wednesday that she believes that Donald Trump “is a fascist” after his longest-serving chief of staff said the former president praised Adolf Hitler while in office and put personal loyalty above the Constitution.

Harris seized on comments by former chief of staff John Kelly, a retired Marine Corps general, about his former boss in interviews with The New York Times and The Atlantic published Tuesday warning that the Republican nominee meets the definition of a fascist and that while in office he suggested that the Nazi leader “did some good things.”

Speaking at a CNN town hall, Harris said they offer a window into who the former president “really is” and the kind of commander in chief he would be.

When asked if she believed that Trump is a fascist, Harris replied twice, “Yes, I do.” Later, she brought it up herself, saying Trump would, if elected again, be “a president who admires dictators and is a fascist.”

The Democratic presidential nominee said Kelly’s comments, less than two weeks before voters will decide whether to send Trump back to the Oval Office, were a “911 call to the American



MATT ROURKE/AP

Vice President Kamala Harris speaks to patrons at a campaign stop at Famous 4th Street Delicatessen in Philadelphia on Wednesday.

people” by the former chief of staff. They were quickly seized by Harris as part of her closing message to voters as she works to sharpen the choice at the ballot box for Americans.

“I believe Donald Trump is a danger to the well-being and security of the United States of America,” she said, saying the American people deserve a president who maintains “certain standards,” which include “certainly

not comparing oneself, in a clearly admiring way, to Hitler.”

She added that if reelected, Trump would no longer be tempered by people who would “restrain him” from his worst impulses.

Earlier Wednesday, Harris repeated her increasingly dire warnings about Trump’s mental fitness and his intentions for the presidency.

The comments from Kelly, the

retired Marine general who worked for Trump in the White House from 2017 to 2019, built on past warnings from former top Trump officials as the election enters its final two weeks.

Kelly has long been critical of Trump and previously accused him of calling veterans killed in combat “suckers” and “losers.” His new warnings emerged as Trump seeks a second term vowing to dramatically expand his use of the military at home and suggesting he would use force to go after Americans he considers “enemies from within.”

“He commented more than once that, ‘You know, Hitler did some good things, too,’” Kelly recalled to the Times. Kelly said he would usually quash the conversation by saying “nothing (Hitler) did, you could argue, was good,” but Trump would occasionally bring up the topic again.

In his interview with The Atlantic, Kelly recalled that when Trump raised the idea of needing “German generals,” Kelly would ask if he meant “Bismarck’s generals,” referring to Otto von Bismarck, the chancellor who oversaw the unification of Germany. “Surely you can’t mean Hitler’s generals,” Kelly recalled asking Trump. To which the former president responded, “Yeah, yeah, Hitler’s generals.”

Trump said on his Truth Social

media platform that Kelly had “made up a story” and went on to heap insults on his former chief of staff, including that Kelly’s “toughness morphed into weakness.”

Trump’s campaign also denied the accounts. Campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said Kelly had “beclowned himself with these debunked stories he has fabricated” and, after Harris’ statement, accused the Democratic candidate of sharing “outright lies and falsehoods.”

Chris Sununu, New Hampshire’s Republican governor and onetime Trump critic, said Kelly’s comments did not change his plans to vote for the former president.

“Look, we’ve heard a lot of extreme things about Donald Trump, from Donald Trump. It’s really par for the course,” the governor told CNN. “Unfortunately, with a guy like that, it’s kind of baked into the vote at this point.”

Some of the former president’s supporters in swing states responded to Kelly’s comments with a shrug.

“Trump did his four years, and we were in great shape. Kelly didn’t have anything good to say about Trump. He ought to have his butt kicked,” said Jim Lytner, a longtime advocate for veterans in Nevada who served in the Army in Vietnam.

Trump tells supporters to ‘just vote’ at lively Georgia rally

By BILL BARROW
AND JILL COLVIN
Associated Press

DULUTH, Ga. — Donald Trump pushed supporters at a rollicking rally Wednesday in Georgia to vote for him — with an early ballot or in-person on Election Day — in a state that will be crucial in the presidential election.

“Just vote — whichever way you want to do it,” Trump told the capacity crowd at an event organized by conservative provocateur Charlie Kirk and the group he founded.

But the rest of former president’s speech and the hourslong lineup that preceded him framed the 2024 presidential election in the starkest terms: Trump, the Republican nominee, lobbed hyperbolic insults at his rival, Vice President Kamala Harris, while a parade of other speakers, Kirk included, invoked unapologetically religious tones and described Harris and her Democratic Party as evil.

Democrats “stand for everything God hates,” Kirk said, calling the Trump vs. Harris choice “a spiritual battle.”

“This is a Christian state. I’d like

to see it stay that way,” Kirk told the 10,000 or so Georgians, who at one point joined Kirk in a deafening chant of “Christ is King! Christ is King!”

Meanwhile, Harris, who is a Baptist, used a CNN town hall in Philadelphia to describe Trump as fascistic, further crystallizing the nation’s polarized posture with less than two weeks until Election Day.

The Trump campaign strategy of encouraging supporters to consider every voting method is a turn from when the former president blamed his 2020 election loss on mail ballots; the number of people voting early has surged this year.

Over 1.9 million voters have cast early ballots in Georgia, where Trump lost by a mere 11,779 votes four years ago to Democrat Joe Biden. Voters nationwide have returned a total of over 23 million advance ballots in the 2024 general election. That’s broken records in multiple states, partly driven by Republicans embracing early voting at Trump’s direction.

Yet as the contest enters its final days, allies like Kirk are searching for people who lean toward Trump but may still sit the elec-



ALEX BRANDON/AP

Supporters arrive before former President Donald Trump speaks at a Turning Point Action campaign rally on Wednesday in Duluth, Ga.

tion out when it comes to casting a ballot.

“You need to go to every single person you know and say, ‘Are you voting for Trump?’” Kirk told the crowd.

The 31-year-old Kirk has an outsized role in this year’s election, using his online presence and the organization he founded, Turning Point Action, to make himself one of the nation’s most recognizable conservatives and a central part of

Trump’s operation. The former president has put a particular emphasis on courting younger men, the “bro vote,” trying to reach them through podcasts, social media and influencers such as Kirk.

The rally, at the Gas South Arena in Duluth, was filled with Turning Point’s signature pyrotechnics.

Trump used it to feature three figures who represent the populist

coalition he is trying to assemble: Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who ran his own campaign for president this year before endorsing Trump; former Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, a former Democrat who announced this week that she is joining the Republican Party; and Tucker Carlson, the former Fox News commentator who has attracted millions of followers with his bravado-heavy social media presence.

He added country music singer Jason Aldean, whose “Try That in a Small Town” single was a reaction to urban protests.

Carlson whipped the crowd into a frenzy by reassuring them that liberals and political elites were the “bizarre minority” in U.S. politics, while Trump’s “Make America Great Again” supporters comprise a “gentle, tolerant” movement. Carlson cast Trump as America’s “Dad” and said a Trump victory over Harris would mean “Dad’s home! And he’s pissed!” — while also being a “big middle finger wagging” at “the worst people in the English-speaking world.”

Later in the night as Trump spoke, some in the crowd shouted out, “Daddy’s home!”

Russia amplified storm confusion, researchers find

By DAVID KLEPPER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Russia has helped amplify and spread false and misleading internet claims about recent hurricanes in the United States and the federal government’s response, part of a wider effort by the Kremlin to manipulate America’s political discourse before the presidential election, new research shows.

The content, spread by Russian state media and networks of social media accounts and websites, criticizes the federal response to hurricanes Helene and Milton, exploiting legitimate concerns about the recovery effort in an attempt to paint American leaders as incompetent and corrupt, according to research from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. The London-based organization tracks disinformation and on-line extremism.

In some cases, the claims about the storms include fake images created using artificial intelligence, such as a photo depicting scenes of devastating flooding at Disney World that never happened, researchers say.

The approach is consistent with the Kremlin’s long-standing practice of identifying legitimate debates and contentious issues in the U.S. and then exploiting them. Previous disinformation campaigns have harnessed debates about immigration, racism, crime and the economy in an effort to portray the U.S. as corrupt, violent and unjust.

U.S. intelligence officials and private tech companies say Russian activity has increased sharply before the Nov. 5 election as Moscow tries to capitalize on an opportunity to undermine its chief global adversary.

By seizing on real concerns about

disaster recovery, Russia’s disinformation agencies can worm their way into U.S. discourse, using hot-button issues to undermine Americans’ trust in their government and each other.

“These are not situations that foreign actors are creating,” said Melanie Smith, director of research at ISD. “They’re simply pouring gasoline on fires that already exist.”

The content identified by ISD included English-language posts obviously meant for Americans, as well as Russian-language propaganda intended for domestic audiences. Much of the disinformation took aim at the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Democratic administration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. She is her party’s nominee in the White House race against former President Donald Trump.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine remains the Kremlin’s prime motivation for spreading lies about the hurricane response. If Russia can persuade enough Americans to oppose U.S. support for Ukraine, that could ease the way for a Moscow victory, officials and analysts have said.

U.S. intelligence officials have said Russia’s disinformation seems designed to support Trump, who has praised Russian President Vladimir Putin and disparaged the NATO alliance and Ukraine’s leaders. Posts linked to Russia routinely denigrate Harris, saying she is ignoring storm victims. By contrast, a recent post from Russian state media company RT called Trump “a mystical figure of historic proportions.”

The Russian Embassy hasn’t responded to messages this week seeking comment about recent allegations by researchers and intelligence officials.



STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH/AP

Damaged businesses are seen as Bridge Street in Hot Springs, N.C., is repaved in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, on Oct. 16. The flooding and destruction likely caused at least a record \$53 billion in damages and recovery needs in the state, Gov. Roy Cooper’s administration said Wednesday.

NC calculates Helene damages, recovery needs at least \$53B

By GARY D. ROBERTSON
Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The catastrophic flooding and destruction caused by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina likely caused at least a record \$53 billion in damages and recovery needs, Gov. Roy Cooper’s administration said Wednesday.

The state budget office generated the preliminary figure for direct or indirect damages and potential investments to prevent similar destruction in future storms.

Cooper told reporters the state’s previous record for storm damage was \$17 billion from Hurricane Florence, which struck eastern North Carolina in 2018.

“It is no exaggeration to describe Helene as the deadliest and most damaging storm ever to hit North Carolina,” Cooper said while unveiling his request to the General Assembly for \$3.9 billion to help pay for repairs and revitalization. He called it a “down payment on

western North Carolina’s future.”

North Carolina state officials have reported 96 deaths from Helene, which brought historic levels of rain and flooding to the mountains in late September.

The storm and its aftermath caused 1,400 landslides and damaged over 160 water and sewer systems, at least 6,000 miles of roads, more than 1,000 bridges and culverts and an estimated 126,000 homes, the budget office said. Some 220,000 households are expected to apply for federal assistance.

“This jaw-dropping damage figure reminds us that we are very much on the front end of this recovery effort,” the Democratic governor said.

The report with Cooper’s spending request was released the day before the Republican-controlled legislature planned to meet for a one-day session to advance additional Helene recovery legislation.

Lawmakers unanimously approved two weeks ago a \$273 mil-

lion package that also included language to provide flexibility to state agencies, displaced residents and officials running elections in 25 western counties. Thirty-nine of the state’s 100 counties are within the federally declared disaster area.

State government coffers include several billion dollars that can be accessed for future recovery spending. Almost \$4.5 billion is in the state’s savings reserve alone.

Legislative leaders had not disclosed as of late Wednesday afternoon specifics about what they would attempt to pass Thursday. Lawmakers were still reviewing Cooper’s request that they received Tuesday, according to Lauren Horsch, a spokesperson for Senate leader Phil Berger. Any legislation is unlikely to be the full package presented by Cooper and State Budget Director Kristin Walker. After Thursday, legislators are expected to return to Raleigh on Nov. 19.

Quarter Pounders pulled at some McDonald’s as E. coli cases probed

Associated Press

McDonald’s worked Wednesday to reassure customers that its U.S. restaurants are safe as federal investigators tried to pinpoint the cause of a deadly E. coli outbreak linked to the fast-food giant’s Quarter Pounder hamburgers.

McDonald’s pulled Quarter Pounders from one-fifth of its U.S. stores Tuesday as a result of the outbreak, which the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said had sickened at least 49 people in 10 states. One person died and 10 were hospitalized, according to the



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP

This Quarter Pounder sandwich was purchased Wednesday at a McDonald’s in Chicago.

CDC.

A preliminary investigation by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration suggested fresh slivered onions that are served raw on Quarter Pounder hamburgers were a likely source of the contamination. McDonald’s also serves raw, slivered onions on one of its breakfast sandwiches, but that sandwich isn’t available at the impacted stores. Other burgers, like the Big Mac, use diced, cooked onions.

McDonald’s said it was searching for a new regional supplier for fresh onions. In the meantime, Quarter

Pounders were removed from menus in Colorado, Kansas, Utah, Wyoming, and portions of Idaho, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

Adrieen Madden pulled up outside a McDonald’s outside Denver on Wednesday but then decided against it. He said he was unsure how E. coli spreads or contaminates other foods, and he thinks McDonald’s should be more forthcoming.

“This affects my decision with coming to McDonald’s in the future,” Madden said. “I feel like the

information isn’t as widely spread. I didn’t see any notices on the door, and then I saw vehicles going through the drive through just as if nothing was going on.”

Colorado has had the most reported cases of any state so far, and it’s where the one death occurred.

McDonald’s said it has worked with federal food safety regulators since late last week, when it was alerted to the potential outbreak. The company said the scope of the problem and the popularity of its products have complicated efforts to find the contamination source.

NATION

National security agencies get new AI rules

By DAVID KLEPPER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — New rules from the White House on the use of artificial intelligence by U.S. national security and spy agencies aim to balance the technology's immense promise with the need to protect against its risks.

The rules that were being announced Thursday are designed to ensure that national security agencies can access the latest and most powerful AI while also mitigating its misuse, according

to Biden administration officials who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence have been hailed as potentially transformative for a long list of industries and sectors, including military, national security and intelligence. But there are risks to the technology's use by government, including possibilities it could be harnessed for mass surveillance, cyberattacks or even lethal autonomous de-

vices.

The new policy framework will prohibit certain uses of AI, such as any applications that would violate constitutionally protected civil rights or any system that would automate the deployment of nuclear weapons.

The rules also are designed to promote responsible use of AI by directing national security and spy agencies to use the most advanced systems that also safeguard American values, the officials said.

Other provisions call for improved security of the nation's computer chip supply chain and direct intelligence agencies to prioritize work to protect the American industry from foreign espionage campaigns.

The guidelines were created following an ambitious executive order signed by President Joe Biden last year that directed federal agencies to create policies for how AI could be used.

Officials said the rules are needed not only to ensure that AI

is used responsibly but also to encourage the development of new AI systems and see that the U.S. keeps up with China and other rivals also working to harness the technology's power.

Lethal autonomous drones, which are capable of taking out an enemy at their own discretion, remain a key concern about the military use of AI. Last year, the U.S. issued a declaration calling for international cooperation on setting standards for autonomous drones.



LINDSEY WASSON/AP

Boeing employees, including assembler Tyrone Hipolito, center, work the picket line after union members voted to reject a new contract offer from the company Wednesday in Renton, Wash.

No end for Boeing labor strike as workers reject latest proposal

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Boeing factory workers voted against the company's latest contract offer and remain on the picket lines six weeks into a strike that has stopped production of the aerospace giant's bestselling jetliners.

Local union leaders in Seattle said 64% of members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers who cast ballots Wednesday voted against accepting the contract offer.

"After 10 years of sacrifices, we still have ground to make up, and we're hopeful to do so by resuming negotiations promptly," Jon Holden, the head of the IAM District 751 union, said in a statement Wednesday evening. "This is workplace democracy — and also clear evidence that there are consequences when a company mistreats its workers year after year."

A spokesperson for Boeing said

officials didn't have a comment on the vote.

The labor standoff comes during an already challenging year for Boeing, which became the focus of multiple federal investigations after a door panel blew off a 737 Max plane during an Alaska Airlines flight in January.

The strike has deprived the company of much-needed cash that it gets from delivering new planes to airlines. On Wednesday, the company reported a third-quarter loss of more than \$6 billion.

Union machinists assemble the 737 Max, Boeing's best-selling airliner, along with the 777 or "triple-seven" jet and the 767 cargo plane at factories in Renton and Everett, Wash.

The latest rejected offer included pay raises of 35% over four years. The version that union members rejected when they vot-

ed to strike last month featured a 25% increase over four years.

The union, which initially demanded 40% pay boosts over three years, said the annual raises in the revised offer would total 39.8%, when compounded.

Boeing has said that average annual pay for machinists is currently \$75,608.

Boeing workers told Associated Press reporters that a sticking point was the company's refusal to restore a traditional pension plan that was frozen a decade ago.

"The pension should have been the top priority. We all said that was our top priority, along with wage," Larry Best, a customer-quality coordinator with 38 years at Boeing, said on a picket line outside a Boeing factory in Everett. "Now is the prime opportunity in a prime time to get our pension back, and we all need to stay out and dig our heels in."

EPA imposes stricter standards to protect kids from lead paint

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two weeks after setting a nationwide deadline for removal of lead pipes, the Biden administration is imposing strict new limits on dust from lead-based paint in older homes and child-care facilities.

A final rule announced Thursday by the Environmental Protection Agency sets limits on lead dust on floors and window sills in pre-1978 residences and child-care facilities to levels so low they cannot be detected.

Paint that contains lead was banned in 1978, but more than 30 million American homes are believed to still contain it, including nearly 4 million homes where children under the age of 6 live. Lead paint can chip off when it deteriorates or is disturbed, especially during home remodeling or renovation.

"There is no safe level of lead," said Michal Freedhoff, EPA's assistant administrator for chemical safety and pollution prevention. The new rule will bring the United States "closer to eradicating lead-based paint hazards from homes and child care facilities once and for all," she said.

The EPA estimates the new rule will reduce the lead exposures of up to 1.2 million people per year, including 178,000 to 326,000 children under age 6.

Lead is a neurotoxin that can irreversibly harm brain development in children, lower IQ, cause behavioral problems and lead to lifelong health effects. It also affects other organs, including the liver and kidneys.

The new rule, which takes effect early next year, targets levels of lead dust generated by paint. Currently, 10 micrograms per square foot is considered hazardous on floors, and a concentration 10 times that high is considered hazardous on window

sills. The new rule brings both of those levels down to no detectable lead.

The proposed rule also would reduce what level is allowed when a lead-abatement contractor finishes work on a property where lead has been identified as a problem. These levels would be 5 micrograms per square foot on the floor and 40 micrograms per square foot for sills.

Individuals and firms that perform abatement work must be certified and follow specific work practices. Testing is required afterward to ensure dust-lead levels are below the new standards.

Environmental justice and public health experts called the EPA rule long overdue, noting that lead poisoning disproportionately affects low-income communities and communities of color.

"We can all breathe a little easier now that the EPA has significantly lowered its dust lead standard to protect children," said Peggy Shepard, co-founder and executive director of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, a New York-based advocacy group.

Shepard, who serves on the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council, said public health experts have long understood there is no safe level of lead in a child's blood, yet New York state leads the nation in cases of children with elevated blood levels. Black children in Harlem living below the poverty line are twice as likely to suffer from lead poisoning as poor white children, she said.

The U.S. government has gradually been reducing the standard for what counts as poisonous levels of lead in children's blood, with the most recent change occurring in 2021. But the EPA rule marks an effort to take more proactive action.



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OPINION

Sinwar envisioned a Palestine as Jew-free

BY CHARLES LANE
The Washington Post
 There’s controversy over the slogan “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” which protesters around the world have been chanting since Hamas committed its massacre in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and Israel responded with a massive military campaign in Gaza.

A month after Hamas’ attack, 64 members of Congress denounced the slogan as, in part, a call for “genocide of the Jewish people.” The American Jewish Committee calls it “a rallying cry for terrorist groups and their sympathizers.” Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., formally censured by the House over her use of the phrase, has countered that it is “an aspirational call for freedom, human rights, and peaceful coexistence, not death, destruction, or hate.” The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee said it’s “a demand for democratic coexistence between Jews and Arabs.” Perhaps it would help to consider what Yahya Sinwar made of this allusion to the land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. The erstwhile Hamas chief and mastermind of the Oct. 7 slaughter articulated his interpretation roughly three years before Israeli troops killed him in Gaza last week.

First, some context: Sinwar apparently began planning the Oct. 7, 2023, attack not long after May 20, 2021, when a cease-fire ended a bloody 11-day battle in Gaza between Israel and Hamas.

Recent reports in The Washington Post and elsewhere, based on captured Hamas documents, show that Sinwar envisioned the Oct. 7 operation as a go-for-broke effort to ignite a wider regional war that would topple Israel. Through other Hamas cadres, Sinwar lobbied for military support from Lebanon’s Hezbollah and Iran itself, telling representatives of the Tehran regime, “we will uproot this mon-

strous entity.” What has received less attention is Sinwar’s detailed preparation for ruling a new Palestinian state after a victory he regarded as all but inevitable—“nigh,” he wrote in 2021. This appears to have begun at roughly the same time as planning for the attack itself. Specifically, Sinwar sponsored the “first strategic vision conference” of the Promise of the Hereafter Institute, a Hamas-led organization, at the Commodore Hotel in Gaza, on Sept. 30, 2021. In an address to the meeting that Sinwar wrote, but which a Hamas Politburo member read for him, Sinwar affirmed that “the heart of Hamas’s strategic vision” was “full liberation of Palestine from the sea to the river.” (He reversed the order of reference to the bodies of water.) Sinwar was quite clear that this “vision” meant neither a two-state solution nor coexistence but “the Palestinian refugees’ return to their homeland, and the establishment of a Palestinian state with full sovereignty over its lands, with Jerusalem as its capital.” (Palestinian media reported the event contemporaneously; quotations are from MEMRI, a pro-Israel nonprofit that translates Arabic-language media.) As for the 7.2 million Jews (46% of the world Jewish population of 15.7 million) who would remain under what Sinwar called Hamas’ “control,” the conference weighed the fate of these “Jewish settlers on Palestinian land” with remarkable specificity. In a final report titled “The Concluding Statement Of The ‘Promise Of The Hereafter’ Conference,” it proposed different treatments for different categories of people. Israelis who fought Hamas “must be killed,” the document noted, although anyone “fleeing” could “be left alone or be prosecuted for his crimes in the judicial arena.” “Educated Jews and experts in the areas of medicine, engineering, technology, and civil-

ian and military industry” would have a special status, however. They would be “retained ... for some time” and “not be allowed to leave and take with them the knowledge and experience that they acquired while living in our land and enjoying its bounty.” The implication is that they would serve the new Hamas regime, voluntarily or otherwise. Finally, an interim government would seize Israel’s intelligence files and find “the names of the recruiters, Jewish and non-Jewish, in the country and abroad,” so that Hamas could “purge Palestine and the Arab and Islamic homeland of the hypocrite scum that spread corruption in the land. This important information will enable us to pursue the fleeing criminals who massacred our people.” This subject was probably of special interest to Sinwar, since he came up through Hamas ranks as a security specialist obsessed with ferreting out suspected Israeli informants — some of whom he personally murdered. The document also considered how to handle “a peaceful individual who gives himself up and can be [either] integrated or given time to leave. This is an issue that requires deep deliberation and a display of the humanism that has always characterized Islam.” In context, it seems these phrases were intended as moderate or reassuring. In the light of what happened to many peaceful individuals on Oct. 7, though, they have a rather different impact. Israel destroyed and erased from the map. Its Jewish inhabitants killed, expelled or forced to work for their conquerors. Untold Palestinians and other non-Jewish people subjected to a witch hunt for “hypocrite scum.” Whatever future anyone else might imagine between the river and the sea, this is the one for which Sinwar died — and killed.

Charles Lane is a deputy opinion editor and columnist for The Washington Post.

What it meant to me when El Toro took the mound

BY LEÓN KRAUZE
Special to The Washington Post
 Fernando Valenzuela was my childhood idol. Like many Mexican kids of my generation, I grew up watching him pitch, mesmerized by his calm demeanor and his peculiar windup — gazing skyward before delivering an indecipherable screwball.

In 1981, my father promised me a trip to Los Angeles to see Valenzuela in person if I earned good grades. Against all odds, we made it to Dodger Stadium. The entire place seemed to resonate with Fernando’s name.

Valenzuela died at the age of 63 on Tuesday, three days before the start of the World Series between the Yankees and his beloved Dodgers.

The last time these two iconic teams clashed in the World Series was in 1981. That season remains etched in history for many reasons, but none more memorable than the rise of Valenzuela himself and the phenomenon known as “Fernandomania.”

The 1981 season was extraordinary for the Dodgers, not only because of their championship win but also because of Valenzuela, then a 20-year-old left-handed youngster from Etchohuaquila, a small town in the Mexican state of Sonora. He began his first full electrifying season in Los Angeles with an incredible streak, winning his first eight starts, with five shutouts. Valenzuela was a sensation. Wherever the

Dodgers played, stadiums often sold out to see him pitch. Millions followed his games in the United States and Mexico, where he became an idol almost overnight. His success resonated deeply with the Hispanic community in Los Angeles, bridging a divide between the Dodgers and Latino fans, many of whom still remembered the painful evictions decades earlier for the construction of Dodger Stadium at Chavez Ravine. While other Latino players had been popular, Valenzuela graced magazine covers, appeared on television shows and became a sought-after figure for endorsements. He became an ambassador for baseball and a trailblazer for generations of Latino athletes. Through it all, he smiled with an endearing shyness. The peak of Valenzuela’s incredible season came during the 1981 World Series. The Dodgers and the Yankees faced off in a rematch of the 1977 and 1978 Series, both of which New York had won. The Dodgers lost the first two games in New York. A third loss, and in Los Angeles, might have been insurmountable. But manager Tommy Lasorda trusted his star rookie with the ball. At 20 years old, Valenzuela became one of the youngest pitchers to start a World Series game. Facing giants such as Dave Winfield and Reggie Jackson, he must have felt enormous pressure. He didn’t show it. Despite early struggles with his command, Valenzuela

dug deep, pitching a complete game and leading the Dodgers to a 5-4 victory. By the end, he had thrown an astounding 146 pitches, unheard of in today’s game. Game 3 shifted the series’ momentum. The Dodgers went on to win the final three games — winning their first championship since 1965. For Dodger fans, especially the Los Angeles Hispanic community, the title held even greater significance. Thirty-five years later, while working in Los Angeles, I had the chance to interview Valenzuela, who had gone on to become a beloved commentator for the Dodgers. Meeting him felt surreal. I still remembered the excitement surrounding the young man from Sonora who could barely speak English yet captivated two countries at once. I could recite the full 1981 Dodgers lineup from memory. I asked him how he had managed the immense pressure of Game 3. Valenzuela, a man of few words, simply tapped his left arm and said, “I knew what I had here.” He had studied the Yankees’ hitters and was ready for the challenge. His left arm became a symbol of resilience, and the “bull from Etchohuaquila” secured his place in baseball history. Jack Flaherty, a pitcher who grew up a few miles from Dodger Stadium, will start for the Dodgers on Friday. Perhaps, on his windup, he might briefly glance toward the sky.

León Krauze is a Mexican journalist, author and news anchor.

WORLD

Gaza shelter hit; cease-fire talks to resume

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — An Israeli strike on a school where displaced people were sheltering in the central Gaza Strip killed at least 17 people on Thursday, nearly all women and children, Palestinian medical officials said.

The strike came as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Israel had accomplished its objective of “effectively dismantling” Hamas, and that negotiations over a cease-fire and the release of dozens of Israeli hostages would resume in the coming days.

Another 42 people were wounded in the strike in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp, according to the Awda Hospital, which received the casualties. Among the dead were 13 children under the age of 18 and three women, according to the hospital’s records.

The Israeli military said it targeted Hamas militants inside the

school, without providing evidence. Israel has carried out several strikes on schools-turned-shelters in recent months, saying it precisely targets militants hiding out among civilians. The strikes often kill women and children.

Blinken, speaking to reporters in Qatar, which has served as a key mediator between Israel and Hamas, said negotiators would reconvene “in the coming days.”

“What we really have to determine is whether Hamas is prepared to engage,” he said on his 11th visit to the region since the start of the war,

The United States hopes to renew the negotiations after Israeli forces killed top Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar in Gaza last week, but neither side has shown any sign of moderating its demands from months of negotiations that sputtered to a halt over the summer.

Blinken also announced an additional \$135 million in U.S. aid to the

Palestinians, while again urging Israel to allow more assistance to enter the territory.

Health workers in besieged northern Gaza meanwhile warned of a catastrophic situation there, where Israel has been waging an air and ground offensive for more than two weeks.

Hundreds of people have been killed and tens of thousands have fled their homes in northern Gaza in recent days. The Israeli military says it is battling Hamas fighters who regrouped in the north, which was one of the first targets of the ground offensive at the start of the war.

Dr. Hossam Abu Safiyeh, director of Kamal Adwan Hospital, said in a video message released Wednesday that some 150 wounded people were being treated there, including 14 children in intensive care or the neonatal department.

“There is a very large number of

wounded people, and we lose at least one person every hour because of the lack of medical supplies and medical staff,” he said.

“Our ambulances can’t transfer wounded people,” he said. “Those who can arrive by themselves to the hospital receive care, but those who don’t just die in the streets.”

Footage shared with The Associated Press shows medical staff tending to premature babies and several older children in hospital beds, some with severe burns. One child is seen attached to a breathing machine, with bandages on her face and flies hovering over her.

“We are providing the bare minimum to patients. Everyone is paying the price of what is happening now in northern Gaza,” Abu Safiyeh said.

The Civil Defense, first responders who operate under the Hamas-run government, said they had suspended operations in the north. They said Israeli forces fired on one

of their teams in the town of Beit Lahiya after ordering them to relocate to the Indonesian Hospital, where troops are stationed.

Three Civil Defense members were wounded in the strike, and a firetruck was destroyed, it said.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the allegations.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel’s retaliatory offensive has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which does not say how many were combatants but says women and children make up more than half the fatalities. The Israeli military says it has killed over 17,000 fighters, without providing evidence.

Putin presides over BRICS summit seeking to expand Russia’s clout

Associated Press

KAZAN, Russia — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday presided at the closing session of a summit of the BRICS bloc of developing economies, praising its role as a counterbalance to what he called the West’s “perverse methods.”

