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AFGHANISTAN

Still feeling the fallout

Guilt, grief endure for troops who survived Kabul airport blast

BY DAN LAMOTHE
The Washington Post

From a guard tower overlooking Kabul's airport, two U.S. Marines spotted a man matching the description of a suspected suicide bomber. They radioed their commanders: "Do we have permission to engage?"

Request denied, one of the Marines, Sgt. Tyler Vargas-Andrews, recalled being told. Too many civilians nearby.

The man vanished from view among a crush of people clamoring outside the airport's Abbey Gate, he said. It was Aug. 26, 2021. Hours later, an explosion ripped through the crowd, killing an estimated 170 Afghans along with 13 U.S. troops.

Vargas-Andrews contends that "unfortunately, a lot of people died" because he was directed to stand down. "That's a hard thing to deal with," he said.

"You know, that's something that, honestly, eats at me every single day."

Vargas-Andrews, 24, from Folsom, Calif., climbed down from the tower a short time before the explosion went off and suffered catastrophic wounds in the blast. He has undergone 43 surgeries since, losing his right arm, left leg, left kidney, and parts of his intestines and colon. At least 15 metal fragments remain embed-

ded in his body, he said, silent reminders of the day he almost died.

It's unclear if the bombing at Abbey Gate could have been averted. The event was a low point in the United States' exit from Afghanistan and the treacherous operation that began **SEE FALLOUT ON PAGE 7**

Marine Sgt. Tyler Vargas-Andrews, who suffered catastrophic injuries during the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, is pictured at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

CAROLYN VAN HOUTEN/The Washington Post



US helicopters pound militant sites in Syria following rocket attack

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

U.S. aircraft and artillery responded to rocket attacks Wednesday in Syria, destroying seven rocket launchers and killing four Iran-backed militants, U.S. Central Command said Thursday.

The U.S. attacks included AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, AC-130 gunships and M777 artillery, a



Kurilla

CENTCOM statement said.

On Wednesday evening, several rockets had landed inside the perimeter of Mission Support Site Conoco in northeast Syria, an earlier CENTCOM statement said. Shortly afterward, additional rockets landed near Mission Support Site Green Village.

One U.S. service member in Mission Support Site Conoco was treated for a minor injury and returned to

duty. Two others were evaluated for minor injuries, the first statements said.

"We are closely monitoring the situation," CENTCOM commander Gen. Michael "Erik" Kurilla said in the statement. "We have a total spectrum of capability to mitigate threats across the region, and we have every confidence in our ability to protect our **SEE ATTACK ON PAGE 4**

BUSINESS/WEATHER

South Korea signs deal with Russian nuclear firm

Associated Press
 SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea has signed a \$2.25 billion deal with a Russian state-run nuclear energy company to provide components for Egypt's first nuclear power plant.

South Korea's government said Thursday the contract between the state-run Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power and ASE requires them to provide turbine-related

equipment and construction work for the plant being built in Dabaa, about 80 miles northwest of Cairo. ASE is a subsidiary of Rosatom, a state-owned Russian nuclear conglomerate.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		South Korea (Won)	
Euro costs (Aug. 26)	\$0.97		1338.69
Dollar buys (Aug. 26)	0.9765	Switzerland (Franc)	0.9648
British pound (Aug. 26)	\$1.15	Thailand (Baht)	30.25
Japanese yen (Aug. 26)	133.00	Turkey (NewLira)	18.1691
South Korean won (Aug. 26)	1302.00		

(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.)

Commercial rates		INTEREST RATES	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770	Prime rate	5.50
Britain (Pound)	1.1808	Interest Rates Discount rate	3.00
Canada (Dollar)	1.2937	Federal funds market rate	2.32
China (Yuan)	6.8547	3-month bill	2.79
Denmark (Krone)	7.4648	30-year bond	3.31
Egypt (Pound)	19.1894		
Euro	1.0037		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8469		
Hungary (Forint)	411.78		
Israel (Shekel)	3.2793		
Japan (Yen)	136.91		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3078		
Norway (Krone)	9.7155		
Philippines (Peso)	56.08		
Poland (Zloty)	4.77		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7555		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3907		

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	Guam
Japan	..	\$4.779	..	\$4.979	\$3.959	\$4.469
Change in price	..	-6.0 cents	..	No change	-6.0 cents	-6.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.949	\$4.979	\$3.959	\$4.469
Change in price	-5.0 cents	No change	-5.0 cents	-6.0 cents

For the week of Nov. 13-19

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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MILITARY

Alaska training center first in line for vehicles

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

Soldiers at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, will be the first to receive the Army's new Arctic-capable vehicle late next year, the service said Monday. The Cold Weather All-Terrain Vehicle, or CATV, will be produced by Michigan-based BAE Land and Armaments, which was awarded a \$278 million contract for 110 vehicles, the Army said in a news release.

Dubbed "Beowulf" by BAE, the vehicles replace the Army's decades-old Small Unit Support Vehicles.

The first four are slated to arrive at Fort Wainwright's Northern Warfare Training Center in the last quarter of 2023, the Army said.

CATVs are unarmored, tracked and capable of amphibious operations and climbing steep grades, BAE said in a news release Monday.

The basic version is a modular platform, meaning it can be fitted for various missions, such as homeland defense, cargo transport and search and rescue, BAE said.

"Beowulf can traverse snow, ice, rock, sand, mud, and swamp conditions and can operate in steep mountain environments," BAE said. "Its amphibious fea-



Photos courtesy of the U.S. Army

The Army's Cold Weather All-Terrain Vehicle can traversing snow, ice, rock, sand, mud and swamp in steep grades under Arctic conditions.

ture also allows it to swim in flooded areas or coastal waters."

The vehicle can also maneuver through muskeg, a type of North American bog that is a mixture of water and dead vegetation often shrouded by a layer of moss, the Army said.

Each vehicle can carry up to nine soldiers, the Army said.

The new vehicles represent a

further step in implementing the Army's Arctic strategy, which aims to train and equip soldiers to operate and fight in extreme cold for extended periods with minimal outside support.

"Regaining Arctic Dominance," the strategy report issued by the Army in March 2021, laid out how the service could successfully partner with Arctic

allies and maintain regional stability in competing with Russia and China.

The transition to a new cold-weather vehicle was overdue, the commander of Alaska's 11th Airborne Division said in the Army's news release.

"The small unit support vehicles were great in their day but have needed replacing for the

past two decades," said Maj. Gen. Brian Eifler.

"These new vehicles will provide our Arctic Angels with capable, reliable mobility and increase their survivability in the harshest conditions Alaska and the Arctic has to offer," he said.

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Status hearing set for Japan-based Marine who refused COVID-19 vaccine

By **JONATHAN SNYDER**
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — The Marine Corps next month plans to "assess the status" of the case against Lance Cpl. Catherine Arnett, who faces court-martial on charges linked to her refusal of a COVID-19 vaccine.

A military judge in Japan, Navy Cmdr. Ben Robertson, on Monday delayed Arnett's special court-martial after her lawyer cited an Aug. 18 order by a federal judge temporarily barring the Corps from punishing or discharging Marines who refused the vaccine on religious grounds.

"The United States Marine Corps closely considers any procedural or circumstantial changes in legal cases," Maj. Rob Martins, a spokesman for the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, said in an email Wednesday to Stars and Stripes.

He said the status hearing is scheduled Sept. 27.

Robertson delayed the start or Arnett's trial, because although the case against her is separate from her vaccine refusal, it falls within the scope of the federal court injunction, according to Martins' email.

Arnett was not charged with refusing the vaccine. "She was originally charged with refusing to board multiple flights to complete the separation process which occurred after she refused the COVID-19 vaccine," Martins wrote.



Arnett

Arnett, 24, of Fort Worth, Texas, in July said she refused to board those flights because the orders stemmed from the 2021 Defense Department mandate on COVID-19 vaccination, which she considers unlawful. The Marines allege she also refused a pre-travel COVID-19 test.

Her two-day trial was delayed first in early August and again on Monday, a day before its scheduled start. She is charged with two counts under article 87 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, missing troop movements on May 7 and May 14, and one under article 92, disobeying a direct order on May 7.

Arnett said her lawyer, Marine Capt. Brent McGee, moved to delay her trial after U.S. District

Court Judge Steven Merryday in Tampa, Fla., issued his preliminary injunction in a separate case.

Merryday also granted class-action status for all active and reserve Marines who refused the DOD vaccine mandate on religious grounds.

Arnett said she is a practicing Catholic who objects to the role fetal cell lines play in developing and testing the COVID-19 vaccines. Arnett said she's been at MCAS Iwakuni since May 2019, first with Marine Air Logistics Squadron 12, then with Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152 for 2½ years. She's back with the logistics squadron, but not in the job she trained for, aviation supply specialist, while she awaits the outcome of her case, she said in late July.

"Right now, I refuse to sit and stay still in one place. Right now, with having my work permissions being revoked, they expect me to twiddle my thumbs," Arnett told Stars and Stripes on Monday. "But I still get up and, you know, go do stuff and find people to help, which is what I love to do."

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Two Marines charged in dine-and-dash, helo damage

By **SIMONE JASPER**
The Charlotte Observer

Two U.S. Marines damaged a helicopter just after dining and dashing at a Waffle House in North Carolina, news outlets reported.

The act of vandalism left the helicopter with broken windows and about \$1,000 in damage on Saturday, Aug. 20, according to police in Havelock. The Eastern North Carolina city is home to U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point.

The damage was reported after a video captured two men walking up to the aircraft on display outside of the Tourist and Event Center in Havelock.

Officials said one of the men climbed onto a RF-4B phantom II plane and took photos. Both men are accused of trying to spin the blades of a HH-46E model helicopter and getting inside the aircraft.

"This particular airplane means a lot to Eastern North Carolina because of all of the lives over the years that they've rescued or gotten out of the hurricane situations," Richard Hazlett, aviation curator for the city, told WNCT.

The vandalism was reported at

about 3 a.m., roughly an hour after officials said the same suspects ate at a nearby Waffle House.

Photos posted to Facebook appear to show one of the suspects at the restaurant wearing a sweatshirt with the letters "USMC."

"The two males walked out of the restaurant without paying for their food," the Havelock Police Department wrote in a Facebook post. "Waffle House reviewed their video camera footage and recognized the two males from the Tourist & Event Center footage."

Now, officials credit that unpaid Waffle House bill and investigative work with helping them identify two suspects. The men were "charged with injury to real property and a city ordinance violation of disorderly conduct," police wrote.

Both of the men were Marines, WCTI and WITN reported.

The two men went back to Cherry Point ahead of a September court date.

An investigation into the Waffle House incident was ongoing as of Aug. 23, officials said.

Police in Havelock, roughly 130 miles southeast of Raleigh, didn't immediately share additional information with McClatchy News on Aug. 24.

MILITARY

Leaked Space Force memo may OK beards

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Stars and Stripes

Cmdr. William T. Riker wore the short, boxed variety on the bridge of the starship Enterprise. His predecessor, Cmdr. Spock, sported the circle style in the “Mirror, Mirror” episode of the original “Star Trek.”

Now the U.S. Space Force is taking one small step toward permitting its guardians to grow their own beards.

A memo leaked to the popular Air Force amn/nco/snco Facebook page says a pilot program would examine the impacts of facial hair on male service members

in uniform. The program could begin as early as Sept. 1, according to the memo signed by Space Force Brig. Gen. Devin Pepper, deputy director of strategy, plans and policy for Space Command.

But the leaked memo is far from the last word on the beard test shot.

“The screenshots [on Facebook] reflect a volunteer’s recommendation for how to proceed if a proposal for a pilot program is approved,” Air Force spokeswoman Deana Heitzman told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday. “The proposal is being discussed within the Black/African Ameri-

can Employment Strategy Team, one of the Department of the Air Force Barrier Analysis Working Groups, but has not been approved.”

Heitzman did not comment on whether only guardians would take part in the pilot program or if airmen would be included.

Individuals participating in the program would still be required to keep “facial hair neat in appearance, shaped appropriately, not faddish and no longer than a quarter-inch,” according to the memo.

Currently, both airmen and guardians are not allowed to grow a beard unless approved for med-

ical or religious accommodation. Even then they must maintain their beards in a neat, clean and professional image not to exceed a quarter-inch in length.

This is not the first time a leaked memo on facial hair has surfaced. In May, a Department of the Air Force draft guidance appeared on social media that proposed allowing airmen and guardians to grow a mustache a quarter-inch past the corner of their lips. The policy has yet to be updated to authorize longer mustaches.

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JACKSON MANSK/U.S. Air Force

Currently, both airmen and guardians are not allowed to grow a beard unless approved for medical or religious reasons.



NORTHROP GRUMMAN

Digital avionics in the cockpit of a UH-60V Black Hawk helicopter represent upgrades to the Army’s current models.

New high-tech model of Black Hawk helo passes initial testing

By MICHAEL SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

The Army is closer to introducing a new version of its workhorse Black Hawk helicopter, aiming to ramp up production in the coming year.

While looking almost identical to the original UH-60L, the updated model has a completely overhauled cockpit, as the analog gauges have given way to a digital display.

Manufacturer Northrop-Grumman bills the new setup in the UH-60V, known as the Victor, as one of the most advanced avionics systems in the Army.

The integrated upgrade provides pilots with more situational awareness and cuts down on both workload and cost, according to the company.

Displays use real-time data from the flight to tell pilots if they are ahead of or behind schedule and also map out ev-

ery leg of the flight. Initial testing on the Victor began July 5 and wrapped up a month later after 200 flight hours.

Successful completion of the testing “allows the Army to make an informed decision on transitioning the UH-60V to full production,” product manager Lt. Col. Howard Swanson said in an Army statement.

Chief Warrant Officer Justin Meyer, an instructor pilot in the Pennsylvania National Guard, said in an Army statement that the upgraded helicopter is a very easy transition for pilots who have flown previous models.

Results from the testing are expected to come out within the next month and the follow up report from the Army Test and Evaluation command should follow as early as December.

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Monkeypox vaccine arriving at overseas bases but still limited

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The Defense Department is increasing its supply of the monkeypox vaccine, including at medical clinics in Europe, where there have been seven confirmed cases of the virus among the U.S. military community, officials said this week.

But the vaccine is still in limited supply and available only to those who have been exposed to the virus or may be at higher risk, including medical and lab workers who conduct testing for the infection.

The U.S. Army Medical Materiel Center-Europe received an initial order of the Jynneos vaccine in June, said Kirk Frady, a spokesman for Regional Health Command Europe. An additional order of doses is expected to arrive in Europe in the coming weeks, he said Wednesday.

It’s not stocked at all treatment facilities but can be delivered on request to any clinic in Europe within about 48 hours, Frady said.

The Air Force in a statement Monday said 36 clinics worldwide have placed orders for the vaccine. Those receiving ship-

ments this week included Yokota and Misawa air bases in Japan.

The vaccine is available for any eligible beneficiary who meets criteria set by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. European Command said.

That includes people who a medical provider has determined need the vaccine either before or after exposure, said Chuck Prichard, a EUCOM spokesman.

People who think they are at high risk and wish to receive the vaccine should contact their health care provider, he said.

“If the member is determined to fit criteria, they will be prioritized to receive the vaccination,” Prichard said.

Confirmed cases of monkeypox among the U.S. military community in Europe have occurred in Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, Prichard said. Four of the seven cases were service members.

Earlier this month, the worldwide number of monkeypox cases topped more than 35,000, with 12 deaths reported and infections spread across 92 countries and territories, according to the World Health Organization.

This month, the White House declared the virus a public health

emergency, seeking to bolster measures to curb transmission, which so far is occurring mostly through sexual contact between men. However, anyone, regardless of sexual orientation, who has been in close contact with someone who has monkeypox is at risk, according to the CDC.

Jynneos was approved in 2019 and is the vaccine preferred by the CDC. It is indicated for the prevention of smallpox and monkeypox in people 18 and older.

It’s given in two doses, 28 days apart. But personnel who have received the smallpox vaccine need only one dose.

Health care providers may now reduce the dose of the vaccine to one-fifth of what was given previously. The smaller dose received emergency-use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration earlier this month.

Measures to prevent the spread of monkeypox include washing hands, avoiding skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like monkeypox and avoiding contact with items used by someone with monkeypox.

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Attack: DOD says airstrike was message

FROM PAGE 1

troops and Coalition partners from attacks.”

The U.S. response was “proportional and deliberate,” according to CENTCOM. “The United States does not seek conflict with Iran, but we will continue to take the measures necessary to protect and defend our people.”

Wednesday’s attacks occurred a day after U.S. airstrikes on sites associated with Iran’s Revolution-

ary Guard Corps, according to CENTCOM. Those strikes targeted a camp run by Shiite fighters from Afghanistan, and killed at least six Syrian and foreign militants, The Associated Press reported.

The Pentagon said Tuesday’s airstrikes were a message to Iran and Tehran-backed militias that targeted American troops this month, The Associated Press reported.

Colin Kahl, the undersecretary of defense for policy, told reporters that the U.S. airstrikes demonstrated that “the United States will not hesitate to defend itself against Iranian and Iran-backed aggression when it occurs.”

He said the U.S. initially identified 11 bunker targets at the site and ended up striking nine because there was evidence there may be people nearby.

MILITARY

Australian, US aircraft fly stunts over beach

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

DARWIN, Australia—A fleet of warbirds, including U.S. Marine Corps and Air Force fighters in Australia for a three-week airpower exercise, wowed locals and vacationers during a beach flyover Thursday afternoon in Australia's Northern Territory.

The planes swooped over Mindil Beach, a popular tourist spot in Darwin, which hosts a rotational force of 2,200 U.S. Marines between April and September each year.

Thousands showed up for the event in a city that's full of visitors lured by the Northern Territory's warm weather during the southern hemisphere's winter months. It was a sunny 91 degrees Fahrenheit during the flyover.

This month and next, Darwin is also hosting U.S. airmen and Marines participating in Pitch Black, a biennial exercise that includes 2,500 service members and more than 100 aircraft from 17 nations flying day and night missions between Aug. 19 and Sept. 8.

Airmen from many of the nations involved in the drills joined the crowd watching the airshow from the beach.

The stars of the flyover included a Royal Australian Air Force F-35A Lightning II conventional stealth fighter and a pair of Marine Corps F-35Bs, which are capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings.

The Marine Corps stealth fighters performed a semi-hover with their landing gear extended as they flew low in front of the crowd before zooming out of sight.

F-35Bs and aviators from the Iwakuni, Japan-based Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121 are flying out of RAAF Tindall, just south of Darwin during Pitch Black.

The Marines also showed beachgoers an MV-22 Osprey, the helicopter-plane hybrid that can



PHOTOS BY SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

A Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft hovers near Mindil Beach during an airshow in Darwin, Australia, on Thursday.

hover and then tilt its rotors and fly on fixed wings farther and faster than helicopters.

The Osprey hovered close to shore while spectators on the beach snapped photographs of the aircraft and posed for selfies with it in the background.

Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 268 out of Kaneohe, Hawaii, is part of this year's Marine rotation.

Marine Capt. Trent Laboda, 28, an Osprey pilot in Darwin with the rotational force, was watching the show.

"I don't know that I've ever been to an airshow that an Osprey has been at," he said.

The Air Force brought two F-15C Eagle fighters to the beach party. The planes zoomed around in circles offshore bathed in the light of a brilliant sunset.

F-15Cs and airmen from the Okinawa-based the 67th Fighter Squadron have been flying out of RAAF Darwin this month.

The beach flyover included an Indian Sukoi SU-30MKI Flanker, German and British Typhoons, a French Dassault Rafale, a Japanese F-2, Indonesian, Singaporean and South Korean F-16 Fighting Falcons and several other planes.

One of the locals taking in the action was Drew Daniell, 49, a fly-

ing boat pilot whose job involves taking workers and gear to pearl farms in the Northern Territory.

Daniell brought his daughter, Madison, 14, along to check out the aircraft.

"Where else can you stand on the beach and have an F-35 come down and you can almost touch it?" he asked.

The grand finale involved an Australian F-35A, which screamed over the crowd with afterburner glowing and performed a 10-minute aerobatic display before it zoomed over the horizon.