The three-day summit in the city of Kazan covered the deepening of financial cooperation, including the development of alternatives to Western-dominated payment systems, efforts to settle regional conflicts and expansion of the BRICS group of nations.

The alliance that initially included Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa when it was founded in 2009 has expanded to embrace Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

The summit was attended by leaders or representatives of 36 countries, highlighting the failure of U.S.-led efforts to isolate Russia over its actions in Ukraine. The Kremlin touted the summit as “the largest foreign policy event ever held” by Russia.

Speaking at what was dubbed the “BRICS Plus” session, which in-



MAXIM SHEMETOV/AP

Chinese President Xi Jinping, left, and Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, speak at BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, on Thursday.

cluded countries that are considering joining the bloc, Putin accused the West of trying to stem the power of the Global South with “illegal unilateral sanctions, blatant protectionism, manipulation of currency and stock markets, and relentless foreign influence ostensibly promoting democracy, human rights, and the climate change agenda.”

“Such perverse methods and approaches — to put it bluntly — lead

to the emergence of new conflicts and the aggravation of old disagreements,” Putin said. “One example of this is Ukraine, which is being used to create critical threats to Russia’s security, while ignoring our vital interests, our just concerns, and the infringement of the rights of Russian-speaking people.”

China’s President Xi Jinping has emphasized the bloc’s role in ensuring global security.

Turkey strikes Kurdish targets for a second day

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey struck suspected Kurdish militant targets in Syria and Iraq for a second day on Thursday following an attack on the premises of a key defense company that killed at least five people, the state-run news agency reported.

The National Intelligence Organization targeted “strategic locations” used by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK, or by Syrian Kurdish militia that are affiliated with the militants, the Anadolu Agency reported. The targets included military, intelligence, energy and infrastructure facilities and ammunition depots, the report said. A security official said armed drones were used in Thursday’s strikes.

On Wednesday, Turkey’s air force carried out airstrikes against similar targets in northern Syria and northern Iraq, hours after government officials blamed the deadly attack at the headquarters of the aerospace and defense company TUSAS, on the PKK.

Defense Minister Yasar Guler said Thursday that 47 alleged PKK targets were destroyed in Wednesday’s airstrikes — 29 in Iraq and 18

in Syria.

The assailants — a man and a woman — arrived at the TUSAS premises on the outskirts of Ankara in a taxi they commandeered after killing its driver, reports said. Armed with assault rifles, they set off explosives and opened fire, killing four people at TUSAS, including a security guard and a mechanical engineer. Security teams were dispatched as soon as the attack started at around 3:30 pm, the interior minister said. The two assailants were also killed and more than 20 people were injured in the attack.

There was no immediate statement from the PKK on the attack or the Turkish airstrikes.

In Syria, the main U.S.-backed force said Turkish strikes in the north of the country killed 12 civilians and wounded 25. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said Turkish warplanes and drones struck bakeries, power stations, oil facilities and police checkpoints.

The PKK has been fighting for autonomy in southeast Turkey in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people since the 1980s. It is considered a terrorist group by Turkey and its Western allies.

Venice extends day-tripper tax into 2025

Associated Press

ROME — Venice will extend its day-tripper tax through next year, increasing the number of days on which tourists have to pay to enter the Italian city and doubling the fee to 10 euros (\$10.80) for last-minute visitors, city officials said on Thursday.

Mayor Luigi Brugnaro stressed that the tax aims to help the city and its citizens battle overtourism and avoid huge influxes of visitors during crowded holidays and weekends.

The new tax will be applied every Friday through Sunday and on holidays from April 18-July 27 of

next year, for a total of 54 days. That’s almost double the number of days it was applied this year. Tourists who don’t make reservations up to four days in advance will pay 10 euros (\$10.80) instead of the usual 5 euros (\$5.40).

The tax will be in force during peak hours, from 8.30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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WORLD

Sensational mass trial in France shines dark light on rape culture

By DIANE JEANTET
Associated Press

AVIGNON, France — They are, on the face of it, the most ordinary of men. Yet they're all on trial charged with rape. Fathers, grandfathers, husbands, workers and retirees — 50 in all — accused of taking turns on the drugged and inert body of Gisèle Pelicot while her husband recorded the horror for his swelling private video library.

The harrowing and unprecedented trial in France is exposing how pornography, chatrooms and men's disdain for or hazy understanding of consent is fueling rape culture. The horror isn't simply that Dominique Pelicot, in his own words, arranged for men to rape his wife, it's that he also had no difficulty finding dozens of them to take part.

Among the nearly two dozen defendants who testified during the trial's first seven weeks was Ahmed T. — French defendants' full last names are generally withheld until conviction. The married plumber with three kids and five grandchildren said he wasn't particularly alarmed that Pelicot wasn't moving when he visited her and her now-ex-husband's house in the small Provence town of Mazan in 2019.

It reminded him of porn he had watched featuring women who "pretend to be asleep and don't react," he said.

Like him, many other defendants told the court that they couldn't have imagined that Dominique Pelicot was drugging his wife, and that they were told she



A man rides a bicycle in front of a banner reading: "A rape is a rape," in Avignon, southern France, on Oct. 16.

was a willing participant acting out a kinky fantasy. Dominique Pelicot denied this, telling the court his co-defendants knew exactly what the situation was.

For the first time since early in the trial, Gisèle Pelicot spoke Wednesday about her husband's "immeasurable" betrayal, and expressed sympathy for the wives, mothers and sisters of his 50 co-defendants, French media reported.

"I always wanted to pull you up, toward the light," she said, addressing her ex-husband. "You have chosen the depths of the human soul."

Céline Piques, a spokesperson of the feminist group Osez le Féminisme!, or Dare Feminism! said she's convinced that many of the men on trial were inspired or perverted by porn, including videos found on popular websites. Although some sites have started cracking down on search terms such as "unconscious," hundreds of videos of men having sex with seemingly passed out women can be found online, she said.

Piques was particularly struck by the testimony of a tech expert at the trial who had found the search terms "asleep porn" on Dominique Pelicot's computer.

Last year, French authorities registered 114,000 victims of sexual violence, including more than 25,000 reported rapes. But experts say most rapes go unreported due to a lack of tangible evidence: About 80% of women don't press charges, and 80% of the ones who do see their case dropped before it is investigated.

Philippines swamped by floods, landslides from tropical storm

By JIM GOMEZ
Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Widespread flooding and landslides set off by a tropical storm in the northeastern Philippines on Thursday left at least 24 people dead, swept away cars and prompted authorities to scramble for motorboats to rescue trapped villagers, some on roofs.

The government shut down schools and offices — except those urgently needed for disaster response — for the second day on the entire main island of Luzon to protect millions of people after Tropical Storm Trami slammed into the country's northeastern province of Isabela after midnight.

The storm began to move away from the coast of the northwestern Philippine province of Ilocos Sur toward the South China Sea on Thursday afternoon with sustained winds of up to 59 mph and gusts up to 71 mph. It was blowing southwestward and could strengthen into a typhoon over the South China Sea, according to state forecasters.

At least 24 people died, mostly due to drowning in the hard-hit Bicol region and nearby Quezon province but the toll was expected to rise as towns and villages isolated by flooding and roads blocked by landslides and toppled trees manage to send out reports, police and provincial officials said.

Most of the storm deaths were reported in the six-province Bicol region, southeast of Manila, where at least 21 people died, including 8 residents in Naga city, which was inundated by flash floods as Trami was approaching Tuesday, dumping more than two months' worth of rainfall in just 24 hours at high tide, regional police chief Brig. Gen. Andre Dizon and other officials said.

While thousands of villagers, who were trapped in floodwaters, have been rescued by government forces, many more needed to be saved Thursday in the Bicol region, including some on roofs. About 1,500 police officers have been deployed for disaster-mitigation work, Dizon said.

"We can't rescue them all at once because there are so many and we need additional motorboats," Dizon told The Associated Press by telephone. "We're looking for ways to deliver food and water to those who were trapped but could not be evacuated right away."

Flash floods swept away and submerged cars in some parts of Naga city while mudflows from Mayon, one of the country's 24 active volcanoes, in nearby Albay province, engulfed several vehicles, Dizon said.

Stormy weather remained in the region, hampering relief efforts, officials said.



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WEEKEND



‘The Last Dance’
for Hardy’s Venom
Movies, Page 18

Vetting FOR THE Vatican

‘Conclave’ imagines what goes on inside
the ultimate election: choosing a pope

Movies, Pages 16-17



Ralph Fiennes plays a cardinal who
must oversee the election of the
next pope in “Conclave.”

FOCUS FEATURES/AP

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Behind the scenes at the Toy Hall of Fame

How museum curators get the year's new inductees and how they choose what they will permanently display

BY CAROLYN THOMPSON
Associated Press

When curators at the National Toy Hall of Fame learned last fall that the Fisher-Price Corn Popper had been voted in as part of the class of 2023, they knew they had some serious work to do.

With a formal induction ceremony approaching, they would have to figure out how to showcase the beloved toddler push toy with colorful balls that ricochet around a clear dome.

It isn't as simple as going to Walmart and pulling one off the shelves: The hall, part of the The Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, N.Y., aims to show how its toys have endured and evolved over the years — pieces go from wood to plastic, electronics are added.

That means digging through archives, auctions, the internet and garage sales to hunt for an original, or one close to it — a process repeated with each new hall of fame inductee.

"We want some recognizable things currently on the market, but we also want people to say, 'Oh, I had one of those!'" said Christopher Bensch, chief curator at the Strong museum, which is a larger-than-life interactive toybox for kids and adults.

For example, when the jigsaw puzzle was inducted in 2002, they added one of the world's first versions, a map of Europe pasted onto a thin mahogany board from 1766, alongside a child's Donald Duck board puzzle from 1990. Not all of the toys inducted into the hall are specific products, either — 2021's inductee was simply "sand."

In the case of the Corn Popper, the curators needed to find something recognizable to generations. The toy has been around since 1957 and more than 36 million have been sold, according to Fisher-Price. Nearly 650,000 visitors would arrive over the next year to view it and the hall of fame's other vaunted toys.

Vaults, garage sales, eBay

After being voted in by experts and fans, many hall of fame toys are pulled for permanent display from the museum's vast archives.

The honorees are usually so iconic — the Barbie doll, the teddy bear, checkers — that the odds are good there will be multiples among the half-million or so objects already in the ever-expanding collection.

But staff is always on the lookout for playthings worth saving — keeping an eye on eBay and garage and estate sales, especially if a toy is already in, or seems bound for, the hall of fame.

With new toys on the market all the time, curators can only guess what might be the next Etch A Sketch, a mechanical drawing toy that's still popular and virtually unchanged after 100 years, and which toys will fizzle.

"We want to be the repository for them, for the nation or the world," Bensch said. "That's why we have 1,500 yo-yos in our collection, or 8,000 jigsaw puzzles," he said, naming two past inductees.

Some of the stored board games, stuffed animals, doll houses and other molded, cast and carved reminders of childhood have been donated by manufacturers. Others come from private collectors following a death, divorce or move. A parent recently donated a collection of 1,600 American Girl dolls and accessories after their child outgrew them.

Some items are pursued at auction, the way a fine art museum might acquire a masterpiece. That's how The Strong landed one of its most prized possessions, an original Monopoly set, hand-painted on oil cloth in 1933 by inventor Charles Darrow before the game went into mass production. With Monopoly in the hall of fame since 1998, the winning \$146,500 bid at Sotheby's in 2010 was over budget — but worth it.



PHOTOS BY LAUREN PETRACCA/AP

Christopher Bensch, chief curator at The Strong National Museum of Play, stands among shelves of toys and games Oct. 15 in a storage area below the museum in Rochester, N.Y. Curators looking to showcase National Toy Hall of Fame inductees dig through the museum's vast archives as well as auctions, the internet, estate and garage sales.

"We want some recognizable things currently on the market, but we also want people to say, 'Oh, I had one of those!'"

Christopher Bensch

chief curator at The Strong National Museum of Play, speaking of the National Toy Hall of Fame's aim for displays

"We're the National Museum of Play. If we were the Henry Ford Museum and we didn't have the first Model T, we would kick ourselves ever after," Bensch said.

An eBay find

Babies have been toddling behind Fisher-Price Corn Poppers for more than 60 years, but finding a "historic" one in pristine, museum-display condition proved challenging.

"Those are toys that get used pretty hard," Bensch said, "especially early versions with that plastic dome and the wooden balls hitting against it. Those did not survive in great condition."

What eventually went on display were two versions. One is a 1980 model purchased on eBay from a woman in Canada, who likely has no idea her castaway — its wear and tear evident in its dinged-up and slightly cloudy dome — is now a museum piece. The other is a shiny new version that is still on store shelves for about \$12, with a sleeker blue handle and beefier red wheels that reflect slight design changes over the years.

"It was hard to find a photogenic one that went back more than a few decades," Bensch said. "I'm not sure we eventually got one that was as old as we wished for, just because they had been so well loved."

What makes a toy a hall of famer?

Each year, a new class of toys makes it into the hall of fame, the culmination of an annual process that invites anyone to nominate their favorite toy online.

Museum staff culls the nominees to 12 finalists before a panel of experts votes in the winners. Eighty-four toys



Fisher-Price Corn Popper toys are displayed in the hall of fame. Curators chose a dinged-up and slightly cloudy model from 1980 and a new version that's still in stores with a sleeker blue handle and beefier red wheels.

have earned the honor since the hall opened in 1998.

Nominees can be as lasting as steel Erector set creations, inducted in 1998, or as fleeting as bubbles blown through a plastic wand, honored in 2014.

Many inductees are a reminder that the true value of a toy isn't necessarily in the price, but the play. In 2008, an ordinary stick from a tree — but a no-cost sword or magic wand to a child — was inducted into the hall, but Flexible Flyer sleds and the Rubik's Cube did not make the cut that year. The Easy-Bake Oven was bypassed in 2005 — by the cardboard box it might have been shipped in.

The museum received 2,400 nominations for 382 different toys for the class of 2024.

This year's 12 finalists include Apples to Apples, balloons and the trampoline. Also: "Choose Your Own Adventure" books, Hess Toy Trucks, remote-controlled vehicles, the stick horse, Phase 10, Sequence and the Pokémon Trading Card Game, and two perennial nominees, My Little Pony figures — a seven-time finalist — and Transformers action figures.

From them, a chosen few will be announced and honored in November, and the curators will begin their hunt all over again.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Focus Entertainment photos

In Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine 2, Demetrian Titus returns to continue the fight against the insectlike Tyranid aliens, and rescue leaders of the mysterious Project Aurora.

The space marines' battle continues

Warhammer 40,000 sequel expands setting, but still leverages rich, dark science-fiction lore of original game

By GIESON CACHO
The Mercury News

The original Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine was forgettable. It didn't leave a strong impression despite the rich lore that the project was embedded in, and that's a travesty because the Game Workshop title's dark sci-fi universe is one of the most fascinating and original out there.

It's filled with space orks, chaos demons and highly advanced aeldari, to name a few factions. Humanity is at the center of things, but it's a grim and militaristic version, with a religious zeal for authority. Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine 2 drops players into this world as Demetrian Titus, the protagonist of the original. After his heroics in the original, he was branded a heretic because of his unusual resistance to corruption energies. He disappeared from the records only to reappear while trying to save the planet of Kadaku from a Tyranid invasion.

The insectlike creatures are dangerous and that's proven when a Carnifex critically wounded him. He was nearly dead but resurrected and ended up reunited with his old faction of Ultramarines. He's tasked with jumping back into the fray with two new squadmates Sergeant Gadriel and Brother Chairon. They have to fend off waves of the highly adaptable creatures and rescue leaders of a mysterious Project Aurora.

That leads to more conspiracy: The cobbled-together team must learn how to work together and trust each other as it fights an endless horde and a chaotic foe from Titus' past.



The multiplayer modes of Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine 2 are better than the main mode: In Operation mode, players set off in a three-person squad to help Titus in the central campaign.

Spicier ranged and melee combat

From the outset, Space Marine 2 establishes a distinct vision as a third-person shooter, in which players attack from range but can mix it up with a melee if needed. Players deal with floods of Tyranid, an alien enemy that overwhelms armies. As Titus, players are mostly ground dwellers who have to blast enemies from afar, but when they get in close, they can transition to using a melee weapon.

Hand-to-hand combat presents its own hurdles as players learn to parry and dodge attacks. The developer, Saber Interactive, layers smart mechanics that accentuate the combat without being too complex. For example, players can parry adversaries easily if they hit their block button when they see a blue circle alerting to an incoming attack. After doing that, they can perform a powerful blow with a pistol.

Another wrinkle is how health is recovered in combat. When wading into a sea of enemies, players must constantly swing their chain saw sword to stay alive because eliminating the cannon fodder recovers health. In addition, Titus has an armor bar that gives players an extra level of health, but when it crumbles under enemy attacks, they can refill it by stunning foes and finishing them off using an execution button.

Right weapons for the job

Weapons provide another element of strategy. Space Marine 2 limits players to two firearms and a melee

weapon but it gives them ample opportunity to switch the arms out. They'll have to adapt their approach for each level based on the environment and what they expect will happen. If there's an open area with long sight lines, it's best to pick a long-range Bolt Gun with a scope. If Titus enters an underground area full of corridors, they'll need a Melta Rifle for those narrow areas.

Saber Interactive also switches up abilities to create more variety. In a few levels, Titus and his crew don Jump Packs that allow them to soar through the air and attack adversaries from above. They're used a few times and create a nice verticality in some stages but sadly, aren't used enough.

The varied abilities and limited weapons prop up a mission design that's simplistic. The main campaign doesn't ask players to do too many complex tasks. Instead, Space Marine 2 leans heavily on the lore of the Warhammer 40,000 universe to create epic moments.

An excellent co-op experience

Thankfully, that doesn't extend to the multiplayer modes, where players will spend the bulk of their time. Eternal War is a decent competitive mode where players of different classes battle each other while the excellent Operations mode allows players to take on a role in alternate squads who help Titus in the central campaign. It's sort of like the B-side of the main narrative.

Players choose from one of six classes in these cooperative missions and set off in a three-person squad to accomplish an objective. This is where teamwork comes into play as players face more difficult circumstances and have to rely on the squad's varied skills to survive. It's also filled with more complex tasks that require more collaboration.

The main campaign can also be played cooperatively, but what makes Operations mode different is that players build out their own space marines. It also has progression systems that let players put points into perk and weapons trees; it also lets players customize a class toward a play-style while also beefing it up for more difficult missions.

All of this creates a game that feels more fleshed out and focused than the original while leveraging the rich mythos of the Warhammer 40,000 universe.

Platforms: PC, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S
Online: tinyurl.com/bdhsb465

WEEKEND: MOVIES



FOCUS FEATURES/AP photos

Director Edward Berger, left, and actor Ralph Fiennes on the set of “Conclave.” Berger says he wanted the film to be like “All the President’s Men”: “It was my opportunity to make a film like a political thriller from the ’70s — for Ralph to feel claustrophobic, to sit in a dark room and all we hear is the hum of a fluorescent light and his breath.”

Going for the (papal) throne

Riveting and thoughtful adult-oriented drama ‘Conclave’ and its star Fiennes already top contenders for the Oscars

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Robert Harris had just completed a trilogy of novels about Cicero when he watched the election of Pope Benedict live on television. As a chronicler of power and its mutations, the scene — the Sistine Chapel smoke signaling a decision, of course, but also the whole, secretive tableaux — fascinated him.

“Just before the pope comes out onto the balcony and reveals himself, the windows on either side fill up with the faces of the cardinal electors who had come to watch him,” Harris says. “And the camera pans along the faces — elderly, crafty, cunning, some benign, beatific. And I thought: My god, that’s the Roman senate. That’s the old men running the whole institution. I thought: There must be stories here.”

That stoked Harris to write “Conclave,” a 2016 novel that went inside the Vatican to imagine how “the ultimate election,” as he calls it — with the added intrigue that the contenders must pretend they don’t want to win — might unfold.

As page-turning as Harris made his novel, it might not



Actor Isabella Rossellini, left, and Berger on set.

have seemed the stuff of Hollywood. A bunch of old men in robes sitting inside and picking a pontiff is not your average elevator pitch. But director Edward Berger’s adaptation, starring Ralph Fiennes as the cardinal leading the conclave, manages to be that rare thing in today’s movie industry: a riveting, thoughtful, adult-oriented drama acted out through dialogue by a sterling ensemble.

“Yeah, we used to have ‘em. A lot. We don’t really have ‘em anymore,” says Stanley Tucci, who co-stars as Cardinal Bellini. “You have people who have been doing this for a long time, so it’s a very mature film. If you take all of our ages and add them up, well, I don’t want to know what the number is.”

“Conclave,” which Focus Features releases in theaters Friday, has already been drafted into a runoff of its own. The film, Berger’s follow-up to his Oscar-winning “All Quiet on the Western Front,” is considered a top Academy Awards contender, as is Fiennes, for what would be his third nomination. (He’s never won.) In a Hollywood that years ago lost belief in the midbudget adult drama, can “Conclave” restore the faith?

“Conclave” wasn’t made with the Vatican’s involvement; it was shot at the legendary Rome studio Cinecittà. The film, made for about \$20 million and scripted by Peter Straughan, is primarily a procedural, albeit one with a spiritual dimension.

“I wanted to make it like ‘All the President’s Men,’” Berger says. “It was my opportunity to make a film like a political thriller from the ’70s — for Ralph to feel claustrophobic, to sit in a dark room and all we hear is the hum of a fluorescent light and his breath.”

To a large degree, it’s a movie that resides on Fiennes’ face. His Cardinal Lawrence spends much of the film listening, strategizing and searching — himself as much as anyone else — as he weighs rapidly shifting allegiances and uncovered secrets. The smoke of “Conclave,” you might say, is in close-ups of Fiennes, a master of the subtle shifts of expression.

“When you know the camera is on you and it’s close, that’s when you know your inner world has to speak,” Fiennes says.

SEE PAPAL ON PAGE 17

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW

Berger's 'Conclave' all about politics

Fiennes led-juicy, smartly crafted thriller riveting, entertaining, but likely to ruffle Catholic feathers

By LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

In Edward Berger's "Conclave," the selection of the pope is no holy affair. Instead, it's a petty, political campaign carried out in secrecy, where gossip flows, agendas are malleable and loyalties are fleeting. All are there to serve God, they say. But we all know how helpful that has been in conflicts throughout history. "Conclave" might not have much new or interesting to say about the Catholic Church, but it is a deliriously fun watch in the way that tense, smart thrillers with an ensemble of great actors can be.

It's fitting that Peter Straughan, who cowrote the script for "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy," was the one to adapt Robert Harris' 2016 novel, taking audiences inside the secretive halls of the Vatican in the immediate aftermath of the pope's death. The film opens abruptly and effectively on Ralph Fiennes' back, walking somewhere briskly. Nothing is said. You don't even see his face. But between Volker Bertelmann's heightened score and Fiennes' pace and tensed shoulders, the mood is set. This, it is clear, is not going to be a straightforward affair. Plus, something seems a little fishy about this death.

Fiennes plays Cardinal Thomas Lawrence, the dean of the College of Cardinals, whose duty is to oversee the election of the next pope. That means gathering a group of 100-some clergymen in Rome to vote. With many dreaming of ascending to the position, they're secluded from the

outside world and left to their own devices to lobby for support.

There are some formidable forces at play following the death of a more liberal-minded pope. Stanley Tucci's Aldo Bellini is a progressive hoping to evolve the church dramatically. Sergio Castellitto's Goffredo Tedesco thinks they've gone astray and wants to bring it back to the days of Latin Mass and Italian leadership. There's also Lucian Msamati's Joshua Adeyemi, from Nigeria, who stands to make history as the first Black pope but whose views on homosexuality worry the progressives. And finally, John Lithgow's slick but earnest Joseph Tremblay, who, unlike Bellini, wears his ambition on his sleeve. He also happened to be the last official meeting on the pope's schedule before he died and delayed before calling Lawrence with the news.

In a film business where youth still reigns supreme, "Conclave" is a symphony of lovely aging faces. These actors whose forehead lines don't disappear at rest are in full command of their instruments showing a world of experience, doubt and regret in any given glance. Fiennes gets the majority of the close-ups, as a man who is having to manage this increasingly unwieldy proceeding while also grappling with his own internal crisis. He reveals to Bellini, who he hopes will be selected, that he recently attempted to resign. His request, he said, was denied.

And now he's left dealing with a bunch of babies in a conclave that is stretching on longer than anyone would like. There



Focus Features/AP photos

Ralph Fiennes plays Cardinal Thomas Lawrence, the dean of the College of Cardinals, whose duty is to oversee the election of the next pope, in "Conclave." Lawrence has to manage an increasingly unwieldy proceeding while also grappling with an internal crisis.



Fiennes and Stanley Tucci, right, as progressive Cardinal Aldo Bellini. Fiennes' Lawrence hopes Bellini gets elected. Lawrence reveals to Bellini that he also recently attempted to resign.

are rumors of a withdrawn report of gross misconduct, a sabotage plot and the surprise arrival of a cardinal no one knew existed: Carlos Diehz's Vincent Benitez, who was secretly appointed archbishop of Kabul. With turmoil both on the streets and inside their claustrophobic and gossip-ridden surroundings, everyone is go-

ing a little mad wondering if they'll have to simply settle for the least worst choice. Even Isabella Rossellini's head nun, who is supposed to be a silent participant, gets involved (thank goodness for us).

Berger, a German-Austrian filmmaker who last made the stunning adaptation of "All Quiet on the Western Front," keeps the audience on the edge of their seats for the duration as you try to piece together the clues to figure out who is holding the strings. The specific setting of the Vatican adds mystery and dramatic flair — the filmmaker seems to take great pleasure in the elaborate and frequent costume changes and ceremony of it all — but this is also a classic story that could have easily been set near any seat of power.

"Conclave" is sure to ruffle some Catholic feathers — provocation is in its DNA. But for the rest of us, this juicy, smartly crafted thriller is simply a great watch.

"Conclave" is rated PG for thematic material and smoking. Running time: 120 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

Papal: Actor, like character, humble about prospects of winning respective contests

FROM PAGE 16

It's a talent that Fiennes has honed through genuine investigation. He recalls watching BBC's "Face to Face" to study how faces shift when asked probing questions. For an acting workshop, he once told students to interview themselves, and watch the facial responses. "What does the human face do in real life that an actor can learn from?" Fiennes says.

Tucci and Fiennes have sporadically worked together ("Maid in Manhattan," "The King's Man"), but after plans fizzled for Tucci to direct Fiennes in a film about George Bernard Shaw, they sought a more substantial collaboration. Tucci's scenes are almost entirely with Fiennes. The rest of the cast includes Isabella Rossellini, John Lithgow and Brian F. O'Byrne.

"It made me really love acting again," Tucci says, speaking from home in London. "Not that I didn't love it, but you sort of start to burn out after a while. After 42 years, you're like, 'Why am I still doing this?' You have those times where you question. And then this is like, 'Oh that's it. There you go.'"

Doubt, itself, is a major theme in "Conclave." When Lawrence first speaks to the assembled cardinals, he makes the case that doubt, not certainty, should guide their search for a new pope. As the film continues, Lawrence's predicament weighs increasingly heavily on his faith in the church. It's the aspect of the character with

which Fiennes most connected.

"As you get older, I have more doubts," Fiennes says. "What does anything mean? I don't know what anything means. What is the value of what I do? I don't know. I have an impulse to follow a scene, to choose a project — what's its meaning?"

"I just think: Things emerge and I like to let things come to me," he continues. "Let accident be apt, you know? There are people in this business who develop stuff. 'I want to play this part. I want to make this film with this director.' That's fine. I've done that and I may do that a bit more. But I feel more and more: What's round the corner that I don't know about?"

But sliding into Lawrence proved a natural fit, even when it came to the vestments. In preparation, Fiennes was allowed to try on a real cardinal's clothes. He liked the feeling.

"The truth is, skirts are quite comfortable," Fiennes says. "Our clothes in the film are made of a heavier fabric and quite a lot of skirtage to maneuver."

"You feel quite strong in them," he adds. "You feel quite powerful."

The 61-year-old isn't inclined to indulge in the Oscar talk, though. When asked, he gently demurred, agreeing instead with Berger, who sat beside him during a recent interview in New York, that he'd let the film speak for itself. That is, of course, the way Lawrence might respond

to someone saying he should be pope.

"I don't think many actors, movie stars, can convey intelligence and a kind of suffering humility quite the way he can," Harris says.

The film is also laced with quandary over the role of women in what Berger describes as "the oldest patriarchal institution in the world." The twists and turns of "Conclave" ultimately arrive at what would be an earthquake of a development for the Catholic Church.

"I would absolutely love to screen it for the Vatican. We've shown it to Catholic organizations and priests," Berger says. "I know from the cardinals we spoke to, they all said, 'We're all going to be watching your movie.'"

As Harris neared publication, he received a letter from the then British cardinal, the late Cormac Murphy-O'Connor. Having recently rummaged through his office, Harris digs out the letter and reads it. (In the book, the main character is called Cardinal Lomeli.)

"Before the reviews come flooding forth, I wanted to write and say how much I enjoyed 'Conclave,'" Harris reads. "You certainly did your homework. I particularly admired your depiction of Cardinal Lomeli as a cardinal the likes of which all we cardinals would wish to be: holy, subject to doubts, intelligent, humane and totally loyal to the church. Well done."

He concluded: "As to the startling ending, I said to myself: After all, it's only a novel."

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS



SONY PICTURES/AP photos

Tom Hardy voices both his character, journalist Eddie Brock, and the symbiote Venom in “Venom: The Last Dance.”

‘Last Dance’ a suitable send-off

Hardy’s chemistry as dual character the central appeal in 3rd and final Venom film

BY KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

You’re either on Venom’s wavelength, or you’re not. If you are, you’re not alone, because as it turns out, a lot of folks are. The wildly successful Marvel series from Sony comprises a triptych of strangely appealing comic book movies featuring Tom Hardy’s take on journalist Eddie Brock and his sassy symbiote sidekick, Venom (whom Hardy also voices). The third installment, “Venom: The Last Dance,” rounds out the trio of films, which are all straight-faced and irreverent, creating a campy tone all their own, distinct from the more self-serious superheroes, or the sarcastically self-referential ones.