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A Royal Australian Air Force F-35A Lightning II flies over Mindil Beach.

USAF NCO arrested on charges of child porn

By **ROSE L. THAYER**
Stars and Stripes

An Air Force noncommissioned officer was arrested at Shaw Air Force Base on Monday on five charges connected to child pornography and the sexual exploitation of children, the South Carolina Attorney General's office said.

The Shaw Air Force Base Office of Special Investigations and the Sumter Police Department arrested Tech. Sgt. David Wayne Crouse, 37, about 10:45 a.m. Monday, and executed search warrants at his office on base and at his Sumter home, according to Attorney General Alan Wilson's office.

He has since received a \$25,000 surety bond and was released.

Crouse is accused of sharing explicit files with a messaging group on or about April 23, 2021, according to his arrest documents. Investigators received a CyberTipline report from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which led them to Crouse. Investigators stated Crouse possessed files of child sexual abuse material, according to the attorney general's office.

The NCO entered the Air Force on Aug. 5, 2003, to work in aerospace propulsion maintenance and is currently assigned to the 20th Component Maintenance Squadron at Shaw Air Force Base, according to his official service record.

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PACIFIC

Navy looks to fill at-sea leadership billets

By JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

The Navy is turning to chief petty officers to fill critical at-sea billets at three duty locations, according to a recent Navy administrative message.

The service created a new pilot program, the Senior Enlisted Advance to Position, or SEAP2, to incentivize E-8 and E-9 sailors to sign up for specific leadership billets, according to the Aug. 22 message, NAVADMIN 178/22.

"Navy Chiefs are essential to the operation and readiness of our fleet," said Vice Adm. Rick Cheeseman, chief of naval personnel, in a Navy news release on

Aug. 5. "SEA2P aims to reward Senior Enlisted who are willing to take the hard jobs where their experience and leadership mean the most, while ensuring our deploying units have the people they need to accomplish the mission."

The program, offered only to active-duty sailors, is designed to "aggressively fill critical at-sea leadership billets," according to the message.

The first deadline for applications is Wednesday; the second round concludes Oct. 17. Interested chiefs may apply with a personnel action form at the MyNavy website.

The duty locations are with the

Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, homeported at Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton, Wash.; the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group, homeported at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek, Va.; and the aircraft carrier George Washington, homeported at Naval Station Norfolk, Va.

The program will automatically approve selected sailors' high-year tenure waivers so they can participate in SEA2P. High-year tenure is the maximum number of years an enlisted service member can serve at their current rank without being promoted.

A billet selection board of senior representatives, along with

command staff, will screen interested sailors for the critical billets, the message said.

Applicants must be either E-7 or E-8 but were not selected for advancement to E-8 or E-9 by fiscal year 2023 promotion boards. They must have the required Navy Enlisted Classification codes associated with the billet for which they apply. A waiver may apply if the candidate has prerequisite experience and can obtain the classification before reporting.

Each candidate is expected to complete three years at the SEA2P billet location and will be permanently promoted upon re-

porting, the document states. Sailors who are chosen will receive orders for a new duty station within 30-45 days.

"Sailors need our Chiefs, our Senior Chiefs, and our Master Chiefs, to lead from the front," Chief of Naval Personnel Fleet Master Chief Delbert Terrell said in the release. "Our Sailors expect it and require their continued leadership, experience, and mentorship. SEA2P helps us make that happen, while offering promotion to those motivators who apply."

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Marines training for littoral combat in hot Australian Outback

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

MOUNT BUNDEY TRAINING AREA, Australia — There is plenty of sun but little shade in the sparse Outback of Australia's Northern Territory, where U.S. Marines and sailors are honing amphibious warfare skills with troops from three other nations.

On Sunday, Sgt. Steven Wilson, 28, of Huntingtown, Md., led six Marine snipers and two Australian forward observers into the 290,000-acre Mount Bunde training area, a former cattle station.

They arrived in dune buggy-style tactical vehicles, humped two more miles and set up an observation post, Wilson explained on Wednesday. They scanned for opposing forces and sweltered in heat that reached 102 degrees over three days, Wilson said. But they spotted only wallabies and dingoes.

"In this area, there's a million trees and no shade," he said. "We were burning up out there."

Exercise Predator's Run, which began Aug. 19 and runs through Sunday, pits the multinational force of Marines and Indonesian and Philippine troops under the Australian Army's 1st Brigade against other Australian troops role-playing as the enemy.

The Marines, from 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment out of Twentynine Palms, Calif., have been in Australia with Marine Rotational Force - Darwin since March.

The battalion includes more than 800 Marines and sailors, two rifle companies, a battery of M-777 howitzers and a weapons company armed with Javelin mis-

siles, Mark-19 grenade launchers, .50 caliber machine guns and snipers, the unit's commander, Lt. Col. Tyler Holt, 41, told Stars and Stripes in the training area Wednesday.

The Marines there have been battling away flies, warning off wild dingoes and seeking shade beneath sparse gum trees sprouting from the dusty red landscape.

Australian troops conducted an amphibious landing near Darwin to simulate the way they'd join the fight in a coastal battlespace, Holt said as he clutched a rifle while his troops took cover amid the gums.

Disputes with China

Amphibious forces could be key to victory in any conflict in the Western Pacific, where China is aggressively expanding its territory by occupying small islets, reclaiming land and building military facilities in the South China Sea.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Brunei and Malaysia have territorial disputes with China in those waters.

The newly formed 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment conducted amphibious training in the Philippines during the annual Balikatan drills in April.

Australia sent an infantry company and Malaysia sent observers to the Super Garuda Shield exercise involving 2,000 U.S. troops, including Marines, and 2,000 Indonesian service members in Indonesia earlier this month.

In recent years, the Royal Australian Navy has commissioned its largest-ever warships, the amphibious landing helicopter docks HMAS Canberra and HMAS Adelaide. Meanwhile, the Australian



SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

U.S. Marines take part in Exercise Predator's Run at Mount Bunde Training Area in Australia's Northern Territory on Wednesday. The exercise began Aug. 19 and runs through Sunday.

Army, with the U.S. Marines' help, has learned how to launch forces from those ships.

The Marines and Australian Army have conducted a wide range of amphibious training together, including at the biennial Talisman Sabre drills in Queensland last summer.

Australia will seek to increase training with other nations' amphibious forces, 1st Brigade commander Brigadier Nick Foxall said Aug. 16 in an Australian Army news release.

"The 1st Brigade will lead Army's thinking on the establishment of the littoral formation," he said.

Drones overhead

At Mount Bunde, the multinational force, which includes platoons from the Philippines and

Malaysia and battalions from the Marines and Australian Army, is training to face a capable adversary equipped with drones and armored vehicles.

"We're making it as realistic as possible," said Holt, a veteran of counterinsurgency campaigns in Ramadi, Iraq, in 2005 and Helmand Province, Afghanistan, in 2011.

The Marines are accustomed to desert training at Twentynine Palms, he said.

"The big difference here is the vegetation," he said. "We can't see as far or shoot as far."

When the Marines spot enemy drones, they take cover and let other units know a threat is overhead, Holt said.

The Marines have their own SkyRaider and RQ-20 Puma drones that are scanning for the

opposing force, he said.

One Marine at Mount Bunde on Wednesday, Sgt. Carter Sampson, 24, of Brisbane, Australia, is a dual U.S.-Australian citizen.

During six years in uniform he served in Iraq, Syria, Kuwait and Okinawa before returning on rotation to his homeland.

When he's not scouting for the enemy in a tactical vehicle, Sampson teaches his comrades about Australian culture. For example, he showed them how to dribble an oval-shaped rugby ball, Australian Rules Football style, and introduced them to local delicacies such as crocodile meat, at a Darwin eatery, he said.

"Everyone I have taken there has loved it," he said.

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MILITARY

Fallout: Afghan government collapse triggered mass panic**FROM PAGE 1**

when Taliban foot soldiers swept into the capital 11 days prior. For the American military personnel involved, much of their experience throughout those two weeks is still coming into focus now, a year later, as they process the suffering they witnessed, and cope with lasting feelings of anger, guilt and grief.

This account of the deployment and the attack, carried out by an Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan, is based on interviews with 14 service members involved, including the top military commander who planned and directed the operation.

In blunt, often visceral detail, those who survived the final days of America's longest war made clear that what endures is an incalculable sense of loss.

The commander, Marine Gen. Kenneth "Frank" McKenzie, said that he, too, continues to process what occurred, and regrets both the Abbey Gate bombing and a drone strike U.S. forces carried out three days later near the airport, killing 10 civilians. U.S. troops involved mistakenly believed they were targeting another suicide bomber, the Pentagon later concluded.

"We all feel bitterly what happened at the end," the general said.

Panic and heartbreak

Nearly 6,000 U.S. service members were dispatched to Afghanistan as Kabul fell, in what would be the greatest test of the Pentagon's emergency-evacuation planning since the Vietnam War's devastating conclusion decades earlier. Nearly 125,000 people were rescued over 17 days. But tens of thousands more were stranded, many with no clear path to be reunited with family in the United States.

For many of the troops rushed to Hamid Karzai International Airport — named for Afghanistan's first leader after U.S. forces ousted the Taliban from power as vengeance for quartering the terrorist group responsible for 9/11 — it was their first taste of a war that, after nearly 20 years, already was lost.

The sudden crisis undercut President Joe Biden's promise of a "safe and orderly" withdrawal, and prompted McKenzie to cut a deal with the Taliban in which coalition troops controlled Kabul's airport while America's longtime battlefield adversary pledged to maintain order outside.

U.S. personnel involved in the mission said the arrangement was exasperating, with militants beating and executing Afghans as they approached the airport. McKenzie described it as a strained but transactional relationship that provided U.S. troops with a measure of security from the Islamic



MARK ANDRIES, U.S. MARINE CORPS/AP

U.S. service members assigned to Joint Task Force-Crisis Response are pallbearers on Aug. 27 for the service members killed in action during operations at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, as transfer cases carrying remains are placed aboard a U.S. Air Force plane.

State, which also is in conflict with the Taliban.

A Defense Department review of the operation, first detailed by The Washington Post in February, exposed sharp disagreements within the U.S. government over how to carry out the withdrawal. State Department officials wanted to keep the U.S. Embassy in Kabul open as long as possible, frustrating the military brass who wanted to begin the evacuation of American citizens and Afghan allies sooner.

Top commanders, including McKenzie, had advised Biden against withdrawing all U.S. forces from Afghanistan, preferring to keep a force of about 2,500 in place that would be reinforced by a similar number of coalition troops and backed by air power. But when the president announced in April 2021 that he wanted the military out by that September, the Pentagon began preparing for an evacuation.

A few hundred soldiers from the Army's 10th Mountain Division were positioned at the airport in spring of 2021 to maintain security in Kabul. They were intended to be a safety net as the administration, leery of Taliban gains elsewhere, had hoped to retain a diplomatic presence after the military withdrawal was complete.

The Afghan government's collapse on Aug. 15 triggered mass panic, leading tens of thousands of Afghans, many of them American allies who aided the war effort, to rush the airport. First Sgt. Andrew Kelly, of the 10th Mountain Division, said his unit tried but failed to prevent the chaos that unfolded as people, desperate to flee, swarmed the flight line and attempted to reach any aircraft they

could find.

In the hysteria, Kelly and other U.S. soldiers responded to a report of gunshots at a traffic circle outside the airport's commercial terminal. As civilians scrambled for cover, a fire broke out when gunmen brandished weapons at the Americans. U.S. soldiers killed three of them and wounded a fourth.

The small contingent of U.S. troops, linked arm-in-arm at times, attempted to hold back the masses. But the determined civilians broke through, with some boarding parked C-17 cargo planes without permission, and others climbing onto the outside of aircraft before takeoff only to fall to their death moments later.

"That's how desperate they were to get out of there," said Army 1st Lt. Timothy Williams. "It was one of those defining moments, I think, for everybody where it was just like, 'Wow, this is terrible.'"

As C-17s carrying American reinforcements touched down, Marines and soldiers were assigned to secure the airport's gates, and to assess, search and admit evacuees. It was heart-pounding, often heartbreaking work.

Among the units instructed to reopen Abbey Gate was the 1st Platoon of Ghost Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines. Comprising less than 45 troops, it had been in Jordan serving as part of a crisis-response force when commanders ordered their departure for Kabul. The group was tight-knit and had been training for months, said Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan Eby, the platoon sergeant.

Eby, a 17-year Marine with previous experience in Iraq and Af-

ghanistan, said they formed a line and surged toward the crowd trying to move people backward. There was a writhing, anxious energy, he said, likening the crowd to a mosh pit.

"I would compare it to whatever Leonidas and his Spartans felt like trying to hold back all those people," Eby said, referring to the ancient Greek king and his warriors, who were vastly outnumbered in a famous battle depicted in the movie "300."

In the ensuing days, the Marines maintained a barricade at the gate, adjacent to a fetid drainage canal along the facility's southeastern edge. Many Afghans figured out that wading through the filth was the easiest way to bypass the crowd. Those flashing the requisite paperwork were hoisted to safety. U.S. troops carried out similar work at other entry points.

Teams of U.S. service women, formed on the fly in preparation for the evacuation, supplemented the mission by searching women and assisting children, hundreds of whom had reached the airport without any parent or guardian, or wound up separated along the way.

Warrant Officer Sasha Savage, who led a team of eight women, said the effort never truly found a rhythm, but they assisted who they could. Photographs of her teammates caring for babies went viral online. It was clear that the evacuees were "going through the hardest time of their life," arriving dehydrated, bloody or scared because their families had been separated in the mayhem, she said.

"It feels like you're making impact at that point," Savage said.

To get around the airport, U.S.

troops hot-wired baggage carts, forklifts and other vehicles. They pilfered tools found in shipping containers, figuring they might prove useful. Vargas-Andrews grabbed a pair of 18-inch bolt cutters.

At Abbey Gate, he and his scout-sniper teammates took turns scanning the crowd from the guard tower. Several times, he said, Marines interfacing with those hoping to flee retreated into the base of the tower to cry. The Taliban were posted at checkpoints just yards away, and watching them act so ruthlessly made it difficult to maintain restraint.

Vargas-Andrews recalled that after a few days of observing Taliban abuses, he crept closer to their checkpoints to photograph corpses nearby — people the militants had killed, he surmised. He relayed the images to commanders, he said, but understood there would be no recourse.

"If we start firing at them, they're going to start firing at us. Do we want to get in that scenario?" he said. "I get it. But it's a hard thing."

A flash and then 'Boom'

Fire from the explosion swallowed the tightly packed corridor outside Abbey Gate, ejecting ball bearings that cut down those closest to the epicenter and left a gruesome path of carnage. U.S. personnel manning the gate had been warned that a suicide bomber was likely to be nearby, but they had not received orders to suspend operations.

Asked about Vargas-Andrews' contention that the bomber could have been killed before the explosion, McKenzie said that no request to do so reached his level or surfaced during a military investigation of the incident that included testimony from more than 100 U.S. personnel. Vargas-Andrews said he was never interviewed as part of that inquiry as he underwent numerous surgeries.

Eby, who also was at Abbey Gate when the bomb exploded, said that there was a "known threat" in the area, but he was unaware of any service member identifying the bomber. "All that was ever said was, 'Look for a black bag,'" Eby said.

Shortly before the blast, Vargas-Andrews had climbed down from the tower to help people into the airport. He recalls seeing a flash. And then, "Boom — this massive wave of pressure just hit me," he said.

"The next time I opened my eyes, I'm on the ground," Vargas-Andrews recalled. To his left, a sea of people were down and lifeless.

The military investigation, released earlier this year, determined the loss of life from the

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MILITARY

Fallout: 13 US troops killed in airport disaster

FROM PAGE 7

bombing was from a single catastrophic explosion. Some dispute that, though. Multiple personnel posted at Abbey Gate said they heard gunfire as well — and that they shot back.

Vargas-Andrews and others with him at the time remain convinced the bombing was part of a complex attack. As he lay in the dirt, his arm and leg shredded, the sound of gunfire crackling overhead urged him to seek cover, he said. There was a hole in the fence line about 70 yards away, but his wounds made it impossible to drag himself there.

Investigators concluded that gunfire was sporadic, and that those believing otherwise may have been disorientated by the explosion.

Those unharmed — or not incapacitated — scrambled to save as many lives as possible.

Among them was Marine Sgt. Wyatt Wilson, who sustained grievous shrapnel wounds in the blast and was thrown off his feet by its force. Despite his injuries, he tried to drag another severely wounded Marine to safety, but he had lost too much blood. The woman Wilson tried to help, Cpl. Kelsee Lainhart, was left paralyzed by the explosion.

Teammates of Vargas-Andrews knew he was in trouble after the blast. Sgt. Charles Schilling, a close friend, raced to him, screaming Vargas-Andrews's name repeatedly. Using the bolt cutters his friend had commandeered, Schilling ripped open a hole in the fence to shorten the distance they'd need to traverse for medical care. The injured were whisked away on any vehicle available.

"Patients kept coming in five, six at a time," said Capt. Carlos Mendoza, an Air Force flight nurse who was working at the airport's hospital a few miles from

the blast site. "It just didn't stop."

The wounded were splayed out on the floor waiting for care as doctors triaged them. Mendoza recalled encountering one service member who had died and another who was mortally wounded. Chaplains arrived and administered last rites.

A doctor split open the chest of one Marine using a pair of scissors as they searched for interior bleeding and then rushed him to surgery, Mendoza said.

"I heard that he survived," he added, though he is unsure.

Thirty-seven Marines were awarded Purple Hearts for injuries sustained in the attack, said Maj. Jordan Cochran, a spokesman. More than 300 received ribbons stipulating that they engaged in direct combat over the course of the evacuation.

In the Army, at least four soldiers have received Purple Hearts for injuries suffered in the evacuation, said Maj. Jackie Wren, a service spokeswoman. Nearly 330 soldiers were recognized for experiencing combat during those weeks.

About 45 U.S. troops were wounded in the bombing and survived, the Pentagon said. The Americans killed:

- Marine Lance Cpl. David Espinoza, 20.
- Marine Sgt. Nicole Gee, 23.
- Marine Staff Sgt. Darin Taylor Hoover, 31.
- Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Knauss, 23.
- Marine Cpl. Hunter Lopez, 22.
- Marine Lance Cpl. Dylan Merola, 20.
- Marine Lance Cpl. Rylee McCollum, 20.
- Marine Lance Cpl. Kareem Nikoui, 20.
- Marine Cpl. Daegan Page, 23.
- Marine Sgt. Johanny Rosario



PHOTOS BY ALLISON JOYCE/ For The Washington Post

Above: Marine Warrant Officer Sasha Savage at Camp Lejeune on July 18. Right: Savage wears a bracelet remembering Sgt. Nicole Gee.



draws.

A memory from a few days before the explosion sticks with the Marine, as he continues physical therapy at Walter Reed National Military Medical outside Washington. In the crowd at Abbey Gate, he spotted a sobbing girl in tattered clothes, maybe 8 years old. She held an infant in one arm and the hand of a boy about 4 in her other hand. The baby wasn't breathing.

Vargas-Andrews said he hustled the infant, who was turning blue, to an Air Force medic, and they resuscitated the baby. But the girl continued to cry.

He scrambled to a higher perch on top of a vehicle, and spotted a man with his head in his hands. It was the children's father. The man had paperwork needed to evacuate but had been separated from his children in the melee. Their family was reunited moments later.

Vargas-Andrews said the moment was "huge for me," his voice thickening with emotion as he recalled it.

"I look at my injuries every day," he said. "And that one family, they have a life now. And that's something that won't be taken away from them."

He shifted his weight in his chair, a prosthetic leg beneath him.

"You know," he said, "there were a lot of moments like that out there, and it makes it worth it. It makes all this worth it."

Pichardo, 25.

■ Marine Cpl. Humberto Sanchez, 22.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Jared Schmitz, 20.

■ Navy Hospitalman Maxton Sowiak, 22.

The recovery

McKenzie, the commanding general, retired in April. He marvels at the courage and professionalism rank-and-file troops showed during the evacuation, and said his greatest fear was a bomber sneaking onto a plane and detonating in the air, killing hundreds of people.

Service members reflecting on the operation should "decouple their actions and their enormous courage on the ground" from decisions made by more senior U.S. officials that put them there, he said.

"If you're going to bring people in, you have to search them," he said. "You've got to be confident that you're not going to let someone with an explosive device get on an airplane because that is the point of greatest vulnerability."

Eby, the platoon sergeant, lost nine men in his unit, all 23 or younger. During an interview last month at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, he paused several times to regain composure while recounting stories about the fallen. He considers the surviving members of the platoon to be family.

"We are inseparable," he said. "I still get called 'Dad' by most of them."

Savage, who led a female search team, wears a black metal bracelet engraved with Gee's name. The weightlifting enthusiast had been meritoriously promoted, and was among the Marines pictured caring for Afghan children.

"She had a certain light and happiness about her that would make things positive no matter the situation," Savage said.

Vargas-Andrews said he hopes the military enhances its recognition of those who saved his life and the lives of others. He singled out Schilling, who tore open the fence, and Hospitalman 3rd Class Jorge Mayo, who raced among the blast victims and treated Vargas-An-

Fort Bragg has moved 100 soldiers from barracks deemed unsafe

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

About 100 of the 1,200 soldiers living in barracks at Fort Bragg that have been deemed unsafe have been relocated, the Army said in a statement Wednesday.

Installation leaders first reported Aug. 4 that soldiers living in about a dozen barracks buildings in the Smoke Bomb Hill area of Fort Bragg no longer met standards for heating, ventilation and air conditioning. Increased moisture levels associated with those problems typically result in mold.

Officials at the North Carolina base estimate that all the affected soldiers should be moved by the

end of September.

"The movement of our service members is a deliberate and phased approach to have the proper spaces to support these relocations and ensure the safety and quality of life of our soldiers," the base said in a statement.

In addition to the more than 100 soldiers who have been relocated, 55 troops were approved to find privatized housing on or off the base, Fort Bragg said. Another 380 soldiers are pending approval.

Units impacted by the relocation include the 1st Special Forces Command, 20th Engineer Brigade and 35th Corps Signal Brigade, among other smaller units and or-

ganizations.

Soldiers living in other barracks on base also are being forced to move to make room for the displaced Smoke Bomb Hill troops. Some have only been given three days-notice to move and are being forced to do so after work hours, according to one soldier living in one of those buildings.

He spoke on condition of anonymity because he did not have permission to speak to the media.

The soldier said he learned Monday that he would be moving one floor down and feels lucky that he was given time during the work day to move his things.

"The move was very last second

[and] poorly planned," he said Thursday. "A lot of moving parts are happening while we still have to do our work and do our day jobs that don't get put on pause while we move."

He said the barracks into which the displaced soldiers are moving also have mold.

Before moving his personal items into his new room, he said he'll have to first clean the mold from the walls, vents and toilet. In a photo, black specs of mold dot the wall of the barracks room, increasing in size and density as it reaches the ceiling, where more mold grows on a ceiling tile and the air vent.

He'd already won the battle of removing mold in his current room, so moving feels like starting it all over again, the soldier said. He predicted the whole process of cleaning, moving and reorganizing his belongings will take about eight hours.

Officials at the base have pledged to be transparent about the move and provide updates on long-term plans for demolition of the affected barracks and new construction. So far, leaders have not said where the funding will come from or how much it could cost.

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EUROPE

Russians launch deadly attack on train station

BY INNA VARENYTSIA
Associated Press

CHAPLYNE, Ukraine — The death toll from a Russian rocket attack on a train station and the surrounding area on Ukraine's Independence Day climbed to 25, including at least two children, Ukrainian authorities said Thursday. Russia said it targeted a military train and claimed to have killed more than 200 Ukrainian reservists.

The bloodshed came as Ukraine was braced for attacks tied to the national holiday and war's six-month mark, both of which fell on Wednesday. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had warned that Russia might "try to do something particularly nasty, something particularly cruel" this week.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an increase in the country's armed forces of 137,000 troops, or more than 13%, by Jan. 1. That would bring Russia's troop strength to over 1.15 million.

The move appeared to be an effort to replenish forces that have sustained heavy losses in the Ukraine war.

The decree Putin signed did not say whether the increase would be accomplished by expanding the draft, recruiting more volunteers or both.

Western estimates of Russian dead have ranged from more than 15,000 to over 20,000 — more than the Soviet Union lost during its 10-



INNA VARENYTSIA/AP

Destroyed houses after a Russian attack are seen in the village of Chaplyne, Ukraine, on Thursday.

year war in Afghanistan. The Pentagon said last week that as many as 80,000 Russian troops have been killed or wounded, eroding Moscow's capability to conduct big offensives.

The lethal train-station strike in Chaplyne, a town of about 3,500 in the central Dnipropetrovsk region, served as a painful reminder of Russia's continued ability to inflict large-scale suffering six months into the war. Wednesday's

national holiday celebrated Ukraine's 1991 declaration of independence from the Soviet Union.

The dead included an 11-year-old boy found under the rubble of a house and a 6-year-old killed in a car fire near the train station, authorities said.

The deputy head of the Ukrainian presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, did not say whether all of the 25 people killed were civilians. If they were, it would

amount to one of the deadliest attacks on civilians in weeks. Thirty-one people were reported wounded.

In his nightly video address Wednesday, Zelenskyy detailed the attack and vowed: "We will definitely make the occupiers bear responsibility for everything they have done. And we will certainly drive the invaders out of our land. Not a single stain of this evil will remain in our free Ukraine."

Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces used an Iskander missile to strike a military train carrying Ukrainian troops and equipment to the front line in eastern Ukraine. The ministry claimed more than 200 reservists "were destroyed on their way to the combat zone."

Tetyana Kvitnytska, deputy head of the Dnipropetrovsk regional health department, said those hurt in the train station attack suffered head injuries, broken limbs, burns and shrapnel wounds.

"People were in a difficult condition, both physically and psychologically," she said.

Following attacks in which civilians have died, the Russian government has repeatedly claimed that its forces aim only at legitimate military targets. Hours before the train station attack, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu insisted the military was doing its best to spare civilians, even at the cost of slowing down its offensive in Ukraine.

Trains and other infrastructure have been frequent Russian targets, with the Kremlin citing their role in transporting military supplies and troops. Trains are also critical for transporting fleeing civilians and humanitarian aid.

In Geneva, the U.N.'s human rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, decried the six months since the Russian invasion as "unimaginably horrifying."

Ukrainian nuke plant near fighting cut off from power grid

Associated Press

NIKOPOL, Ukraine — The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in the middle of the fighting in Ukraine was temporarily cut off from the electrical grid Thursday because of fire damage, causing a blackout in the region and heightening fears of a catastrophe in a country haunted by the Chernobyl disaster.

The plant has been occupied by

Russian forces since the early days of the war. The government in Kyiv alleges Russia is essentially holding the plant hostage, storing weapons there and launching attacks from around it, while Moscow accuses Ukraine of recklessly firing on the facility.

On Thursday, the plant was cut off from the grid for the first time after fires damaged a transmission line, according to Ukraine's

nuclear power operator. The damaged line apparently carried outgoing electricity — and thus the region lost power, according to Yevgeny Balitsky, the Russia-installed governor. As a result of the damage, the two reactors still in use went offline, he said, but one was quickly restored, as was electricity to the area.

Ukraine cannot simply shut down its nuclear plants during the

war because it is heavily reliant on them, and its 15 reactors at four stations provide about half of its electricity. Still, an ongoing conflict near a working atomic plant is troubling for many experts who fear that a damaged facility could lead to a disaster.

That fear is palpable just across the Dnieper River in Nikopol, where residents have been under nearly constant Russian shelling

since July 12, with eight people killed, 850 buildings damaged and over the half the population of 100,000 fleeing the city.

Fighting in early March caused a brief fire at the plant's training complex that officials said did not result in the release of any radiation. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says Russia's military actions there amount to "nuclear blackmail."

George H.W. Bush carrier strike group arrives in Mediterranean

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A Navy carrier strike group with more than 6,000 sailors entered the Mediterranean Sea on Thursday, in a continuing demonstration of U.S. and NATO resolve as Russia's war on Ukraine stretches into its sixth month.

The George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group transited the Strait of Gibraltar on a scheduled deployment to the area of operations of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and U.S. 6th Fleet,

the service said in a statement.

The transit marked the first time the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush has been in the region since 2017, according to the statement.

The newly arrived strike group includes Carrier Air Wing 7, Destroyer Squadron 26 and the cruiser USS Leyte Gulf.

It is expected to relieve the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group, which has been on duty in the Mediterranean for more than eight months, USNI News reported Aug. 8. But the Navy has not

yet said whether that is the case.

In December, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered Truman to remain in the Mediterranean as a show of U.S. and NATO strength amid Russia's military buildup along the borders of Ukraine.

The carrier had been scheduled to deploy to U.S. 5th Fleet in the Middle East. Russia launched its full-scale attack on Ukraine on Feb. 24.

In late March, the Pentagon announced that Truman would remain in the Mediterranean for

the foreseeable future.

Since arriving in the 6th Fleet area of operations, Truman has supported patrol and training flights in Eastern Europe and sailed the Adriatic, Ionian and Aegean seas.

In July, an F/A-18E Super Hornet was blown off its deck into the Ionian Sea. The plane was recovered earlier this month.

USS George H.W. Bush finished a 2½-year drydock maintenance cycle in 2021 and recently completed its final certification exercise with the Italian navy de-

stroyer Caio Duilio, according to the statement.

The carrier left its homeport in Norfolk, Va., on Aug. 10, joining the destroyers USS Delbert D. Black, USS Farragut, USS Nitze and USS Truxtun in the Atlantic Ocean, the Navy said.

Sailors aboard the carrier will show "service, grit, humility and resilience," said Capt. David-Tavis Pollard, commanding officer of USS George H.W. Bush.

NATION

Idaho must OK abortions for medical risks

By REBECCA BOONE
Associated Press

A federal judge in Idaho has barred the state from enforcing a strict abortion ban in medical emergencies over concerns that it violates a federal law on emergency care.

The ruling Wednesday evening came after a federal judge this week in Texas made the opposite call, barring the federal government from enforcing a legal interpretation of the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act that would require Texas hospitals to provide abortion services if the health or life of the mother is at risk.

In Idaho, the ban makes performing an abortion in any “clinically diagnosable pregnancy” a felony punishable by up to five years in prison. Much of Idaho’s law will still go into effect Thursday, but U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill ruled Wednesday the state cannot prosecute anyone who is performing an abortion in an emergency medical situation.

That’s because abortions in those cases appear to fall under a federal health care law requiring Medicare-funded hospitals to

provide “stabilizing treatment” to patients, Winmill said.

That includes cases when the health of a pregnant patient is in serious jeopardy, when continuing the pregnancy could result in a serious impairment to a person’s bodily functions, or a serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part.

The pause on enforcement in Idaho will continue until a lawsuit challenging the ban is resolved, the judge said in the written ruling.

The U.S. Department of Justice sued the Republican-led state of Idaho earlier this month, saying the abortion ban set to take effect on Thursday violates the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor (EMTALA) Act. Idaho’s law criminalizes all abortions in “clinically diagnosable pregnancies,” but allows physicians to defend themselves in court by arguing the procedure was necessary to avert the death of the mother.

Idaho Attorney General’s spokesman Scott Graf said his office would not comment on the ruling because the case is still working its way through the courts.

Report shows economy shrank 0.6% last quarter

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. economy shrank at a 0.6% annual rate from April through June, the government said Thursday in an upgrade from its initial estimate. It marked a second straight quarter of economic contraction, which meets one informal sign of a recession.

However, most economists have said they doubt the economy is in or on the verge of a recession, given that America’s job market remains robust, with strong hiring, low unemployment and widespread openings. Still, inflation is near a four-decade high and is punishing consumers and businesses. And the Federal Reserve’s aggressive efforts to tame inflation through steep interest rate hikes are raising the risk of an eventual recession.

In its revised estimate Thursday, the Commerce Department

calculated that the nation’s gross domestic product — the broadest measure of economic output — contracted last quarter, though less than the 1.6% annual decline in the January-March period. In its previous estimate for the April-June quarter, the government had estimated that the economy had shrunk at a 0.9% rate.

Consumer spending, which accounts for nearly 70% of U.S. economic activity, grew at a 1.5% annual pace last quarter, faster than Commerce initially estimated but down from 1.8% from January through March.

By contrast, government spending and business investment declined. And inventories tumbled as businesses slowed their restocking of shelves, shaving 1.8 percentage points from the GDP.

Rising interest rates hammered the housing market. Home construction plunged 16.2%.



ERIC GAY/AP

Parents and family members hold signs at a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District where Uvalde School District Police Chief Pete Arredondo was dismissed Wednesday in Uvalde, Texas.

Uvalde school police chief fired for response during shooting

Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas — The Uvalde school district has fired police chief Pete Arredondo under mounting pressure in the grieving Texas town to punish officers over the law enforcement response to the deadly elementary school massacre in which a man armed with an AR-15-style rifle remained in a fourth-grade classroom for more than an hour, killing 19 children and two teachers.

In a unanimous vote Wednesday evening, the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District’s board of trustees fired Arredondo during a meeting also attended by parents and survivors of the May 24 massacre. Arredondo, who was not present, is the first officer to lose his job as a result of one of the deadliest classroom shootings in U.S. history.

His ouster came three months to the day after the tragedy and

less than two weeks before students return to school in Uvalde, where some children are still too scared or scarred to go back inside a classroom.

The crowd cheered following the vote, and some parents walked away in tears. Outside, several Uvalde residents called for other officers to be held accountable.

“Coward!” some in the audience yelled as the meeting got underway.

Arredondo, who has been on leave from the district since June 22, has come under the most intense scrutiny of the nearly 400 officers who rushed to school but waited more than 70 minutes to confront the 18-year-old gunman in the fourth-grade classroom at Robb Elementary School.

Most notably, Arredondo was criticized for not ordering officers to act sooner. Col. Steve McCraw, director of the Texas Department

of Public Safety, has said Arredondo was in charge of the law enforcement response to the attack.

Minutes before the school board meeting got underway, Arredondo’s attorney released a scathing 4,500-word letter that amounted to the police chief’s fullest defense to date of his actions. Over 17 defiant pages, Arredondo was described not as a fumbling chief blamed in a damning state investigation for not taking command and wasting time searching for keys to a likely unlocked door, but instead as a brave officer whose level-headed decisions saved the lives of other students.

“Chief Arredondo is a leader and a courageous officer who with all of the other law enforcement officers who responded to the scene, should be celebrated for the lives saved, instead of vilified for those they couldn’t reach in time,” George Hyde wrote.

US jobless claims drop last week

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Fewer Americans filed for unemployment benefits last week as the labor market continues to stand out as one of the strongest segments of the U.S. economy.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending Aug. 20 fell by 2,000 to 243,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

The four-week average for claims, which evens out some of the week-to-week volatility, rose by 1,500 to 247,000.

The number of Americans collecting traditional unem-

ployment benefits fell by 19,000 the week that ended Aug. 13, to 1.42 million.

First-time applications generally reflect layoffs and are often seen as an early indicator of where the job market is headed.

Hiring in the United States in 2022 has been remarkably strong even as the country faces rising interest rates and weak economic growth.

U.S. employers added 528,000 jobs in July, according to the Labor Department, more than double what forecasters expected. The unemployment rate dipped to 3.5%, tying a 50-year

low reached just before the coronavirus pandemic slammed the U.S. economy in early 2020.

But there are other challenges. Consumer prices have been surging, rising 8.5% in July from a year earlier — down slightly from June’s 40-year high, 9.1%. To combat inflation, the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark short-term interest rate four times this year.

On Friday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell will deliver a speech that could shed more light on how high or how fast the central bank may raise interest rates in the coming months.

NATION



TED S. WARREN/AP

Mary Beth Orr holds an embroidery panel from her “stitch journal” as she poses for a photo in her home Tuesday in Burien, Wash., south of Seattle.

‘Magic mushroom’ psychedelic may help heavy drinkers quit

BY CARLA K. JOHNSON
Associated Press

The compound in psychedelic mushrooms helped heavy drinkers cut back or quit entirely in the most rigorous test of psilocybin for alcoholism.

More research is needed to see if the effect lasts and whether it works in a larger study. Many who took a dummy drug instead of psilocybin also succeeded in drinking less, likely because all study participants were highly motivated and received talk therapy.

Psilocybin, found in several species of mushrooms, can cause hours of vivid hallucinations. Indigenous people have used it in healing rituals and scientists are exploring whether it can ease depression or help longtime smokers quit. It's illegal in the United States, though Oregon and several cities have decriminalized it. Starting next year, Oregon will allow its supervised use by licensed facilitators.

The new research, published

Wednesday in JAMA Psychiatry, is “the first modern, rigorous, controlled trial” of whether it can also help people struggling with alcohol, said Fred Barrett, a Johns Hopkins University neuroscientist who wasn't involved in the study.

In the study, 93 patients took a capsule containing psilocybin or a dummy medicine, laid on a couch with their eyes covered and listened to recorded music through headphones. They received two such sessions, one month apart, and 12 sessions of talk therapy.

During the eight months after their first dosing session, patients taking psilocybin did better than the other group, drinking heavily on about 1 in 10 days on average vs. about 1 in 4 days for the dummy pill group. Almost half who took psilocybin stopped drinking entirely compared with 24% of the control group.

Mary Beth Orr, 69, of Burien, Wash., said her psilocybin-induced hallucinations—flying over breath-

taking landscapes and merging telepathically with creative people throughout history—taught her she wasn't alone.

Before enrolling in the study in 2018, Orr had five or six drinks every evening and more on weekends.

“The quantity was unacceptable and yet I couldn't stop,” she said. “There was no off switch that I could access.”

During her first psilocybin experience, she saw a vision of her late father, who gave her a pair of eagle eyes and said, “Go.” She told the therapists monitoring her: “These eagle eyes can't see God's face, but they know where it is.”

She stopped drinking entirely for two years, and now has an occasional glass of wine. More than the talk therapy, she credits psilocybin.

“It made alcohol irrelevant and uninteresting to me,” Orr said. Now, “I am tethered to my children and my loved ones in a way that just precludes the desire to be alone with alcohol.”

Judge receives redacted Trump affidavit

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department on Thursday submitted to a judge a redacted version of the affidavit it relied on when it federal agents searched the Florida estate of former President Donald Trump to look for classified documents.

The document was filed under seal and it was not immediately clear when it might be made public, or how much of it will be disclosed.

“The United States has filed a submission under seal per the Court's order of Aug. 22,” Justice Department spokesman Anthony Coley said in a statement. “The

Justice Department respectfully declines further comment as the Court considers the matter.”

U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Reinhart had given the department until Thursday at noon to propose to him the redactions to the affidavit it wanted to make before any portion of it was released to the public. But he acknowledged on Monday that it was possible that the redactions, or blacked-out portions, would be so extensive as to make the document essentially incomprehensible.

The affidavit is likely to contain key information about the FBI's basis for executing a search war-

rant at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach on Aug. 8. Documents already made public as part of the investigation show that the FBI retrieved from the property 11 sets of classified documents, including information marked at the top secret level.

Multiple news media organizations argued in court last week for the disclosure of the document, citing the extraordinary public interest in the federal search of a former president's home. The Justice Department has opposed the release of the affidavit, saying it could reveal information about witnesses and about sensitive investigative techniques.

Calif. set to phase out all sales of new gas-powered cars

BY KATHLEEN RONAYNE
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California is poised to set a 2035 deadline for all new cars, trucks and SUVs sold in the state to be powered by electricity or hydrogen, an ambitious step that will reshape the U.S. car market by speeding the transition to more climate-friendly vehicles.

The California Air Resources Board was set to vote Thursday on the policy, which sets the most aggressive roadmap in the nation for moving away from gas-powered cars. It doesn't eliminate such vehicles, however.

People can continue driving gas-fueled vehicles and purchasing used ones after 2035. The plan also allows for one-fifth of sales after 2035 to be plug-in hybrids that can run on batteries and gas.