Much of that unique humor has to do with star Hardy’s performance as both Venom and Eddie, and through his writing contributions (he has a story by credit on both “Venom: Let There Be Carnage” and “Venom: The Last Dance”), and close collaboration with longtime friend Kelly Marcel, who wrote all three films and makes her directorial debut with “The Last Dance,” which announces itself with that title as Venom’s potential last twirl on the floor.

The main appeal of these films has always been the relationship between Eddie and Venom, his alien pal who frequently pops out to say hello and crack wise, and who can take over Eddie’s body with his tar-like mass and giant teeth for various feats of strength and derring-do. The irascible Venom loves animals, eating brains and letting the music move him (in the second installment, they hit up a rave; in this one, it’s a choreographed disco dance in a Vegas penthouse).

That remains the focus in “The Last Dance,” wherein Eddie and Venom try to

make it from Mexico to New York City, and end up stranded in Area 51, as aliens are wont to do. Through no small amount of exposition, we learn that the pair have become a codex, or key, to unlock some sort of galactic prison where a stringy-haired dark lord of sorts has been locked up by his symbiote children. He’s now dispatched an army of stabby crab-like aliens through portals to retrieve the Eddie-Venom codex and free himself.

The pair turn into a tracking device when Venom fully manifests, and the codex can only be destroyed if one of them dies, and so the story is essentially a chase movie through the American Southwest. With a Gen. Strickland (Chiwetel Ejiofor) and his special forces also in pursuit, and an alien-sympathetic scientist Dr. Payne (Juno Temple) attempting to salvage her specimens, mayhem ensues in and around Area 51, which is about to be decommissioned in three days.

The desert setting and chomping alien monsters gives “The Last Dance” a whiff of “Starship Troopers” and a soupcon of “Tremors,” nodding to those self-consciously campy B-movie creature features of yore. This “Last Dance” may be shaggy, silly and even a little bit stupid, and there’s absolutely nothing wrong with that, especially when it’s winking so hard at its own genre-play.

There is a sense of randomness to this journey, but Hardy’s oddball charm and a great soundtrack go a long way to smooth the cracks and bumps on the road, which is also an ensemble comedy as Eddie encounters different folks, including an alien-obsessed dad (Rhys Ifans) taking his family on a pilgrimage to Area 51 in their hippie-fied Volkswagen bus, and his old pal Mrs. Chen (Peggy Lu), running the slot machines in Vegas. These supporting



Juno Temple, left, and Chiwetel Ejiofor enter the narrative in the Area 51 desert in “Venom: The Last Dance.”

actors have the important task of playing the straight man to Venom’s clown. Since Michelle Williams in the first film, it’s imperative that those around Venom understand the assignment, but allow him to shine, and this cast never cracks.

Because it’s not the supporting characters, stories, set pieces or special effects that make “Venom” what it is, but rather the chemistry that Hardy has — with himself — as this dual, dueling character. You genuinely believe in the connection between Eddie and Venom; that they care about each other as much as they squabble, and this is thrown into stark relief in “The Last Dance,” which is, unfortunately, perhaps the last time these two will tango. Though the concept itself is running out of gas, and it would be nice to free Hardy to do other things, it’s a fitting send-off for the cheeky alien with the thousand-watt grin.

“Venom: The Last Dance” is rated PG-13 for intense sequences of violence and action, bloody images and strong language. Running time: 109 minutes.

Garfield, Pugh lead out-of-time relationship in ‘We Live in Time’

BY ADAM GRAHAM
The Detroit News

Andrew Garfield and Florence Pugh have a delightful chemistry that carries the romantic drama “We Live in Time” over its rougher patches and needlessly off-balance framework.

Has the pair done five movies together? Six? Wait, “We Live in Time” is their first pairing. How can this be? They’re so affable together and comfortable with one another that they already seem like a classic movie pair. Well if they’re not one yet, maybe they will be now.

Garfield is breakfast biscuit rep Tobias Durand and Pugh is high-end chef Almut Brühl, and the pair meets cute when she hits him with her car. That scene happens well after viewers have met the pair and as we’re getting to know them in bits and pieces, through director John Crowley’s nonlinear storytelling.

Sometimes that mode of storytelling is deliberately goofy-footed. Just before Tobias is hit by the car, we see him signing divorce papers. Oh no, is their relationship over? And then he’s hit by the car, and we see him wake up in the hospital across from Almut. Is she there just to check up on him?

No, it turns out this is their meeting, which is presented as an audience gotcha, even though the gotcha itself — that moment of questioning, “huh?” — doesn’t necessarily add anything to the story.

Elsewhere, we hop around the couple’s love story. Almut isn’t sure she wants children, but we see the couple has a daughter. And early on we learn that Almut is battling cancer, the details of which are parsed out over the course of the story.

A central scene has Almut explaining to Tobias that rather than going through cancer treatment and having 12 bad months, she’d prefer to not undergo treatment and have six great months instead.

Even when the script by Nick Payne gets a little too cutesy — the birth scene in the convenience store bathroom comes to mind — Garfield and Pugh make it worth the ride. The pair has a romantic, friendly partnership that reads extremely well on screen. They complement each other, and they complement the work.

“We Live in Time” is rated R for language, sexuality and nudity. Running time: 107 minutes. Now playing in on-base theaters.



A24/AP

Andrew Garfield, center, and Florence Pugh star in “We Live in Time.”

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Appreciating Granada's exotic Alhambra

It's sunset, and I'm at the place to be in Granada — the breathtaking San Nicolás viewpoint overlooking the fortress of the Alhambra. Here, at the edge of the city's exotic Moorish quarter, lovers, widows and tourists jostle for the best view of the hill-capping, floodlit fortress, the last stronghold of the Moorish kingdom in Spain. For more than 700 years, Spain, the most Catholic of countries, lived under Muslim rule, until the Christians retook the land in 1492.

Today, Granada is a delightful mix of both its Muslim and Christian past. It has a Deep South feel — a relaxed vibe that seems typical of once-powerful places now past their prime.

Granada's dominant attraction, the Alhambra, captures the region's history of conquest and reconquest: its brute Alcazaba fort and tower, the elaborate Palacios Nazaries (where Washington Irving, much later, wrote *Tales of the Alhambra*), the refined gardens of the Generalife and Charles V's Palace, a Christian Renaissance heap built in a "So there!" gesture after the Reconquista. It's what conquering civilizations do: build their palace atop their foe's palace.

The Alhambra is one of Europe's top sights, but many tourists never get to see it because tickets sell out. Savvy travelers make an advance reservation.

Moorish magnificence blossomed in the Alhambra. Their visual culture was exquisite, artfully combining design and aesthetics. Rooms are decorated from top to bottom with carved wooden ceilings, scalloped

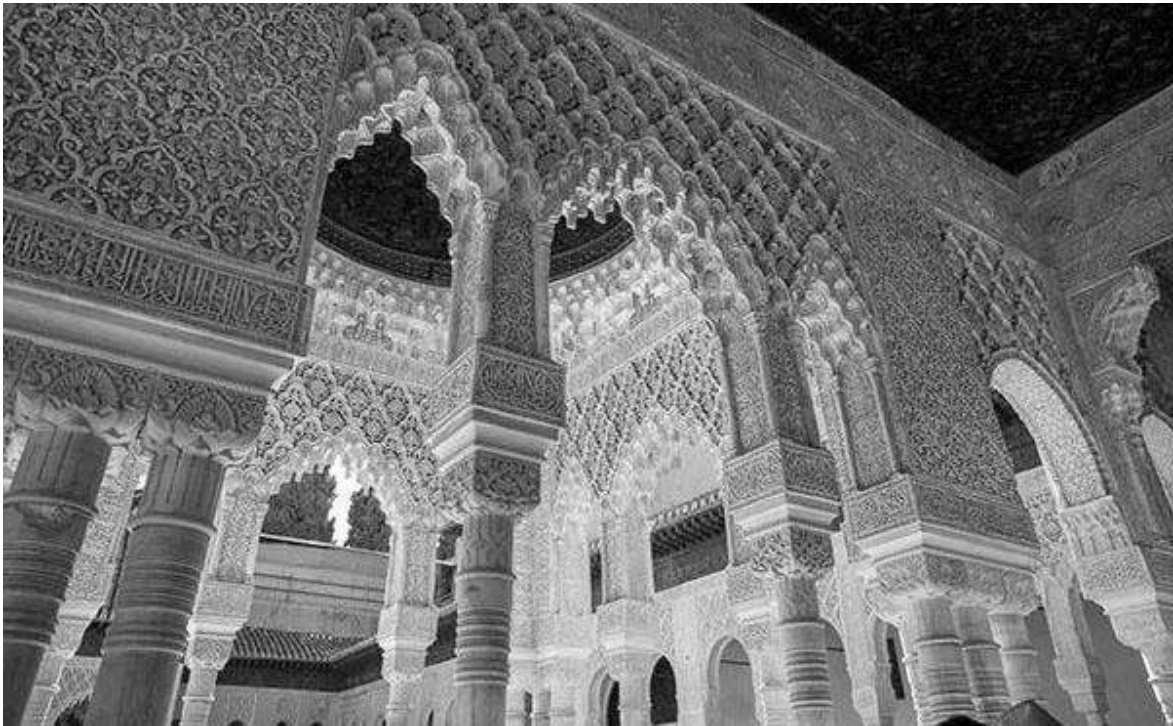


Rick Steves

stucco, patterned ceramic tiles, filigree windows and colors galore. And water, water everywhere. So rare and precious in most of the Islamic world, water was the purest symbol of life to the Moors. The Alhambra is decorated with it: standing still, cascading and dripping playfully.

Muslims avoid making images of living creatures — that's God's work. But Arabic calligraphy, mostly poems and verses of praise from the Quran, is everywhere. One phrase — "only God is victorious" — is repeated 9,000 times throughout the Alhambra.

When Christian forces re-established their rule here in 1492, their victory helped provide



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI/Rick Steves' Europe

The intricate detailing and balanced proportions of the Alhambra's Palacios Nazaries make it one of the most fascinating and aesthetically pleasing buildings in Europe.

the foundation for Spain's Golden Age. Within a generation, Spain's king, Charles V, was the most powerful man in the world.

The city's top Christian sight, the Royal Chapel, is the final resting place of Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand, who ruled dur-

ing the final reconquest. When these two married, they combined their huge kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, founding what became modern Spain. And with this powerful new realm, Spanish royalty were able to finance many great explorers. It

was in Granada that Columbus pitched his idea to Isabel and Ferdinand to finance a sea voyage to the "Orient."

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.

Travel passes enable train passengers to get around in style

Incredibly scenic and environmentally friendly, travel by train is a wonderful way to see the best that Europe has to offer. While a ride on the fastest trains can cost a bundle, single or multi-day travel passes enable not-in-a-rush travelers to take in some beautiful landscapes as they save their pennies.

Here are a handful of regional and national train travel offers to consider before your next trip:

Italy

The "Discover Italia In Tour" are regional promotions allowing travelers to travel without limit for either three or five consecutive days. The offer is good for travel between any origin and destination and applies to second-class travel on Trenitalia and Trenitalia Tper's regional, fast regional and metropolitan trains. Passes can be purchased online, from automated machines in train stations or at ticket counters. The "Italia in Tour 3" goes for 29 euros for adults and 15 euros for ages 4-11; the "Italia in Tour 5" costs 49 euros for adults and 25 euros for ages 4-11. Online: tinyurl.com/24bvxn3j



Karen Bradbury

Germany

The single-day ticket allowing passengers to enjoy journeys of any distance throughout Germany is known as the Quer-durchs-Land-Ticket. This flat-rate ticket is good for use on city buses, trams and subways, as well as second-class travel in the S-Bahn, regional and regional express trains. Up to three children between the ages of 6 and 14 can travel for free with their parents or grandparents. The ticket also comes as a group pass for up to five travelers, and the ticket remains valid until 3 a.m. the following day. A single-day pass goes for 46 euros, a pass for a couple costs 55 euros, three passengers pay 64 eu-



iStock

Several European countries have train pass options that could be useful for foreigners.

ros, four pay 73 euros, and a group of five is 82 euros. Online: tinyurl.com/3mean4r6

Great Britain

Americans traveling through Great Britain might wish to consider a BritRail pass, offering unlimited train trips over the course of a day across England, Scotland and/or Wales. A variety of passes are offered, including types to be used in consecutive days in a row, or those that can be used for a fixed number of days within a month's time. For example, a pass valid for two consecutive days in second class for a single traveler goes for 107 euros, while a pass valid for an entire month goes for 634 euros. A flexi-pass valid for two days of travel within one month goes for 136 euros; a flexi-pass good for eight days within one month costs 365 euros. Britrail Passes must be purchased in advance; they are not sold inside the country. Online: britrail.com/britrail-passes/britrail-pass

Luxembourg

You won't find a better deal than that proposed by the public transportation system of this pocket-sized nation: Since 2020, travel on all trains, buses and trams costs nothing at all. If space allows, bringing along a bicycle is also permitted. First-class travel and high-speed trains remain subject to additional charges. All passengers must carry personal ID. Online: tinyurl.com/rupnmp8z

Spain

Although single-day travel passes are not available on a regular basis, foreigners living outside the country can avail themselves of the Renfe rail network's Renfe Spain Pass, also referred to as an "Abono para extranjeros." The pass allows for travel on a variety of services such as national Larga Distancia (long-distance) trains, including the AVE high-speed train, along with mid-distance regional trains and the Avant mid-distance high-speed train. For some services, a seat reservation is required. The pass remains valid for one month after the first trip has been taken. The cost of the pass is 195 euros for four journeys, 275 euros for six journeys, 350 euros for eight journeys and 410 euros for ten journeys in standard-class carriages. Online: tinyurl.com/yc7uatje

Switzerland

Swiss Rail offers travelers a Saver Day Pass that allows adventurers to spend one day traveling on second-class train cars for 52 Swiss Francs and up. The pass is good for travel by rail on both SBB trains and those belonging to other rail companies, and also on other forms of public transportation such as boats, buses and trams. The pass works within the so-called GA (Generalabonnement) area — basically residential areas, as opposed to touristic destinations such as mountain summits. The earlier the pass is booked, the cheaper its price; same-day bookings not allowed. Online: tinyurl.com/3ez9vcxh

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

The rise of the floating breakfast

Why meals served in water are so popular, in spite of their impractical setting

By NATALIE B. COMPTON
The Washington Post

Through the sliding glass door of my jungle hotel room in Tulum, Mexico, I could see my breakfast had arrived. A plate of huevos rancheros were waiting in the pool. Not by — in.

A woven basket tray bobbed in the water, topped with a decadent spread begging to be photographed. At the Yellow Nest, a boutique hotel a short drive away from the beachfront in this Caribbean hot spot for influencers, my floating breakfast included the Mexican egg dish, black coffee, a tropical juice, half a bagel with sliced fruit and granola, fake flowers and an array of condiments.

The precarious meal service is the social media era’s answer to breakfast in bed: lavish, photogenic, incredibly impractical.

Some see it as the height of luxury. To others, like David Hawkraven, the owner of Designed Travel, it’s “for lack of a better word — and I hate to say — a gimmick.”

To determine which camp I fell in, I lowered myself into the pool, moving carefully to avoid any food splashing or tray tipping. The water came up chest high. I dried my hands and hovered over the lip of the basket to eat. Inevitably, water dripped into my coffee cup. A few morsels may have gone for a swim.

The huevos rancheros were wonderful. Their floating delivery was not.

Who invented the concept?

For me, floating food is a bridge too far. While I’m definitely not alone in that opinion, the amenity’s popularity far outweighs its detractors — at least online, where posts flaunting such trays draw armies of glowing fans. It has become a staple for honeymooners and influencers traveling anywhere vaguely pool-friendly, and it shows no sign of waning.

You can find floating sushi in Antigua and floating bar bites in Singapore. Outside of hotels and resorts, catering companies are delivering floating cupcakes in Curaçao and floating chicken and French toast in Atlanta.

According to hospitality legend, the floating breakfast was born in Indonesia.

It originated in Bali, said LaDell Carter, a Baltimore-based luxury travel planner who founded Royal Expression Travels.

A 2016 news release from the Ritz-Carlton in Bali may be one of the earliest mentions of the trend. Announcing a new “enhanced villa experience,” the release advertises “an impressive floating breakfast” along with a reserved beach cabana, access to a 24-hour butler service, personal shopper, wellness specialist and chef. (Bali has since taken the concept a step further; a hotel now serves floating dinner, as in, a table and chairs on a



NATALIE COMPTON/The Washington Post

The writer’s floating breakfast platter at the Yellow Nest boutique hotel in Tulum, Mexico, cost about \$25 and included huevos rancheros, black coffee, a tropical juice, half a bagel with sliced fruit and granola, fake flowers and an array of condiments.

“In my experience, a lot of people would only order them just for Instagram photos. They would sort of prop everything up for the poses and then they would send it away. Maybe the champagne might have been opened, but I don’t think there’s any substance to it, really.”

Chloe Esme

co-founder of the Maldives travel agency Amazing Escapes

floating platform.)

Science fiction writer John Varley may have invented the concept before Bali. In his 1998 book “The Golden Globe,” the main character wakes up from a nap in a spaceship’s spa pool (keyword: science fiction) to discover: “a floating breakfast tray had found me. On it was a steaming mug of coffee, a huge glass of orange juice, a Bloody Mary, and a bowl of what looked like oatmeal.”

Earlier still, there’s an Associated Press photo called “Floating Luncheon” from 1939 that routinely pops up on social media showing three women eating spaghetti off an inflatable mattress by the isle of Capri. According to the AP, “swimming waiters push out the floating tables bearing meals which include wine and spaghetti.”

The appeal is obvious; humans love the water. Eating and drinking on it is the ultimate indulgence. (See also: the swim-up bar, which debuted in Las Vegas in the 1950s.)

“There’s something quite dreamy about the idea of being served an indulgent breakfast afloat in a private pool with the most incredible backdrop of a tropical paradise,” said Chloe Esme, co-founder of the Maldives travel agency Amazing Escapes.

Strictly for the ’gram

Esme, who has lived in the Maldives for nearly 20 years, started noticing floating breakfasts trending in 2018; the timing coincided with the rise of influencer culture. It was a natural progression from the other photogenic amenities hotels offered, like serving branded coconuts or setting up dinners on the beach.

But Esme says most people don’t seem to actually be interested in consuming their floating breakfast.

“In my experience, a lot of people would only order them just for Instagram photos,” she said. “They would sort of prop everything up for the poses and then they would send it away. Maybe the

champagne might have been opened, but I don’t think there’s any substance to it, really.”

I’d heard about the same in Tulum. The hotel employee who delivered my tray had asked if I would like my picture taken, and the owner had told me many guests don’t touch the food at all. This isn’t just a meal, it’s a flex.

That’s part of what makes it special, said Carter, who has arranged floating breakfasts for clients on trips in Bali and Africa.

“It’s normally in a private pool with a scenic view,” she said. “It’s indulgent and exclusive, relaxing and elevated. After all, it’s not every day you get to eat breakfast in a pool on a safari with elephants walking in the background.”

“It’s like, who does this?” Carter added. “It’s so memorable.”

Despite its reputation as a splurge, the experience can be found on the cheap. My breakfast cost 500 Mexican pesos, about \$25 for guests staying at the hotel. It’s also listed on Airbnb Experiences, Resort Pass, Expedia and Viator at prices between \$70 and \$90.

At nicer properties, they can be much pricier. Esme says travelers can expect to pay around \$100 to \$200 in the Maldives.

However, Esme said the more high-end the property, the less often she sees demand for floating breakfasts. Ultraluxury resorts may sell 10 a week, while “mass-market” resorts do 10 per day. Hawkraven said the same.

But both travel planners agreed the trend is here to stay, no matter how little sense it makes to eat wet eggs.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



PHOTOS BY SALWAN GEORGES/The Washington Post

In the Swiss village of Verbier on Mont Fort, the experience of paragliding draws people from all over the world, eager to see the Alps from a new angle.

Verbier’s paragliding, chocolate, cheese remain top draws despite climate change-related challenges

BY SALWAN GEORGES
The Washington Post

The wind whips against your face when you soar above the Swiss Alps. The ground falls away when you’re gliding over jagged peaks, with only the sound of the breeze and the rustle of a parachute to interrupt the breathtaking views. The experience is both exhilarating and serene. It’s one reason people come to the Swiss village of Verbier on Mont Fort near the French and Italian borders.

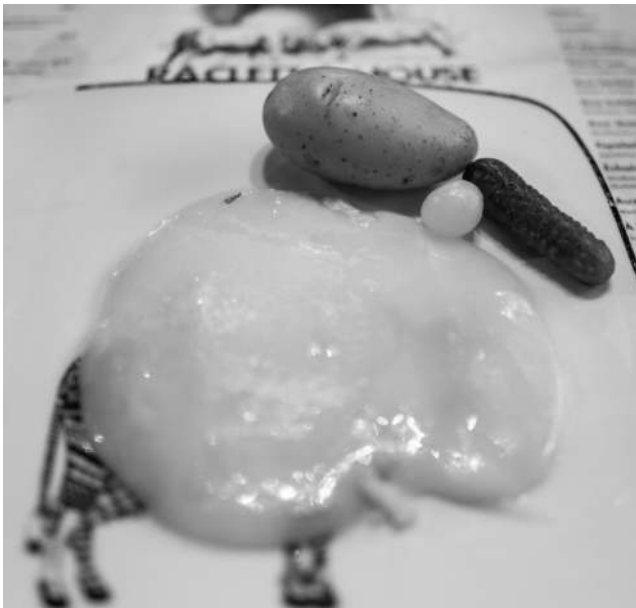
For paragliding instructor Mike Belbas, this experience was life-changing. He first came to Verbier in 1997 for a ski season with his twin brother, Stuart. After taking a paragliding course, the brothers decided to pursue instructor ratings. By 2002, they had opened the Verbier Summits paragliding school.

The school has since become one of the top attractions for Verbier’s tourism industry, particularly as changing climate conditions have made the ski season less predictable. The school offers a range of courses, ensuring that anyone with a sense of adventure can take to the skies.

The two-week beginner course (which starts around \$2,000, or \$3,200 with accommodations) is a structured introduction to the sport, starting with ground-based training to master takeoff and landing techniques. By the third day, students are usually ready for their first solo flight — a moment of triumph and freedom as they take control and experience flight on their own. Intermediate courses focus on using the elements — wind, thermals and air currents — to achieve longer, more complex flights.

Tandem flights (available year-round for about \$220) are another major offering at the school, allowing tourists to experience the thrill of paragliding with the safety of an experienced instructor.

“It’s the interaction with the people that we absolutely love, and it’s that first experience of a tandem. Some of



A serving of raclette cheese at the Raclett’House. The restaurant is known for its cheese as well as its warm, inviting atmosphere. The walls are adorned with unique cowbells, each one representing a local cow.

them are just whooping for joy,” Belbas said. “Others are just hanging on.”

These flights are particularly popular in winter, on days when skiing conditions may be less favorable. Imagine launching off a snowy slope and feeling the contrast between the cold air and the warmth of the sun on your face. It’s an experience that draws people from all over the world, eager to see the Alps from a new angle.

In town, chocolates and raclette

Once you’ve had your fill of flying — or if you’re simply in the mood to explore — you’ll find a town known for its vibrant après-ski scene, cozy cafés and shops that offer Swiss chocolates and mountain gear. Verbier is also home to some exceptional restaurants, where you can indulge in the local favorite: raclette.

For breakfast, the Arctic cafe offers organic coffee, fresh juices, smoothie bowls and great sandwiches. For

lunch and dinner, stop into Le Fer à Cheval for the famous beef lasagna.

The Raclett’House is one of the most beloved spots in the valley when it comes to cheese. Owner Eddy Baillifard has deep roots in the region’s cheesemaking tradition. He began learning the craft from his father at 10 years old. After decades of working in the industry, Baillifard was forced to retire in 2012 due to a neck injury. However, his passion for cheese led him to open his restaurant in 2015.

The restaurant quickly became a local landmark, known for its warm, inviting atmosphere as much as the cheese. The walls are adorned with unique cowbells, each one representing a cow from the local herds. These cows, which graze in the mountain pastures, produce the milk that gives the cheese its distinctive flavor.

Jonathan, Baillifard’s son, now carries on the family tradition as the head cheesemaker at the Laiterie de Verbier factory. The facility produces nearly 50 wheels of cheese a day, each one aged in carefully monitored caves to develop its full flavor.

Reacting to a warming planet

The challenges of climate change are becoming increasingly evident in this idyllic setting. The mountains that provide such perfect conditions for paragliding and grazing are also prone to mudslides, a problem that has worsened in recent years.

As warmer temperatures cause the permafrost to melt, the once-stable mountainsides are becoming more susceptible to erosion and landslides. These events have disrupted the lives of many in the region, threatening homes, businesses and the landscape that defines Verbier.

In response, the local community has taken action to protect the town and the people’s way of life. Vulnerable areas have been reinforced with steel netting, and early-warning systems have been put in place to alert residents to potential dangers.

The reality of climate change looms large, but the people of Verbier remain resilient. As skiing becomes less accessible, they will have to adapt, but the culture of enjoying the mountains — and the special cheese they produce — remains persistent.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Art is back at Darmstadt’s Mathildenhoehe

Freshly renovated space traces 200 years of styles, mediums in German city

By Michael Abrams
Stars and Stripes

Four-three-two-one, finished. Finally. After being closed for 12 years for renovation, the Exhibition Hall on Darmstadt’s Mathildenhoehe is open again for art enthusiasts.

The first exhibit being held here since 2012 is appropriately named “4-3-2-1 Darmstadt,” a show that traces the past 200 years of art in the city.

The Exhibition Hall is part of a series of buildings that the Darmstadt Artists’ Colony, or Kuenstlerkolonie, designed and constructed in the early 20th century.

The planning began in 1899, when Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hesse invited seven Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) artists to work and live in Darmstadt. They built a colony of houses and studios on the Mathildenhoehe, a hill overlooking the city, and created a body of work that, when exhibited in 1901, made the city the center of the German Art Nouveau movement. More exhibits were held in 1904, 1908 and 1914.

The Exhibition Hall was built for the 1908 edition. It’s among the city’s top tourist attractions, along with the Wedding Tower — Darmstadt’s most famous landmark — and the Russian Chapel, built in 1899 by Czar Nicholas II for his wife, Alexandra of Darmstadt.

The show at the Mathildenhoehe complex, which was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site while being renovated, is an interesting hodgepodge of styles and mediums.

Instead of going chronologically, the curators mostly divided the 400-plus works in the exhibit geographically.

The outlines of neighborhood streets and their names are painted on the floor of each section. Information panels, in English and German, describe the artists, their studios and the galleries where their art was shown.

Many of the artists exhibited are hardly household names outside of the region.

The best known is Max Pechstein, though he didn’t work or live in Darmstadt. He is part of the exhibit because a local publisher, Alexander Koch, collected Pechstein’s works, among them “Blue Boa (Lotte Pechstein).”

Among the works in the exhibit that stand out are Vera Roehm’s sculpture “Double Binomen,” a self-portrait by artist Ernst Vogel and Eberhard Schlöter’s full-length portrait of the writer Gabriela Wohmann.

One section is dedicated to art influenced by the 1944 bombing of the city. The standouts are Willi Hofferbert’s “Madonna of the Ruins” and a group of haunting paintings depicting the carnage by Karl Deppert, a survivor of the attack.

An American is also featured in the exhibition. In the mid-1960s, Laura “Polly” Williams ran an art studio in the Darmstadt district of Arheiligen. She said in a 1964 Stars and Stripes article about



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Visitors look at works of art on display at the “4-3-2-1 Darmstadt” exhibit, including a portrait of author Hans Schiebelhuth by Carl Guntschmann and the bust “Abandonment,” by Adam Antes. The exhibit at Darmstadt, Germany’s Exhibition Hall on the Mathildenhoehe, is the first since 2012, following the hall’s extensive renovation.



The Wedding Tower, the newly renovated Exhibition Hall and the Russian Chapel on the Mathildenhoehe in Darmstadt, Germany, glow in an autumn sunset.



A 1964 Stars and Stripes story on American Laura “Polly” Williams and her studio Ordo in Darmstadt is one of the items on display. Williams was a follower of the Fluxus art movement.

her work that “this is all modern art on display. No trees or houses and things like that.”



The most well-known artist on display is probably Max Pechstein, with this painting “Blue Boa (Lotte Pechstein).” While Pechstein did not work in Darmstadt, a local publisher collected his works.

It’s a lot to take in, but while you are there, the Mathildenhoehe itself is a piece of art not to be missed.

On the QT

Where: Olbrichweg 13. 64287 Darmstadt. It’s about a 30-minute drive from Wiesbaden and 1.5 hours from Kaiserslautern. The cheapest garage is under the Rewe supermarket and the Alice-Hospital on Dieburgerstrasse at 1.80 euros for the first hour, then 2 euros per hour, up to 15 euros for the day. If arriving at the city’s main train station, take the F bus to the Mathildenhoehe stop.

Hours: “4-3-2-1 Darmstadt” runs until April 27, 2025. The Exhibit Hall and the Museum Kuenstlerkolonie are open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. The Wedding Tower hours vary; see website hochzeitsturm-darmstadt.eu for details.

Cost: Admission to the “4-3-2-1 Darmstadt” exhibit is 10 euros for adults and 8 euros for children. The Artists’ Colony Museum is 5 euros for adults 18 and over; children get in free. A combination ticket for both sites is 12 euros for adults. Purchasing a Mathildenhoehe Card online also grants admission to the museum and Wedding Tower, the reduced price for the exhibit (8 euros) and a free bus pass in the city and surroundings for a day.