But it sets a course for ultimately ending the era of filling up at the local gas station. The switch from gas to electric cars will drastically reduce emissions and air pollutants. The transition may be painful in parts of the state that are still dominated by oil; California remains the seventh-largest oil producing state, though its output is falling as the state pushes forward with its climate goals.

“The climate crisis is solvable if we focus on the big, bold steps necessary to stem the tide of carbon pollution,” Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom said Wednesday. He announced the 2035 goal two years ago and regulators have

spent the time since then working out the details of what Newsom termed “the action we must take if we're serious about leaving this planet better off for future generations.”

There are practical hurdles to overcome to reach the goal, notably having enough reliable power and charging stations. California now has about 80,000 stations in public places, far short of the 250,000 it wants by 2025. The Alliance for Automotive Innovation, which represents many major car makers, flagged the lack of infrastructure, access to materials needed to make batteries and supply chain issues among the challenges to meeting the state's timeline.

“These are complex, intertwined and global issues well beyond the control of either (the California Air Resources Board) or the auto industry,” John Bozella, the group's president, said in a statement.

Though the state makes up 10% of the U.S. car market, it's home to 43% of the nation's 2.6 million registered plug-in vehicles, according to the air board.

California climate officials have said the state's new policy will be the world's most ambitious because it sets clear benchmarks for ramping up electric vehicle sales over the next dozen years. By 2026, for example, one-third of new cars sold must be electric. About 16% of cars sold in California in the first three months of this year were electric.

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WEEKEND



Boyega a desperate veteran in 'Breaking' **Movies, Page 17**



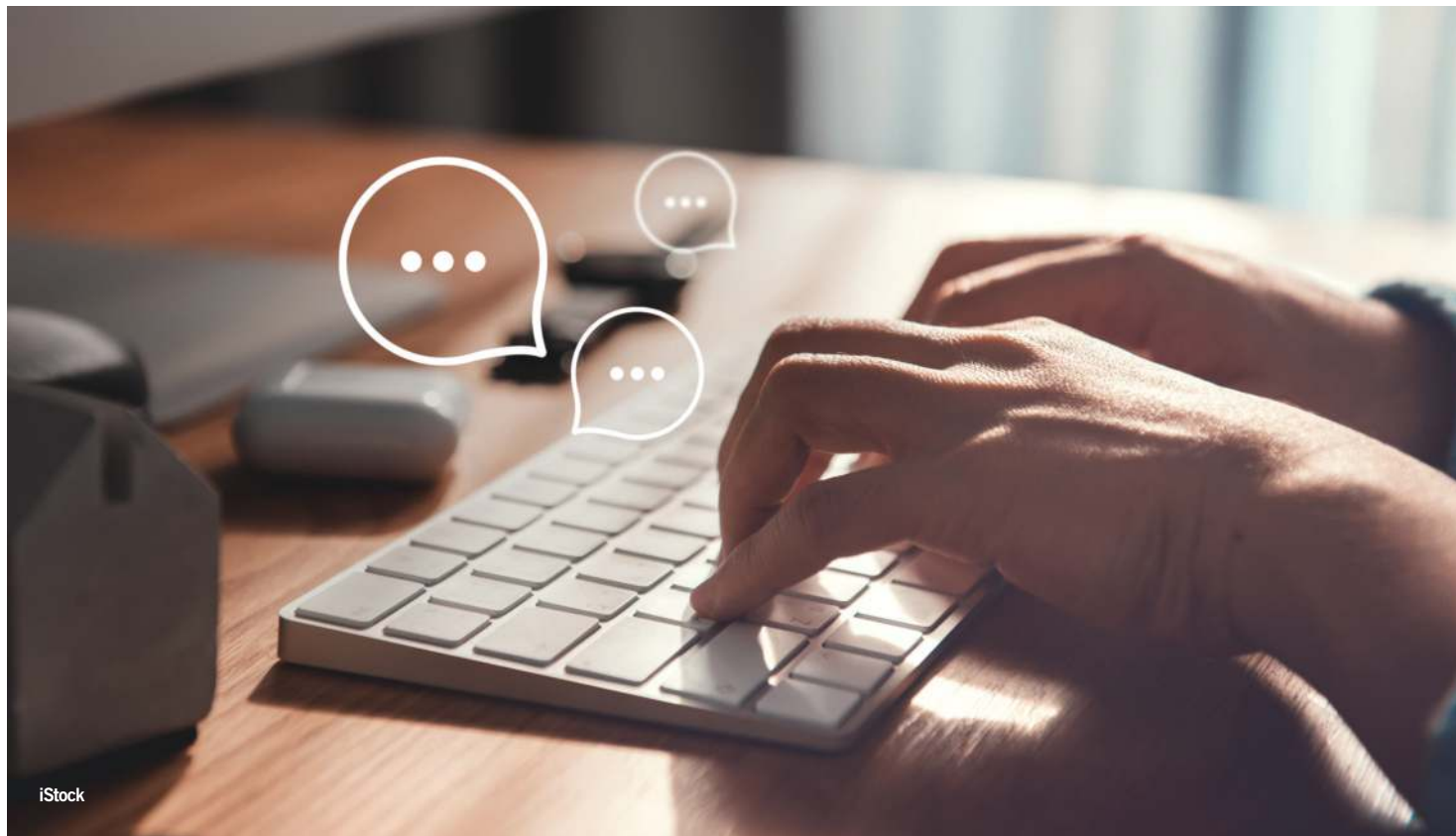
Gen Z in the spotlight

Hollywood tries to appeal to teens, 20-somethings through recent films

Page 15

Zoey Deutch stars in "Not Okay."
SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES/Hulu

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



Teach your computer to text

Keeping devices on friendly terms is challenging if they're on different operating systems

BY CHRIS VELAZCO
The Washington Post

It's 2022. Cars are driving themselves around some cities. Some kinds of clothing are becoming robotic. And at least a few people are convinced that an AI has become self-aware.

So why is sending a text message from your computer still kind of a crapshoot sometimes?

Granted, that's not true for everyone: if the company that makes your phone also makes your computer, the whole thing is pretty easy. The same is true if your phone maker is on good terms with that company that made your computer's operating system.

But if neither of those categories applies to you, well, the process usually takes a little thinking through.

Here is a quick guide to get your text messages flowing to — and from — your computer.

iPhone + Mac

This is about as easy as it gets. As long as you're signed into the same Apple ID on your iPhone (or iPad, for that matter) and your Mac, you'll be able to send and receive those blue-bubbled iMessages from your computer's Messages app. But what about standard, green-bubbled SMS messages?

Simple: just make sure your phone's text message forwarding feature is on. Here's how.

Open the Settings app and tap Messages.

Tap the Text Message Forwarding option.

Select the Mac (and/or the iPad) you want to send and receive text messages from.

Once that's done, you can use the same old Messages app on your Mac to reach out (or reply) to the people in your life who don't also have iPhones.

Android phone + Mac

Are you a Mac user who prefers to use an Android smartphone? There's one dead-simple method that I rely on, though using it could come with a catch.

Many (but not all) Android phones use Google's homemade Messages app for sending and receiving their texts. If you already know what I'm talking about, or if your Android phone's messaging app icon has a blue background and a speech bubble with three lines in it, you have the least work to do.

Just go to Google's Messages website, follow the instructions to scan the QR code, and you'll soon see all of your text conversations right in your web browser. (You may want to bookmark it for easy access later.)

But what if your phone came with a different messaging app instead? Don't worry — this is pretty common. You can download and install Google's Messages app from the Play Store if you don't mind making the switch, though apps like Pushbullet can help you send and receive text messages from inside your web browser too.

Android phone + Windows

Once again, the easiest option is to use the Google Messages feature we just discussed in the web browser of your choice.

That said, Windows 10 and 11 — which Microsoft says are being used by 1.4 billion devices monthly — come with a special feature called Phone Link that can do a lot more than just get your texts to the right people. Here's how to set it up:

On your Windows PC, locate the search box or button in your task bar and type "Phone Link."

Sign into your Microsoft account if asked.

If your Android phone doesn't already have it, download and install the Link to Windows app.

Once the app is installed on your phone, click the button allowing you to pair with the QR code in your computer's Phone Link window, and follow the instructions.

From there, you'll be able to send and receive text messages from inside your PC's Phone Link, but that's just the beginning. You can also view your phone's photos on your computer monitor, save them directly to your PC, and even run certain Android apps inside Windows, all without having to plug anything in.

iPhone + Windows

This is, as you may expect, the trickiest scenario of them all. And it is technically possible to pull off, provided you're willing to put in a bunch of fiddly work.

Apps like AirMessage, for instance, can essentially forward SMS and iMessages to an Android phone, a web browser running on your Windows computer. But while AirMessage has a solid reputation, there's one significant catch: you already have to own a Mac computer for it to work.

But why is this so hard?

Anshel Sag, principal analyst at Moor Insights & Strategy, told me that companies like Apple can exercise more control over your experience if you stay within its ecosystem, and that it rewards that behavior with exclusive features you can only get by staying in it.

"I don't foresee Apple wanting to make most of its own features accessible outside of its own platform without regulatory pressure," said Sag. "Apple wants its users to know that they'll have a better texting experience on iPhone when paired with an iPad or a MacBook."

The company has been highly protective of its messaging experience for years. According to emails that surfaced during the company's legal battle with Epic Games, Apple at least briefly entertained the idea of bringing its iMessage service to Android in 2013 before deciding against it.

GADGETS

Air fryers get smart with Proscenic T22

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Proscenic's newly launched T22 Smart Air Fryer connects to your home Wi-Fi and cooks dinner on demand with a simple smart device command.

Air fryers are countertop appliances that cook foods from french fries to chicken wings and a whole lot in between. They are designed to cook more healthily and efficiently. The Proscenic T22 takes it up a level with built-in Wi-Fi to connect it to your home network, to add voice assistants (Alexa and Google Assistant), schedules and remote control functionality.

The AC-powered fryer (14.2-by-10.66-by-12.04 inches, 12.5 pounds) cooks with less oil and with TurboAir Technology, stated by Proscenic to be "seven times more effective than regular air circulation technology and reduces 90% of the fats contained in foods for an extremely healthy option." Intelligent SuperDenoise Technology reduces noise by 20% to 48 decibels while in use.

A dishwasher-safe, square-shaped 5.28-quart basket coated with nonstick Teflon holds the food. The basket is removed by pressing a button on the handle to avoid direct contact with anything hot. A crisper plate (dishwasher-safe) sits inside on the bottom of the basket. The basket can hold enough food for up to four people. When the basket is in the air fryer, 360-degree air circulation efficiency cooks the food.

The free ProscenicHome app (iOS and Android) offers endless recipes, timers and schedules.

The air fryer is also easy to use with the controls on a topside touchscreen that enable you to begin, power, pause, pre-heat, preset and set temperatures — the 1,500-watt T22 cooks in a range of 165 to 400 degrees Fahrenheit in five-degree increments. The controls also have a keep warm feature and automatic turnoff.

There are 11 presets, and everything can be tweaked.

Once you have figured out personal recipes, Proscenic has an online option to share T22 air fryer recipes.

As with any new tech, the T22 takes some experimenting. But once you figure it out, it's easy to see why the devices have received so much fanfare recently.

Online: proscenic.com; \$139



PROSCENIC/TNS

The Proscenic T22 has built-in Wi-Fi.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Bridging the gap

3 summer movies comment on the visual language, culture of Gen Z

BY MARK OLSEN
Los Angeles Times

Here's a Hollywood math problem for you: Feature filmmaking as we know it is well over 100 years old. Members of Generation Z, defined by Pew Research Center as those born between 1997 and 2012, are now between 10 and 25. How long will it take the entertainment industry to bridge the gap?

For a number of summer movies, the answer isn't just "not long" — it's "now." "Bodies Bodies Bodies," directed by Halina Reijn from a screenplay by Sarah DeLappe; "Sharp Stick," written and directed by Lena Dunham; and "Not Okay," written and directed by Quinn Shephard, are all part of a spate of recent films to grapple with how the medium can engage a generation versed in a new visual language and culture. Their 20-something, predominantly female characters are defined to a significant extent by the way they define themselves online, a mix of jokey memes, earnest questioning, engaged activism, real horniness, performative fakeness and the actual search for an authentic sense of self.

'Wi-Fi is our oxygen'

In "Bodies Bodies Bodies," based on a story by viral "Cat Person" author Kristen Roupenian, a group of mostly wealthy, mostly college-age friends meet at one's family estate to party hard during an impending storm. They decide to play the game that gives the film its title — a variation on "Mafia" or "Werewolf" in which players try to deduce who among them is hiding information — when the power goes out and people start to die actual violent deaths, one by one. The friends turn on each other, and the film becomes a biting satire on class and privilege, all mediated by new technology, the language of progressive politics and youth culture, and Gen Z identity itself.

"This is just the best age group to examine human behavior," said Reijn, who as an actress was a longtime collaborator with the celebrated theater director Ivo van Hove. "When the power goes out and the Wi-Fi goes out, they change. The animal comes out. It's like the Wi-Fi is our oxygen. Wi-Fi out, demons in."

"They have so much info in their hand. Literally in their hand, and that makes you feel like they know everything," Reijn, 46, continued. "My characters are almost intellectual bullies, but a lot of the words they're using, they haven't lived. They say 'trigger' and 'anxiety' and 'ableist' and 'body dysmorphia' and 'mental illness.' They have all these things in their mind, but have they actually experienced them?"

Dunham launched to fame in no small part by exploring her own life as a 20-something and the lives of those around her with her breakthrough feature "Tiny Furniture" and the HBO series "Girls," for which she was nominated for eight Emmy Awards. "Sharp Stick" is the first feature film Dunham has directed in more than 10 years, meaning she now has some distance between herself and some of the characters she is depicting on screen.

"Instead of documenting my friends, it feels like I'm like 100, trying to do sociological research," said Dunham, who at 36 is squarely of the millennial generation. "A lot of the movie did come out of the fact that during the height of the pandemic, I discovered TikTok and was spending an enormous amount of time watching this incredible plethora of young people find this new way to express their voice. And I am both in awe of it and so glad that I didn't have access to it when I myself was that age."

"Sharp Stick" follows Sarah Jo (Kristine Froseth), a



A24/AP

From left, Amandla Stenberg, Maria Bakalova, Chase Sui Wonders and Rachel Sennott star in "Bodies Bodies Bodies." In the film, a group of college friends play a game about murder that becomes a reality.



Utopia

Kristine Froseth appears in a scene from "Sharp Stick." Her character sets off on a journey of self-discovery by having sex with men she meets online.

26-year-old virgin living with her mother Marilyn (Jennifer Jason Leigh) and sister Treina (Taylour Paige). Dunham plays Heather, a pregnant 30-something struggling to hold her life together in the face of her husband Josh's serial philandering. After Josh (Jon Bernthal) has an affair with Sarah Jo, caregiver to their special needs son, Sarah Jo sets off on a journey of self-discovery by having sex with men she meets on the internet.

"There's so much that I love about it and so much I don't understand about it," Dunham said of exploring online culture again. (Dunham, who does not control her public social media accounts, created a secret TikTok account during the pandemic — the first time in a while she had actively used social media.) "I think the thing that was most important to me was to come at it from a place where I wasn't like the old granny saying, 'The internet's ruining everything!' whether it's TikTok or the way that people engage with porn and sex online. I wanted to do it from a place that wasn't a judgmental parody but was instead just sort of meeting these people where they are and understanding what could be important to them and their self-expression about using those tools."

Of the three films, "Not Okay" is the most direct satire of contemporary online culture, starring Zoey Deutch, 27, as Danni Sanders, a photo editor for an online publication who longs to be a writer. In part to boost her online following and in part to impress a co-worker (Dylan O'Brien), she fakes a trip to Paris — where a real-life bombing incident rocks the city and leaves Danni to be falsely hailed as a brave survivor. She strikes up a friendship with Rowan (Mia Isaac), who survived a school shooting and has become an advocate to stop gun violence, but Danni's lies soon begin to unravel.

"Not Okay" begins with a tongue-in-cheek content warning advising that the film contains "an unlikable female protagonist," and sprinkled throughout the film

are real-life internet personalities such as Caroline Calloway, Reece Feldman, Rocco Botte and Bestdressed. Shephard also makes a cameo appearance as part of an on-line shaming support group. (There is a joke about Lena Dunham too.)

"Something I found really heartening about the people that we worked with for cameos was that they immediately understood that the film was satirizing a culture and not specifically criticizing them," Shephard, 27, said. "While it is obviously very critical of internet culture, it's not intended to be like, 'It's influencers' fault' or 'Throw your phone in the ocean,' because the internet is a part of our reality now. And I really tried to paint all sides of how it can be used for the best and the worst behavior in all of us."

Phones are 'not going anywhere'

The films all home in on this distinction between a presentational online persona and the actual self. The gulf between the two can be difficult to navigate.

"We get asked a lot on this press tour for 'Bodies' if we spend less time on our phones after working on this film," said Amandla Stenberg, already a showbiz vet at 23. "And that's really not what it's about, because the phones are here. They're not going anywhere."

"We have to figure out how to engage with social media responsibly, how to engage with it in a way that maintains humanity. The thing about these algorithms is they can so easily become echo chambers for the worst parts of ourselves. And it actually takes us, as a collective, to be the antithesis to that, to ... the AI that is shaping our world now, taking our biases and our insecurities and regurgitating it and feeding it back to us."

"Sharp Stick" uses a different gambit to illustrate the contrast between "real" and "mediated." As the film opens, glamorous images of actress Taylour Paige fill the screen, dancing seductively as a delightfully lascivious rap song plays. Then there is an abrupt cut to the vertical aspect ratio of filming on a phone as Paige moves awkwardly, trying to emulate a TikTok dance, and the illusion is shattered.

"What's interesting to me is the distinction between the kind of glamorous cinema fantasy and this kind of iPhone reality," Dunham said. "But also life is more beautiful than anything that we can see on an iPhone."

'Reeks of inauthenticity'

It's of course not unusual for a generation to be skeptical, even adversarial, regarding those coming up behind them. The prospect of an end to job security, political power and cultural influence is enough to make anyone anxious. But there's something about the way the combined fears of boomers, Gen Xers and millennials collectively land on Gen Z that feels especially weighty.

SEE GEN Z ON PAGE 16

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Gen Z: Films not intended to mock youth

FROM PAGE 15

“The older generations ... might be afraid that we don’t even understand what the culture is. We want to learn it, but we don’t really feel it. And they live it. They think differently about male, female, they have a whole new way of looking at the world. They are very aware of climate change and all those sensitivities,” Reijn said. “We wanted to be self-deprecating and full of humor, even though it’s also very important. And the film itself is inclusive.

“Of course, at the same time, we’re also making fun of that because they look like they’re so giving and caring about others, but in the end, [those concerns] are also used in a narcissistic way.”

“Whatever the youngest group of working people are doing has a sort of threatening component to it, like it’s gonna wipe out everything that came before it. And I think we’ve learned that elder Hollywood can’t be wiped out by anything,” Dunham said.

“I tend to just love the bravery and the guilelessness that comes with being young. So much of what I did as a young person, I couldn’t have done if I’d had an awareness of how older people were looking at me or us.”

Deutch understands why Gen Z is in turn skeptical of older generations attempting to speak its language, get its references and co-opt its attitudes in order to reach it through media and marketing.

“It just reeks of inauthenticity when people are trying to impress or understand Gen Z when they don’t,” she said.

“I really hope with all my heart that young people don’t feel that we’re making fun of them,” Reijn said. “It’s about human nature. In the end, it’s not only about Gen Z.”

While the filmmakers are all careful to say the audience for their movies is not limited to one generation, they also know who is likely to be their harshest and most public critics.

Armed with smartphones and social media, Gen Z will make their displeasure known quickly and clearly if they feel their on-screen depictions are inaccurate.

“If I know anything about Gen Z it’s that they can smell any falsity or any little tiny cheugy thing from a million miles away,” Shephard said.

“Honestly, I think my use of the word cheugy is now cheugy. Someone’s going to read this article and be like, ‘That’s last year’s word.’”



ELISE LOCKWOOD, METRO GOLDWYN MAYER PICTURES/AP

Director George Miller, center, with Tilda Swinton, left, and Idris Elba on the set of “Three Thousand Years of Longing.”

‘We remain ... hardwired for story’

Director, stars of ‘Three Thousand Years of Longing’ chat about power of storytelling

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

George Miller’s “Three Thousand Years of Longing” spans millennia, but it can often feel longer waiting in between films from the “Mad Max” director.

Seven years after Miller’s “Fury Road” blazed its way across movie screens, the 77-year-old filmmaker is finally back with a movie two decades in the works, and with a lot on its mind about what’s temporary and what’s eternal.

In “Three Thousand Years of Longing,” which opens in stateside theaters this weekend, Tilda Swinton plays an academic named Alitheia, a “narratologist” specializing in stories about stories, who encounters a wish-granting djinn (Idris Elba) who emerges from an old glass bottle bought in Istanbul’s Grand Bazaar. When no wish comes to her mind, he tells her 3,000 years’ worth of stories. If “Fury Road” beat a ferocious, straightforward narrative line, “Three Thousand Years,” adapted from an A.S. Byatt short story, ruminatively skips through time. It’s an intimate chamber piece sculpted in epic proportions.

“Big cinema,” Swinton called it as she, Elba and Miller assembled in a hotel room in Cannes, France, shortly before “Three Thousand Years of Longing” made its red-carpet premiere and while Miller’s “Fury Road” follow-up, “Furiosa,” was ramping up production back in Australia.

The trio were clearly enthralled to be together again after shooting the film through the pandemic, and still animated by the movie’s ideas and ambitions.

“The faith to throw oneself over the highest bar,” Swinton said of Miller’s endeavor. “Who better to jump that bar?”

Remarks have been edited for length and clarity.

AP: The film opens with wonder and enchantment as something like endangered species in a modern digital world. Is that a feeling you three connect with?

Swinton: I’m really happy to hear you use the word “enchantment.” It is about enchantment. It’s about faith. It’s about the willingness to take a leap and essentially be open to change. It’s not that it’s necessarily threatened, but it can get obscured. Reality is overrated.

Elba: As an actor, you sometimes live in this weird space of reality. It’s a bit like the djinn. People see me and they go, “Oh my God. Can you give me something?” It’s a picture or a signature or whatever. I find myself wondering what am I, really? Who am I? But I realize my role in my life or in society as a storyteller and someone who makes people believe something is incredibly important. To get to sit in a room with the master himself (gestures toward Miller) and to be able to tell a story about storytelling is incredible. Enchantment is an incredible word. I don’t think it will ever get lost.

Miller: What’s really interesting to me, despite all these technological advances, is that we remain definitely hardwired for story. You could argue there are more stories being told today than ever before. I was really struck by the fact that Napoleon had read every single book that existed at his time. Now it’s impossible to read every book, see every TV show, every movie. I don’t think stories are replaced. I think they just continuously evolve. There was a British census where people were asked what their religion was and a very high percentage put in Jedi. It’s replacing one form of mythology for the other.

George, as a myth-maker who can conjure worlds, you’re not so unlike the djinn. Why were you drawn toward a movie that digs into the nature of storytelling?

Miller: One of my favorite quotes about story is the Swahili storytellers who end their story by saying: “The story has been told. If it was bad, it was my fault because I’m the storyteller. If it was good, then it belongs to everybody.” There’s absolutely no question that stories, once told, get traction or not and they mean something to people in one way or the other. So you can’t think about them lightly. I’ve known people who can beguile you with their stories. I know that I struggle with that. I can’t get up and spontaneously tell a story well. But I can do it in the ultra-slow motion of telling a movie where I think about every nuance, every rhythm of it, and it’s finally there.

Tilda and Idris, does making a movie like this prompt you to reflect on what compels you as actors to tell stories?

Swinton: I’ve never made anything quite like this. Even though in a funny way the film is about one of my favorite things — inarticulacy — or rather the effort that we go to communicate with one another. Knowing that it’s almost impossible to understand each other, we still try, and that really touches me. It’s certainly one of the things that keeps me making films.

Elba: I’m a bit like George. I’d be fascinated with my dad telling stories, but I was never good at that. I remember when I went to a boy’s school. I was one of the funny boys. In the drama class, those kids couldn’t do it. They couldn’t make believe. I never forget the teacher’s phrase “make believe” and how it resonated. Suddenly, I could tell you the best story in the world because I was making you believe I could. I was really aware of the irony of working with George and Tilda and I’m playing a guy who has to tell stories honestly to get his freedom. I was Idris acting his socks off playing a man who was not allowed to act his socks off but had to tell these honest, engaging stories.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

‘Breaking’ shows a veteran on the brink

Boyega gives one of the most transformed, riveting performances of his career in film about real Marine in 2017

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

The tragic case of Brian Brown-Easley didn't take the nation by storm back in 2017 when he walked into a Marietta, Ga., Wells Fargo branch and passed the teller a note reading, "I have a bomb." But attention was what the former Marine demanded, and deserved, in that moment of desperation, and with "Breaking," a depiction of the tense hours that unfolded during the hostage standoff that ensued, Brown-Easley's story finally gets its due, though the resolution is far from heartening.

Written by director Abi Damaris Corbin and Kwame Kwei-Armah, "Breaking" keeps a tight focus on the events of the day, and offers a showcase for star John Boyega, who gives one of the most transformed, and riveting, performances of his career. With an economy of storytelling, just an opening scene and a few flashbacks are needed to situate the audience in Brown-Easley's frame of mind.

On the verge of homelessness after a disability check from Veterans Affairs was diverted to a student loan payment, and struggling with mental illness, Brian is distressed and hopeless. He wants to maintain a relationship with his beloved daughter. His rock bottom and last resort is to take hostages in the bank in order to bring attention to his plight and demand a payment from the VA: just \$892.

He ends up barricaded inside with bank employees Estel (Nicole Beharie) and



Bleeker Street

John Boyega appears in a scene from "Breaking" as Brian Brown-Easley, a veteran driven to take hostages in a bank to bring attention to the injustice of his situation.

Rosa (Selenis Leyva), demanding his payment, a hostage negotiator and television cameras. What's clear from the outset is that this situation, while triggered by the struggles of poverty, isn't about money at all. He has no intention of robbing the bank, and refuses offers of payment from Estel. What Brian needs is attention to the injustice of his situation, and someone to listen to him.

He finds a kind ear in Lisa Larson (Connie Britton), a TV news producer who picks up the tip line that Brian calls from

the bank. He finds connection and comfort in Eli Bernard (Michael K. Williams, in his last screen performance), the hostage negotiator and former Marine who attempts to keep the situation under control and works to get Brian and the hostages out safely. In Estel and Rosa, his ostensible victims, he finds witnesses to his pain and suffering, and strange companions in the escalating hostage situation.

"Breaking" is Corbin's first solo directorial effort, and it's a solid debut: tense, topical and a showcase for a host of fantas-

tic performances. The entire cast is excellent — the ensemble was awarded with a special jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival where the film premiered earlier this year. But the film wouldn't work without Boyega. He's rough and rangy, his hangdog expression sorrowful, punctuated with bursts of mania, paranoia and sometimes even humor.

The film is a tense, slow-burn thriller and with a heavy, somber tone appropriate for a social justice drama, but there are times when its pace sags and it can't sustain the tension. Within the walls of the bank, with just Boyega, Beharie and Leyva, as calls are made to 911, the news, the police and Brian's loved ones, the film is at its most taut and suspenseful.

As soon as it ventures outside, to explore the machinations of law enforcement, the film loses some of its tightly strung tension as characters fade to the background. The storytelling around the police maneuvers, especially the sniper who looms in the distance, is a bit messy, and while Williams gives a fine performance, his character feels underwritten.

Corbin and Kwei-Armah, along with Boyega, give Brown-Easley's story what he always wanted and deserved: attention to the injustice that is the crushing bureaucracy that can chew up and abandon those who have served our country. In this tragic story, the only villain is simply the system itself.

"Breaking" is rated PG-13 for some violent content and strong language. Running time: 108 minutes.

‘Three Thousand Years of Longing’ has more questions than answers

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

Australian filmmaker George Miller's latest cinematic exploration of humanity is a far cry from the dusty, diesel-fueled "Mad Max" franchise for which he is known, and it proves a moment of respite between 2015's "Mad Max: Fury Road" and the currently filming prequel to that film, "Furiosa." Based on the short story "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye" by A.S. Byatt, adapted by Miller and Augusta Gore, "Three Thousand Years of Longing" is a philosophically ambitious project, a cerebral exploration of the function of storytelling in human existence and the meaning of desire.

"Three Thousand Years of Longing" is a nested Matryoshka doll of story. The outer layer is told by Alitheia (Tilda Swinton), a narratologist who has made her way to Turkey for a conference. Upon arrival, she starts to encounter mysterious, magical figures, what she calls djinn (another word for "genie," referring to the Muslim belief in

invisible spirits that inhabit the world and take the form of humans or animals). While giving a talk about the continuing purpose of myth in our modern, science-based world, she is spooked by a djinn in the audience and faints.

The script is so densely packed with mythological insight that some scenes almost gloss over interesting concepts like the one Alitheia discusses in her talk, which questions the function of gods, monsters and creation myths in everyday life, when we have science to tell us where we came from. But even if Miller doesn't linger on these ideas, they remain in the background of "Three Thousand Years of Longing," constantly informing the rest of the film.

The story inside Alitheia's belongs to the main djinn she encounters, after purchasing a mysterious glass bottle in the bazaar and scrubbing it clean. The Djinn (Idris Elba) explodes into her hotel room, requesting that she make three wishes. Alitheia declines, insisting that stories about making wishes are

cautionary tales, and there's really nothing she needs or desires in her independent, solitary, academic life. The pair, clad in white hotel robes, sit down for a chat, and the Djinn tells her his story, of the three times he's been "incarcerated" in his bottle, and the danger of wishes unfulfilled, which rob him of his purpose.

Rendered with stunning beauty and daring visuals by Miller, these 3,000 years of history — from the Queen of Sheba, through various slaves and sultans and trips to the bottom of the Bosphorus — are an exploration through the danger of wishing and the undeniable power of desire. Though Alitheia claims she has no desire for wishes, in hearing the Djinn's story, she comes to understand her purpose, which is to love him. Whether or not they can harmoniously coexist in the modern world is another question altogether.

Miller's vision is an earnest and high-minded one, with more insights about humanity and



METRO GOLDWYN MAYER PICTURES/AP

Idris Elba, left, and Tilda Swinton star in "Three Thousand Years of Longing," about the danger of wishing and the power of desire.

storytelling packed into a tossed-off moment than most films contain. But it's also a deeply odd film, spanning centuries, but contained to the interaction between Alitheia and the Djinn. In line with core tenets of Miller's genre-spanning work, it most clearly espouses the questions of human existence, human desire, and how it's desire that make us human, whether it's for love or survival, or both.

But while Miller poses questions about the purpose of storytelling, and perhaps, about the

lack of magic in our technological, science-driven world, the film doesn't offer up any concrete answers, leaving us adrift in a sea of provocative queries. For a film about narrative, it meanders, losing focus. The only messages or lessons in "Three Thousand Years of Longing" are to be gleaned ourselves from the clues left behind, which is a fascinating, if a bit frustrating experience.

"Three Thousand Years of Longing" is rated R for some sexual content, graphic nudity and brief violence. Running time: 108 minutes.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

In need of some prayer

Reboot of open-world Saints Row still full of good, mindless fun but also lots of bugs

BY JONATHAN LEE
The Washington Post

Saints Row is an open-world action game series that has defined itself for being sheer, dumb fun. If Hangar 13's Mafia series is the "The Godfather" of video games and Rockstar Games' Grand Theft Auto series is "Goodfellas," then Volition's Saints Row is "The Fast and the Furious" with dabbing, hoverbikes and bedazzled bazookas. Saints Row, from 2006, and its sequel Saints Row 2 were open-world action games about a nameless criminal leading a street gang's rise to power, a relatively dark tale interspersed with zany moments. Saints Row: The Third solidified the franchise's now trademark over-the-top aesthetic and Saints Row IV capped off the series by turning the player into a super-powered politician (president of the United States, to be exact) fighting off an alien invasion.

Enter 2022's Saints Row, a reboot that developer Volition said would take the series back to its roots and focus on a small-time gang becoming a major player in the criminal world — but without losing the cheeky, irreverent niche that Saints Row has carved for itself. I'm happy to report that Saints Row succeeds on that front. The writing is wacky, the humor is silly and the characters have some surprisingly poignant moments in between all the crazy high jinks. I am sad to say, however, that Saints Row is also one of the most badly optimized and buggiest games I've played all year.

In this latest entry, you play as a penniless 20-something-year-old living with three friends in Santo Ileso, a new metropolis inspired by the big cities of the Southwest. Your tight-knit group of misfits includes the brainy entrepreneur Eli, artistic mechanic Neenah and fun-loving DJ Kevin (a thinly veiled reference to Asian American rave bae meme persona, Kevin Nguyen). Your origin story is quintessentially millennial and Generation Z: After working thanklessly for giant corporations and struggling to find stability in a highly volatile job market, you and your friends decide to do your own thing by starting a new criminal syndicate called the Saints.

To fund your burgeoning illicit enterprise, you commit lots of

extravagant, ridiculous crimes. The main story missions in Saints Row range from Hollywood blockbuster-style heists to slice-of-life sequences. I have pancaked dozens of cars from angry rival gangs in my monster truck; I also took Kevin on a quest to get a kid's meal toy and learned that he never got one as a child growing up in foster care. The repeatable side hustle missions include infiltrating guarded rooftops using a wingsuit and riding shotgun for getaway drivers.

In the absurdist, cartoony world of Saints Row where assassinations are crowdsourced out to the gig economy via an app called Wanted, racking up a body count in the thousands should be gleeful fun. Unfortunately, most of that fun has been crushed under the game's litany of bugs.

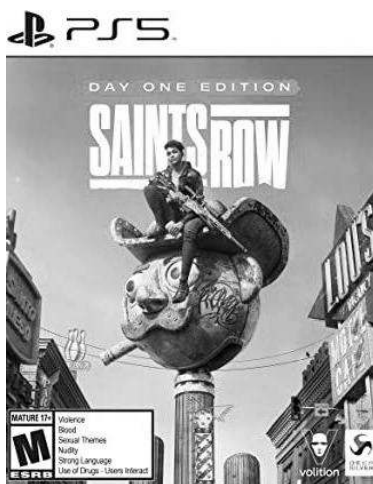
Oh the bugs, so many bugs. Listing them all would take an entirely separate article. In one mission, my shotgun stopped working completely during a sequence where I was being rushed by half a dozen enemies with melee weapons; reloading my game didn't fix it. I automatically failed another mission because the last target I needed to kill spawned a quarter mile away from the objective area and leaving to pursue him timed me out. My game crashed during a cutscene after a main story mission, and when I loaded back in, the mission had already concluded. There was no way for me to go back and see what happened. On yet another mission, after fighting my way through a gauntlet of enemies to find a car I needed to destroy, the car suddenly became invulnerable. I had to reload and do it all over again, hoping that the bug was a fluke.

But even without the bugs, Saints Row is in dire need of more development time. The PC version of the game (which is the version I played) feels like an afterthought. Mouse settings are completely nonexistent: I had no option to change its sensitivity or turn off acceleration. The photo feature, which you use for side quests and to record fast travel points, would randomly stop working for me. There are several times where I've been in the passenger seat and my artificial intelligence (AI) driver would keep grinding into civilian cars until we both died in an explosive inferno. For some bizarre reason,



Volition photos

The crew that make up the Saints criminal syndicate: From left to right, fun-loving DJ Kevin, your player the Boss, brainy entrepreneur Eli and artistic mechanic Neenah.



the game won't let you fast travel during the introductory phase of a main mission. I would start a mission, see that the quest giver wants to meet me all the way on the other side of town, quit the mission, fast travel to get closer and then start the mission again. Even the gunplay, a core part of the experience (you shoot lots and lots of things in this game), feels sluggish, imprecise and janky.

The most frustrating thing about all this is that I genuinely believe there is a great game buried under the bugs. I love the design approach of putting fun first over realism. When you're driving in Saints Row, you are an unstoppable force — and in Santo Ileso, there are few immovable objects. You can blaze through street lamps, trees, mailboxes and pretty much anything short of a building without slowing down at all, even on a motorcycle. There is a large array of different cars and weapons, each with in-depth features and customization options. I find the writing charming and the Saints crew to be endearingly cheesy, filled with characters who also brim



Gunplay, a core part of the Saints Row experience, feels sluggish, imprecise and janky in this Volition reboot.



Saints Row puts fun ahead of realism: You can blaze through pretty much anything short of a building without slowing down.

with real tenderness and vulnerability.

There is no shortage of enjoyable things to do in Saints Row, but doing them means putting up with a severe lack of polish.

As it currently stands, Saints Row is barely playable. It's good, mindless fun, but I cannot rec-

ommend it in good faith. I offer a little prayer that one day a patch can address some of these concerns, and that the studio has a long-term plan to salvage this promising title.

Platforms: PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, PC, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S

Online: saintsrow.com

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Tearing down walls and building bridges

Though many impressive walls have played an enormous role in Europe's past, today most are historical relics. From Hadrian's Wall (constructed to defend the northern boundary of Roman Britannia) to the Maginot Line (built by the French in the 1930s to keep out the Germans), Europe's walls have generally been symbols not of strength, but of mistrust and insecurity. Most were necessary when built. But the promising news in our age has been a European society that is advancing toward mutual respect and cooperation — dismantling walls so that it can move forward.

Long ago, at one point or another, most of Europe's great cities — Paris, London, Rome, Florence, Milan, Barcelona, Vienna — were contained within walls, constructed during ancient and medieval times to defend against invaders. Many of these walls were torn down long ago as cities expanded beyond their historic centers and land was opened up for grand circular boulevards. Some intact walls have been preserved in places like Dubrovnik, Croatia; Rothenburg, Germany; York, England; Lucca, Italy; and Carcassonne, France. In each case, these walls

have become people-friendly, park-like spaces where people stroll, gather and enjoy the view.

Some walls seem to survive to take us back in time. One of my favorites, Hadrian's Wall, is the remains of the fortification the Romans built nearly 2,000 years ago in Britain. Now in ruins, this great stone wall once stretched 73 miles from coast to coast across the narrowest part of northern England, where Britannia



Rick Steves

ended and the barbarian land that would someday be Scotland began. More than just a wall, it was a cleverly designed military rampart manned by 20,000 troops. At every mile there was a small fort guarding a gate. Today, two of these Hadrian Wall forts have been turned into museums, where visitors can see the ruins up close, view ancient artifacts and get a sense of life in the distant past of a desolate corner of the Roman Empire.

But Europe's most poignant walls are products of the recent past. Thankfully, so many that once stood for fear and intolerance now symbolize peace and progress.



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI/Rick Steves' Europe

Visitors to Belfast's Peace Wall are welcome to leave their own messages of peace and hope.

During the Troubles, the 30-year conflict that wracked Northern Ireland, so-called "peace walls" went up in Belfast to separate its sectarian communities: Catholics, in favor of a united Ireland, and Protestants, in favor of staying in the United Kingdom. Today, instead of separating its warring tribes, these walls are a tourist attraction. Visitors from around the world decorate the walls with colorful messages of hope and thanksgiving that the bombs and killing that came with

the Troubles are no more.

Europe's most famous wall is the Berlin Wall, designed not to defend against invaders but to keep residents from escaping. Built in 1961, this 96-mile-long barrier encircled West Berlin, making it an island of freedom in communist East Germany. When the wall fell on November 9, 1989, Europe enjoyed its happiest day since the end of World War II. In the euphoria that followed, "wall peckers" giddily chipped the Berlin Wall to smithereens. A

surviving stretch of the wall has been preserved as a memorial to the victims of the Cold War. What's left of the long-hated wall has become a concrete canvas for graffiti artists — a people's gallery celebrating freedom.