Food: Café Restaurant Mathildenhoehe, under the Exhibition Hall, serves breakfast, lunch, afternoon coffee and cake and Sunday brunch. Open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

Information: Online: mathildenhoehe.de/en

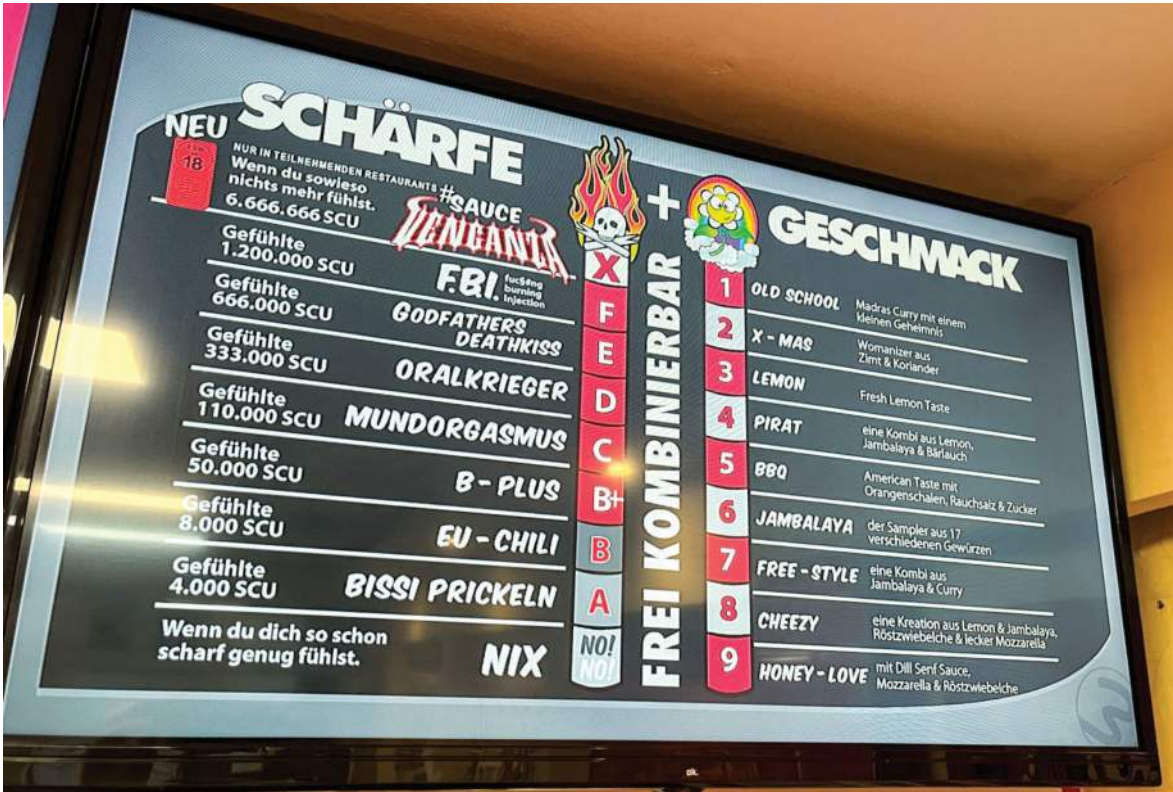
Michael Abrams

Eleven of the buildings designed by the original Art Nouveau artists are still standing. Their concept propagated the “complete artwork.” Not only were the houses of special design, but so were the works of art and the furniture that filled them, all the way down to the flatware.

Examples of this can be seen in the Artists’ Colony Museum, where the exquisite works of the colony, furniture, plates, silverware and jewelry are on display.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



Currywurst served at a heat level of 1.2 million Scoville units, along with fries and bread, at Best Worscht in Town in Mainz. It is almost as spicy as a Carolina Reaper, one of the hottest peppers in the world.

PHOTOS BY BRADLEY LATHAM/Stars and Stripes
The menu board at Best Worscht in Town in Mainz, Germany. The currywurst chain offers nine permanent flavors along with a rotating flavor of the month, at a range of spice levels. There are hundreds of combinations with the three choices of sausage (pork, beef and vegan), 10 flavors and eight heat levels.

Can you handle the heat at this currywurst chain?

Best Worscht in Town in Mainz offers sausages with 10 different flavors and 8 spice levels ranging from 4,000 Scoville Heat Units to 6.66 million

BY BRADLEY LATHAM
Stars and Stripes
For the most part, Germans don't do spice. It's a chief complaint I've regularly heard from fellow Americans during my five years in Germany. I've asked for very spicy food several times, only to receive something best referred to as mildly "German spicy."

Well, I certainly paid the price for my skepticism on a recent outing.

A couple of months ago, friends suggested I try the Best Worscht in Town. The snack stand franchise has more than 20 locations in Frankfurt and surrounding cities in Hessen.

It sets up a twist on currywurst, a mainstay street food of sliced sausage in a curry ketchup sauce.

My teenage son and I visited the Mainz location about 15 minutes from Wiesbaden. The menu is straightforward: currywurst, fries and fresh baked bread.

Although focused, there are hundreds of combinations with three choices of sausage (pork, beef and vegan), 10 flavors and eight heat levels.

The tiered spice levels amused me with names like Oral Warrior

(Oralkrieger), Mouth Orgasm (Mundorgasmus) and Godfather's Deathkiss.

Sitting near the mild bottom was EU-Chili; I suppose the stereotype for aversion to anything exciting must come from somewhere.

Each level has a corresponding Scoville Heat Unit figure. A jalapeno pepper generally runs from 2,000-8,000 SHU, while the Carolina Reaper, one of the world's hottest peppers, sits around 1.4-2.2 million SHU.

Throwing caution to the wind, I ordered the currywurst at level F for "(Expletive) Burning Injection," with a rating of 1.2 million Scoville units. I was certain the SHU levels were just for show.

The cook raised his eyebrow and asked me if I was sure, because "it's very spicy." Having thought I'd been through this song and dance many times before, I confidently confirmed my request.

A searing blaze engulfed my mouth and my eyes watered within seconds of taking the first bite.

My bottle of Coke brought little relief and I considered calling it quits about halfway through.

My son, only slightly phased by



AFTER HOURS
GERMANY

Best Worscht in Town
Address: Augustinerstrasse 11, 55116 Mainz (more than 20 locations in Frankfurt and surrounding areas)
Hours: Monday-Thursday, 11:30 a.m.-7 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11:30 a.m.-8 p.m.
Prices: 10-15 euros for combo with currywurst, fries, bread and drink
Information: Phone: +49 (0) 6131886211; online: bestworschtin-town.de
Bradley Latham

the heat of his BBQ Godfather's Deathkiss, said his currywurst was a little sweet and smoky with a hot, slow burn that creeps up on you.

He wasn't laughing at me, but the amusement on his face was clear. He took a bite of mine and his smile faded.

He later described it as "an immediate punch of heat to the face" and said he couldn't taste much else after that.

I powered through the last few bites, eating them as fast as I could, to end the most painful

meal I've ever experienced. By the end, my nose was running, my ears were ringing and I was a little lightheaded from the endorphin rush.

The fire dropped to a tolerable level 15 minutes after I finished eating, but smoldering embers stayed in the pit of my stomach for hours.

I returned for another visit a few days later, since all I could recall from my first visit was a dry mouth set ablaze.

I had a split order of Pirate and Nut Nougat Nirvana flavors, both at a more tolerable C spice level, which is comparable to a very spicy Thai bird's eye chili or a low-end habanero at 110,000 SHU.

The Pirate is a combination of 17 different spices from a jambalaya mix and a lemon flavor, but I didn't pick up the assortment. It tasted like a standard, albeit delicious, currywurst with a bright citrus note.

The sliced bratwurst crackled with a pleasant little snap from the casing, paired with a juicy interior.

I opted for sliced, pickled jalapenos as a free add-on, but the peppers weren't a good match.

The Nut Nougat Nirvana, one of the rotating flavors of the

month, combines traditional currywurst flavor with a dollop of Nutella. I was surprised how well the two seemingly incompatible flavors went together.

The chocolate hazelnut spread overpowered everything at first, but after stirring the sauce, the flavors blended for a spicy and not-overly-sweet treat.

I also was a fan of the bread. The deep brown sourdough had a crunchy crust and spongy body that cleared the palate.

The fries were fresh and piping hot but were otherwise standard snack fare.

Best Worscht in Town lives up to its name and I would gladly drop in again if I were nearby. It's gimmicky but it works — and when they say it's hot, they mean it.

The Mainz location is one of a few franchises that offers spice level X, known as Sauce Venganza. It boasts a 6.66 million SHU rating and is restricted to patrons 18 and over.

I can't imagine what godless inferno awaits anyone willing to tackle something that hot. I don't know if it's truly more than five times hotter than what I experienced with the F.B.I., but I'm also not in a hurry to find out.

WEEKEND: FOOD

Dark pastries & fiery Fraps

These special Starbucks limited-time treats sold only in Japan locations until Halloween



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA
Stars and Stripes

BY HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

This year, Starbucks Japan's drink and dessert holiday specials evoke a spooky, fiery Halloween.

Under a theme of Magical Fire Halloween, Starbucks introduced a Frappuccino that looks like a mysteriously lit blue-and-red fire under a magical spell, and a cocoa-infused Halloween Malassada pastry that's darkly sweet.

The drink is called Mela Mela — the Japanese term for flaring fire.

Blue and red powders, with blueberry and raspberry flavors, combine with slushy, white condensed milk to give the drink the appearance of a swirling flame. The Mela Mela is topped with whipped cream; a mixed raspberry-, blueberry-

and strawberry-flavored sauce; and crunchy chocolate.

You can get extra magical with Pachi Pachi topping to sprinkle on top of the Frappuccino. Similar to Pop Rocks candy, Pachi Pachi pops in your month and adds extra color and texture to your Frappuccino. It is available for additional 110 yen and either comes in red, blue and orange. You won't know what color you'll get until you open the package.

The Halloween Frappuccino projects an impressively spooky aura. My drink had just the right amount of blueberry and raspberry powders, a nice variation of sweet and sour against the slushy milk.

My colleague found the drink to be less satisfying, overwhelmed by condensed milk that was much too sweet.

But we agreed that the chocolate crunch on top added a different texture and bitterness to the beverage.

We were also divided on the malassada, a Portuguese dessert made of fried dough coated with granulated sugar.

Starbucks' Malasada Halloween Raspberry and Blueberry is black, not golden like ordinary malassada. The color comes from cocoa mixed in the dough.

Unlike ordinary malasada, which is fried, this dough is fluffy, with powdered sugar sprinkled on one side. Inside, there are two kinds of flavored cream: raspberry and blueberry.

My colleague liked that the malasada was soft, not fried. She also liked that the filling was not too sweet.

However, I didn't care for the unfried

dough and found it not sweet enough. But I did like the filling. It reminded me of jelly-filled doughnuts, which are not so popular in Japan and hard to find.

The Frappuccino and malasada together put you in the mood for Halloween with their photogenic looks. My colleague and I agreed that they are worth trying.

The Mela Mela Frappuccino comes only in tall size and is 678 yen, or about \$4.51, for takeout and 690 yen for dine-in, tax included.

Malasada Halloween Raspberry and Blueberry is 324 yen for takeout and 330 yen for eat-in, tax included. Both are available until Oct. 31.

Read more online at starbucks.co.jp.

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[@HanaKusumoto](https://twitter.com/HanaKusumoto)

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Roam the range at famous ranch

Historic Hawaiian reserve popular with tourists, filmmakers is a multifaceted recreational area

BY JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

With more than 4,000 acres of lush rain-forest and wide-open rangelands, Kua Loa Ranch is a popular and multifaceted destination on the island of Oahu, Hawaii.

Tucked into the Ko’olau mountains, the ranch beckons visitors with promises of history and recreation in the Ka’aawa Valley. The ranch, established more than a century ago, is a private nature reserve featuring hundreds of horses, cattle, pigs, sheep and more. It’s been a popular tourist spot for years; hundreds of thousands of people visit annually.

Do some digging on the ranch website and you’ll find 15 single adventures or a package deal there.

My family and I went with the half-day package — \$120 for adults — that lets you enjoy a grand tour of the ranch, the Secret Island and a Hollywood movie site, to name a few.

Other packages involve horse-back riding, riding all-terrain vehicles around the ranch, ziplining and other activities.

After a short wait for our tour’s start time, we boarded a bus with an energetic and comedic local driver who was very helpful on the tour.

He took us down bumpy dirt roads to our first destination, the Hollywood Legends Exhibit, which included iconic TV and movie memorabilia, props and displays well known worldwide.

The ranch, with its naturally scenic surroundings, has been a location for more than 70 movies such as “The Karate Kid Part II,” “Godzilla,” “Pearl Harbor,” “50 First Dates,” “Windtalkers,” the TV series “Lost” and many more.

At the Jurassic Valley, one of the highlights of our time there, you are whisked into a cinematic

atmosphere. One famous wide-open field was the location for a scene from the 1993 box office hit “Jurassic Park,” in which a flock of Gallimimus runs from a Tyrannosaurus bursting from the nearby trees. Seeing the actual giant set pieces from the movie “Kong: Skull Island,” with an opportunity to take photos up close, was very cool.

Another part of our package was the Ocean Voyage Tour, a little over an hour tour on two boats near and on the Kaneohe Bay. The first 20-minute ride on a small boat across the Moli’i fishpond provided insight about the 800-year-old pond and Hawaiian ancient aquaculture, according to the website.

On the other side of the pond leading to the bay, we were led on a short walk through the sandy, tree-shrouded Secret Island. The Secret Island Beach Adventure tour, which starts at \$55, offers canoeing, paddle-boarding, swimming and more.

From there, we boarded a large catamaran and enjoyed a sunny but breezy 45-minute ride with a wonderful view of the nearby basalt islet, Mokolii Island, a lonesome piece of land.

An enthusiastic guide narrated our trip past popular landmarks and sea life, including large sea turtles. We spotted several of the reptiles in the water as they broke the surface and quickly dove back down again.

A free lunch buffet is included on the half-day tour at the Ranch House, which offers a variety of food, from Hawaiian cuisine to grass-fed beef burgers, and other selections. An expansive gift shop has items to purchase that will help you remember your time at the popular ranch. Military discounts are a plus, and the ranch offers them with a valid identification.

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PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

Kua Loa Ranch in Hawaii has served as a filming location for more than 70 Hollywood movies, including “Jurassic Park.” The ranch is a private nature reserve that offers lots of guided activities.

Kua Loa Ranch

Directions: 49-560 Kamehameha Hwy, Kaneohe, Hawaii, 96744-5152
Times: Open daily, 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; the last tour departs at 3:30 p.m. Closed Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.
Costs: Admission varies depending on the package you choose.
Food: Aunty Patty’s Cafe at the Ranch House offers a variety of food; picnic areas available.
Information: 808-237-7321; online: kualoa.com

Juan King



The Kua Loa Ranch includes more than 4,000 acres of rainforest and rangelands. It attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually.



A catamaran takes guests on the Ocean Voyage Tour of the Kua Loa Ranch on the Kaneohe Bay.



Those who take the Secret Island Beach Adventure tour can get this view of Mokolii Island.



Horseback riding is one activity of several offered at Kua Loa Ranch.

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STARS AND STRIPES

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WEEKEND: FOOD & BOOKS

A two-cook kitchen ballet

Overhisers create new cookbook to help pairs divide up chef tasks at home

BY MARK KENNEDY
 Associated Press

Husband-and-wife food bloggers and podcasters Sonja and Alex Overhiser have a new cookbook that uses a simple step to keep the kitchen a less heated place for two chefs: clear, alternating roles.

“A Couple Cooks: 100 Recipes to Cook Together” lays out ingredients and directions for a wide array of dishes, like any other cookbook, but also divides the cooking tasks — one home chef is designated a square, the other a triangle — so neither is overwhelmed or resentful.



“Everything is more fun together, we think. And so we found that about cooking,” says Sonja Overhiser from their home in Indianapolis. “You’ll stay doing it if you’re doing it with someone else.”

So to make their Meatballs with Fire-Roasted Marinara, one chef preheats the oven and then starts to make the marinara sauce, while the

other prepares the meatballs. They come together at the end to coat the cooked meatballs with the sauce and add Parmesan cheese and basil.

“We’re hoping to break down that factor where people are intimidated by being in the kitchen, where all they want to do is wash dishes because they’re afraid they’re going to burn something,” Alex Overhiser says.

The Overhisers — known online as A Couple Cooks — use this formula throughout their new cookbook, which mixes a few fan favorites with new spins on dishes. But they intend their division of labor to be a suggestion.

“You can always change it up,” Sonja says. “It’s really just kind of an idea of the way that the dance can be performed. There are many other interpretations of that.”

College sweethearts to partners

“A Couple Cooks” leans on the pair’s extensive work as recipe developers and food explorers. There are sections on everyday dinners, romantic ones, breakfasts, large gatherings, sides, sweets, appetizers and snacks, bakes and drinks.

“We wanted to encapsulate all of those different occasions, whether it’s a date night, whether it’s having a dinner party, whether it’s having a snack and a drink at the end of a long day, whether it’s baking something fun together on the weekend,” Sonja says.

The college sweethearts — she is a classically trained musician and journalist; he is a photographer — have been cooking together since 2008, steadily building their repertoire.

At the beginning, they were eating frozen food, spaghetti and Hot Pockets.

Their first book, “Pretty Simple Cooking,” was named one of the best vegetarian cookbooks by Epicurious and one of the best healthy cookbooks of 2018 by Mind Body Green.

Their new one is for two cooks, but any kind of two — parent and child, grandparent with grandkid, college roommates, newlyweds or even for a couple as a neat date idea. The idea is to take the stress out and enjoy partnerships.

“You really can use food as a bonding moment,” Sonja says.

The dishes include tastes from Italy, Spain, France, Greece and Thailand, among others. Ingredients are easy to find and swaps are offered for gluten-free or vegan eaters. Wine pairings are suggested, courtesy of Alex’s knowledge.

One dish they are obsessed with is pizza, having honeymooned in Italy and fallen in love with artisanal versions. When they came home, they wanted to re-create one; they say a homemade option is the perfect date dish for two.

Their no-cook sauce uses crushed fire-roasted tomatoes, olive oil, grated garlic, salt and oregano. Toppings include mozzarella, red onion, pepperoncini and pecorino Romano.

Tahini and miso

The Overhisers have a knack for using flavors in unexpected ways, like their banana baked oatmeal that has a maple drizzle with tahini.

“Tahini adds this really kind of nutty intensity to that maple drizzle on top. It’s something we tried once and we’re like, ‘Wow, this tastes incredible,’” Sonja says. “Just kind of adding a surprising element to a recipe makes it



SHELLY WESTERHAUSEN/AP

Sonja and Alex Overhiser have released a new cookbook for pairs of people who cook together: parent and child, grandparent with grandkid, roommates, newlyweds, etc.

so much more fun to eat when it’s unexpected for your palate.”

Or take their vegan risotto, which adds a miso-rosemary broth to asparagus, peas and pine nuts. The couple say they put their heads together to try to make a romantic vegan meal, not an easy task since so many have dairy or meat.

“It’s like how do we get to make this where you don’t say, ‘Oh, I miss my chicken broth,’” Alex says. (“And my Parmesan,” Sonja adds.) “That miso-rosemary broth, you can just drink it alone as a delicious soup, it’s so good. And it adds this complexity to the broth, which, when you mix it to the rice for your risotto, it’s just outstanding.”

They say they’ve been trained to look out for the user and make things easy for the home cook to understand and organize. That has now extended to the kitchen ballet of two cooks.

“We think our flavors are there and exciting, but we’re also really always thinking about how is someone actually executing this in their kitchen,” Sonja says.

Swap salmon for chicken for a simple twist on classic piccata

Here’s how to make salmon sing: Pair it with butter, lemon and capers in a move that’s genius in its simplicity. Husband-and-wife food bloggers and podcasters Sonja and Alex Overhiser swap fish for chicken in this classic Italian American dish, making it (dare we say?) even more irresistible than the original. It never fails to get big wows around their table, and they hope it will do the same for you.

Salmon Piccata

- Serves: 4
 Diet: pescatarian, gluten-free option, dairy-free option
Ingredients
 Four 6 oz (170 g) salmon fillets, skin on
 ¾ tsp kosher salt
 Freshly ground black pepper
 ½ cup (70 g) all-purpose flour
 3 Tbsp (45 g) unsalted butter
 1 Tbsp olive oil
 1 medium shallot, minced
 ½ cup (120 ml) vegetable broth
 ¼ cup (60 ml) fresh lemon juice
 ½ Tbsp lemon zest
 3 Tbsp (45 g) capers, drained
 Lemon wheels, for garnishing
 Finely chopped parsley, for garnishing



SHELLY WESTERHAUSEN/AP

Salmon Piccata is simple and delicious.

Directions

(First cook) Allow the salmon to come to room temperature. Season the fillets with the kosher salt and plenty of black pepper. Spread the flour on a plate and dredge each fillet until lightly coated with flour on all sides.

(Second cook) In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1 tablespoon of the butter and the olive oil. When the butter is melted, add the salmon, skin side up.

Cook until the bottom is browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip and cook skin side down until browned, 1 to 2 minutes — watch to make sure the flour doesn’t burn. Transfer the salmon to a plate and turn down the heat to low.

(Both cooks) Add another tablespoon of the butter to the same pan; when it melts, add the shallot and cook, stirring frequently, until transparent and fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter and the vegetable broth, lemon juice and zest, and capers, scraping up the browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Add the salmon to the pan, skin side down. Bring to a simmer and cook, occasionally spooning the sauce over the fish, until the fish is fully cooked, about 5 minutes. For a medium salmon, cook until the internal temperature reaches at least 130°F (55°C) when measured with a food thermometer at the thickest point.

(Both cooks) To serve, garnish the salmon with lemon wheels and chopped parsley. Drizzle a few spoonfuls of sauce over each fillet and serve.

Tips

Make chicken piccata using the same method: Use two boneless skinless chick-

en breasts or 4 cutlets (about 1½ pounds or 680 grams). Pat the chicken dry with a paper towel. If using breasts, slice them in half horizontally (if you bought cutlets, skip this step). Then follow the steps in this recipe, using 1 teaspoon kosher salt to season the chicken.

A food thermometer is the best way to measure the internal temperature of fish. The temperature of 130°F (55°C) makes for moist, tender salmon. Feel free to cook up to 140°F (60°C) if you prefer a more well-done piece of fish.

Wine pairing: Pair this dish with a pinot noir. This red wine is known for its bright acidity, medium body and fruity flavors, making it a perfect companion for the rich and flavorful salmon dish. We love the light and bright flavor of a pinot noir from Oregon.

Cooking together: Assign the fish prep to one of you! That person can season and dredge the fish while the other prepares the remaining ingredients.

For gluten-free: Omit the flour or use gluten-free flour.

For dairy-free: Use vegan butter.
 Storage: Leftover salmon will keep, refrigerated, for up to 3 days.

WEEKEND: BOOK REVIEWS

Isolation, suffering ... and hope

Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's memoir details final years in prison

BY HILLEL ITALIE
AND DASHA LITVINOVA
Associated Press

In a memoir released eight months after he died in prison, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny never loses faith that his cause is worth suffering for while also acknowledging he wished he could have written a very different book.

"There is a mishmash of bits and pieces, a traditional narrative followed by a prison diary," Navalny writes in "Patriot," which was published Tuesday, and is, indeed, a traditional narrative followed by a prison diary.

"I so much do not want my book to be yet another prison diary. Personally I find them interesting to read, but as a genre — enough is surely enough."

The final 200 pages of Navalny's 479-page book do, in some ways, have the characteristics of other prison diaries or of such classic Russian literature as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich." He tracks the boredom, isolation, exhaustion, suffering and absurdity of prison life, while working in asides about everything from 19th century French literature to Billie Eilish. But "Patriot" also reads as a testament to a famed dissident's extraordinary battle against despair as the Russian authorities gradually increase their crack-down against him, and even shares advice on how to confront the worst and still not lose hope.

"The important thing is not to torment yourself with anger, hatred, fantasies of revenge, but to move instantly to acceptance. That can be hard," he writes. "The process going on in your head is by no means straightforward, but if you find yourself in a bad situation, you should try this. It works, as long as you think everything through seriously."

In recent years, Navalny had become an international symbol of resistance. A lawyer by training, he started out as an anti-corruption campaigner, but soon turned into a politician with aspirations for public office and eventually became the main challenger to Russia's longtime president, Vladimir Putin.

Navalny's widow, Yulia Navalnaya, oversaw the book's completion. In a promotional interview, she told the BBC that she would run for president if she ever returned to Russia — an unlikely move with Putin in power, Navalnaya acknowledged.

Putin "needs to be in a Russian



MARKUS SCHREIBER/AP

Copies of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's memoir "Patriot" are stacked Oct. 22 in Germany.

prison, to feel everything what not just my husband, but all the prisoners in Russia" feel, Navalnaya said during an interview on CBS' "60 Minutes."

Navalnaya has vowed to continue her late husband's fight. She has recorded regular video addresses to her supporters and has been meeting with Western leaders and top officials, advocating for Russians who oppose Putin and his war in Ukraine. She had two children with her husband, who in his book praises Navalnaya as a soulmate who "could discuss the most difficult matters with me without a lot of drama and hand-wringing."

During the first section of his book, Navalny reflects on the fall of the Soviet Union, his disenchantment with 1990s Russian leader Boris Yeltsin, his early crusades against corruption, his entry into public life and his discovery that he did not need to look far for a politician "who would undertake all sorts of needed, interesting projects and cooperate directly with the Russian people."

"I wanted and waited, and one day I realized I could be that person myself," he wrote.

His vision of a "beautiful Russia of the future," where leaders are freely and fairly elected, official corruption is tamed and democratic institutions work — as well as his strong charisma and sardonic humor — earned him widespread support across the country's 11 time zones. He had young, energetic activists by his side — a team that resembled "a fancy startup" rather than a clandestine revolutionary oper-

ation, according to his memoir. "From the outside we looked like a bunch of Moscow hipsters," he writes, and together they put out colorful, professionally produced videos exposing official corruption. Those garnered millions of views on YouTube and prompted mass rallies even as the authorities cracked down harder on dissent.

The authorities responded to Navalny's growing popularity by levying multiple charges against him, his allies and even family members. They jailed him often and shut down his entire political infrastructure — the Foundation for Fighting Corruption he started in 2011 and a network of several dozen regional offices.

In 2020, Navalny survived a nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin, which denied involvement. He describes it in great detail in the very beginning of the book, recounting, "This is too much, and I'm about to die." His family and allies fought for him to be airlifted to Germany for treatment, and after recovering there for five months, he returned to Russia, only to be arrested and sent to prison, where he would spend the last three years of his life.

In the memoir, Navalny recalls telling his wife while still hospitalized in Berlin that "of course" he will go back to Russia.

The pressure on him continued behind bars, intensifying after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and ratcheted its clampdown on dissent to unprecedented levels. In messages he was able to get out of prison, Navalny described harrowing conditions of solitary confine-

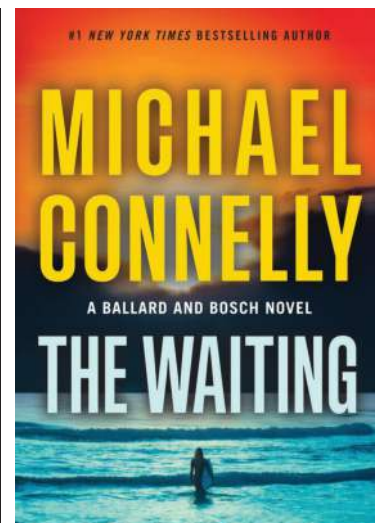
ment, where he was placed for months on end for various minor infractions prison officials relentlessly accused him of, sleep deprivation, meager diet and lack of medical help. In October 2023, three of his lawyers were arrested and two more were put on a wanted list.

In December 2023, the authorities transferred Navalny to a penal colony of the highest security level in the Russian penitentiary system in a remote town above the Arctic Circle. In February 2024, 47-year-old Navalny suddenly died there; the circumstances and the cause of his death still remain a mystery. Navalnaya and his allies say the Kremlin killed him, while the authorities argue that Navalny died of "natural causes," but wouldn't reveal any details of what happened.

Tens of thousands of Russians attended his funeral on the outskirts of Moscow in March in a rare show of defiance in a country where any street rally or even single pickets often result in immediate arrests and prison.

"I dream of as many people as possible reading this book, because it seems to me that everyone will learn something new about Alexei. (Everyone) will laugh and cry a bit. He was so cool: strong and brave, kind and funny. The best. And the dearest," Navalnaya said on X.

Navalny's team has said the book will be available in Russian, the language he wrote it in, but shipping to his homeland and its neighbor Belarus won't be possible "as we cannot guarantee delivery and the absence of problems at customs."



The Waiting

Michael Connelly

It's early morning in Southern California, and Renee Ballard, director of the LAPD Open-Unsolved Unit, is where she most loves to be — surfing. After a final run, she returns to the parking lot and discovers that someone has broken into her car and stolen her badge and gun.

Protocol requires her to report this, but Ballard has more than her share of enemies in the department. She can't afford to give them ammunition to take her down, so she sets out alone to find the thief.

It's an especially bad time for Ballard to be distracted by her own problem, because her unit is in the middle of two huge cases in the sixth thriller in Connelly's fine Ballard and Bosch series.

For starters, a DNA check on a 24-year-old arrested on an unrelated charge has identified him as the son of the Pillowcase Rapist who terrorized Los Angeles for years before going silent in 2005. It turns out that the young man was raised by a politically connected Superior Court judge who may or may not be his biological father.

Meanwhile, rookie patrol officer Maddie Bosch, daughter of Harry Bosch, who once ran the Open-Unsolved unit, has joined Ballard's team. She arrives with stunning evidence that may hold the key to solving the city's most infamous unsolved murder — the brutal 1947 slaying of Elizabeth Short, aka The Black Dahlia.

As if that weren't enough, Ballard's hunt for her badge and gun uncovers a plot to use them in an imminent terrorist attack. To foil that, she enlists the help of her old friend and convalescing cancer patient Harry, the protagonist of 20 previous novels.

Despite having to navigate the politics of the city's justice system, meddling higher-ups and an intransigent prosecutor, Ballard and her team ultimately win the day. The multiple plotlines are suspenseful, the prose is tight and the characters are compelling and well-drawn. "The Waiting" is the habitually bestselling author at the top of his game.

— Bruce DeSilva/AP

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Slash's scary side gig

How the Guns N' Roses guitarist makes soundtracks for theme park horror nights

BY BRADY MACDONALD
The Orange County Register

Guns N' Roses and Velvet Revolver guitarist Slash got hooked on horror movies at 8 years old when his mom took him to see a double-feature of "Night of the Living Dead" and "The Exorcist" at a drive-in theater in the family's Volkswagen.