It's no accident that the euro's paper bills feature bridges, not walls — as do the dreams of great leaders.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European guidebooks, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio and organizes European tours. You can email Rick at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

Cows, cheese and chestnuts among Alpine wonders

Once family summer vacation time has passed, but before the first snows of winter have fallen, the masses that flock to the Alps year-round tend to subside a bit, and the mountains exude a special kind of magic. Now is the time to enjoy harvest festivals, spectacular foliage-filled hikes and other wonders of the autumn season. Here are just a few reasons why visiting the Alps in the weeks to come is a splendid idea:

Cows: The Almabtrieb, also known as Vihscheid, is the name for the annual village fetes thrown in honor of the return of the livestock, primarily in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. During the summer months, cattle (as well as goats and sheep) are driven up to the high Alpine pastures, where they feast on the ecologically clean and abundant meadow grasses.

But even bovine holidays have to end, so when it's time for them to return to the barns that make up their winter quarters, they're welcomed home in style. Should the entire herd have made it through the summer without death or serious misfortune, the cows are adorned with headdresses bedecked with flowers, thistles, pine boughs and religious symbols. On the day when the cows descend from their mountain havens back into town, residents don their own traditional garb and celebrate the return of the animals so closely intertwined with the Alpine livelihood with song, schnapps, games and merriment.

While dozens of rural villages celebrate the return of their beloved animals, some fetes are of particular touristic interest. Amongst Germany's most notable is the Bad Hindelang "Vihscheid," which is accompanied by a market, fest tent and carnival rides (Sept. 10). In Mittenwald, the warmest of welcomes home are accorded to goats (Sept. 3) and sheep (Sept. 10 and 11). For dates of all such events, see tinyurl.com/yeyvafz8.



iStock

The return of the cattle from their high Alpine pastures is celebrated annually in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

Cheese: Unsurprisingly, all that high-quality Alpine milk is the secret to the spectacular cheeses of the Alps — the hard or semi-hard cheeses formed into large wheels with a hard rind that makes them convenient to transport. Switzerland's "Schaukäsereien," or show dairies, are the place to learn about the cheese-making process, but to skip to the best part, the tastings, consider adding a cheese festival to the to-do list. The "Käsefest Luzern" or Lucerne Cheese Festival slated for Oct. 15 offers a market, milking and cheese-making demonstrations, music and a chalet constructed of Swiss cheese; smaller cheese fests take place in Basel (Oct. 1); Huttwil (Oct. 1-2), Thun (Oct. 8-9), Bern (Oct. 29), Appenzell (Oct. 29-30) and Rapperswil-Jona (Nov. 5). Online: cheese-festival.ch

Chestnuts: For centuries, chestnuts made up a good part of the caloric intake of many residents of the Alps' southern reaches. Flour made from smoke-dried chestnuts found its way into pasta, bread, cakes and other

dishes. The Swiss city of Ascona, perched prettily on the shore of Lake Maggiore, celebrates its connection to this traditional crop on Oct. 8 with its annual Festa delle Castagne, or Chestnut Market. The scent of chestnuts roasting in pans over open fires is a call for immediate consumption, while the farmer's market offers local specialties to take home and enjoy at a later date. Online: tinyurl.com/5n946fkb

Chestnuts are also revered in Italy's South Tyrol region, where "Törggelen" is a favorite autumn activity. The custom involves imbibing the new wines made from the still-fermenting, freshly pressed grapes while sampling local dishes such as dumplings and heaping platters of cold cuts. Hiking through a chestnut forest beforehand is the perfect way to work up an appetite; the South Tyrolean Chestnut Trail, a 50-mile-long trail through the Valle Isarco between Vilpiano and Bressanone, is but one of countless trails. Many single-day festivals and culinary weeks dedicated to chestnuts and the Törggelen tradition are held in October. Online: tinyurl.com/mpjjecrip

Other culinary fests: Tasty dishes made from the bounty of the harvest season await sampling at numerous other festivals and events. One of the best-known autumn food festivals takes place in Lugano, Switzerland. From Sept. 30 through Oct. 2, visitors to the Festa d'Autunno converge upon the streets of the Old Town to sample local cuisine alongside wines from the Ticino region. Traditional music performed by folk bands provides the backdrop to this free-entry festival. Online: tinyurl.com/3sus62dh

Vaduz, the capital of tiny Liechtenstein, launches a new culinary event this year. The Genussfestival, slated for Sept. 1-11, invites producers of local specialties, from food truck owners to top chefs, to present their food and drink around the Town Hall Square. The city's bars and restaurants will also be offering unique dishes. On weekends, the program will include musical entertainment. Online: genussfestival.li



Karen Bradbury

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Experience Paris anew by sidecar

Motorcycle tours offer unique way to see the City of Lights

BY ANNA HARTLEY
For The Washington Post

As we idle at a quiet intersection, waiting for the light to change, a man crossing the street stops in his tracks, pulls his headphones down and approaches us with a look of childish delight. It's impossible to exchange more than a few words, but that does not seem to bother him, nor the many other Parisians who suddenly drop their usual cool reserve to smile and chat as we ride through the city. My guide, Simon Burke, is used to it. Cruising in a beautiful sidecar does that to people.

I'm sitting low in a Watsonian basket, bolted securely to the side of Simon's burnished-red Royal Enfield Interceptor 650 motorcycle. We're zigzagging through streets beside the Seine River, and despite the fact that I've lived in Paris for the best part of a decade, I feel as if I'm seeing it all anew.

After years of on-and-off lockdowns, tourism has returned to Paris. And looking at the volume of visitors now, you would scarcely believe they were ever gone. The city seems to be waking up after a long slumber, yet the pandemic hit the industry here just as hard as anywhere else. Simon would not be sitting on the bike beside me if it were not for COVID-19. The difficulties faced by the large tourism company he had worked with for years gave him the boost he needed to strike out on his own, and he decided to combine his longtime passion for motorcycles into Txango Tours, a private business that could be as agile and independent as his beloved bikes.

The engine roars to life, and we're now crossing the Bir-Hakeim bridge, with the Eiffel Tower over our right shoulders. It's an unusually wet and stormy day, but enough light comes through between dark clouds to give the river a brilliant shine. I laugh giddily as we zoom up the street, the wind tossing loose strands of hair around my helmet. Paris is coming at me thick and fast, and without the barrier of a full windshield, nor the responsibility of being the driver, I can really take it all in.

And I'm never more grateful that I'm not driving than when I see what lies before us: the Arc de Triomphe, and around it, the notorious Étoile roundabout. Twelve large avenues all empty onto this one spot, yet it has no lanes, and — read this part carefully — right of way is given to vehicles entering, rather than those already on the roundabout. Rather than stopping at the edge of this swirling vortex, we dive right in, directly into the path of multiple cars and buses. The temptation to clutch the sides and close my eyes is strong, but magically, order prevails and the traffic moves to absorb us. We spin around the towering Arc, under which a giant French flag billows in the wind. The Avenue des Champs-Élysées swoops away behind us, down toward Paris' other great traffic jumble — Place de la Concorde — and beyond it, the Tuileries Gardens and Louvre Museum. But none of those will be our next stop. On this aptly named Paris Monuments Tour, we are hitting all the sights, but unlike those on a tour bus, we are nimble and free, and taking as many back roads as possible.

Time and again, usually reticent Parisians pop their heads out of car windows or stop in the street to admire the rig. In 2022, a sidecar is charming, old-fashioned and unusual. Yet they were once a common sight: The first sidecar was invented by a Frenchman and was designed to be attached to a bicycle. They were once part of a common family vehicle, before the advent of affordable family cars. Nowadays, they are just for enthusiasts, like Simon, and indeed, my granddad. When he emigrated from England to Australia, he brought his passion for vintage English cars and bikes with him. He and his wife spent their weekends zooming across the outback, Nanna in the passenger seat with her helmet and goggles, maps of Australia spread on her lap in the era before GPS.



PHOTOS BY ANNA HARTLEY/For The Washington Post

The reporter and Simon Burke, founder of Txango Tours, take a motorcycle and sidecar to visit Parisian landmarks. The nimbleness of the ride allows for easy navigation.

We zoom over some of the French capital's famous cobblestone streets. Our ride is like a who's-who of Paris sights: Arc de Triomphe, Palais Garnier, the Louvre, Pont Neuf. And although we cannot quite see it from here, it's impossible not to think of the Notre Dame Cathedral. In April 2019, smoke billowed high into the sky when a fire of unknown origin set the ancient cathedral alight, destroying the spire, most of the roof and some of the upper walls, and taking with it a little bit of the soul of Paris. The smoke has long since cleared, but when you pass nearby, it looks strange and hollow, and it's yet again under construction, almost 900 years after the first stone was laid.

Pont Neuf is its usual glorious self, its stones worn with centuries of weather and foot traffic, and to the east, groups of tourists board boats on the tip of the Île de la Cité, ready to cruise up and down the Seine River. The river is not an official stop on this tour, but it's the ever-present icon that ties the city together. Paris is one of the busiest ports in France, but the industrial zones are slowly being squeezed out as the banks of the famous river are converted into pedestrianized public spaces. A wealth of gardens, outdoor gyms, bars and cafes have turned the river into a 24-hour attraction. No wonder that for the 2024 Paris Olympics, the organizing committee is eschewing the usual stadium or concert hall, and it will host the Opening Ceremonies on the river.

Know & Go

Txango Tours

Phone: 011-33-6-23-75-12-68

Online: txangotours.com

This tour company offers group motorcycle sidecar tours in Paris and Versailles. The two-hour Paris Monuments Tour zips to some of the city's most famous sites, including the Eiffel Tower and Louvre. The Paris tour is available daily, except Monday. Tours are about \$130 for one guest, half off for the second guest.

Anna Hartley

We continue, back on the Left Bank now, skirting the river past the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée de la Légion d'honneur. Then over the Pont de la Concorde, an un-beautiful bridge that holds great historical significance. Connecting the National Assembly on one side and Place de la Concorde, once blood-soaked from guillotined bodies during the Revolution, on the other, the bridge is built from stones salvaged from the Bastille prison. For now, Place de la Concorde's centerpiece, a magnificent ancient Egyptian obelisk, is obscured, hidden behind scaffolding as it undergoes restoration. Yet more evidence that, since the stillness of the coronavirus, Paris is once again moving and shaking.

The sky has mostly cleared, and rays of sunlight dance on the golden statues of the Beaux-Arts marvel Pont Alexandre III as we cruise underneath them. In a city of epic views, this is still hard to beat. Before us, the gold dome of the chapel of the Hôtel National des Invalides — better known as the final resting place of Napoleon Bonaparte — shines brightly, winking in the sunlight as we drive by. We're weaving through the beautiful, quiet streets of the Seventh Arrondissement when Simon makes a few quick swerves and “flies the basket,” sending me, the basket and my surprised laughter into the air. In a place as pretty as this, it's easy to be silly.

Finally, the Grande Dame. Drops of rain slowly drip from the leaves of the plane trees at the Champ-de-Mars, and from the surprisingly delicate ironwork on the Eiffel Tower. There she stands, at once imposing and fine, gently resting on the soaked ground and reaching high into the sky, where she enjoys an expansive view uncluttered by skyscrapers and cranes. The morning weather had slowed the usual crowds, but now they have reemerged, shaking rain from their umbrellas and folding them away, treading a jaunty beat around the ancient City of Lights.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

You can Gor your own way

Road less traveled between Italian towns near Aviano is a quiet wonder to wander

BY KENT HARRIS
Stars and Stripes

I've been stationed at Aviano Air Base in Italy for more than 20 years, but it was only recently that I learned of the Sentiero Naturalistico Gor, or the Gor Nature Trail.

Like most Americans living around the base, if I want to get from Budoia to Polcenigo, I'll drive the 3 miles or so along the road commonly known as the mountain highway, so named because it runs along the base of the Dolomites.

But it's entirely possible to walk between the two towns, which hundreds of Americans call home, without ever seeing the highway or much of anything else other than trees.

The trail itself varies dramatically between Budoia, where there's a parking lot about a block away seemingly reserved for the hike, and Polcenigo, where the trailhead has a covered driveway.

Most of the trail is essentially a rough gravel road, but parts are paved with cement. Three people could comfortably walk side by side, and mountain biking is certainly viable.

The part nearest Polcenigo, though, is a different story, with the path becoming narrow, steep and sometimes hard to spot. A few thorny branches exchanged greetings with my family of four during our recent visit.

Regardless, the scenery is fairly common throughout: trees and smaller flora. The sign at the Budoia entrance indicates there are deer and other wildlife. But we saw only a few insects, prompting an exclamation of "ooohh, butterflies!"

The scarcity of fauna for us was at least partially because the two youngest members of the family aren't exactly known for their stealth abilities.

With mouths shut, though, the trail is very quiet. There are no sounds of the cars making the much quicker trip. The few other hikers could be heard before they were seen.

Only the bells ringing in the tower of the Church of Santa Lucia, a short diversion from the path, can be heard for most of the way.

There are dozens of trails of varying length and difficulty around Aviano and hundreds within a few hours of the base. Seasoned hikers either have maps or have walked them enough to know the way.

Many, the Gor Nature Trail included, don't seem to have many flat stretches. You're going either uphill or downhill most of the time.

We followed the white signs pointing out the way along the trail. There were only a few times we had to guess.



The Gor Nature Trail, near Aviano Air Base in Italy, offers dozens of walking paths and plenty of solitude. There are ample directional signs on the trail, and hikers are left guessing at only a few spots along the way.



PHOTOS BY KENT HARRIS/Stars and Stripes

Much of the Gor Nature Trail, which runs between the Italian towns of Budoia and Polcenigo, is along a gravel road. Some stretches are paved with concrete. The trail is suitable for mountain bikes, though a bit rough for strollers.



Lucky (and quiet) hikers might see wildlife such as deer along the trail. Others will have to settle for nature of the floral variety.

On the QT

Directions: Budoia is about 7 miles northwest of Aviano Air Base. Polcenigo is 3 more miles to the west. The Budoia entrance to the Sentiero Naturalistico Gor is along Via Cialata in the southwest part of the city. There's a parking lot about a block to the northeast. At Polcenigo, the trail entrance starts in a covered driveway off Via Longone. Look for the white sign.

Cost: Parking is free at the lot in Budoia.

Hours: Unless repair work is being done, the trail is always open. Hiking at night would require a flashlight or headlamp.

Those choices were few enough that the trip back went smoothly. Though maybe that's because, with a few exceptions, it seemed like it was mostly downhill.



The Church of Santa Lucia can be seen on a side trip from the Gor Nature Trail. The short path is paved with cement and is very steep.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

A satisfactory stop on a culinary quest

Weiden's Steaklounge can be a mixed bag, but its setting provides considerable charm

By MICHAEL SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

Moving to small-town Weiden, Germany, from Washington, D.C., left me feeling uneasy about the quality of the local restaurant scene.

Would I be able to find modern dining in a place whose history dates back over 1,000 years? Could I post cute pictures to Instagram? Would the food meet my pompous D.C. expectations?

The Steaklounge may not be the answer to all these questions, but it will check some of the boxes until my search continues.

Combining its historic roots with a cozy, upscale dining experience, the Steaklounge was on par with U.S. counterparts, in my estimation.

The waitstaff and bartender were very welcoming and happy to accommodate an American with little to no experience speaking German. And the availability of English menus made ordering effortless.

Although I was dining on a Tuesday, I would highly recommend a reservation, as I've seen the place get quite busy on weekends.

I started off with the tapas platter, consisting of seasoned shrimp, chorizo in wine and bacon-wrapped dates, paired with a mojito.

The visually pleasing presenta-



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GERMANY

Steaklounge

Address: Fleischgasse 4, Weiden in der Oberpfalz, Germany
Hours: Monday-Sunday, 5-10 p.m.
Prices: Entrees range from 25 to 30 euros. Appetizers are in the 10-20 euro range; drinks cost 5-10 euros.
Information: Phone: +49 961 78488360; Online: steaklounge-weiden.de/eng

tion of both the platter and the drink set my expectations high, but the flavor didn't quite measure up. While the shrimp were the highlight of the appetizer, the chorizo could have used a little less cooking time.

Both drinks I ordered were on par with the German take on classic cocktails, having all the right parts but put together with one ingredient out of place. I would recommend checking out the large wine list instead.

With a cozy atmosphere and relaxed environment, this is a great place for date night or a special occasion. The waitstaff ensures that you aren't rushed during or after the meal, and the intimate setting provides ample opportunity for conversation without a feeling of being overcrowded.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL SLAVIN/Stars and Stripes

The fillet of gold beef — aka tenderloin — with truffle fries and grilled vegetables at the Steaklounge in Weiden, Germany. The steak was cooked to a perfect medium-rare, but the sides stole the show.



The tapas platter, with chorizo, bacon-wrapped dates and shrimp, is a featured appetizer.

The entree and side dishes were the saving grace of my dining experience at Steaklounge. For the main dish, I had the locally sourced fillet of gold beef, also known as tenderloin. It was cooked to a perfect medium-



Creme brulee with mixed berries.

rare, although it lacked the melt-in-your-mouth quality of a higher-end steak.

The side dishes were more like the Batman to the entree's Robin. The truffle fries with truffle mayonnaise were a perfect golden-brown with truffle shavings

on top. The grilled vegetables made even a crayon-eating Marine like me want to come back for more.

Seeing one of my favorite desserts, creme brulee, on the menu, I decided to give it a go. Topped with assorted berries, the dish exuded the customary custard flavor. Unfortunately, after breaking the crust, I found a runny center.

So on the whole, I would rate my experience at Steaklounge as pleasant enough, with its share of pluses.

However, the search for a restaurant in my new home that measures up to all my admittedly lofty specifications is bound to continue.

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Coconut corn soup with chili crisp is a sweet and spicy bowl of comfort

By AARON HUTCHERSON
Special to The Washington Post

A warm bowl of soup might not be exactly what you think of to eat in the middle of summer, but some cultures do just that on the hottest days of the year, and there is scientific evidence to support the cooling effect of consuming hot foods on warm days. And this coconut corn soup — topped with as much chili crisp as your heart desires — is begging to be made right now with peak season corn. Or, if you'd rather enjoy it during the colder months, frozen or canned kernels make this a pantry-friendly recipe that can be enjoyed any time of the year.

The liquid is a combination of broth or water and coconut milk. Broth, of course, has more flavor, but water works too if you're out. I developed this recipe using vegetable broth, but you can use chicken broth or stock if you aren't vegetarian. Canned coconut milk adds a lovely creaminess while keeping the soup vegan.

As delightful as the soup is on its own, the addition of chili crisp transforms each



SCOTT SUCHMAN/For The Washington Post

Coconut Corn Soup with Chili Crisp is a good dish for using peak season summer corn.

serving into a bowl of sweet-and-spicy comfort. If you aren't a fan of spice, toasted coconut or chopped peanuts would also work as a garnish, or simply omit it. For a heartier meal, serve with toast or a piece of crusty bread for dunking in the soup.

Coconut Corn Soup with Chili Crisp

Time: 25 minutes
4 servings (about 6 cups)

Storage Notes: Refrigerate leftovers for up to 4 days.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium yellow onion (about 7 ounces), diced
1½ teaspoons ground coriander
1 teaspoon fine salt, plus more to taste
½ teaspoon ground black pepper, plus more to taste
½ teaspoon garlic powder
½ teaspoon smoked paprika
Two (12-ounce) bags frozen sweet corn (may substitute with three (15-ounce) cans no-salt-added whole kernel sweet corn, drained, or about 5 cups fresh corn kernels)
2 cups no-salt-added or low-sodium vegetable broth or water
One (13.5-ounce) can unsweetened full-fat coconut milk
Chili crisp, for serving

Directions

In an 8-quart or similarly sized stock pot over medium-high heat, heat the oil until it shimmers. Add the onion, coriander, salt,

pepper, garlic powder and paprika and cook, stirring regularly, until the onion begins to soften and turn translucent, about 5 minutes.