Slash's love affair with creepy stuff that began in the 1970s continues every year at Universal Studios Hollywood as the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Grammy Award-winning guitarist writes a musical score for one of the haunted houses at Halloween Horror Nights.

This year, Slash wrote his seventh Horror Nights soundtrack — this time for Universal Monsters: Eternal Bloodlines, one of eight new mazes featured on select nights through Nov. 3 at the Hollywood movie theme park. "It's fun to do," Slash said during an interview at the Horror Night media preview.

"I look forward to it every year." Scoring a haunted house soundtrack is a yearlong process that requires close collaboration

between Slash and Halloween Horror Nights creative director John Murdy. The horror fans met in 2013 when Universal launched a Black Sabbath maze at Horror Nights. "The first thing he said to me was, 'How do I do this? I want to work with you,'" Murdy said during an interview at the Horror Night media preview. "So we

landed on the music approach." Slash scored the soundtrack for the Clowns 3D maze in 2014 and has done the soundtracks for all six Universal Monsters mazes since 2018.

Murdy knew Slash was a huge Universal Monsters fan the first time he walked into the guitarist's studio and saw a Bride of Frankenstein picture on the wall.

"I know that his heart is in the right place," Murdy said. "I trust him implicitly." Murdy doesn't really set any musical constraints, guidelines or guardrails for Slash when it comes to Horror Nights soundtracks.

"You're on the Mount Rushmore of guitarists," Murdy recalled telling the musician. "So



Universal Studios

Slash's latest score is for "Universal Monsters: Eternal Bloodlines."

SEE SLASH ON PAGE 29



Gene Kirkland

Guns N' Roses and Velvet Revolver guitarist Slash, a horror fan since childhood, channels his love of the genre into his soundtracks for Universal Studios' annual Halloween Horror Nights.

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEW

The latest round of ‘Brat’ remixes, ranked

BY MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

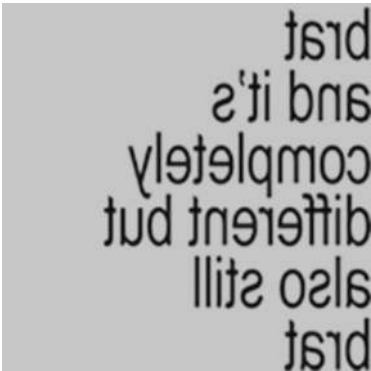
This is the way Brat Summer ends, not with a bang, but a Twitch livestream.

On Oct. 10, hours after her deluxe, remixed, double-album version of her culture-shifting album “Brat” leaked — this one called “Brat and it’s completely different but also still brat” — and hours before it would be officially released, Charli XCX held a listening party/DJ event/livestream deep in New York’s Storm King Art Center, autumn leaves cascading down next to mammoth art installations. She stood beneath one of her own — a macro-scale version of the vinyl’s gatefold erected in her signature Brat green — and pressed play on a phone, commanding an activated crowd.

This album (not to be confused with her previous re-release, “Brat and It’s the Same but There’s Three More Songs So It’s Not”) transforms some of the preexisting songs through features with starry collaborators like Billie Eilish, Ariana Grande, Lorde, Robyn and her tour mate Troye Sivan. That is the beauty of dance music, anyway: It has an ability to reinvent itself.

Some are complete overhauls; others ring true to the original. It’s up for the listener to find their favorites. Until then: Here’s a ranking of the new tracks.

16. “Rewind,” feat. Bladee: Swedish rapper-singer Bladee adds a lackadaisical flow to “Rewind,” underlining the bleeding



Charli XCX
Brat and it’s completely different but also still brat (Atlantic)

nostalgia of the original.

15. “I might say something stupid,” feat. The 1975 and Jon Hopkins: The piano ballad of “Brat” loses its hyper-present vocal effects, until the last minute and a half, when the song crescendos into a slight, electro-emo dirge.

14. “Mean girls,” feat. Julian Casablancas: For her remix of “Mean Girls,” Charli XCX recruited the original mean girl of New York City: The Strokes’ Julian Casablancas, patron saint of whatever commercialized “indie sleaze revival” cultural marketing movement has taken some corners of the internet by storm. It’s too fitting.

13. “Apple,” feat. The Japanese House: Who knew “Apple” needed a shimmery, synth-y indie pop rework? Charli XCX and The Japanese House, apparently.

12. “Talk Talk,” feat. Troye Sivan: An uncredited Dua Lipa

and her polyglot tongue punctuate this reimagination of “Talk Talk,” a clubby remix with Charli’s “Sweat Tour” mate Troye Sivan. It’s sexy, to be sure, but maybe gets lost in this over-stuffed release.

11. “360,” feat. Robyn and Young Lean: Who expected this inspired combination of Robyn and Young Lean? Plus, Charli has long considered herself a Robyn-like figure: a pop star with a cult following, perhaps a little too cool for full-on mainstream appreciation. Of course, Brat Summer challenges that notion, but it is fall now, and the connections are still there.

10. “B2b,” feat. Tinashe: Another improvement from the original: The innate, smooth R&B-pop of Tinashe’s verse here is a welcomed addition.

9. “Von Dutch,” A.G. Cook remix feat. Addison Rae: Addison Rae, an actor and TikTok star who bears striking resemblance to the queen of all things Y2K — Britney Spears — is experiencing a second wind of her young career, due in part to Charli’s commitment to making her a pop star. On this “Von Dutch” remix, a self-assured, swaggering and sometimes-screaming treatise on celebrity, Rae’s too-sweet vocals offer tension.

8. “Club Classics,” feat. BB Trickz: The new “Club Classics” speeds up Charli XCX’s vocals to chipmunk levels — it won’t be for everyone, but it will be a favorite to those whom its invention speaks.

7. “Everything is Romantic,” feat. Caroline Polachek: A meeting of shared musical minds! Still a love song for platonic relationships, presented in a new fashion, this song demonstrates the kind of religiosity found in an early-morning conversation with a close friend rather than in the club.

6. “I think about it all the time,” feat. Bon Iver: Bon Iver has long experimented in electronic music, and his featured work on the emotional heart of the album — “I think about it all the time” — allows Charli XCX to speak her concerns at a crossroads in life. He launches them into an ethereal space, as if casting them off into the universe in a lit lantern.

5. “365,” feat. shygirl: Party girls, meet shygirl. The original “Brat” closer reintroduced the club after an introspective moment; in this “365” version, they never left. It’s 4 a.m. in Berlin, hearts are racing, palms and everything else are sweaty, lights are dizzying.

4. “Sympathy is a knife,” feat. Ariana Grande: In the original “Sympathy is a knife,” Charli XCX allows self-doubt room to breathe. Is she famous? Is she successful? Why does it seem like more commercial artists look down on her? Do they, or is that projection? On this version, Charli, a longtime Ariana Grande fan, brings in one of the biggest pop stars for an Imogen Heap-esque recasting of that story: What happens when you reach a certain level, and every part of your

life is interrogated by strangers?

“It’s a knife when you’re so pretty, they think you must be fake,” Grande adds her spin. “It’s a knife when they dissect your body on the front page.”

3. “Guess,” feat. Billie Eilish: A remix of a bonus track with one of the world’s biggest pop stars, “Guess” featuring Billie Eilish is indulgent, flirty electro-trash, the kind that could convince anyone Brat Summer is not temporal but a state of mind. Produced by the Dare, it’s a refreshingly new way to hear Eilish’s whisper. This time, it booms.

2. “So I,” feat. A.G. Cook: “So I,” a tribute to the late, great, future-seeking producer Sophie, could only have one collaborator: A.G. Cook, fellow member of the PC Music collective, and someone who worked closely with the innovator. No dry eyes here, in this version that far exceeds the original. “So I” on “Brat” is a guarded memorial; on “So I” featuring A.G. Cook, Charli tells stories about her friend Sophie with the hyper-specificity of the greatest narrative songwriters.

1. “Girl, so confusing,” feat. Lorde: As if there was any other option for No. 1. “Girl, so confusing” ends a potentially long held and certainly private rivalry between Charli XCX and Lorde, two distinctly different artists once frequently mistaken for one another. And for a song about environmental and internalized insecurities, it’s reassuring to hear these two powerhouses work it out on the remix.

Slash: Guitarist has assembled compilation of some Horror Nights work

FROM PAGE 28

I’m not going to tell you musically what you should do.”

The creative process begins with Murdy sending Slash the concept for an upcoming haunted house.

“That just gets my wheels turning,” Slash said. “Melodies just come.”

Slash sends back some written notes about his musical ideas for the maze.

“I never reference old stuff,” Slash said. “I just come up with whatever inspires me at the moment.”

Murdy passes along character art, scenic designs and photos from the maze set as they become available. Slash offers up early musical ideas.

“He’ll do a rough demo that’s pretty much just guitar,” Murdy said.

Eventually, Murdy writes a 100-page treatment for each maze that serves as a script-like narrative from the visitor’s point



Slash, shown at the opening of a Halloween Horror Nights maze in 2021, has written seven Horror Nights soundtracks for Universal Studios Hollywood.

of view. At the same time, Slash starts composing the main musical theme for the maze.

“You want to create a mood. That’s the most important thing,” Slash said. “But you’re doing it with music and with guitar. You want to have a melody and a rhythm and something sort of catchy.”

As the process moves along, the team locks in on a central melody and musical style that will serve as the film score for the maze.

“When you’re doing these things, you can’t just change the music every week,” Slash said. “You can change certain dynamics about it, but keep a through line.”

The main musical theme is then broken down into 20- to 30-second segments for each scene in the maze.

“There’s a central melody that he comes up with and then there’s lots of different variations as you go along,” Murdy said.

“And then there’s usually a couple of other different pieces of music.”

Establishing a consistent rate of beats per minute for the music allows the soundtrack to ratchet up or slow the action depending on the intent of each maze scene.

“If there’s a series of scenes that are connected, you want to flow with that same tempo,” Murdy said. “If we want to change the mood, then we might change the tempo.”

Once the music is done, the final step is for Slash to head out to Universal to hear his soundtrack inside the maze.

“He came down to listen to the mix and give us his thoughts and comments,” Murdy said. “He gets involved all the way down to the mix.”

After a year of work, Slash was thrilled with how the soundtrack turned out for the Universal Monsters: Eternal Bloodlines maze.

“It came out really, really

cool,” Slash said.

The “Sweet Child O’ Mine” guitarist has a job every year at Horror Nights if he wants it, according to Murdy.

“As long as he’s willing to do it, I will always want to work with him,” Murdy said. “He’s one of my absolute favorite people to work with because he’s so cool and he gets what we do and understands it.”

Slash now has enough Horror Nights soundtracks to warrant an album. The 11-song compilation is available at Universal throughout the Halloween season.

Someday soon, Slash might have his own Universal maze based on one of his own horror movies.

The guitarist launched the BerserkerGang horror production company in 2023 with “The Breach” that played at several film festivals. Slash produced his first horror film in 2013 with “Nothing Left to Fear” starring Anne Heche.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

‘Happy’s Place’ a new dramedy cocktail

Reba’s ‘Cheers’-like NBC show explores grief, extended family

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Reba McEntire finds herself behind the bar in her latest return to network TV, making a series that’s a nicely calibrated cocktail of drama and comedy.

“The things that are most important in my life is love, hope, faith, happiness, energy, light. And that’s all of the things that are happening with this show,” the country music legend says.

NBC’s “Happy’s Place” — which airs Mondays on AFN-Pulse — finds McEntire’s character, Bobbie, inheriting a Tennessee tavern from her recently-deceased father and finding out in the first episode that he had a second family.

Even more alarming is the fact that her dad left ownership of the bar to both Bobbie and her newly-discovered half sister, Isabella. Add to the tension the fact that the two women are divided by ethnicity and a generation or two.

“I’m shocked. I mean, I didn’t think Daddy could ever do anything like this, ’cause he always said family was the most important thing,” Bobbie says. To which, Isabella replies: “Maybe that’s why he started two of them.”

Belissa Escobedo, who plays Isabella, says the new series can be seen as both sweet and sour, as these two women learn to make peace and move forward.

“I think Bobbie reacts to this news very differently than Isabella does, and the audience is able to see it and understand both sides. I love that Isabella kind of just inches her way into Bobbie’s heart,” Escobedo says.

In the series, Bobbie finally looks at Isabella and realizes what she’s done: “I’ve been looking at you like a person that has been forced upon me. Instead, I should be looking at you like a sister that’s been given to me.”

Escobedo, whose film credits include “Blue Beetle” and “Hocus Pocus 2” and who has been a series regular on TV shows like “The Baker and the Beauty,” says working with McEntire is a joy: “She is an angel. She is so sweet, so down to earth. She does everything with a smile and comes in ready to work but also ready to have fun.”

The new series comes from TV veteran Kevin Abbott, who has a lengthy list of credits, in-



NBC/AP photos

From left, Belissa Escobedo, Melissa Peterman, Reba McEntire and Pablo Castelblanco in a scene from “Happy’s Place.” Escobedo and McEntire play newly discovered half sisters Isabella and Bobbie, who inherit their father’s tavern after he dies.

“A lot of people can relate to this — finding that you’ve got a third cousin you didn’t know. I think that’s what helps shows be successful is when they’re relatable.”

Reba McEntire

Star of “Happy’s Place,” about the show’s premise of a secret family

cluding producing “Reba,” “Last Man Standing,” “Roseanne” and “Golden Girls.”

The show has a welcome “Cheers” vibe, another NBC stalwart set in a bar, which allows easy reasons for new stories through guest stars and room for some oddball regulars to flourish, including a reunion with McEntire and Melissa Peterman, who shined together in “Reba,” and Rex Linn, a frequent collaborator, whose TV credits include “Young Sheldon” and “Better Call Saul.”

One of the early production ideas was to cast McEntire as a schoolteacher and have Peterman as the principal. But then “Abbott Elementary” came out on ABC, so that idea went out the window.

The next proposal was exploring the idea of a secret family, inspired by 23andMe, the ancestry-tracing company.

“A lot of people can relate to this — finding that you’ve got a third cousin you didn’t know. I think that’s what helps shows be successful is when they’re relatable. That happens with books, songs, movies: If you can relate to it, it’s going to be more successful,” McEntire says.

Alongside McEntire, Escobedo, Peterman and Linn, the cast also includes Pablo Castelblanco (“Alaska Daily”) and Tokala Black Elk (“American Primeval,” “1883”). It’s a multicultural set — Castelblanco is from Colombia, Black Elk is of Sioux descent and Escobedo has Mexican roots.

“To have that diverse cast has been interesting on screen and off screen for us because when we’re not doing something — when they’re rewriting or we’re waiting on something or we’re at rehearsals — we sit and visit and talk about each other and learn



Escobedo, top, Castelblanco and Tokala Black Elk, above, who play Steve and Takoda, respectively, help make “Happy’s Place” a multicultural set: Castelblanco is from Colombia, Black Elk is of Sioux descent and Escobedo has Mexican roots.

from each other. It’s been an education for all of us,” McEntire says.

McEntire will be hoping fans of “Reba” will check it out. Over six seasons, “Reba” performed more than decently for The WB — and later The CW — but faced competition at the awards shows from the likes of “Everybody Loves Raymond,” “Friends,” “Will & Grace,” “Sex and the City,” “Desperate Housewives,” “Malcolm in the Middle,” “Ugly Betty” and “30 Rock.”

The indefatigable McEntire, who is also shooting “The Voice” for NBC and presides over cloth-

ing and footwear lines, teamed up with iconic songwriter Carole King to write the new show’s theme song.

In one powerful scene from the new show, a framed children’s drawing at the tavern falls and reveals that it was drawn by Isabella, proof their father cared about his secret child.

“I think the theme that we really explore, while also bringing comedy into it, is grief and what comes out of grief,” Escobedo says. “When one door closes, another opens — that’s one of the things that I think is not touched upon enough.”

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



CBS/AP

Damon Wayans, left, and Damon Wayans Jr. star in the new CBS sitcom “Poppa’s House.” While the two have worked together before, this is their first time headlining a series.

‘Same humor, different sensibilities’

Wayans and son headline ‘Poppa’s House,’ a CBS sitcom that explores old-school and new-school generational issues

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Boundaries between work and family don’t just blur in the new CBS sitcom “Poppa’s House” starring father-and-son comedy duo Damon Wayans and Damon Wayans Jr. — they shatter.

“It’s wonderful to come to work every day and see him and some of his kids and my sister and my brother and nieces and nephews. They all work on this show. They all contribute,” says the senior Wayans. “I don’t think there are words to express how joyful I am.”

Wayans plays the titular Poppa, a curmudgeonly radio DJ who’s more than comfortable doing it his way, while Wayans Jr. plays his son, Damon, a budding filmmaker who’s stuck in a job he hates.

“My character, Pop, is just an old-school guy who’s kind of stuck in his ways,” says Wayans, who starred in “In Living Color” and “My Wife and Kids.”

Pop yearns for the days when a handshake was a binding contract and Michael Jordan didn’t complain if he got fouled on the court. Pop laughs at the younger generation’s participation trophies.

“It’s old school versus new school and them teaching each other lessons from both sides,” says Wayans Jr., who played Coach in the Fox sitcom “New Girl.”

“They (the characters) bring the best out in each other and they’re resistant initially. But then throughout the episode they have revelations and these revelations help them become better people,” he adds.

The two have worked together before — dad made an appearance on son’s “Happy Endings” and “Happy To-

gether,” while son was a writer and guest star on dad’s “My Wife and Kids.” But this is the first time they have headlined a series together.

The half-hour comedy — which premieres Friday on AFN-Pulse and co-stars Essence Atkins and Tetona Jackson — smartly leaves places in the script where father and son can let loose and create, like a moment in the pilot when the son has to wait as his father sips tea.

“We have a lot of those moments in every episode. And

“I would say that they’re very similar and the differences are minuscule. It’s because my comedy is informed by my upbringing and same for him.”

Damon Wayans Jr.

on how his sense of humor compares to his dad’s

that’s kind of what we’re trying to zero in on, is trying to find the comedic set pieces, at least one of them for each episode,” the son says.

“I tell the writers, ‘Don’t write the funny. Put us in the area of the funny and we’ll find it,’” Wayans says. “You know, if you’ve got Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, don’t put them in a pie factory reading books.”

He has some sway with the writers: He and his son write for the show as do Kim Wayans, Michael Wayans and Shawn Wayans, siblings of the elder Wayans.

The Wayans family is like the Barrymores of comedy, a clan that also includes Keenen Ivory. The Wayans have been behind everything from “In Living Color” and “White Chicks” to “Bamboozled.”

In the first episode of “Poppa’s House,” the elder Wayans is challenged when a new female co-host (played by Atkins) is hired, while the younger Wayans puts pressure on his happy marriage by threatening to leave his salesman job.

Later episodes will have Poppa starting a podcast at home — further blurring the home-work divide — and exploring the different ways the generations deal with grief and discipline. In one episode, a family photo leads to a discussion of who and what constitutes family. Does it survive divorce?

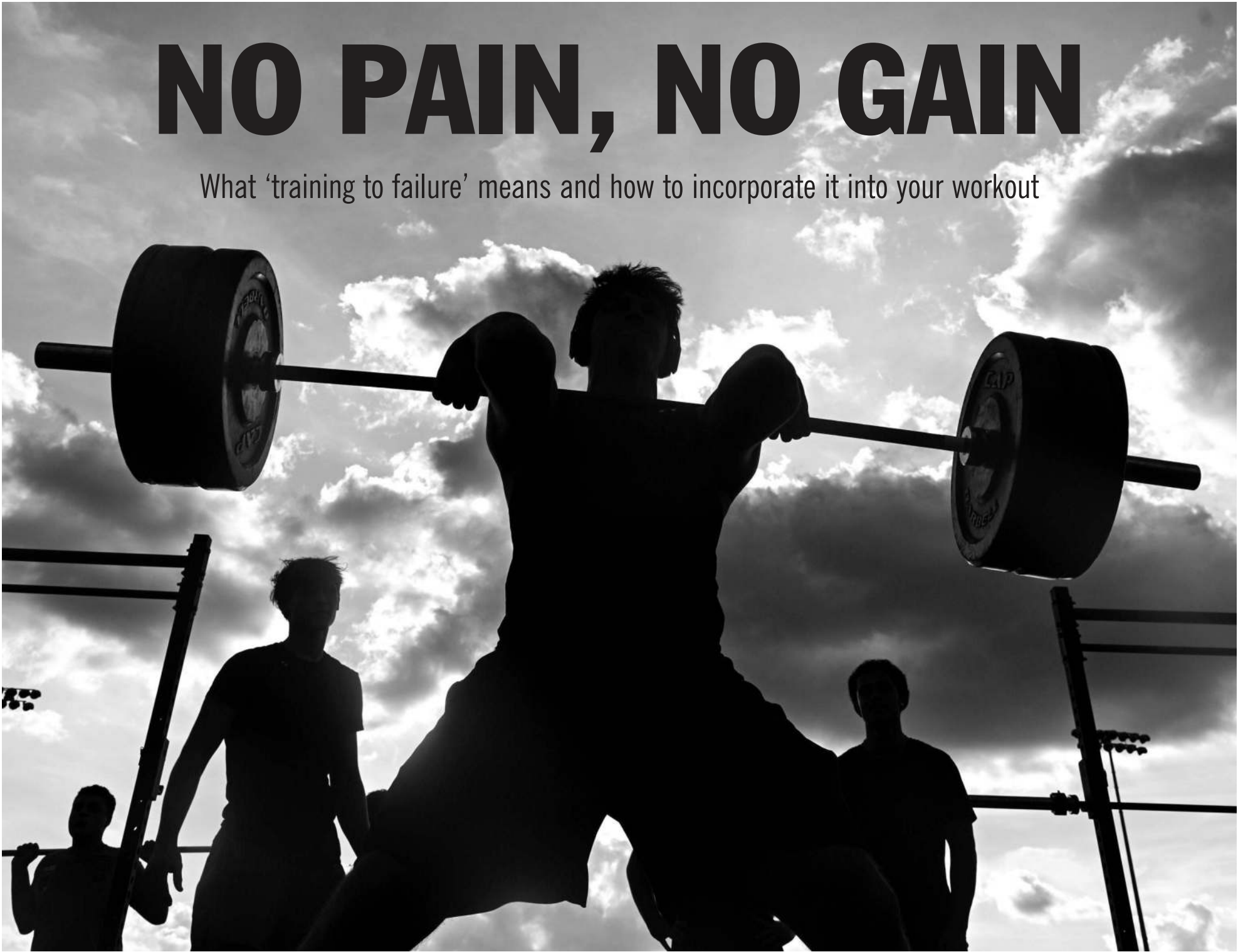
“I think we’re dealing with a lot of relatable storylines that I think people will enjoy. And on top of enjoying it, you’re going to laugh out loud,” Wayans Jr. says.

Speaking of laughing, do the two men have the same approach to comedy? Wayans Jr. says they mostly laugh at the same things.

“I would say that they’re very similar and the differences are minuscule. It’s because my comedy is informed by my upbringing and same for him,” he says.

Dad agrees: “Yeah, I call it same humor, different sensibilities. Like, he’ll say stuff that in a million years, I would never get to that joke. And I love that about his sense of humor. It’s like, ‘That’s so random.’”

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



WILLIAM WOTRING, THE DOMINION-POST/AP

Brock Kehler lifts at University High in Morgantown, W.V., Aug. 1. Not all gymgoers need to train “until failure,” and those who want to, shouldn’t every time they work out.

By MARIA CHENG
Associated Press

No pain, no gain, as the old exercise adage goes. But just how much pain do you have to endure to benefit from weight training? That depends on what you’re trying to accomplish, fitness experts say.

For years, some trainers have instructed gymgoers that to get the best results, they need to train “until failure,” meaning until they cannot physically do one more repetition or exercise.

Some recent studies, however, suggest this extreme regimen, when applied to weight training, may only benefit certain people.

“If somebody wants to increase muscle mass as much as they possibly can, then training to failure is something to consider,” said Michael Zourdos, chair of exercise science and health promotion at Florida Atlantic University, who co-authored a review of 55 research papers on the subject in the journal Sports Medicine.

Zourdos and colleagues found that lifting weights “until failure” may build bigger muscles but isn’t needed to increase strength. He said people who work out hard, but don’t push themselves to exhaus-

tion, will still likely improve their health and fitness.

“There is a difference between training for health and training for elite performance benefits,” he said.

For the average person simply looking

In extremely rare instances, overdoing it can be harmful, leading to a potentially fatal condition called rhabdomyolysis, where damaged muscles begin to break down, possibly causing kidney damage.

James Fisher, a sport science expert

“There is a difference between training for health and training for elite performance benefits.”

Michael Zourdos
chair of exercise science and health promotion at Florida Atlantic University

to increase their fitness levels, Zourdos said it’s much easier to get results. He said people who work out regularly would benefit from an intense session that comes within five to 10 repetitions of failure, rather than training to complete exhaustion.

He also said “failure training” often comes at a cost, since people working to that standard might be so tired and sore that they skip their next gym session or two.

and consultant in Southampton, England, said the idea of working until complete exhaustion can be a turnoff for many people.

“What we’re really talking about is how hard you should work when you go to the gym,” he said, adding that the concept should be interpreted to mean that people can spend less time in the gym — if they work hard.

“If you’re short on time, then you can push yourself harder, and then you don’t

need to work out as long,” he said.

Fisher explained that to boost strength, it’s critical to push your muscles to a certain threshold.

“If you lift a weight you can easily lift 10 times or more, you never really work hard enough,” he said. “Now, if we increase the weight so that on the ninth and 10th rep, it feels properly hard, that will benefit your muscle fibers.”

Still, Fisher said that the best workout is ultimately “one that people will actually do,” regardless of how hard they push themselves. He said that for improving overall health, strength training is probably the best single thing people can do for their health, quality of life and longevity.

Whatever your fitness goal, Fisher said the concept of failure training can be incorporated into your workout.

People should then rest the muscle group they’ve trained for about two days, he said.

For people who have more experience, experts recommend saving the failure training for occasional workouts, or on the last set of exercises in their session.

“It’s not meant to be for every person, every time they work out,” Fisher said. “This is a tough way to exercise.”

WEEKEND: FAMILY



More trick than treat

These 9 unwanted Halloween handouts may earn your house an egging

By LAURA SAMPSON
Associated Press

Halloween is all fun and games until someone hands out the wrong treats. Every neighborhood has those houses that kids dread because of disappointing candy choices — or even worse, noncandy surprises. Don't be that house this year by avoiding these treats. They might just leave your doorstep in danger of a little Halloween mischief.

If you're looking to avoid the dreaded egging or toilet paper job, check out this list of the top nine handouts that just don't pass the vibe check this year, or ever. Make sure you're giving out goodies that bring smiles instead of groans this Halloween. Everyone enjoys the holiday so much more when you do.

Natural treats

Think granola bars, healthy gummies and sugar-free gum. Yes, you guessed it, no one wants these except maybe parents everywhere. When choosing your treats to hand out, do your house a favor and skip anything labeled as natural.

Boxes of raisins fall in this category too. These often go to waste because there's no way to tell if they've been opened before, rendering them practically useless. And let's face it, those little boxes are always dried out anyway because they're not airtight.

Toothbrushes

Unless you're a dentist, oral hygienist or at a dentist's office, there is no need to hand these out. These will earn you a reputation that no one wants as the house to skip, or worse, to trick. You may feel strongly, but the kids feel even more strongly.

Religious tracts

You might think that now is the time to strike with religion by handing out religious paper leaflets that look like folded \$20 bills. But I can assure you that nothing breaks a kid's heart faster than finding one in their bag and realizing it was a trick, on them.

Loose candy

Unwrapped, loose candy is definitely off the list this year and every year. Unwrapped candy is a hard

pass for parents and kids alike. Want to take this one up a notch? Circus peanuts.

Hard candy

While these are candy and fall in the sugar treat category, no one wants them. Things like butter-scotch or peppermint disks, those strawberry-filled hard candies and so on are old, stale and chewy— no thank you. However, if you do hand them out, they can be used later on gingerbread houses or Yule log cakes as decorations.

Fruit

Apples or oranges just don't scream Halloween fun for most kids. And given their awkward history with hidden objects inside, they're a must pass.

One exception? Adorable mini clementine pumpkins with faces drawn on with a Sharpie or food-safe marker. Those make cute and healthy treats that kids actually love to find in their bags because they can go in their lunch box the next day. But they're actually better served at parties where sweet treats might be frowned upon.

Homemade treats

Due to safety concerns, many parents won't allow their kids to eat homemade goodies from strangers. This one is a true shame because it used to be that everyone knew one neighbor was making popcorn balls for Halloween and the other neighbor was making taffy. If your parents didn't make candy or treats like these, then these were so nice to receive.

Loose change

Kids and parents alike cringe to see a bowl of change for treats. Money is dirty, and mixing it in with candy, even in the wrappers, just feels wrong. And very germey. This one might incite parents to mischief. So beware.

Pencils and erasers

While practical items, the holiday versions are not great quality and, therefore, rather useless. The pencils are often covered in a plastic wrap making them impossible to sharpen. And the cute erasers aren't cute when they mark up papers. Hand these out and you're sure to be in line for some kind of prank.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Life, like dancing, looks different in middle age

Back then, I danced. I mean I really danced.

During my 20s and 30s, I'd hear a song that would make me spring to my feet. Channeling the beat of the music through gyrating torso and limbs, I swung my hair in loop-de-loops just for laughs. Rivulets of sweat trickled down my back, and when my evening was done, I slept like a rock.

I danced often. At cousins' weddings. On Friday nights with friends who came over for dinner and didn't end up leaving until 1 a.m. At bars or nightclubs when I was still young enough to patronize them without looking pathetic.

Now, decades later, dancing just isn't the same.

When I get the opportunity to dance, which isn't often, for the most part, I sit and watch. But every once in a while, like an old dog who's feeling frisky, I give it a go. A really good '80s song fools me into believing I've still got it, so I shuffle to the dance floor doing a sort of predance — biting my bottom lip with one fist pumping in the air.

Once positioned, I begin, but soon realize my body doesn't dance spontaneously like it used to. I'm stiff, uncoordinated. I must deliberately recall the moves that used to come so freely, as I awkwardly re-create The Roger Rabbit, The Van Halen Jump and The Hair Swing from faded memory. Eventually, thirst and a twinge of humiliation prompt me to slink back to my seat.