Add the corn, broth or water, and coconut milk, bring to a simmer and cook, stirring regularly and adjusting the heat as needed to maintain a simmer, until the corn is tender, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove from the heat. Use an immersion blender to puree until smooth. (Alternatively, transfer the soup to a blender, cover loosely [see note], and blend, starting on low speed and gradually increasing to high, until the consistency is as smooth or chunky as desired.)

Taste, and season with more salt and/or pepper, if needed. Ladle into bowls, drizzle with the chili crisp and serve warm.

Note: When blending the hot soup, be careful not to fill the blender pitcher more than halfway. Remove the center ring from the lid and place a kitchen towel over the opening as you blend. This will allow steam to escape and protect you from splatters.



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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Bridging the sandwich gap

Try a San Francisco-themed bite at Harry's Sandwich Company in Tokyo

By KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

In Tokyo's Omotesando neighborhood, among the storefronts for luxury brands Louis Vuitton, Dior and Gucci, is a restaurant specializing in sandwiches with a San Francisco theme.

My friend told me that Harry's Sandwich Company reminds him of the bar in "Cheers," the American TV sitcom "where everybody knows your name." After one visit, I concurred.

The building looks like a two-story house, but it stands out because of the white lights hanging on the outside. Guests head up the narrow staircase to Harry's.

I felt welcomed as soon as I walked in. Harry, the owner, greeted me and asked for my name, which he remembered during the duration of my stay.

Most customers were American expats engaged in fascinating, lengthy, pop culture-inspired conversations, including a discussion about the original "Star Trek" TV series.

The restaurant is San Francisco-themed because Harry is from the Golden City. The interior décor includes baseball mem-



AFTER HOURS JAPAN

orabilia from the San Francisco Giants, a model trolley car and photos of famous city landmarks such as the Golden Gate Bridge.

The restaurant can fit 30 people, and the vast menu is in English.

The eponymous menu includes the BBQ Bay, a grilled pork with grilled onions, cheddar cheese and BBQ sauce sandwich; the Foggy Mushroom, a grilled seasoned pork and sauteed mushrooms with creamy horseradish sauce sandwich; and the Chicken Parm, a grilled chicken with marinara and parmesan sandwich, to name a few.

Harry also offers vegetarian sandwiches, including the North Beach Nassu, a grilled eggplant, fresh tomato, red onions, cheese with homemade pesto aioli sandwich; the Caprese, a sandwich with balsamic-glazed tomatoes, mozzarella, pesto aioli and basil; and vegetarian American classic sandwiches peanut butter and jelly and grilled cheese.

I had the meatball hero with the vegetarian option that consisted of vegetarian meatballs, marinara sauce and mozzarella cheese. The sandwich was toasted perfectly; the cheese melted in my mouth. The sandwich cost me 1,300 yen, or about \$9.75. There is also a vegan option for the sandwich that comes with vegan cheese.

For drinks, Harry's offers homemade ginger ale, Coke, coffee, orange juice, grapefruit juice and teas. For mocktails they make a Shirley Temple or virgin versions of a cosmopolitan, side-car, margarita or a salty dog. There is also a full-service bar.

Harry's sponsors monthly trivia nights, comedy shows and open DJ events when patrons may learn how to DJ. Fan nights are themed after popular TV shows like "Seinfeld" that include a special, themed menu, trivia and the soundtrack and clips from the show playing in the background.

If you're looking for a place to feel comfortable instantly and eat a delicious, American-style sandwich, Harry's Sandwich Company could be the place for you.

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PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

The menu at Harry's Sandwich Company in Tokyo features such creative sandwiches as this vegetarian meatball hero.



The décor includes a model San Francisco trolley car.

Harry's Sandwich Company

Location: Jingumae, 5-chome-11-13 Esperanza Omotesando 2F Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-0001

Directions: A 10-minute walk from Harajuku Station via the East Exit; follow signs for the Omotesando Gate
Hours: 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, noon to 11:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, noon to 11 p.m. Sunday

Prices: BBQ Bay, Foggy Mushroom and North Beach Nassu cost 1,200 yen; Chicken Parm and Caprese cost 1,100 yen; Grilled Cheese is 800 yen (about \$6).

Dress: Casual
Information: Online: facebook.com/harryssandwichco

Kelly Agee

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STARS AND STRIPES

WEEKEND: FOOD

A chicken and egg reunion, with rice

Oyakodon an easy Japanese dish

By JESS ENG

The Washington Post

If any dish were a poem, oyakodon would come pretty darned close. Preparation begins by slowly warming up dashi and sending sliced onions for a tumble into a savory broth. Eggs are lightly beaten and poured gingerly over chicken thighs and mellowed-out onions. You can't rush oyakodon — patience rewards the cook with pillowy eggs, juicy chicken and a fistful of onions soft to the bite. All the while, the sweet aroma of dashi envelops the kitchen like a cozy, weighted blanket.

Then there's the name: Oyakodon, a Japanese chicken and egg rice bowl, translates literally to "parent-and-child donburi." The dish is a nod to the perplexing, perennially debated chicken-egg dilemma. (Which came first: The chicken or the egg, the dish seems to jest.) Taking inspiration (and the title) from a similar Chinese chicken and egg dish, Paul Simon, in his song "Mother and Child Reunion," sings of a poetic reunion: "No, I would not give you false hope / On this strange and mournful day / But the mother and child reunion / Is only a motion away."

Like a poetic song, making oyakodon evokes intense family memories around the dinner table as well as the time I learned to live alone.

Those five months in early 2021 were some of the loneliest. I found myself embracing the simple, unfussy art of one-pot dishes. Skillet in hand, I sampled my way through Japanese and Vietnamese comfort foods and insisted on learning traditional Chinese dishes from my grandmother on WeChat.



SCOTT SUCHMAN/For The Washington Post

Oyakodon, or Japanese Chicken/Egg Rice Bowl, is an unfussy and satisfying one-pot dish.

Soon enough, oyakodon wriggled its way into my weekly dinner rotation. A comforting spoonful of egg, chicken and rice served as a reminder that food could heal even the loneliest of pangs. To this day, when asked to whip up my favorite recipe from when I lived alone, I pull out my skillet and declare it oyakodon time.

As with a favorite poem, there are many ways to interpret this dish. If you prefer more onions, cut more onions. Feeling a dash of spice or slightly bitter bite? Consider adding shichimi togarashi, a Japanese seasoning blend, or mitsuba, a Japanese herb similar to parsley. And for an equally delicious vegetarian spin, tofu will soak up all that savory broth.

Oyakodon lends itself well to culinary riffs, and soon it can become an indispensable part of your weekly dinner rotation, just as it had for me.

Oyakodon (Japanese Chicken/Egg Rice Bowl)

Ingredients

1 cup instant or homemade dashi
2 teaspoons mirin (may be substituted with sake)
2 teaspoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon granulated sugar
½ medium yellow onion (4 ounces total), thinly sliced
3 boneless skin-on or skinless chicken thighs, sliced
3 large eggs, beaten lightly
Chopped scallions, for garnish (optional)
Mitsuba, for garnish (optional)
2 cups cooked Japanese-style short-grain white rice
Shichimi togarashi, for serving (optional)

Directions

In a medium skillet over medium heat, combine the dashi, mirin, soy sauce and sugar and bring to a simmer. Taste and season with more soy sauce and/or sugar, if desired. Add the onions and simmer until they begin to soften, 6 to 7 minutes.

Arrange the chicken around the skillet and simmer until it is opaque and white on the outside, 6 to 7 minutes.

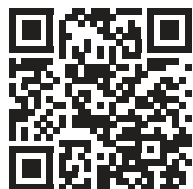
Pour the beaten eggs in a smooth stream over the skillet until the egg mixture covers all of the surface area. The texture of the eggs will look soupy, but that's normal. Cover the pan and let the eggs fully cook, 2 to 3 minutes, or until the eggs become custardy. Uncover, sprinkle the scallions and/or mitsuba, if using, over the eggs, and remove from the heat.

To serve, divide the rice among the bowls, followed by the oyakodon. Serve with the shichimi togarashi at the table for heat.

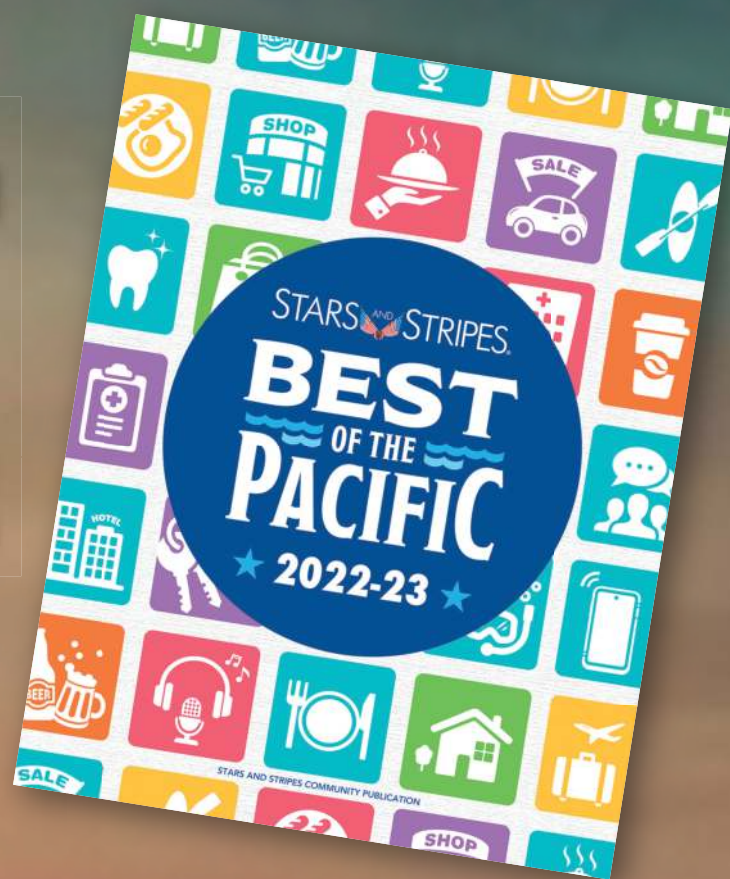
Makes 2 to 3 servings

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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Crawling with fun

Make noodles with your feet, catch a new pet at Komatsuzawa Leisure Farm in Saitama prefecture

BY CLAIRE JENQ
Stars and Stripes

A leisure farm seems like an oxymoron. Any farmer will tell you that farming is anything but leisurely.

However, take a trip to Komatsuzawa Leisure Farm in Saitama prefecture and you'll understand by participating in the curated and family-friendly activities how relaxing a day on the farm can be.

At the heart of the farm are food stalls, a barbecue house and an eating area, all sheltered beneath a canopy of grapevines heavily laden with green grapes. The leafy roof was stunning and provided a surprising amount of relief from the hot sun.

Near the entrance is a vending machine to purchase tickets for food and to participate in some of the many activities. Depending on the season, guests can pick strawberries, grapes or shiitake mushrooms. There's also sweet potato digging, beetle catching and fishing, as well as classes for making udon and soba noodles.

My family purchased tickets for udon making and beetle catching.

Before we arrived in Japan, we watched a travel show, "James May: Our Man in Japan," to learn more about our new home. In the episode "Pickled Plum," May learns to make udon by putting the dough in a plastic bag and kneading it with his feet. After that episode, our 7-year-old daughter couldn't wait to move to Japan so she could make noodles with her feet.

I was impressed by the smooth operation of the farm's classroom. There were rows of project tables, each fully equipped with a large mixing bowl, knives and small brooms and dustpans.

Udon noodles are easy and fun to make.

They require only four ingredients, and following the instructions from our instructors, two older men who didn't speak much English, was simple.

My daughter got to live out her dream by stepping and dancing all over the noodle dough. This was done hygienically by placing the dough in a bag and covering that with a sheet of cardboard.

We spent some time outside feeding fish and ducks at the koi pond while the dough rested. When we returned, we rolled out the dough, dusted it with flour and cut it into thin slices.

Our instructors boiled the noodles and served them to us with a cold dipping sauce called mentsuyu.

We rounded out the meal with farm-raised shiitake mushrooms fried in a light tempura batter and freshly caught fish roasted outside over hot coals.

After some ice cream and kakigori, it was time for beetle catching. Komatsuzawa Leisure Farm stocks a couple of types of beetles. During this time of year, they had the Japanese rhinoceros beetle, or kabutomushi. Each child was given a net, but we had to purchase a bug cage for 500 yen, or about \$3.60, to hold the bugs.

The large beetles had been placed on stacks of wood for the children to easily find. My daughter was nervous about touching the big bugs, but another child enthusiastically helped her catch the one male and female beetle she was allowed.

She named her new pets "Blueberry" and "Milkshake." We left Komatsuzawa Leisure Farm with full bellies, happy memories, two bugs and perhaps a little Blueberry Milkshake on the way.

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PHOTOS BY CLAIRE JENQ/Stars and Stripes

Bugs find a new owner at Komatsuzawa Leisure Farm in Saitama prefecture, Japan, on July 24. Beetle catching is available for a fee, and requires the purchase of a bug cage.

On the QT

Address: 1408 Yokoze, Chichibu District, Saitama 368-0072

Directions: One hour and 15 minutes by car from the main gate of Yokota Air Base.

Hours: 9:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.

Costs: Admission and parking are free. Experiences range from 500 yen to 8,600 yen depending on the activity.

Food: Some experiences include food that you make or catch. A menu includes hotpot or outdoor barbecue. Options may only be open on the weekends, so it's good to call ahead and check.

Information: Phone: 0494-24-0412; Online: komatsuzawa.co.jp

Claire Jenq



Mixing udon noodle dough — from only four ingredients — is one of the steps of making noodles at the farm.



One of the ways in which children can get closer to nature at Komatsuzawa Leisure Farm is by feeding ducks and koi in a pond.



The outdoor dining space at Komatsuzawa Leisure Farm is sheltered by a leafy canopy of grapevines.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Neuroscientist by day, author by night

Romance novelist Ali Hazelwood is out with a new book, 'Love on the Brain,' and still living a sort-of-secret life

By STEPHANIE MERRY
The Washington Post

Ali Hazelwood is hiding in plain sight. Search the bestselling romance author's name online, and you'll see plenty of photos of the smiling, spectacled brunette, not to mention a TikTok of her gamely autographing a fan's chest (caption: "when getting the signed book isn't enough"). But she'd rather not divulge her real name.

So who is the woman behind the pseudonym? Here's what we know: She was born and raised in Italy and retains a charming accent. She's a neuroscientist and professor living with her husband somewhere in the United States. And her age is ...

"Can you just say I'm in my thirties?" she asks over Zoom. "I'm sorry. Is that weird? Am I being weird?"

"Weird," like a lot of her words, comes out with an "a" on the end: weird-a. But the answer is no. Pen names are not at all out of the ordinary, particularly in the world of romance. And yet, she still seems conflicted about the whole thing.

The truth, as she explains it, is that she didn't intend to keep her scientist identity separate from her author identity, because she didn't intend to become an author. Creative writing — specifically the writing of erotic fan fiction about "Star Trek's" Mr. Spock — was a hobby, a way to unplug from the stressful world of academia.

"Even as a kid, I loved Spock so much," she says with reverence. "He's just this broody, emotionless science man, but every two or three episodes, something happens, and they just make him feel all the emotions."

Hazelwood's fan fiction showed her potential. One story, inspired by Kylo Ren and Rey from the "Star Wars" franchise, had enough depth and humanity — and the setting of STEM academia was different enough from "a galaxy far, far away" — that when literary agent Thao Le stumbled across it in 2020, she thought it already read like an original story.



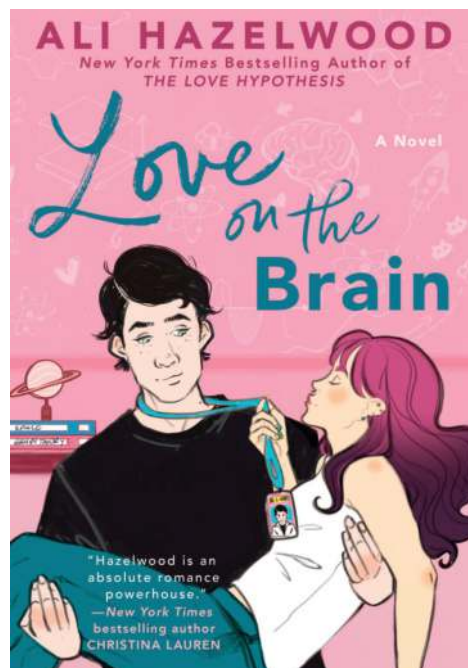
Ali Hazelwood

Author Ali Hazelwood (not her real name) is also a neuroscientist.

"Honestly, if you didn't know it was inspired by characters from 'Star Wars,' you wouldn't even recognize them," Le says.

One fortuitous Twitter connection later and the pair were turning Hazelwood's fan fiction into "The Love Hypothesis." And now here she is, less than a year after her debut became a bestseller and days from releasing her second novel, "Love on the Brain." Both are about female scientists who fall for, well, broody, emotionless science men. Hazelwood also published three novellas this year. ("I should be doing research," she says, "but I'm doing this other thing.")

Hazelwood's novels fall into the growing genre of "STEMinist" fiction that also includes recent feel-good bestsellers "Lessons in Chemistry," by Bonnie Garmus, and "The Soulmate Equation," by Christina Lauren. "Love on the Brain" revolves around two scientists, Bee Königswasser and Levi Ward, who are working on a NASA project to create a helmet that uses



transcranial magnetic stimulation to reduce an astronaut's "attentional blinks," which, as Bee describes it, are "those little lapses in awareness that are unavoidable when many things happen at once."

There are plenty of breathless encounters in "Love on the Brain," but the flirty banter isn't typical romance stuff. It might consist of a scientific debate about why couples are destined to break up. "Emotions are transient by nature," Bee schools Levi. "They're temporary states brought on by neurophysical changes that aren't meant to be long-lasting. The nervous system must revert back to homeostasis." To which Levi responds: "What about prairie voles? They pair bond for life."

"The Love Hypothesis" has been hugely popular on TikTok, where young women sing its praises and quote its "spicy" passages. And that begs the question: Do Hazelwood's students really not know about her alter ego? What about her co-workers?

"No one has ever said anything to me,"

Hazelwood says. "I don't think they know. Maybe they don't read romance. And there are many authors whose faces I wouldn't know."

It didn't even occur to Hazelwood that she was living "this weird Hannah Montana life" until "The Love Hypothesis" started taking off, but by then she wasn't sure how she would even broach the subject of her book with people who know her as a scientist.

"If, one day, someone comes into my office and says, 'you wrote this,' I'm going to own it," she says. "Right now, the hard thing is just bringing it up to people, like, 'oh, by the way, I wrote this book.'"

Pen names are common in the romance genre, which has historically been stigmatized and minimized despite massive and growing popularity. But Hazelwood says she isn't keeping her identity secret because she's ashamed of writing about sex.

She's proud of writing romance. Ten years ago, maybe she would have been embarrassed, but the fan communities she belongs to have changed that.

"I found my people, and by finding my people I was able to accept myself better," she says. "I find writing and reading stuff incredibly hot and, you know, it's something that makes me happy."

Hazelwood has also found her people at book events, though she doesn't do many readings. (She's under the likely mistaken impression that her fans won't appreciate her accent.)

"It's a weird thing, because I'm not hiding," she says, before stopping and starting a few times, weighing her words.

"The people who know me as Ali Hazelwood, the readers, I don't want them to know my real name," she says. "But I don't mind if people who know my real name find out I'm Ali Hazelwood."

That's good, because with another romantic comedy ready to take TikTok by storm, it feels like it can only be a matter of time.

Rom-com meets true crime in Thompson's book for grown-ups

By COLETTE BANCROFT
Tampa Bay Times

Phoebe Walsh has serial killers on the brain.

As a woman who's a fan of true crime books, podcasts and documentaries, Phoebe is one of millions — studies show that fans of the popular genre are overwhelmingly female and mostly young.

As a 30-year-old graduate student in literature who's in the throes of writing her dissertation on true crime books, she's a rarer bird, analyzing the books she loves for the relationships between their subject matter and their authors.