Later, in the wee hours, I bolt awake when my calf seizes up with cramps. And in the morning, I discover I have a kink in my neck and won't be able to turn my head to the left for three more days.

Back then, when my husband Francis and I were in our 20s and 30s, we were still discovering ourselves and setting standards for our life together.

We'd ponder, "Perhaps we're the kind of people who brew craft beers in our garage using apricots and toasted malts? Maybe we surf, play tambourine in a coworker's band, bake gourmet biscotti, ride Harleys or run marathons?"

When we planned our home life together, we believed we'd use the china from our wedding registry every Thanksgiving. We were certain that romance will not be diminished when we had kids.

Naively, we believed our babies would be born without the use of pain medications. They'd eat organic, homemade baby foods, and when old enough, they'd strictly adhere to a system of marble jar behavior rewards as set forth in the June issue of Parenting magazine. As teens, our children would never defy our authority, because we'd raise them in an environment of mutual respect.

Yeah, right.

Now, in our 50s, our days of self-discovery are behind us. Somewhere along the way, life simply happened. We were too busy working, paying taxes, raising kids and keeping our marriage intact to bother with all those standards.

We simply became a family, naturally.

Our house has mismatched furniture and tumbleweeds of dog hair. I drive used cars and take fiber supplements. Francis is bald and falls asleep in his recliner. I haven't seen our wedding china since we boxed it for storage before an overseas move 15 years ago. The money we dreamed we might spend on exotic travel and trendy décor ended up being used on braces for our three kids, mortgages, fan belts, plumbers' bills and college tuition. Our idea of a great Friday night is fire-pitting with the neighbors and still being in bed by 11.

Life didn't follow the principled, high-minded blueprint we planned, but we've had more fun than we ever imagined.

After more than 2½ decades of marriage, parenting and military life, I may not dance all that much anymore. But I've gained the wisdom to know that, to me, it's the love of family, the companionship of friends, the honor of military service and the richness of experience that make a life worth living.

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

MANUAL DEXTERITY
BY GARY LARSON AND DOUG PETERSON / EDITED BY JOEL FAGLIANO

Gary Larson is a retired stand-up comedian from Edmonds, Wash. Doug Peterson is a professional crossword constructor from Pasadena, Calif. One of them is not the creator of “The Far Side,” and the other is not the head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars. They will, however, consider pretending to be if it means a better table at a restaurant.

ACROSS

1 Massive stars
6 Associate of the gods
Pothos and Himeros (Longing and Desire)
10 Train in the Washington-Baltimore area
14 Distortions in the space-time continuum
19 Got by
20 Blow
21 Surname of three baseball brothers
22 Turn away
23 Title for a tutorial on musical composition?
26 Interior design
27 Susan who wrote “The Orchid Thief”
28 Actress Gardner
29 Tickle Me Elmo maker
31 How many elements on the periodic table have the letter “J” in their names
32 Impromptu
34 Spot for a stud
36 Put into motion
38 Underworld thug
41 . . . a primer on playing dreidel?
45 In the center of
48 Some I.C.U. workers
49 Alternative to Hinge or Bumble

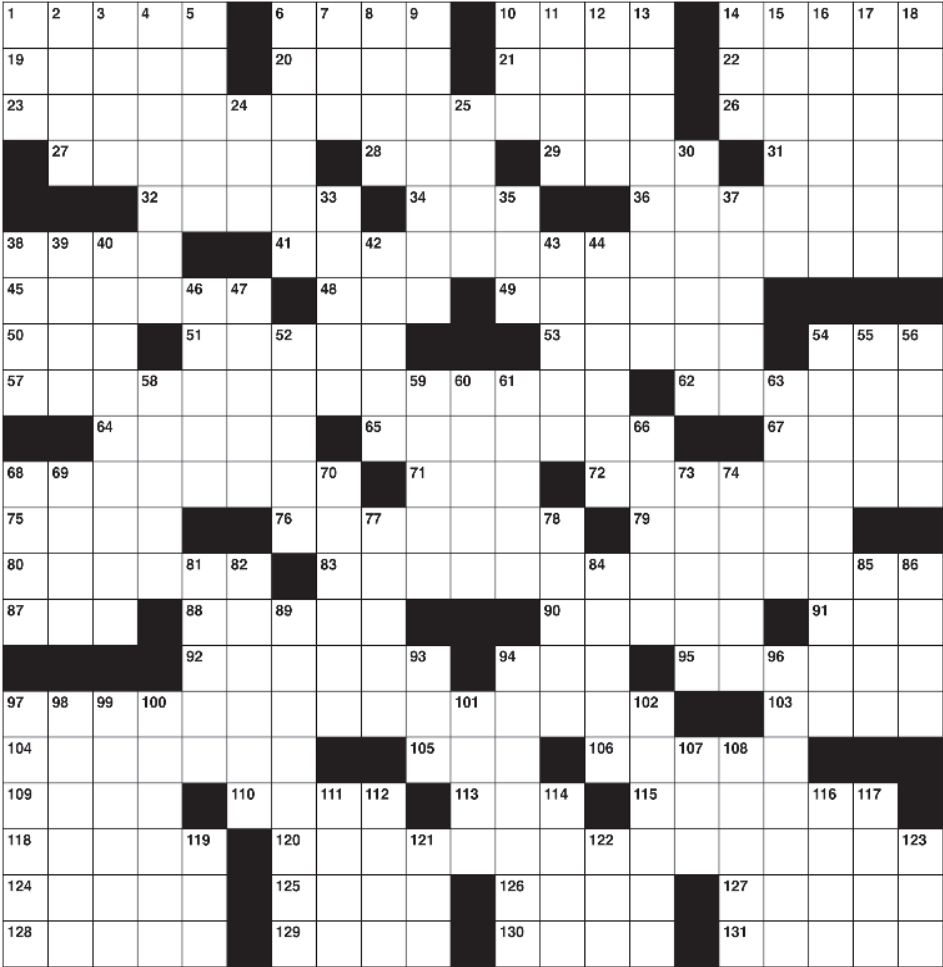
50 On which Maya Rudolph has played Kamala Harris, in brief
51 Enjoys a lazy Sunday, say
53 2020 nonfiction best seller subtitled “The Origins of Our Discontents”
54 Over or under
57 . . . a volume on vapor dynamics?
62 Calm
64 Aware of
65 Bodies of work
67 Touched down
68 Farewell performance
71 Slugger’s stat
72 Stereotypical prom experience
75 Trough call
76 “Go us!”
79 Free of extra charges
80 Uncovers
83 . . . a step-by-step guide for throwing breaking balls?
87 Keep in the cellar, perhaps
88 Symbols of toughness, in a simile
90 Barrel-shaped containers
91 ____ Le Gallienne, star of 1920s Broadway
92 Sheets and pillowcases
94 Joule division
95 Salts
97 . . . a handbook on raising kids?
103 Email button
104 It’s going around

105 “Here a ____, there a ____, everywhere a ____ . . .”
106 Lock
109 Be extremely angry
110 Model’s need
113 Simpson’s judge
115 Come (to)
118 Light ditties
120 . . . a D.I.Y. manual on other D.I.Y. manuals?
124 Panache
125 Repetitive sound
126 Apartment building V.I.P.
127 Newspaper section
128 Delectable
129 “____ the Limit” (Notorious B.I.G. song)
130 Edict issuer in “Fiddler on the Roof”
131 Shangri-las

DOWN

1 Texter’s shrug
2 Pet for Pebbles, in cartoons
3 It will all come out in the wash
4 Flood-prone area
5 Competed in a biathlon
6 What has some holiday spirit?
7 Tired routine
8 Workplace regulator, for short
9 Ford’s only Supreme Court appointee
10 Easy ____ (longtime Kraft product)
11 Loads
12 Golfer McIlroy

13 Signs with lines
14 Bunch of bills
15 Any of the light blue properties in Monopoly
16 Apply more varnish to
17 “Right this second!”
18 Recipient of 21 Academy Award acting nominations
24 “Uh-uh”
25 ____ paneer (Indian dish)
30 Some chamber groups
33 Island off Greece’s northwest coast
35 Balderdash
37 Substitute for “E” on a license plate, maybe
38 [Did he really just say that!?]
39 High-end hotel chain
40 Garage job
42 Creative spark, informally
43 Parish priest
44 Cloisonné material
46 Docking spots
47 Spanish for “foolish”
52 Serious suffering
54 “Seriously . . .”
55 Sooner State city
56 Béret bearer
58 “Come Dancing” band, with “the”
59 King maker?
60 Potato, yam or cassava
61 Water brand whose name is an adjective in reverse
63 Harder to come by
66 Turns state’s evidence



- 68 Beverage one shouldn’t shake well before serving
69 Kristen formerly of 50-Across
70 Ship’s kitchen
73 Pokes fun at
74 Worth having
77 Kind of question
78 Lead-in to brewery
81 Like the leftmost candle until the final night of Hanukkah

82 Looking discomfited
84 Incessantly bother
85 Level
86 Navajo painting medium
89 Thankless types
93 Bottom of some columns
94 Self-centered sort
96 Taken for granted
97 The Holy Grail, e.g.
98 Beethoven’s third symphony

99 Govt.-backed investments
100 Attack, medieval-style
101 Churn up
102 Stock-exchange worker
107 Earthbound bird
108 River to the English Channel
111 Bulletin-board piece
112 Hurting

114 ____ probandi (burden of proof)
116 ____ Owl, one of the superheroes in “Watchmen”
117 Fork-tailed bird
119 Dump
121 Decks, in brief
122 Fig. of interest to an admissions department
123 Castaway’s call

GUNSTON STREET



“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

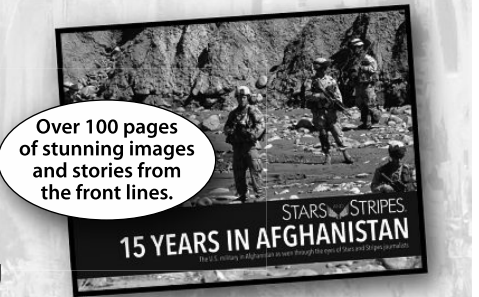


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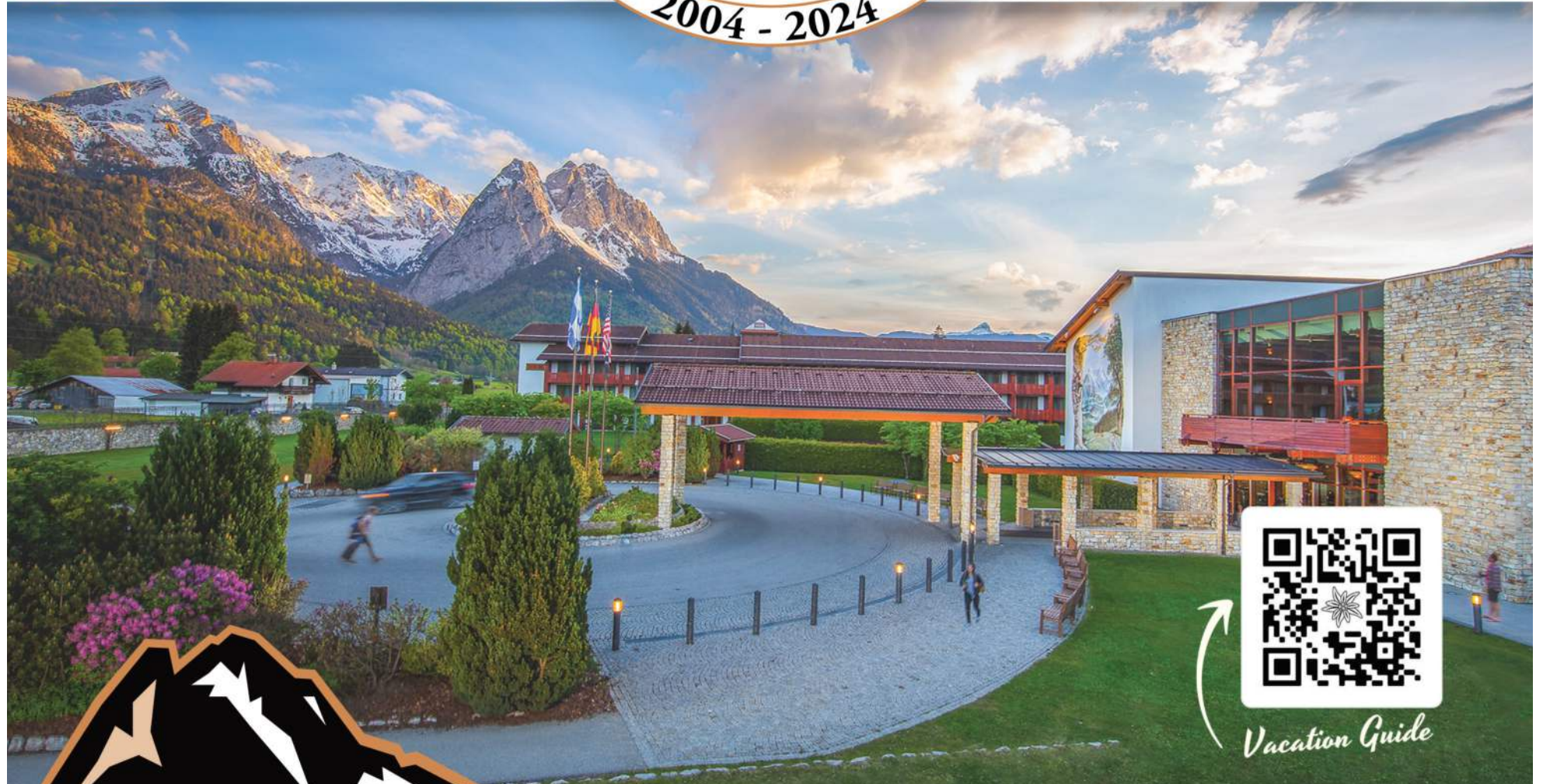
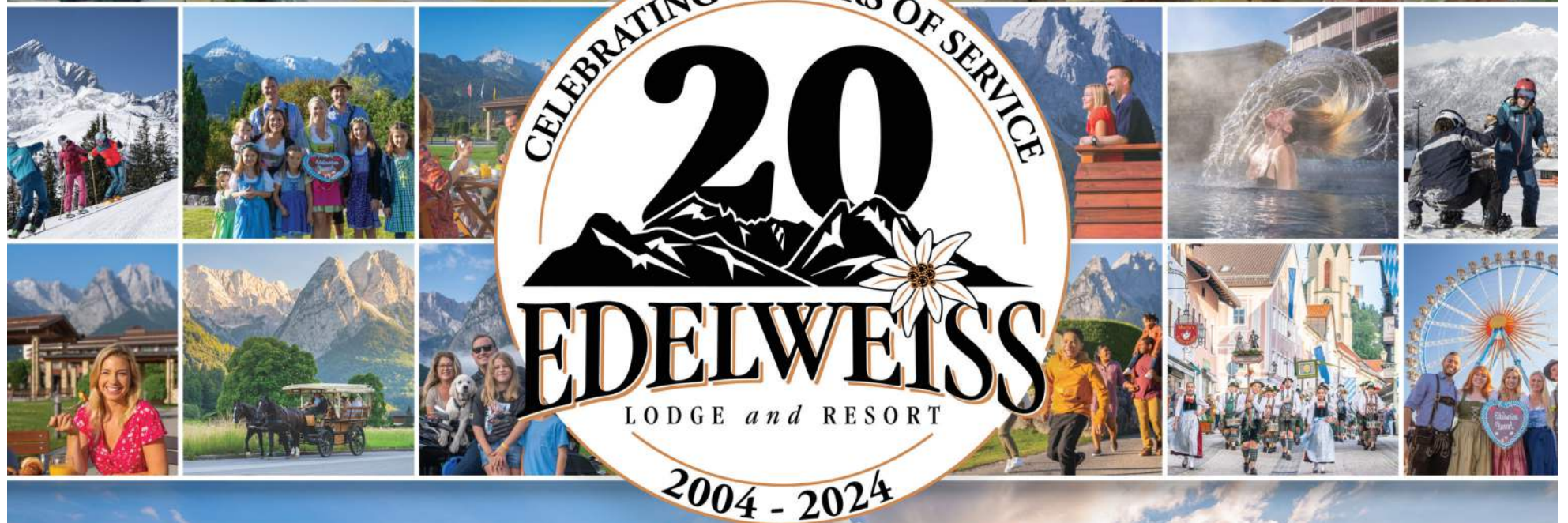
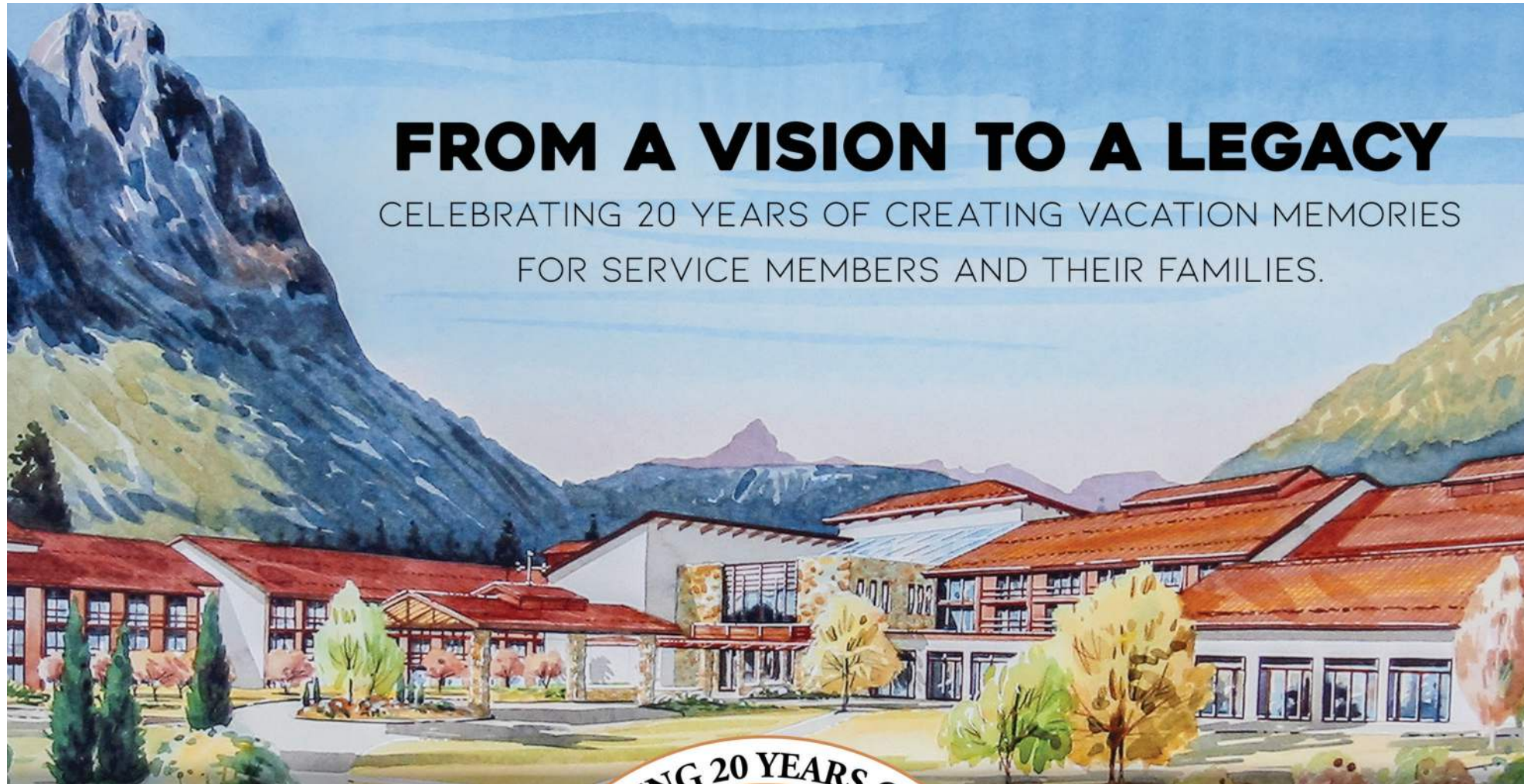


SCAN
for more!

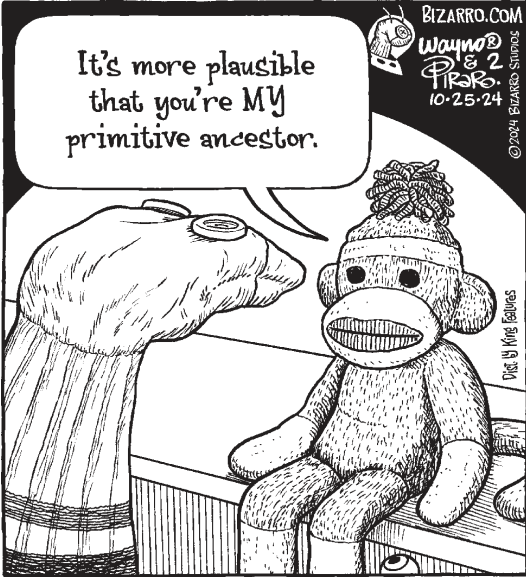
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Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
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18							19	20				
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37			38				39					
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45	46	47				48	49					
50						51				52		
53						54				55		

ACROSS

- 1 Writer Levin
4 Body powder
8 Musical finale
12 Pester
13 Met solo
14 Twistable cookie
15 Unexpected pitch
17 Hit on the noggin
18 Delegate
19 Eastern path
21 PBS supporter
22 Red wine
26 Trademark
29 Sashimi fish
30 Greek vowel
31 Tax
32 "Homeland" org.
33 Angelic instrument
34 Praise in verse
35 Stanley Cup org.
36 Scrabble pieces
37 Eye part
39 Victory
40 "You've got mail" ISP
41 Strange thing
45 Pleased as punch
48 Fermented tea drink
50 Verdi opera
51 Morales of "Jericho"
52 Pierced body part

53 Make well

- 54 Mar on a car
55 "The butler — it"

25 Lights-out tune

- 26 United nations
27 Make over
28 Declare
29 Be sick
32 Recorded a score, with "up"
33 Brahmanist
35 Prefix with natal
36 Morsel
38 Tennis star Rafael
39 Helen Reddy's "I Am —"
42 Chilled
43 Bangkok cuisine
44 Lawn party site
45 "So frustrating!"
46 Fish story
47 Nabokov novel
49 Sugary suffix

DOWN

- 1 Early Peruvian
2 Stadium cheers
3 Turkish officials
4 Put a price on
5 Concert venue
6 Actress Lucy
7 "I'm not a bot" test
8 Winter quaff
9 Granada gold
10 Comfy family room
11 Fine, to NASA
16 Silly goose
20 Boxing legend
23 Authentic
24 To be, in Toulon

Answer to Previous Puzzle

C	I	A	O		M	A	R	A		B	A	A
A	S	T			E	P	I	C		E	R	R
B	E	T	H	M	A	R	C	H		T	L	C
S	E	A	E	E	L				E	T	H	O
					R	A		R	O	S	I	E
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P	A	Y			T	E	X	T		O	P	E

10-25

CRYPTOQUIP

G Z M V H G H C V M Q Q M F Q L N M
U R Q T U M E B M S Q X E S S T H V D
C G H D Q, Q C L V M Q E V F N R F, C Z E C
G E Q F E N N H V D M B H F M V X M.

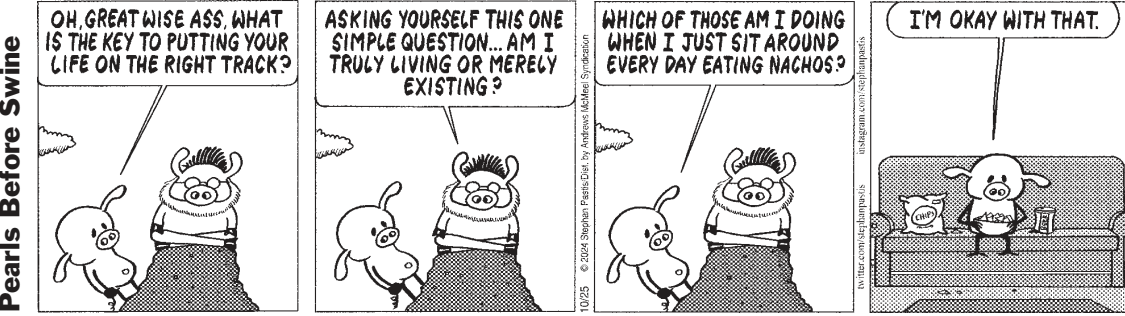
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF I TOLD A ONE-LINER ON THE SUBJECT OF AN ARM BONE, I RECKON THAT COULD BE A HUMERUS JOKE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: D equals G

Frazz



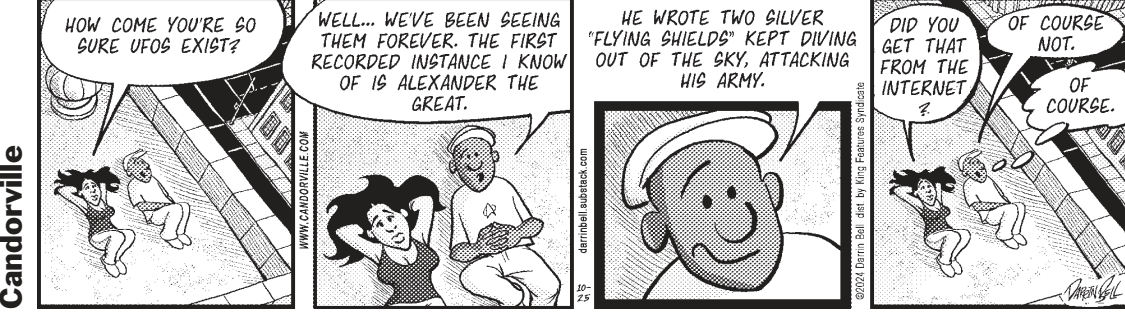
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



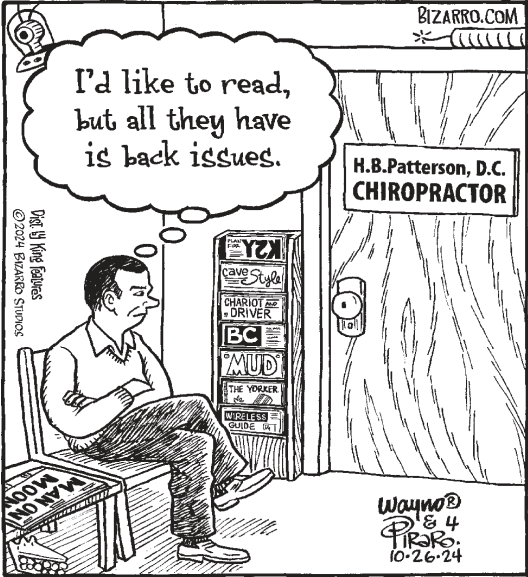
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11
12							13					
14							15					
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56							57					

- ACROSS
- 1 LP players

6 Misgivings

12 Meal

13 "No question!"

14 Acting company

15 Big guitar brand

16 Get lippy

17 Whispered "Hey!"

19 Pink Floyd's Barrett

20 Grand

22 Popped down

24 TV watchdog org.

27 Concerning

29 Abode

32 Present-giver's purchase

35 Nitwit

36 Labels

37 Hang low

38 Altar promise

40 Many corp. recruits

42 NBC weekend show

44 Actress Perlman

46 Cilium

50 "I'm not listening ...!"

52 Bit of baby talk

54 Arthurian isle
- 55 Range

56 They're nuts

57 Comes in last
- DOWN
- 1 Olympian queen

2 Wall St. debuts

3 Goethe play

4 MSN, for one

5 "Hurry!"

6 Really enjoys

7 Skips

8 PC port

9 Pickup places for commuters

10 "Iliad" setting

11 Dispatch

12 ACLU issues

18 Family moniker

21 Trendy

23 "Caught ya!"
- 24 Email subject line abbr.

25 — -Magnon

26 Escalade, for one

28 Golden breakfast roll

30 — culpa

31 Work unit

33 Pea holder

34 Unpaid TV ad

39 Acrylic fiber

41 Job openings

42 Duel prompter

43 Cathedral area

45 Prince in "Frozen"

47 Screenwriter James

48 Brady Bunch trio

49 Sizzling

51 Pie — mode

53 Tic-tac-toe loser

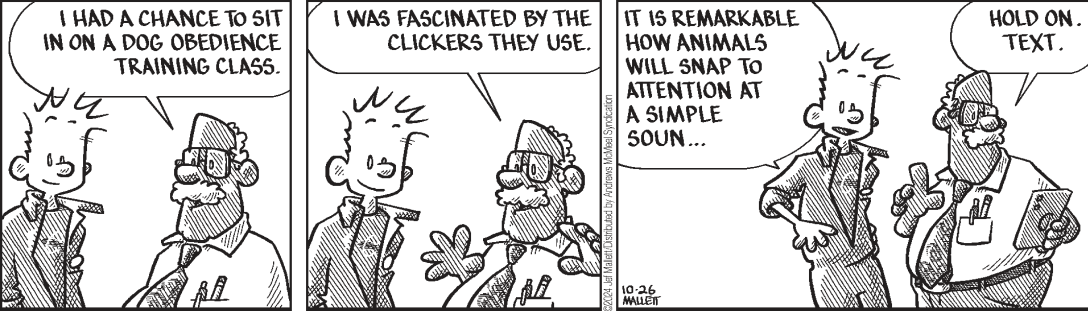
Answer to Previous Puzzle

I	R	A		T	A	L	C		C	O	D	A	
N	A	G		A	R	I	A		O	R	E	O	
C	H	A	N	G	E	U	P		C	O	N	K	
A	S	S	I	G	N		T	A	O				
			N	E	A		C	L	A	R	E	T	
B	R	A	N	D		A	H	I		E	T	A	
L	E	V	Y		C	I	A		H	A	R	P	
O	D	E		N	H	L		T	I	L	E	S	
C	O	R	N	E	A		W	I	N				
			A	O	L		O	D	D	I	T	Y	
G	L	A	D			K	O	M	B	U	C	H	A
A	I	D	A		E	S	A	I		E	A	R	
H	E	A	L		D	E	N	T		D	I	D	

10-26 CRYPTOQUIP

D USSA ADCS SXSOJ FNIC HWFR
HSTFWOS RGSAXS DMIVSF DM
ASMLRV. RVTR GTJ, DR ITM
UDR DM NMS UNNR.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN I WITNESSED SOME BUSY BEAVERS CARRYING TWIGS, STONES AND MUD, THAT WAS DAMMING EVIDENCE.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals F

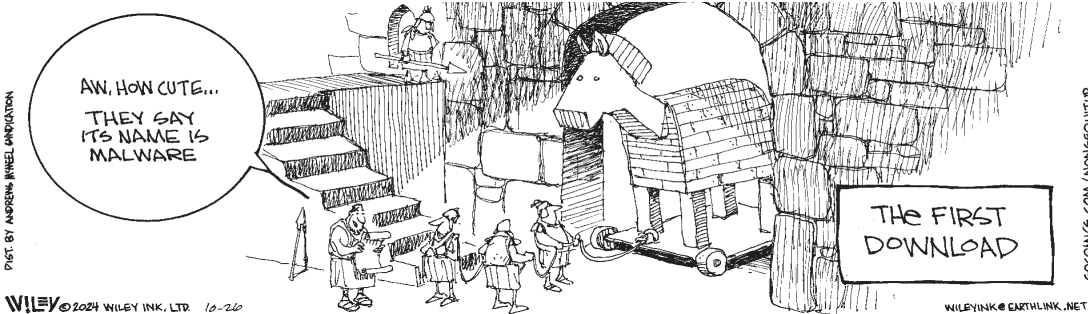
Frazz



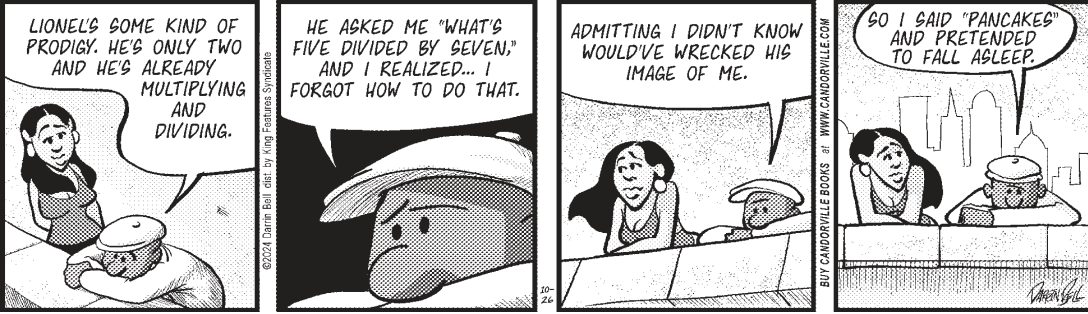
Pearls Before Swine



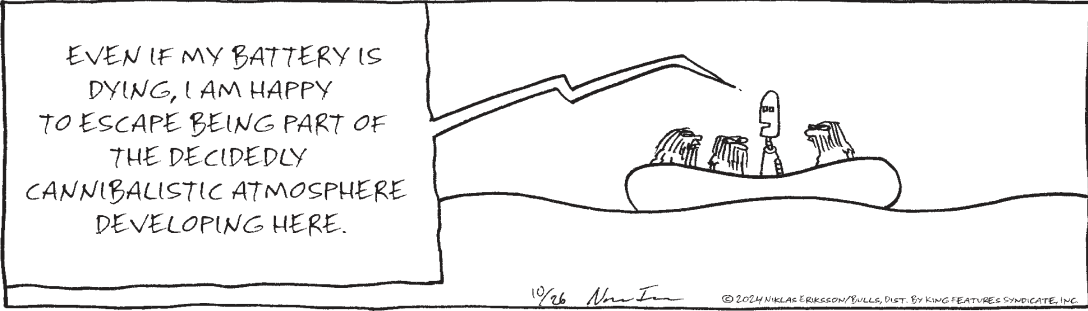
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Wednesday's scores
SOUTH
Kennesaw St. 27, Liberty 24
Jacksonville St. 42, Middle Tennessee 20

Schedule
Friday's games

EAST
Yale (3-2) at Penn (2-3)
Louisville (4-3) at Boston College (4-3)

FAR WEST
Boise St. (5-1) at UNLV (6-1)
Rutgers (4-3) at Southern Cal (3-4)

Saturday's games
EAST

Mercyhurst (2-5) at Sacred Heart (3-5)
Fordham (0-7) at Lehigh (3-3)
Navy (6-0) vs. Notre Dame (6-1) at East Rutherford, N.J.
Cornell (2-3) at Brown (2-3)
Valparaiso (2-5) at Marist (0-7)
CCSU (3-4) at LIU Brooklyn (1-7)
Richmond (5-2) at Bryant (2-5)
Towson (3-4) at Monmouth (NJ) (4-3)
Duquesne (4-2) at Stonehill (1-5)
Maine (4-3) at Rhode Island (6-1)
Colgate (2-5) at Merrimack (3-4)
Holy Cross (3-5) at Lafayette (4-3)
Dartmouth (5-0) at Columbia (4-1)
Bucknell (3-4) at Georgetown (4-3)
St. Francis (Pa.) (2-5) at Robert Morris (4-3)
Princeton (2-3) at Harvard (4-1)
Albany (NY) (3-4) at Delaware (6-1)
William & Mary (5-2) at Stony Brook (5-2)
New Hampshire (4-3) at Villanova (5-2)
Rice (2-5) at Uconn (4-3)
Wagner (4-4) at Umass (1-6)

SOUTH
Georgia Tech (5-3) at Virginia Tech (4-3)
North Carolina (3-4) at Virginia (4-3)
Oklahoma (4-3) at Mississippi (5-2)
Charlotte (3-4) at Memphis (6-1)
Arkansas (4-3) at Mississippi St. (1-6)
Georgia St. (2-4) at Appalachian St. (2-4)
Butler (5-2) at Davidson (5-2)
Presbyterian (2-6) at Stetson (2-4)
Elon (2-5) at Hampton (4-3)
S. Utah (3-4) at West Georgia (2-5)
N. Dakota St. (7-1) at Murray St. (1-6)
ETSU (4-3) at Wofford (3-4)
Samford (3-3) at The Citadel (3-5)
Temple (2-5) at East Carolina (3-4)
Howard (3-4) at Norfolk St. (2-6)
Charleston Southern (1-6) at Tennessee Tech (2-5)
Jackson St. (5-2) at Bethune-Cookman (1-6)
Utah Tech (0-8) at E. Kentucky (3-4)
Lamar (4-3) at Northwestern St. (0-8)
E. Illinois (1-6) at UT Martin (4-3)
Morgan St. (3-4) at NC Central (5-2)
Delaware St. (1-6) at SC State (4-2)
Southern Miss. (1-6) at James Madison (5-2)
W. Carolina (4-3) at Mercer (6-1)
Missouri (6-1) at Alabama (5-2)
BYU (7-0) at UCF (3-4)

Alabama A&M (3-3) vs. Alabama St. (3-3) at Birmingham, Ala.
VMI (0-7) at Chattanooga (4-3)
McNeese St. (4-4) at Nicholls (3-4)
NC A&T (1-6) at Campbell (2-5)
Tarleton St. (6-1) at Austin Peay (3-4)
Texas (6-1) at Vanderbilt (5-2), 4:15 p.m.
Louisiana-Monroe (5-1) at South Alabama (3-4)
Incarnate Word (5-2) at SE Louisiana (4-4)
Southern U. (4-3) at Florida A&M (3-3)
Florida St. (1-6) at Miami (7-0)
Auburn (2-5) at Kentucky (3-4)
SMU (6-1) at Duke (6-1)

MIDWEST
Buffalo (4-3) at Ohio (4-3)
Nebraska (5-2) at Ohio St. (5-1)
Morehead St. (4-3) at Dayton (5-1)
Washington (4-3) at Indiana (7-0)
San Diego (4-2) at St. Thomas (Minn.) (4-3)
S. Illinois (2-5) at Indiana St. (2-5)
Cent. Michigan (3-4) at Miami (Ohio) (3-4)
Gardner-Webb (2-5) at SE Missouri (7-1)
W. Illinois (3-4) at Lindenwood (Mo.) (3-5)
Kent St. (0-7) at W. Michigan (4-3)
Bowling Green (3-4) at Toledo (5-2)
Maryland (4-3) at Minnesota (4-3)
E. Michigan (5-2) at Akron (1-6)
N. Illinois (4-3) at Ball St. (2-5)
Northwestern (3-4) at Iowa (4-3)
Missouri St. (5-2) at N. Iowa (2-5)
North Dakota (5-2) at Youngstown St. (2-6)
Penn St. (6-0) at Wisconsin (5-2)
Michigan St. (4-3) at Michigan (4-3)
South Dakota (6-1) at S. Dakota St. (5-2)
Kansas (2-5) at Kansas St. (6-1)

SOUTHWEST
Tulane (5-2) at North Texas (5-2)
Texas A&M Commerce (1-6) at Prairie View (2-5)
MVSU (0-7) at Ark.-Pine Bluff (2-5)
Texas Tech (5-2) at TCU (4-3)
UTSA (3-4) at Tulsa (2-5)
Oklahoma St. (3-4) at Baylor (3-4)
North Alabama (3-5) at Cent. Arkansas (5-2)
Troy (1-6) at Arkansas St. (4-3)
Grambling St. (4-3) at Texas Southern (2-4)
Utah (4-3) at Houston (2-5)
Houston Christian (3-4) at Stephen F. Austin (4-3)
LSU (6-1) at Texas A&M (6-1)

FAR WEST
Montana (5-2) at N. Colorado (1-6)
Illinois (6-1) at Oregon (7-0)
Wake Forest (3-4) at Stanford (2-5)
Oregon St. (4-3) at California (3-4)
New Mexico (3-4) at Colorado St. (4-3)
Sacramento St. (3-4) at Idaho St. (3-5)
West Virginia (3-4) at Arizona (3-4)
Utah St. (1-6) at Wyoming (1-6)
San Jose St. (5-2) at Fresno St. (4-3)
E. Washington (2-5) at Idaho (5-3)
Cincinnati (5-2) at Colorado (5-2)
Washington St. (6-1) at San Diego St. (3-3)
Nevada (3-5) at Hawaii (2-5)

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions
BASKETBALL
Women's National Basketball Association
WASHINGTON MYSTICS — Fired general manager Mike Thibault and coach Eric Thibault.
FOOTBALL
National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Reinstated OL Christian Jones from injured reserve. Signed QB Anthony Brown Jr. to the practice squad.
BALTIMORE RAVENS — Designated CB Jalyn Armour-Davis to return from injured reserve.
CAROLINA PANTHERS — Designated WR Adam Thielen and S Jordan Fuller to return from injured reserve and OLB D.J. Wonnum from the physically unable to perform list. Re-signed LB Chandler Wooten and DT T.J. Smith to the practice squad.
CHICAGO BEARS — Designated RB Travis Homer and OT Larry Borom to return from injured reserve.
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Designated G Wyatt Teller to return to practice.
DALLAS COWBOYS — Designated DT Jordan Phillips to return from injured reserve.
GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed LS Matt Orzech to a contract. Released DL Jonathan Ford.
HOUSTON TEXANS — Signed LB Devin White to a contract.
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Released K Spencer Shrader from the practice squad. Signed WR Ethan Fernea to the practice squad.
LOS ANGELES RAMS — Elevated CB Ahkello Witherspoon to the active roster.
MIAMI DOLPHINS — Designated QB Tua Tagovailoa to return from injured reserve. Signed QB C.J. Beathard and WR Tarik Black to the practice squad. Released TE Hayden Rucci from the practice squad.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Signed TE Robert Tonyan to the practice squad.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Signed LB Keshawn Banks to the practice squad.
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed OL Jack Driscoll to the active roster. Signed WR Parris Campbell and DT Siaki Ika to the practice squad.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Placed WR Brandon Aiyuk on injured reserve. Signed DL Evan Anderson, OL Dieter Eiselen and WR Malik Turner to the active roster.
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Traded LB Jerome Baker and a fourth-round draft pick to Tennessee in exchange for LB Ernest Jones IV. Designated OT Abraham Lucas and George Fant to return to practice. Signed CB Damarion Williams to the practice squad. Claimed LB Josh Ross off waivers from Baltimore. Placed T Stone Forsythe on injured reserve.
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Placed WR Chris Godwin on injured reserve. Signed WR Ryan Miller and P Tretton Gill to the active roster. Signed WR Dennis Houston to the practice squad.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League
COLORADO AVALANCHE — Reassigned F Calum Ritchie to Colorado (AHL). Recalled F Chris Wagner from Colorado.
ST. LOUIS BLUES — Reinstated C Oskar Sundqvist from injured reserve.
SEATTLE KRaken — Reassigned D Cale Fleury to Coachella Valley (AHL).
TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Waived LW Conor Sheary.
UTAH HOCKEY CLUB — Sent Patrik Koch to Tucson (AHL).
SOCCER
Major League Soccer
AUSTIN FC — Re-signed D Brendan Hines-Ike to one-year contract extension.
PHILADELPHIA UNION — Signed M Quinn Sullivan to a three-year contract.

GOLF

Maybank Championship
Thursday
At TPC Kuala Lumpur - West Course
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Purse: \$3 million
Yardage: 6,536; Par: 72
First Round

Mao Saigo	30-33—63	-9
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Hae-Ran Ryu	33-31—64	-8
Wei-Ling Hsu	32-33—65	-7
Ruixin Liu	33-32—65	-7
Na Rin An	32-34—66	-6
Kristen Gillman	32-34—66	-6
Minami Katsu	35-31—66	-6
Yuka Saso	35-31—66	-6
Maja Stark	32-34—66	-6

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL							
AMERICAN CONFERENCE							
East							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Buffalo	5	2	0	.714	199	136	
Miami	2	4	0	.333	70	129	
N.Y. Jets	2	5	0	.286	128	145	
New England	1	6	0	.143	99	175	

South							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Houston	5	2	0	.714	165	159	
Indianapolis	4	3	0	.571	155	149	
Jacksonville	2	5	0	.286	145	194	
Tennessee	1	5	0	.167	106	144	

North							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Baltimore	5	2	0	.714	218	180	
Pittsburgh	5	2	0	.714	161	101	
Cincinnati	3	4	0	.429	178	166	
Cleveland	1	6	0	.143	109	162	

West							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Kansas City	6	0	0	1.000	146	103	
Denver	4	3	0	.571	145	106	
L.A. Chargers	3	3	0	.500	106	83	
Las Vegas	2	5	0	.286	124	183	

NATIONAL CONFERENCE							
East							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Washington	5	2	0	.714	218	152	
Philadelphia	4	2	0	.667	134	115	
Dallas	3	3	0	.500	126	168	
N.Y. Giants	2	5	0	.286	99	149	

South							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Atlanta	4	3	0	.571	163	169	
Tampa Bay	4	3	0	.571	209	182	
New Orleans	2	5	0	.286	177	180	
Carolina	1	6	0	.143	110	243	

North							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Detroit	5	1	0	.833	182	120	
Minnesota	5	1	0	.833	168	107	
Green Bay	5	2	0	.714	186	143	
Chicago	4	2	0	.667	148	101	

West							
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Seattle	4	3	0	.571	180	164	
Arizona	3	4	0	.429	150	178	
San Francisco	3	4	0	.429	180	158	
L.A. Rams	2	4	0	.333	114	154	

Thursday's game
Minnesota at L.A. Rams

Sunday's games
Arizona at Miami
Atlanta at Tampa Bay
Baltimore at Cleveland
Green Bay at Jacksonville
Indianapolis at Houston
N.Y. Jets at New England
Philadelphia at Cincinnati
Tennessee at Detroit
Buffalo at Seattle
New Orleans at L.A. Chargers
Carolina at Denver
Chicago at Washington
Kansas City at Las Vegas
Dallas at San Francisco

Monday's game
N.Y. Giants at Pittsburgh
Thursday, Oct. 31
Houston at N.Y. Jets
Sunday, Nov. 3

Dallas at Atlanta
Denver at Baltimore
L.A. Chargers at Cleveland
Las Vegas at Cincinnati
Miami at Buffalo
New England at Tennessee
New Orleans at Carolina
Washington at N.Y. Giants
Chicago at Arizona
Jacksonville at Philadelphia
Detroit at Green Bay
L.A. Rams at Seattle
Indianapolis at Minnesota
Open: Pittsburgh, San Francisco
Monday, Nov. 4
Tampa Bay at Kansas City

PRO HOCKEY

NHL										
EASTERN CONFERENCE										
Atlantic Division										
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA			
Florida	8	4	3	1	9	24	29			
Tampa Bay	6	4	2	0	8	26	20			
Ottawa	6	4	2	0	8	22	19			
Toronto	7	4	3	0	8	22	19			
Boston	7	3	3	1	7	21	24			
Buffalo	8	3	4	1	7	25	28			
Detroit	6	3	3	0	6	15	17			
Montreal	7	2	4	1	5	18	28			

Metropolitan Division										
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA			
N.Y. Rangers	6	5	0	1	11	31	12			
New Jersey	9	5	3	1	11	32	28			
Washington	6	5	1	0	10	26	18			
Pittsburgh	8	3	4	1	7	27	35			
Carolina	5	3	2	0	6	15	13			
Columbus	6	3	3	0	6	24	20			
N.Y. Islanders	6	2	2	2	6	14	15			
Philadelphia	7	1	5	1	3	17	31			

WESTERN CONFERENCE										
Central Division										
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA			
Winnipeg	6	6	0	0	12	27	10			
Minnesota	6	4	0	2	10	20	12			
Dallas	7	5	2	0	10	20	13			
Utah	7	4	2	1	9	22	24			
St. Louis	7	4	3	0	8	19	20			
Colorado	7	3	4	0	6	24	31			
Chicago	7	2	4	1	5	18	24			
Nashville	6	1	5	0	2	14	23			

Pacific Division										
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA			
Calgary	6	5	0	1	11	24	15			
Vegas	7	4	2	1	9	29	21			
Vancouver	6	3	1	2	8	20	18			
Los Angeles	7	3	2	2	8	22	25			
Seattle	7	4	3	0	8	24	20			
Anaheim	6	3	2	1	7	15	16			
Edmonton	7	2	4	1	5	14	27			
San Jose	7	0	5	2	2	13	29			

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Wednesday's games
Washington 6, Philadelphia 3
Thursday's games
Dallas at Boston
Florida at N.Y. Rangers
Minnesota at Tampa Bay
New Jersey at Detroit
St. Louis at Toronto
Carolina at Calgary
Colorado at Utah
Winnipeg at Seattle
San Jose at Los Angeles

Friday's games
Ottawa at Vegas
N.Y. Islanders at New Jersey
Nashville at Chicago
Pittsburgh at Edmonton

Saturday's games
Detroit at Buffalo
Minnesota at Philadelphia
Utah at Los Angeles
Anaheim at N.Y. Rangers
St. Louis at Montreal
Toronto at Boston
Washington at Tampa Bay
Winnipeg at Calgary
Florida at N.Y. Islanders
Chicago at Dallas
Columbus at Nashville
Carolina at Seattle
Pittsburgh at Vancouver
San Jose at Vegas

Sunday's games
Edmonton at Detroit
Anaheim at New Jersey
Montreal at Philadelphia
Ottawa at Colorado

TENNIS

Erste Bank Open
Wednesday
At Wiener Stadthalle
Vienna
Purse: Euro 2,470,310
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Men's Singles
Round of 32
Tomas Machac, Czechia, def. Fabian Marozsan, Hungary, 7-6 (5), 6-1.
Grigor Dimitrov (3), Bulgaria, def. Zhang Zhizhen, China, 6-4, 7-5.
Karen Khachanov, Russia, def. Thiago Seyboth Wild, Brazil, 6-2, 6-4.
Brandon Nakashima, United States, def. Tommy Paul (4), United States, 6-4, 6-4.
Round of 16
Alexander Zverev (1), Germany, def. Marcos Giron, United States, 6-2, 7-5.
Matteo Berrettini, Italy, def. Frances Tiafoe (5), United States, 6-3, 6-7 (6), 6-3.

PRO BASKETBALL

MLS playoffs
Wild Card Eastern Conference
Tuesday: Montreal 2, Atlanta 2, Atlanta advances 5-4 on penalty kicks
Western Conference
Wednesday: Vancouver 5, Portland 0
First Round Best-of-three x-if necessary Eastern Conference Cincinnati vs. New York City
Monday, Oct. 28: at Cincinnati
Saturday, Nov. 2: at New York City
x-Sunday, Nov. 9: at Cincinnati
Orlando vs. Charlotte FC

Friday: at Orlando
Friday,

NFL

Pearsall can shine with Aiyuk out

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The plan to ease rookie receiver Ricky Pearsall back into form as he worked his way back from being shot in the chest didn't last long for the San Francisco 49ers.

With Brandon Aiyuk out for the season after tearing ligaments in his right knee Sunday, Pearsall quickly goes from a luxury depth option on San Francisco's offense to one of the key pieces.

"There are definitely a lot of opportunities for us," Pearsall said Wednesday about him and fellow rookie receiver Jacob Cowing. "Obviously, it sucks seeing a guy like B.A. go down — one of our leaders on the team, big playmakers and one of my close buddies who I've known for a really long time. It hurt my heart to see him go down. ... Now we have a lot of rookies who need to step up like myself."

The Niners are short-handed when it comes to playmakers on offense with Aiyuk out for the season and All-Pro running back Christian McCaffrey being sidelined by Achilles tendinitis that has kept him out since August.

The status of two of the team's other top receivers is also in question this week with Deebo Samuel missing practice Wednesday, a day after being released from the hospital after spending two nights there with pneumonia, and Jauan Jennings out with a hip injury that could force him to miss a second straight game.

Pearsall had three catches for 21 yards in his debut, while playing 48 snaps on offense in a loss to the Kansas City Chiefs. There were also some mix-ups, including a bad route he ran on his first target of the game that went for an incompletion late in the first half.

"It was just a communication error," Pearsall said. "Obviously, we haven't had many reps at that together, me being out. I was just a few yards too deep. I can cut that a little shorter, and the ball would've been right on my chest."

After getting most of his practice time at the "X" receiver spot that lines up on the line of scrimmage, Pearsall got opportunities to play out of the slot and off the



EAKIN HOWARD/AP

San Francisco wide receiver Ricky Pearsall had three catches for 21 yards in his NFL debut last week against Kansas City. The 49ers might have to count on Pearsall for more this week because of injuries.



**Dallas Cowboys (3-3)
at San Francisco 49ers (3-4)**
AFN-Sports
1 a.m. Monday CET
9 a.m. Monday JKT

line Sunday because of all the injuries.

Coach Kyle Shanahan said he was pleased with how Pearsall performed in that role and hopes to build on it this week when San Francisco plays Dallas.

"I think he's wired to run every route as a receiver," Shanahan

said. "Ricky is a plug-and-play with all routes. It's not like he has a small route tree and can only do certain things, so he can run the whole tree."

That was one of the traits that led the 49ers to draft Pearsall in the first round in April with the 31st pick. He missed the majority of training camp with injuries to his hamstring and shoulder, but was on track to be ready for the opener before he was shot in the chest in San Francisco's Union Square area during a robbery attempt Aug. 31.

He was hospitalized overnight but avoided damage to any organs and nerves and was back working out at the team facility the following week. He returned to practice for the first time last week before making a debut that he hopes to

build on in the coming weeks.

"I saw a lot of room for improvement," he said. "Obviously, being out of training camp and this period of time for the season, there's a lot of opportunity for me to get better. I just have to go back and do that and grind and do what I normally do and work hard."

Notes: The Niners promoted DT Evan Anderson from the practice squad to fill Aiyuk's spot on the roster after he went on IR. ... TE George Kittle (foot), DL Kevin Givens (groin), S George Odum (knee) and LT Trent Williams (veteran day) all missed practice. ... DL Nick Bosa (elbow), RB Jordan Mason (shoulder) and WR Chris Conley (ankle) were limited. ... San Francisco signed WR Malik Turner and OL Dieter Eiselen to the practice squad.



STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH/AP

Carolina Panthers quarterback Bryce Young was benched earlier this season after getting off to another slow start.

QB Young set to start again with Dalton hurt

By STEVE REED
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Bryce Young is back in as Carolina's starting quarterback.

Panthers coach Dave Canales said Young would start Sunday against the Denver Broncos after Andy Dalton was diagnosed with a sprained thumb on his right throwing hand sustained during a car crash Tuesday in Charlotte.

Dalton did not practice Wednesday and is listed as day to day. There is a chance he could be the No. 2 quarterback this week depending on his recovery.

"Bryce has been an absolute stud through this whole process. He has been engaged," Canales said. "He has been involved in what we were doing and is excited about the opportunity."

Young said Canales has not told him who will be the team's starting QB moving forward if he plays well this week.

The start will give Young, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2023 draft, another opportunity to prove himself before the Nov. 5 trade deadline. He is 2-16 as an NFL starter and was benched two games into the season because of his ineffectiveness.

He was replaced by Dalton, who won his first start but has lost four straight since.

"I'm fired up for him to have another opportunity and just get in there and play some football," Canales said of Young.

On AFN



**Atlanta Falcons (4-3)
at Tampa Bay Buccaneers (4-3)**
AFN-Sports2
6 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT



**Philadelphia Eagles (4-2)
at Cincinnati Bengals (3-4)**
AFN-Atlantic
6 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT



**Indianapolis Colts (4-3)
at Houston Texans (5-2)**
AFN-Sports
6 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT



**Buffalo Bills (5-2)
at Seattle Seahawks (4-3)**
AFN-Sports2
9 p.m. Sunday CET
5 a.m. Monday JKT



**Kansas City Chiefs (6-0)
at Las Vegas Raiders (2-5)**
AFN-Atlantic
9:25 p.m. Sunday CET
5:25 a.m. Monday JKT

NFL/NBA



NAM Y. HUH/AP
Chicago Bears quarterback Caleb Williams has led the team to a 4-2 start after being selected first overall in the 2024 NFL Draft.

Possible matchup with Daniels not fazing Williams

BY ANDREW SELIGMAN
Associated Press

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Caleb Williams wasn't getting caught up in any hype over a potential matchup with Jayden Daniels or playing in his hometown.

The No. 1 overall draft pick comes out of Chicago's bye looking to build on a string of dominant performances when the Bears visit the Washington Commanders on Sunday. And that's what matters to him.

"My job is to go win games on Thursdays, Sundays and Mondays. That's it," he said Wednesday.

The matchup between quarterbacks drafted with the first two picks this year is no sure thing after Daniels suffered a rib injury in a 40-7 rout of Carolina.

He missed practice Wednesday, casting more doubt on whether he'll be available this week.

Williams, who grew up in Maryland and Washington, hopes Daniels is able to play. Either way, he figures they'll see plenty of each other in the coming years.

"Obviously he's on the same side, the NFC side, so I'll be seeing him a good amount I would say," Williams said. "We'll see from this game and in the future. I think it's going to be great for us and the battle between us is what y'all want to kind of talk about. But my job is to go out there and win the game for the Chicago Bears."

With three straight wins and a 4-2 record, the Bears come out of their bye hoping to pick up where they left off. Williams was starting to look the part of a franchise



Chicago Bears (4-2) at Washington Commanders (5-2)
AFN-Sports
9:25 p.m. Sunday CET
5:25 a.m. Monday JKT

quarterback and the offense appeared to be coming together after a shaky start, helping Chicago beat the Los Angeles Rams, Carolina and Jacksonville Jaguars.

It's added up to their best start since the 2020 team was 5-1 on the way to an 8-8 finish. If they beat Washington (5-2), the Bears will have their first four-game win streak since 2018 NFC North championship season.

The teams the Bears have beaten, including Tennessee in the season opener, are a combined 6-20. Their losses were to Indianapolis (4-3) and Houston (5-2).

The Bears struggled through their first three games. Some veteran players told offensive coordinator Shane Waldron they wanted to be coached harder following a loss at Indianapolis in Week 3. Receiver DJ Moore said there has been a noticeable difference, particularly in walk-throughs.

"Walk-throughs got real detailed," he said. "If you're not out there doing the right thing, it will be seen and we're going to re-do it and that's what really has been the difference right now."

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	1	0	01.000	—
Brooklyn	0	1	0.000	1
Philadelphia	0	1	0.000	1
New York	0	1	0.000	1
Toronto	0	1	0.000	1
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	1	0	01.000	—
Atlanta	1	0	01.000	—
Charlotte	1	0	01.000	—
Washington	0	0	0.000	½
Miami	0	1	0.000	1
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	1	0	01.000	—
Milwaukee	1	0	01.000	—
Cleveland	1	0	01.000	—
Chicago	0	1	0.000	1
Detroit	0	1	0.000	1
Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	1	0	01.000	—
New Orleans	1	0	01.000	—
Dallas	0	0	0.000	½
San Antonio	0	0	0.000	½
Houston	0	1	0.000	1
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	0	0	0.000	—
Denver	0	0	0.000	—
Minnesota	0	1	0.000	½
Portland	0	1	0.000	½
Utah	0	1	0.000	½
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	1	0	01.000	—
Golden State	1	0	01.000	—
L.A. Lakers	1	0	01.000	—
Sacramento	0	0	0.000	½
L.A. Clippers	0	1	0.000	1

Tuesday's games	
Boston 132, New York 109	L.A. Lakers 110, Minnesota 103
Wednesday's games	
Indiana 115, Detroit 109	Cleveland 136, Toronto 106
Milwaukee 124, Philadelphia 109	Orlando 116, Miami 97
Atlanta 120, Brooklyn 116	New Orleans 123, Chicago 111
Charlotte 110, Houston 105	Memphis 126, Utah 124
Golden State 139, Portland 104	Phoenix 116, L.A. Clippers 113, OT
Thursday's games	
Boston at Washington	San Antonio at Dallas
Minnesota at Sacramento	Oklahoma City at Denver
Friday's games	
Brooklyn at Orlando	Philadelphia at Toronto
Charlotte at Atlanta	Detroit at Cleveland
Indiana at New York	Chicago at Milwaukee
Memphis at Houston	Golden State at Utah
New Orleans at Portland	Phoenix at L.A. Lakers
Saturday's games	
L.A. Clippers at Denver	Boston at Detroit
Cleveland at Washington	Miami at Charlotte
Oklahoma City at Chicago	Orlando at Memphis
Toronto at Minnesota	Houston at San Antonio
Dallas at Phoenix	Sacramento at L.A. Lakers
Sunday's games	
Philadelphia at Indiana	Milwaukee at Brooklyn
New Orleans at Portland	Atlanta at Oklahoma City
L.A. Clippers at Golden State	
Monday's games	
Indiana at Orlando	Washington at Atlanta
Milwaukee at Boston	Detroit at Miami
Cleveland at New York	Denver at Toronto
Chicago at Memphis	Houston at San Antonio
Utah at Dallas	L.A. Lakers at Phoenix
Portland at Sacramento	

Healthy LaMelo Ball plays like all-star he was before injuries

BY KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

HOUSTON — LaMelo Ball looked like the superstar that nagging ankle injuries have kept him from being for most of the last two seasons in Charlotte's opener Wednesday night.

Playing in a regular-season game for the first time since Jan. 26, Ball had 34 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds to lead the Hornets to a 110-105 win over Houston.

Ball made four 3-pointers and all 10 of his free throws to help Charlotte to the victory.

The Hornets are counting on Ball to be on the court a lot more than he has been in recent years as they attempt to end an eight-year playoff drought.

He was the third overall pick in the 2020 draft and was named Rookie of the Year that season before making the All-Star Game in his second year. But soon he began to struggle with ankle injuries and was limited to just 58 games combined in the past two seasons because of them.

Now that he seems to have put those problems behind him, first-year coach Charles Lee was asked what a healthy Ball does for his team.

Lee exhaled deeply and smiled before answering.

"He's like the engine for us," he said. "If we have a healthy LaMelo Ball, we're going to do a lot of really

good things because I know that he's going to continue to grow and he helps everyone around him continue to be better, too."

The 23-year-old was all smiles after the game and reflected on being back on the court after his tough stretch.

"It's blessings, just doing what we love," he said. "We grew up playing basketball, so to be able to still do it for your living is an amazing feeling."

Lee said that Ball has been consistent in his commitment to being great since their first phone call after he was hired and raved about his young star.

"He wants to be someone who earns the trust of his teammates and his coaches, and wants to be a winner and wants to impact winning," Lee said. "So I told him what I think is going to help us impact winning and I think that you saw tonight him implementing that with some of his defensive efforts, some of the multiple efforts that he made and then offensively playing with the pass and driving. So I'm all around excited for him."

The Hornets trailed by as many as 18 points Wednesday before surging late to rally for the victory. Ball was encouraged by how the team came together after struggling early in the game.

"First game, you want to just come out and set a tone," he said. "So we had to get that first win."



ERIC CHRISTIAN SMITH/AP
Charlotte Hornets guard LaMelo Ball shoots against the Rockets during the first half Wednesday in Houston. The Hornets won 110-105.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

SEC QB's Heisman hopes have tanked in league play


BY MARK LONG
Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — South-eastern Conference quarterbacks may have played themselves out of the Heisman Trophy race for now. Well, maybe not Vanderbilt's Diego Pavia. But he could be next. Alabama's Jalen Milroe has more interceptions than touch-down passes in four league games. Georgia's Carson Beck has leveled off against SEC competition, get-ting picked off eight times in his last four outings, including three at Alabama and three more at Texas last week. Mississippi's Jaxson Dart, Tex-as' Quinn Ewers, Tennessee's Nico Iamaleava and LSU's Garrett Nussmeier also have cooled con-siderably since conference games began.


Missouri's Brady Cook is the lone SEC starter without an inter-ception in league play, but his com-pletion percentage has dipped nearly 20 points heading into Sat-urday's test at No. 15 Alabama. No one should be surprised con-sidering the powerhouse SEC has been known more for its stout de-fenses for decades. But four of the past five Heisman winners — LSU quarterback Jayden Daniels (2023), Alabama quarterback Bryce Young (2021), Alabama re-ceiver DeVonta Smith (2020) and LSU quarterback Joe Burrow (2019) — came from the SEC. Now, though, it looks like a long shot for any SEC player to even land an invitation to the Downtown Athletic Club in early December. The last time that happened was in 2017. According to BetMGM Sports-book, Beck, Ewers and Milroe were the preseason Heisman fa-vorites. Their recent turnover-laden performances have left them out-side the top five, now trailing Boise State running back Ashton Jeanty, Miami quarterback Cam Ward, Oregon quarterback Dillon Ga-briel, Colorado two-way star Tra-vis Hunter and Clemson quarter-back Cade Klubnik. Not surprisingly, SEC coaches are defending their QBs. "In Jalen's case, I know how he takes it all on himself," Alabama coach Kalen DeBoer said. "But there's other things that we can all do to help support him and keep him from being in those tough spots. ... We need to come through and help him a little bit more, too. And just like you'd guess, he can continue to improve as well." Georgia coach Kirby Smart was even more protective of Beck. "He had probably eight or nine drops," Smart said. "And that's hard on the quarterback psycho-



Georgia quarterback Carson Beck fumbles as he is hit by Alabama linebacker Qua Russaw on Sept. 28. Beck has thrown eight interceptions in his past four games, all against SEC opponents.



No. 21 Missouri (6-1)
at No. 15 Alabama (5-2)
AFN-Sports
Saturday 9:30 p.m. CET
Sunday 4:30 a.m. JKT



No. 8 LSU (6-1)
at No. 14 Texas A&M (6-1)
AFN-Sports2
Sunday 1:30 a.m. CET
Sunday 8:30 a.m. JKT

logically. When you start a game and you have drops, sometimes it affects you. I'm not saying he played perfect. ... I think he played pretty good. But everybody will look at stats and everybody will look at other things and they'll have things to say, and we'll keep on playing with Carson Beck." No one suggested benching Beck. Oklahoma and Texas can't say the same about their starters. The Sooners already switched from sophomore Jackson Arnold to freshman Michael Hawkins Jr. and now back to Arnold. They also fired play-caller Seth Littrell this week amid the team's offensive struggles. The Longhorns briefly benched Ewers during a sluggish start against Georgia and have highly touted Arch Manning patiently waiting his turn. Ewers, a third-year starter who led Texas to the College Football Playoff last season, hasn't looked the same since a strained abdomen sidelined him for 2½ games. "It's there a little bit, but I think that's just how injuries go," Ewers said after losing to Georgia. "You're going to feel it, whether it's just my mind thinking about it too much or it's just there a little bit. It's not a big issue or anything." Ewers has thrown for 410 yards,

with three TDs and two INTs, in two SEC games. "We have confidence and belief in him," Texas coach Steve Sarkisian said. "I think he's going to come out and play really good foot-ball for us here in the second half of the season." Most of the SEC's starting QBs are looking for similar, second-half surges. Just six weeks ago, Milroe, Dart, Beck, Iamaleava, Ewers and Nussmeier were con-sidered among the top-10 betting fa-vorites for the Heisman. Even more recently, Dart, Mil-roe and Iamaleava had single-digit odds. They've since faded into Heisman afterthoughts. Pavia, meanwhile, has yet to crack any Heisman lists. But the unlikely hero from Vanderbilt's epic upset of Alabama is now play-ing for a ranked team — the Com-modore are No. 25 in the latest AP college football poll — and could find himself in the postseason award mix if he beats No. 5 Texas, eighth-ranked LSU and No. 7 Ten-nessee down the stretch. "Every time I step on the field, I feel like I'm the best player on the field — every single time," Pavia said. It's about how all his QB coun-terparts felt before league play be-gan.



Boise State running back Ashton Jeanty leads the nation with 1,248 yards rushing and is among the favorites to win the Heisman Trophy.

Playoff hopes on line for Boise State, UNLV

BY MARK ANDERSON
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — If Friday night's game between No. 17 Boise State and UNLV had been played even a year ago, it would've been a nota-ble regional matchup. But because the College Foot-ball Playoff tripled in size to a 12-team field, the game now carries national implications. The winner takes a major step toward securing a spot in the playoff, which takes the five high-est-ranked conference cham-pions, guaranteeing space for a Group of Five program. "We know it's a big game," Re-bels coach Barry Odom said. "Don't run from it. Don't make it bigger than it needs to be, but un-derstand the moment that they've earned, they've created for not on-ly our program but our confe-rence. You look around the world of college football this week and in the top five games it's UNLV and Boise."

The Broncos (5-1, 2-0 Mountain West) have a little more margin for error for making the playoffs. Their only defeat was 37-34 to top-ranked Oregon on a last-second field goal, and a loss to UNLV could be made up by winning the conference championship. UNLV (6-1, 2-0) will have a nearly impossible task of trying to make the playoffs if the Rebels lose. Their loss was 44-41 in over-time to Syracuse on Oct. 4, which dropped the Rebels from their first ranking in team history. "I'm shocked they're not ranked in the Top 25," said Boise State coach Spencer Danielson, point-ing out UNLV won at Houston, Kansas and Oregon State. "They deserve that for sure." This game is not only an opportu-nity for the Broncos to make an im-pression on a national level, but al-so continue to push the Heisman Trophy case for Ashton Jeanty. He leads the nation with 1,248 yards rushing and averages 9.9 per carry.



No. 17 Boise State (5-1)
at UNLV (6-1)
AFN-Pacific
Saturday 4:30 a.m. CET
Saturday 11:30 a.m. JKT

BetMGM lists Jeanty as the 2-1 favorite to become the first player from outside a power conference since BYU quarterback Ty Detm-er in 1990 to hold college football's most coveted individual trophy. Odom used several words to de-scribe Jeanty, who averages 208 yards rushing per game, but found he couldn't come up with ade-quate words "to give him the re-spect of how great of a player he is. I don't know if there are any com-parisons. People have asked me to compare him to someone. I can't. He's unique."

Potential shootout

If the statistics are any indica-tion, this will be a high-scoring game. A sampling of the national rank-ings:

- Boise State is third in scoring offense (46.8-point average) and UNLV is fifth (43.6).
- The Broncos are second in rushing with a 289.8-yard average and the Rebels are fifth (251.4).
- Boise State's 523-yard offen-sive average is fourth.

A tough out

UNLV rallied to win at Kansas and Oregon State and came back to force overtime against Syra-cuse. "They're gritty," Danielson said. "You get something on them, they're going to stay in the fight. I respect that a lot."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Warren adds wrinkle to Penn State offense

By TRAVIS JOHNSON
Associated Press

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — Andy Kotelnicki has coached plenty of versatile players over the years. None of them could do what Penn State tight end Tyler Warren is doing.

The hulking 6-foot-6, 260-pound Warren lined up in nine different spots, went in motion seven times, blocked, carried the ball, caught the ball and pitched the ball all on No. 3 Penn State's first possession in an overtime win at Southern California on Oct. 12.

Later, in his FBS record-tying 17-catch performance against the Trojans, Warren was the fulcrum for another Kotelnicki original when he motioned to the center spot, snapped the ball, sliced his way into the end zone and beat a defender for a touchdown that sparked Penn State's comeback win.

Kotelnicki, in his first year as Penn State's offensive coordinator, called it a play he could've drawn up playing backyard football, only possible with a player of Warren's abilities and IQ.

"He's pretty special," Kotelnicki said. "Probably one of a kind in that sense. I'm really enjoying finding creative ways to get him the football and I appreciate his willingness to want to do creative things."

The Nittany Lions (6-0, 3-0 Big Ten) travel to Wisconsin (5-2, 3-1) on Saturday having shown a new Warren wrinkle nearly every



No. 3 Penn State (6-0)
at Wisconsin (5-2)
AFN-Atlantic
1:30 a.m. Sunday CET
8:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

week. As a result, Penn State ranks 10th nationally in total offense after finishing no better than 34th each of the previous three seasons and has set itself up to make a run at the Big Ten championship.

Kotelnicki's desire to get Warren the ball has played a big part.

The tight end leads Penn State with 40 catches for 513 yards and four touchdowns. He's also carried five times for 38 yards and a score, and has completed two passes for 26 yards and another touchdown.

Warren is on pace to surpass the year Georgia tight end Brock Bowers had in 2022, one of the greatest seasons by an FBS tight end. The Bulldogs won the national championship that season and Bowers finished with 63 catches for 942 yards and seven touchdowns in 15 games.

"I've been talking about him being the best tight end in college football, but the reality is he's now part of a conversation of one of the best players in all of college foot-



Penn State tight end Tyler Warren had 17 catches in an overtime win over Southern Cal on Oct. 12.

ball," Penn State coach James Franklin said.

Warren shrugs off the praise.

"One guy usually will make a play but there are so many things that go into it and 10 other guys that had to do something for that one guy to make a play, so that's just why I love football," Warren said. "It takes a team. It takes the guys around you and that's something I really enjoy."

Sure, Penn State's offensive line has been physical, running backs Kaytron Allen and Nick Singleton

have delivered big plays, and quarterback Drew Allar has shown command of Kotelnicki's offense from the start.

But they all know that Warren's unique ability to touch the ball in nearly any phase makes them one of the toughest groups for opponents to slow down.

When Kotelnicki first met Warren in the weeks leading up to spring practice, he was determined to test the depth of the senior's knowledge. Kotelnicki had seen a bunch of Warren's colle-

giate tape and his high school basketball reel, but he still wanted to know how much Warren really understood offensive concepts.

Also, could he throw the ball?

The quiet, humble Warren, who passed for 3,654 yards in high school, was almost incredulous.

"He's like, 'Coach, I was a high school quarterback,'" Kotelnicki said. "All this is possible because he has that background athletically, but two, because he just does everything right. He's a tell-you-once guy."

Transition rough for several former Pac-12 teams

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

Oregon has made a splash in its first Big Ten season but the other former Pac-12 teams are finding the transition far more difficult.

UCLA, USC and Washington are all sitting in the bottom half of their new conference's standings midway through the season and are collectively 4-10 in Big Ten play.

The Trojans and the Bruins, who were the first Pac-12 teams to announce they were leaving the conference before it fell apart in realignment in the summer of 2023, have just one Big Ten win apiece this season.

USC (3-4, 1-4) has dropped three straight, including last Saturday's 29-28 loss at Maryland. The Trojans have led in the fourth quarter of all seven of their games this season.

"We've had a myriad of different issues," coach Lincoln Riley said this week. "I think the reality is we've been in a lot of really close games, we've had some opportunities to separate in several of these games and we haven't. We've had some opportunities to close them.



Rutgers (4-3)
at Southern Cal (3-4)
AFN-Sports
5 a.m. Saturday CET
Noon Saturday JKT

We've had some unfortunate breaks, we'll call them, in several of these games, but we haven't been good enough to overcome those."

The Trojans, who opened the season with a win against LSU in Las Vegas and were ranked as high as No. 11 earlier in the season, have a chance to get back on track at home against Rutgers on Friday night.

Overall, the Big Ten's teams are 5-11 when traveling over multiple time zones. Collectively, USC, UCLA and Washington have just one conference win on the road.

The Huskies (4-3, 2-2) will play at No. 13 Indiana on Saturday in their

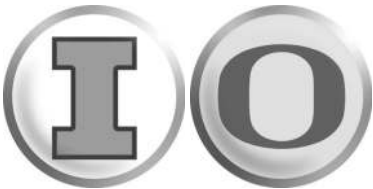


Washington (4-3)
at No. 13 Indiana (7-0)
AFN-Atlantic
6 p.m. Saturday CET
1 a.m. Sunday JKT

second road game played at 9 a.m. back home.

Washington won the Pac-12 championship and went on to play in the national championship game last season but subsequent turnover meant this was essentially a rebuilding year for the Huskies. Coach Jedd Fisch, in his first year with the Huskies, knew there would be highs and lows.

"There are so many new faces, new bodies, new people playing positions they've never played before, in atmospheres they've never played, in a conference we've never played in. There was going to be so much new that it was going to be



No. 20 Illinois (6-1)
at No. 1 Oregon (7-0)
AFN-Sports2
9:30 p.m. Saturday CET
4:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

impossible to suggest that it was going to look too different than it is right now," Fisch said.

UCLA (2-5, 1-4) snapped a five-game losing streak with a 35-32 victory at Rutgers last weekend, for the Bruins' first win in the new conference.

"I'm excited to get a Big Ten win but we have a few more games and I would like to become bowl eligible," Bruins coach DeShaun Foster said. "So we're just going to continue to play and hopefully we get there."

Interestingly, Oregon State and Washington State, the lone two remaining teams in the Pac-12 after

realignment, have both defeated Big Ten opponents this season. The Beavers beat Purdue and the Cougars beat Washington.

The outlier for the Pac-12-to-Big Ten teams is the Ducks, ranked No. 1 in the nation for the first time since 2012, and boosted by a victory two weeks ago at home over then-No. 2 Ohio State.

"Entering this conference, there's some new challenges that are presented. Going through the summer scouting reports, you realize that some of these teams that we are going to get to play, and it's really exciting. But I'll tell you here at Oregon, we chase and attack those challenges," Dan Lanning predicted before the season kicked off.

Oregon (7-0, 4-0) got off to a shaky start in lackluster nonconference wins against Idaho and Boise State that now seem like anomalies. Last weekend on the road the Ducks shut out the Boilermakers 35-0. This week they host No. 20 Illinois.

It's likely Oregon will figure into the expanded College Football Playoff field barring disaster.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Unbeaten Navy faces test vs. Notre Dame

By TOM CANAVAN
Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — It took Navy five years, five wins to start the season and a second-year coach to get back into the AP Top 25.

That No. 24 ranking could be on the line Saturday when the Midshipmen (6-0) face No. 12 Notre Dame (6-1) at MetLife Stadium in the New Jersey Meadowlands sports complex.

“It’s a great opportunity for our team and our program,” Navy coach Brian Newberry said. “These are the kind of games you want to play in. It’s a great thing about coming to school here at Navy is you get to play a team like Notre Dame every year: a big game on national stage like that. That’s what you want.”

Beating Notre Dame will be a big ask for Navy, which lost 42-3 to the Irish in Dublin in August 2023. BetMGM Sportsbook has made Notre Dame a 12½-point favorite in this 97th meeting in a series that dates to 1927.



Nick Wass/AP

Navy players celebrates their win over Charlotte by singing their alma mater “Navy Blue and Gold” last Saturday in Annapolis, Md.

“We know who we are and what we’re able to do, and we have to control that,” Navy quarterback Blake Horvath said. “There’s nothing that Notre Dame can do that will change who we are. We can beat ourselves and that’s for sure and that’s something we haven’t done so far this year.”

Notre Dame coach Marcus Freeman said the Irish are playing

an opponent that vastly improved from last season. The Midshipmen are averaging 44.8 points and 435.8 total yards, including 274.8 rushing.

“I love it,” said Freeman, whose team beat Georgia Tech 31-13 last weekend. “We’re looking forward to a great challenge. To play a 6-0 team, as the head coach you’d much rather do that than play a



No. 12 Notre Dame (6-1)
vs. No. 24 Navy (6-0)
At East Rutherford, N.J.
AFN-Sports
6 p.m. Saturday CET
2 a.m. Sunday JKT

team that’s 0-6, because it doesn’t take much to motivate your guys.”

Navy is just about as motivated. “We can’t treat this like it’s the Super Bowl,” senior linebacker Kyle Jacob said. “It’s the next game.”

Everyone knows the Super Bowl for Navy will be Dec. 14 against Army at the Washington Commanders’ home stadium in Landover, Md.. The teams, each 6-0 for the first time since 1926, could also meet in the American Athletic Conference title game

eight days earlier in either Annapolis or West Point.

Notre Dame knows it is the biggest game on essentially every opponent’s schedule. And while the list of longtime Irish rivals includes matchups with schools such as Michigan, Purdue, Southern California and Stanford, the one with Navy carries a different feel.

That’s not because these teams have met on the football field every year since 1927, except the pandemic 2020 season. This one has been played in a variety of locations, including Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, San Diego, Cleveland and South Bend, Ind.

Meanwhile, Charlotte coach Biff Poggi said after his team’s 51-17 loss at Navy that Horvath deserved Heisman Trophy consideration. There is still a long way to go before that’s a possibility, but Horvath and Alabama’s Jalen Milroe are the only players in Football Bowl Subdivision with 10 touchdowns each rushing and passing.

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GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP

The Yankees’ Giancarlo Stanton celebrates hitting a two-run home run in Game 5 of the ALCS. Stanton’s batting gloves and elbow pad are accented in the Yankees’ new adopted color: Statue of Liberty green.

Minting a new vibe

Image-conscious Yankees adopt accent color

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — These Yankees have minted a new vibe going into their first World Series since 2009.

Baseball’s most tradition-bound team, with a grandiose granite-and-limestone stadium and pin-striped home uniforms that have hardly changed since 1936, has added a flamboyant flash to its accessories: Statue of Liberty green.

“Been kind of looking for a little accent color and I think the Statue of Liberty and what it represents in the city and the state, it’s a good one,” said captain Aaron Judge, who started the color craze.

New York remains the major leagues’ most conservatively dressed club in an era marked by expressions of individuality — Yankees players remain forbidden from long hair or beards under a policy owner George Steinbrenner issued in 1976. But whether its Jazz Chisholm Jr. and Alex Verdugo wearing glitzy chains, or Juan Soto walking up to a dembow hit titled after his signature “Soto Shuffle,” this year’s team isn’t as stodgy as the Yankees of yesteryear.

Up and down the lineup, nothing expresses that quite like all the mint green accents. It’s on cleats, chest protectors, batting gloves and sliding mitts, along with wrist and elbow guards. This is one team happy to be told it looks like statues — at least sartorially.

Judge is the Yankees’ ultimate influencer, and if he goes green, the rest of the team follows.

Reliever Jake Cousins remem-

Scoreboard

World Series
(Best-of-seven)
x-if necessary
N.Y. Yankees vs. L.A. Dodgers

Friday: N.Y. Yankees (Cole 8-5) at L.A. Dodgers (Flaherty 13-7), **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m., Saturday CET; 9 a.m. Saturday JKT**
Saturday: N.Y. Yankees (TBD) at L.A. Dodgers (Yamamoto 7-2), **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m. Sunday CET; 9 a.m. Sunday JKT**
Monday, Oct. 28: at N.Y. Yankees, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Tuesday CET; 9 a.m. Tuesday JKT**
Tuesday, Oct. 29: at N.Y. Yankees, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Wednesday CET; 9 a.m. Wednesday JKT**
x-Wednesday, Oct. 30: at N.Y. Yankees, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Thursday CET; 9 a.m. Thursday JKT**
x-Friday, Nov. 1: at L.A. Dodgers, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Saturday CET; 9 a.m. Saturday JKT**
x-Saturday, Nov. 2: at L.A. Dodgers, **AFN-Sports, a.m. Sunday CET; 9 a.m. Sunday JKT**

bered joining up with the Yankees at the team hotel in Phoenix after he was acquired on March 31, the fourth day of the season.

“I got on the bus, went to the back, just kind of said, ‘What’s up?’ to everybody and sat there in silence,” Cousins said. “And when we pulled into the stadium — Judge sits at the very front — and we got off the bus, and Judge got off first. He waited off on the side for me and I was the last guy off the bus and Judge was there waiting for me, like, ‘Hey, man, welcome to the team. If you need anything, I’ll help you out.’ That just shows his true leadership.”

Now 32 and likely to win his second AL MVP Award, Judge leads the Yankees into the World Series starting Friday at the Los Angeles Dodgers. He signed with the Yankees in 2013, made his big league

debut three years later and in December 2022 was appointed the team’s first captain since Derek Jeter.

“I’ve been in the Yankees organization for a while and I just felt like that was what I saw the veteran guys do, and I just wanted to be a part of that,” Judge said. “I try to continue to do that to this day and try to show our younger guys the same thing, ‘How you doing around here?’ because the quicker we get these guys feeling comfortable with us, feel like they’re a part of this team, the better they’re going to be playing, the better they’re going to help us win games.”

Yankees manager Aaron Boone cites a togetherness that developed when players started reporting to the minor league complex in Tampa, Fla., last January, well before spring training. Five of the 26 players on the active roster for the AL Championship Series clincher were not with the Yankees when spring training started and acclimated after they arrived.

Chisholm has added to the exuberance since he was acquired from Miami on July 27. The infielder is co-owner of his glove company, Absolutely Ridiculous Innovation for Athletes (ARIA), and a staffer traveled to Boston with appropriately hued gear for his Yankees debut at Fenway Park on July 28.

“Brings a lot of swag to the park every day and energy — kind of a light and a smile,” manager Boone said. “He’s hugged our room and they’ve hugged him back.

Role: Torres getting on base pivotal for Yankees

FROM PAGE 48

Leading off

Yankees: Second baseman Gleyber Torres, who can become a free agent this fall, is playing inspired ball in October after looking lackadaisical at times the past few years. His .400 on-base percentage from the leadoff spot in nine postseason games has been critical to New York’s offensive production, forcing opposing pitchers to face the likes of Soto, Judge and ALCS MVP Giancarlo Stanton with runners aboard. That leaves less margin for error and means fewer opportunities to work around any of the big sluggers.

Dodgers: Ohtani has struck out 17 times in his first postseason, but the \$700 million superstar has scored 12 runs in 11 games. He’s batting .286 with three homers, 10 RBIs and a .934 OPS. He homered on consecutive swings at Citi Field in the NLCS, including a leadoff shot in Game 4. What he hasn’t done yet is steal a base, after swiping 59 bags during the regular season to go with his 54 homers, making him the first major leaguer with a 50-50 season. The Yankees have a few left-handers they can use to try to neutralize Ohtani, including starter Carlos Rodón, relievers Tim Hill and Tim Mayza — and Nestor Cortes if he returns from an elbow injury as anticipated.

Who’s on first?

Yankees: After missing the Division Series against Kansas City because of two fractured fingers on his right hand, first baseman Anthony Rizzo returned in the AL Championship Series versus Cleveland and batted .429 (6-for-14) with a double and two walks. The 35-year-old Rizzo has played in 54 postseason games and won a World Series ring with the 2016 Chicago Cubs.

Dodgers: Hard to know what Freddie Freeman can provide even after six days off going into Game 1. The popular first baseman has been playing with a badly sprained right ankle that caused him to miss three NL playoff games, including two of the final three in the NLCS against the Mets. Los Angeles is averaging 9.3 runs per game without him in October. Can that possibly continue? Freeman, an eight-time All-Star and the 2020 NL MVP, is batting .219 with one RBI and no extra-base hits during the postseason. If he sits, the flexible Dodgers could again move Max Muncy from third base to first and put Kiké Hernández at third.

Short story

Yankees: Gold Glove shortstop

Anthony Volpe had nine hits and eight walks for a .459 on-base percentage during the AL playoffs — a huge improvement over his .288 career mark in two major league seasons. Volpe’s newfound patience at the plate toward the bottom of the order has helped turn the lineup over and provide RBI chances for the hitters at the top.

Dodgers: Tommy Edman was acquired from St. Louis in late July and played in only 37 games this season because of wrist surgery and a sprained ankle. Filling in at shortstop for injured Miguel Rojas, the switch-hitter found himself in the cleanup spot a couple of times during the NLCS — an unusual choice at 5-foot-10 and 193 pounds with 59 regular-season homers in six big league seasons. But boy did he deliver. Edman batted .407 with a home run, 11 RBIs and a 1.022 OPS to earn NLCS MVP honors. All-Star catcher Will Smith and slugging outfielder Teoscar Hernández didn’t get going against the Mets until Game 6. And with Freeman struggling or sidelined throughout the series, Edman’s at-bats behind Ohtani and Betts were pivotal. Maybe they will be again.

Arms race

Yankees: New York’s rotation is lined up with Cole, the reigning AL Cy Young Award winner, likely followed by Rodón, Clarke Schmidt and rookie Luis Gil. Yankees manager Aaron Boone also likes his bullpen, with former castoff Luke Weaver flourishing in his new closer role. Tommy Kahnle has allowed three hits in seven shutout innings this postseason, and Hill has a 1.59 ERA in seven appearances. Big names or not, they all will have their work cut out for them against a powerful and patient Dodgers lineup that drew 42 walks from the Mets — a record for any postseason series.

Dodgers: A rash of pitching injuries has left manager Dave Roberts with just three healthy starters. Jack Flaherty, a July 30 trade acquisition from Detroit, will get the ball in the Series opener. Yamamoto, the \$325 million rookie from Japan, goes in Game 2. Besides that it’s Walker Buehler (1-6, 5.38 ERA) and at least one bullpen game in the best-of-seven series. Flaherty is 1-2 with a 7.04 ERA in three postseason starts — though he dominated the Mets in Game 1 of the NLCS. Yamamoto is 1-0 with a 5.11 ERA, also in three outings. Buehler is 0-1 with a 6.00 ERA in two starts totaling nine innings. Perhaps that gives the Yankees an advantage on the mound. But the Dodgers won two of three bullpen games during the playoffs — when facing elimination in San Diego, and the NLCS clincher.

SPORTS



Perfect record on line
Unbeaten Navy, ranked 24th, faces
No. 12 Notre Dame » **College football, Page 46**

ANALYSIS

Don't overlook role players



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI, ABOVE, AND GODOFREDO VASQUEZ, RIGHT/AP
Above: All eyes are on Dodgers slugger Shohei Ohtani, who this season became the first major leaguer to hit more than 50 home runs and steal more than 50 bases. He's playing in the postseason for the first time. Right: Yankees slugger Aaron Judge led the major leagues in home runs this season with 58.

World Series has stars, but others may decide outcome

By MIKE FITZPATRICK
Associated Press

Aaron Judge, Juan Soto and Gerrit Cole. Shohei Ohtani, Mookie Betts and Yoshinobu Yamamoto. No doubt, many of baseball's biggest names will be center stage when the New York Yankees and Los Angeles Dodgers square off in a dream World Series matchup between two of the sport's most successful and storied franchises. Huge payrolls, massive media markets, enormous fan bases. New York with the best regular-season record in the American League at 94-68, and Los Angeles tops in the National League at 98-64. But even with all that star power on the field, this Fall Classic could be decided by the less-celebrated players batting in front of Soto and Judge, and the grind-it-out guys hitting behind Ohtani and Betts. Or the unheralded arms coming out of the bullpen to replace Cole and Yamamoto on the mound. Some things to watch for when the Yankees and Dodgers meet in the World Series for the 12th time overall and first in 43 years. Game 1 is Friday in Los Angeles.

SEE ROLE ON PAGE 47



With Aiyuk out, 49ers' Pearsall can step up » NFL, Page 42