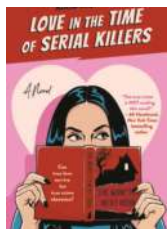
But that intellectual pursuit has been slowed by more practical matters. As Alicia Thompson's new novel, "Love in the Time of Serial Killers," begins, Phoebe has driven from the campus of her university in North Carolina to her childhood home in Florida. Her father died six months ago, and she's there to

help her younger brother, Conner, empty the house and ready it for sale.

She's made the drive straight through, listening to true crime podcasts all the way, a gigantic Victorian writing desk strapped to the top of her Camry. So when she arrives at the house in the middle of the night and a barefoot man walks silently up behind her, she's so startled she jumps, screams and drops her phone.

She dismisses the stranger's offer of help, which reminds her of the strategies of the Zodiac Killer and Ted Bundy, and after she threatens to pepper-spray him, he disappears.

She manages to get into the house safely and find that her dad had been "hoarder-adjacent." She'd been estranged from him for years; when he and her mother



divorced, Phoebe chose to go with her mom, while Conner, who's seven years younger than his sister, grew up with their father.

So her homecoming is full of mixed emotions, especially after she discovers her childhood bedroom is just as she left it 15 years before, right down to the DVD of "Heathers" on the dresser. In her memories, her father is a distant and often angry man, and her parents' divorce (although her mom is happily remarried) is a major reason for Phoebe's cynical attitude toward romance.

That cynicism gets a workout when Conner shows up bright and early the next morning. In contrast to his sister, he's relentlessly upbeat and optimistic, and he's madly in love.

In addition to digging out her dad's house and trying to keep up with her academic work, she has another thing to wonder about: The barefoot stranger

turns out to be her next-door neighbor.

In daylight, Sam Dennings seems like a nice guy. During that first night, he'd unloaded the heavy desk from Phoebe's car while she slept and put it near the house. When she meets him, he offers condolences on her father's death. When, at Conner's urging, they crash a party at his house, it turns out he's throwing a Beach Boys-themed celebration for a co-worker's retirement.

Thompson, who's a graduate of the Master of Fine Arts program in creative writing at the University of South Florida, has published several young adult novels. "Love in the Time of Serial Killers" is a rom-com for grown-ups, which means the sex scenes are explicit.

She cleverly flips some of the time-tested tropes of romance in this book, particularly the one about the man who can't commit. Her humor is breezy, her pacing well-crafted.

WEEKEND: MUSIC



AP photos

Alison Krauss, 51, and Robert Plant, 73, are touring in support of “Raise the Roof,” the highly anticipated follow-up to their 2007 collaboration, “Raising Sand.” Both albums feature lushly arranged roots music and haunting vocal interplay.

Golden years

Q&A: Robert Plant and Alison Krauss on the secrets to aging gracefully

BY MIKAEL WOOD
Associated Press

Robert Plant picked up the phone at his home in western England and offered a detailed weather report as he peered through a picture window in a sitting room. “It’s a beautiful evening here,” said the 73-year-old singer best known as the golden-god frontman of Led Zeppelin. “That said, in the U.K. we’re unaccustomed to 38 degrees Celsius — about 100 degrees Fahrenheit — “which is what’s been going on today. There’s a major panic around the country with the water supplies.

“So: lovely, but also a little ominous.”

The description isn’t a bad one for the music Plant makes with Alison Krauss, the veteran bluegrass singer and fiddler he met nearly 20 years ago when they sang together as part of a Lead Belly tribute concert.

In 2007, the two teamed with producer T Bone Burnett for an album, “Raising Sand,” which showcased their haunting vocal interplay in lushly arranged roots-music renditions of old songs by Gene Clark, Allen Toussaint, Townes Van Zandt and the Everly Brothers. Commercially speaking, the LP was hardly a sure thing (though Burnett had recently overseen the smash soundtrack for “O Brother, Where Art Thou?”); nevertheless, “Raising Sand” went on to sell more than a million copies and win six Grammy Awards, including album and record of the year.

Now, Plant and Krauss, who’s 51, are on the road behind a long-awaited follow-up, “Raise the Roof,” which came out late last year — inside the eligibility window for the upcoming 65th Grammys — yet sounds like it could’ve been made just weeks after its predecessor. Produced

again by Burnett, who assembled a top-flight band including guitarists Bill Frisell and Marc Ribot and drummer Jay Bellerose, the gorgeously spooky “Raise the Roof” features more tunes by Toussaint and the Everlys along with oldies by Bert Jansch, Anne Briggs and Merle Haggard; it also has an original by Plant and Burnett, “High and Lonesome,” and opens with a relatively new song in “Quattro (World Drifts In)” by the Arizona-based indie-rock band Calexico.

Krauss, who recently lent her vocals to Def Leppard’s latest album, joined Plant on the call from Nashville.

How would you describe your relationship beyond the music?

Krauss: We’re happily incompatible.

Plant: That’s probably right. I do still

SEE GOLDEN ON PAGE 29

WEEKEND: MUSIC



Red Light Management

Sean and Sara Watkins capture the variety of their Los Angeles club shows on their new Watkins Family Hour album, "Vol. II."

Review: Watkins Family Hour captures spirit of variety shows

By STEVEN WINE
Associated Press

Tom Petty's pianist plays "Tennessee Waltz," an Ernest Tubb classic rides a Bo Diddley beat, and a deep cut by the '60s band the Zombies becomes a Disney-style lullaby.

The latest album from Watkins Family Hour lasts just 39 minutes, but that's not to say it falls short. Like its 2015 predecessor, "Vol. II" captures the adventurous spirit of the musical variety shows hosted by siblings Sara and Sean Watkins during their enduring residency at the Los Angeles club Largo. The stellar new set is more consistently engaging than the first album, thanks to a range of styles and collaborators. Among those featured are Benmont Tench, a



Watkins Family Hour

Vol. II (Family Hour Records)

Largo regular best known for his work with Petty, and Jackson Browne, who sings harmony on a stirring rendition of his tune "The Late Show."

Tubb's "Thanks a Lot" sounds grateful for the Watkins' rhythmic tweak and Jon Brion's cool guitar work. Sara's supple soprano anchors four-part harmony that features Lucius on the Zombies' "The Way I Feel Inside." Sean and Sara tap into their bluegrass roots on Jim and Jesse's "She Left Me Standing on the Mountain," and also excel at bouncy pop on the Tune-Yards' "Hypnotized."

The final cut benefits from a large choir that includes Madison Cunningham, Fiona Apple, the Milk Carton Kids and Ed Helms, and they elevate Glen Phillips' "Grief and Praise" into a moving benediction. "Sing loud while you're able," goes the chorus as Watkins Family Hour hits just the right closing note.

Golden: Singers each enjoy discovering music from the other's home country

FROM PAGE 28

like you, though.

Krauss: I still like you too!

Plant: We're not Dale & Grace or Sonny & Cher, but we've definitely got something going on. We've got two totally different lives running. Alison's a lot more private than I am. I'm out in the flood. I've lived where I've always lived.

You've both been singing for decades. Talk about how you take care of your voices.

Plant: I don't. I just go out and sing. I know a guy from a famous band that Alison's quite friendly with — he's gonna pour some sugar on me or something — who creates a complete hullabaloo backstage. I was back there one time and he was making such a bloody noise. I said, "Why are you doing that?" He said, "I'm warming up." I said, "Well, you won't have anything left by the time you get there."

A voice changes over time.

Plant: I know that the full, open-throated falsetto that I was able to concoct in 1968 carried me through until I was tired of it. Then that sort of exaggerated personality of vocal performance morphed and went somewhere else. But as a matter of fact, I was playing in Reykjavík, in Iceland, about three years ago, just before COVID. It was Midsummer Night and there was a festival, and I got my band and I said, "OK, let's do 'Immigrant Song.'" They'd never done it before. We just hit it, and bang — there it was. I thought, "Oh, I didn't think I could still do that."

Plenty of fans would love to hear you do it with Led Zeppelin.

Plant: Going back to the font to



David McClister

Robert Plant and Alison Krauss use their projects to bring to light great songs from the past and the present.

get some kind of massive applause — it doesn't really satisfy my need to be stimulated.

Does that make you feel like an outlier among your classic-rock peers?

Plant: I know there are people from my generation who don't want to stay home and so they go out and play. If they're enjoying it and doing what they need to do to pass the days, then that's their business, really.

You and Alison recorded your two albums at Nashville's Sound Emporium Studios, and you returned there for an NPR Tiny Desk Concert. Why always work in Nashville and not in England?

Plant: I've been making records and traveling through America since 1966, and we just don't have the flexibility that American players do. The culture here and the schooling — English players haven't been exposed to the wide variety of music forms that are in the States. If Allen Toussaint were

around and it was another time, maybe we would have gone to New Orleans and tried to pick up on where he was going with Betty Harris and people like that. But in the U.K. we don't have that lineage of music — of telling a musical story.

Krauss: I love Fairport Convention and skiffle and all the things that came from that. I appreciate the land that it came from. And the rock 'n' roll singers that come out of that area of the world — Paul Rodgers and Frankie Miller — they always reminded me of the Ralph Stanley kind of singers. There was always a link for me between the way they sounded and what I would see in my head when they sang.

What's the link?

Plant: To my mind, with the guys from the northeast of England — Paul and Frankie and Eric Burdon and Joe Cocker — it was all about the blue notes, same as the Stanley Brothers. It's

that flattened third in the scales, which ultimately leads back toward Bert Jansch and Davey Graham — a sort of British transposing of the folk music that was present before the Industrial Revolution and made its way across to Kentucky and West Virginia. Many of the songs we do are blueprinted on both sides of the Atlantic.

Is the point of Plant & Krauss to delineate those historical through lines?

Plant: It's not just a historical monument, though. What's the album by Rod Stewart? "The Great American Songbook"? I mean, "Come Fly With Me" is fine. But the guys from Calexico, they're giving us the new American songbook. Their records "Feast of Wire" and "Garden Ruin," they're echoing the circumstances in contemporary America. I have a little blue book that I carry with me everywhere and continue to add songs — threads for the future, if you like — because with access to music now, you're hearing new stuff all the time.

Which kind of encourages an ahistorical perspective, right? It's so easy to hear something without understanding what it was building on.

Krauss: But isn't that part of it? You don't know why you love something — you just love it. It seems very natural and innocent.

T Bone Burnett recently introduced a new audio format that he says represents the "pinnacle of recorded sound." Is high fidelity particularly important to the two of you?

Plant: Eh. I prefer something that crackles and bangs. I don't mind if it sounds like it had a

better time earlier in its life. I just want to hear what the musicians and the engineer and the producer at the time were going for. I'm sitting here looking at all these records I got from these record stores in Oslo when Alison and I were playing in Scandinavia last month — fantastic compilations of Muscle Shoals country-funk, stuff by Gregg Allman, some of Cher's early recordings when she got down there. Remember when Otis Redding was a driver for that session with whoever it was, and everybody went to lunch and he got up and sang, and suddenly we had a new voice on the planet? For me as a listener, I just want to hear the spirit.

Last thing: Don Everly died last year, which means very few of early rock's pioneers are still living. Obviously their music lives on, but what does it mean when the actual people are gone?

Plant: It's tough, isn't it? Great players remain, but maybe it's a different kind of romance that we're left with now.

Krauss: We recently lost [the bluegrass guitarist] Tony Rice, who was a huge influence, and I couldn't believe how hard that hit me for so many reasons. Those people that made you who you are — when they go, they take some of you with them.

Plant: That's exactly right. I remember when Bo Diddley passed, I was on a bus somewhere with Buddy Miller. It came on the radio and it was like the whole bus just slumped. I mean, Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry — they're part of your DNA, you know? As British kids, we spent our adolescence just furiously ruining their songs.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Finding his character's home and his own

Of his role, Emmy nominee Toheeb Jimoh of 'Ted Lasso' says: 'The fact that Sam leads with love is almost revolutionary'

BY MICHAEL ORDOÑA
Los Angeles Times

Sam Obisanya isn't a laugh riot on "Ted Lasso." Rather, it was likely how involving his Season Two arc was (activism, leadership, love) that earned the actor who plays him, 25-year-old Toheeb Jimoh, his first Emmy nomination. If the dark evolution of Coach Nate (Nick Mohammed) from sweet milquetoast to burgeoning supervillain has cooled the reception to the series' second outing, Sam's development could be the show's new hope.

"The relationship between Sam and Ted kind of parallels me and Jason," says Jimoh of co-creator and star Jason Sudeikis. "He's really helped me stand on my own two feet as an artist, just as Ted helps Sam stand on his own two feet as a player and as a person. It's dope."

Initially quiet Nigerian import Sam is becoming the ideal player-leader under Coach Ted. Thrown into an environment in which he was doubted and bullied, Sam, like Ted, doesn't respond with confrontation.

"The fact that Sam leads with love is almost revolutionary," says Jimoh, speaking quickly as the thoughts flow in his natural London accent. "Coming into a new country, especially the U.K., it does feel like there's this brittle front you have to have just to survive. I think there's something really cool about it that he doesn't do that."

The actor isn't taking his success for granted, despite an impressive run following graduating from London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 2018: "In 2019, I got a lot of jobs really quickly. I got 'Ted Lasso' and I got (the lead in the BBC movie) 'Anthony' and I also got 'The Power,' which isn't out yet, but yeah — I'm kind of riding my luck right now."

Jimoh was born in London but spent his early childhood in Nigeria before returning to London around age 7: "The whole thing, identity-wise, is so interesting to figure out, where I call home. I think I've settled on a blend of everything. There's a really cool, newly emerging idea of being a Black Brit. It's been a turbulent struggle, but ... You see (rapper) Stormzy in Glastonbury wearing the Banksy jacket with the Union Jack, and it feels owned. And [rapper] Dave, and Daniel Kaluuya doing what he's doing is cool. It feels like I'm finding my home in those guys."

That multifaceted identity served the young grad when auditioning for "Ted Lasso."

"At this point, I don't even



Apple TV+ photos

Toheeb Jimoh plays Sam Obisanya in "Ted Lasso." Jimoh is Nigerian like his character.



Jimoh and Jason Sudeikis in a scene from "Ted Lasso." "The relationship between Sam and Ted kind of parallels me and Jason," says Jimoh of co-creator and star Sudeikis. "He's really helped me stand on my own two feet as an artist, just as Ted helps Sam stand on his own two feet as a player and as a person."

remember any other candidates for that role," said series co-creator Brendan Hunt. "We called him 'Sam' because we were giving a shout-out to our buddy Sam Richardson, who is Ghanaian. We had asked him for the appropriate Ghanaian 'thank you' term [for the script], and Toheeb just confidently changed it to his Nigerian dialect. It's kind of a ballsy move for an actor to do: 'This guy's French? F— it, I say he's from Luxembourg!' I don't think there was even a callback."

"I changed Sam's nationality," Jimoh acknowledged. "I changed the dialogue, spoke a bit of Yoruba. It was a bit of a risk, but I thought I could better serve this project if it was something I felt completely tied to. And that's kind of become the throughline with Sam. Being Nigerian is such a big part of who he is. You know, high risk, high reward, and now we're here."

Jimoh didn't change it up just to stand out at the audition, he said. "I want to influence the way Nigerians are seen in the public sphere. Especially in the U.K., in the media, Nigerians are painted very negatively. That's why putting in the language is important: I think a lot of people feel seen by that. I know a younger Toheeb would have."

That made him eager to take on perhaps Sam's key scene of the season, with a little help:

"He has taped (over the Dubai Air logo) on his shirt, he's about to speak to the British press, who historically especially hate when Black players speak out. This is a brilliant example of ally-ship. Ted is supposed to have this press conference, but instead just allows Sam to have this platform. I think that's the moment where Sam steps up and almost becomes a man in Season Two: 'I'm not here to talk about football. ... Football's not the most important thing to me right now.'

"This was the summer of 2020 and we had just had the Lekki toll gate massacre in Nigeria. I was thinking, 'People are dying, fighting for their rights back home, and I'm here in London.' So to have that opportunity (as Sam) to stand up in that press conference — 'Are you openly accusing the Nigerian government of corruption?' and Sam says, 'Yes, yes I am.' Sam's speaking for me, Toheeb, and for Nigerians everywhere."

"Filming it, everybody knew what the significance was for me. Jason was there even though he had shot his part of the scene; he still stood there and was with me, the same way Ted was there for Sam. Jason was there for me."

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

REVIEW



HBO photos

Paddy Considine, background, as King Viserys Targaryen, and Milly Alcock as young Rhaenyra in “House of the Dragon.” Rhaenyra is set to be the next ruler on the Iron Throne.

Return to the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros

‘Game of Thrones’ prequel ‘House of the Dragon’ recaptures the power and grandeur of the original HBO series

By LORRAINE ALI
Los Angeles Times

Let’s start at the end. “Game of Thrones” was the television drama of the decade right up until its eighth and final season, when the HBO series’ conclusion disappointed fans on a global scale. Despite all of the show’s dexterous villains, fierce emancipators, persevering women and supernatural surprises, it handed the crown to a boy who’d literally slept through much of the show’s 73-episode run.

Thanks to that fizzling 2019 climax, prequel “House of the Dragon” premiered Sunday amid slightly lower expectations than it would have if “GoT” had nailed the landing. But with the arrival of the first episode, “The Heirs of the Dragon,” the hope that a new series might recapture some of the power and grandeur of its predecessor no longer seems so fanciful.

Set 172 years before the death of the Mad King and the birth of Daenerys Targaryen, “House of the Dragon” immediately thrusts viewers into the familiar sights and sounds of the “Game of Thrones” universe: Flea Bottom and its brothels, dragons and their flames, the Red Keep and its Iron Throne. While honoring the legacy and look of the original series, the spinoff wisely adopts subtle changes in tone and approach while introducing a fresh world of characters and storylines.

It’s the reign of King Viserys Targaryen (Paddy Considine), the seventh ruler to sit on the Iron Throne, which he inherited after decades of peace and prosperity in Westeros under his grandfather, King Jaehaerys I Targaryen. As usual, though, there is consternation about who should really be occupying that spiky seat of power. King Viserys should quash his detractors, but the middle-aged monarch is conflict avoidant, kind and reasonable — all terrible attributes for a ruler in the always barbaric and occasionally magical Seven Kingdoms. We meet the king when he has to make the worst decision of his reign:



Considine, shown in a scene from “House of the Dragon,” plays Viserys, a conflict-avoidant, kind and reasonable ruler — unique in the barbaric Seven Kingdoms.

His pregnant Queen Aemma (Sian Brooke) is in distressed labor and he must choose between the life of his wife or his (hoped-for male) child.

It’s here that we see the promise of the next nine episodes in the skills of showrunners Miguel Sapochnik and Ryan J. Condal, the strength of the writing and the impact of the performances. The queen’s grueling delivery is contrasted against scenes of a celebratory jousting tournament taking place outside, pitting the violent act of giving life against the violent actions of men who take it away. The poignancy of these simultaneous battles is presaged by a conversation the queen has with her daughter when the girl shows concern about her mother’s swollen belly: This is how we serve the realm as royal women, the queen explains. Childbirth is our battlefield. The exchange between mother and daughter, and the artful contrast of dueling knights and dutiful midwives, are powerful enough on their own to render the first epi-

sode a smashing success and show that “House of the Dragon” has a depth of understanding of its female characters that “GoT” took years to find. But it doesn’t stop there: In a moment that reflects some of the ugly realities of our own world, it is men who ultimately decide the queen’s fate — choosing the baby’s life over hers.

This fresh chapter in the saga of the Seven Kingdoms is reverse-engineered to feed into narratives and family trees that are familiar to “GoT” devotees. It’s best to brace now for the genealogy chatter around Houses Targaryen, Lannister, Velaryon and Hightower, for theories connecting the future with the past and for ghoulish discussions of which series featured more graphic displays of blood, gore and guts. A strong stomach is still required upon returning to Westeros (beware of wanton beheadings, carts full of dismembered body parts and worse), though previous fandom is not a requisite for becoming invested in “House of the Dragon.”

The brewing bloodbath over the Iron Throne is an immediate draw, especially since the conflict centers on the young Princess Rhaenyra Targaryen (played wonderfully by Milly Alcock), who is just 15 and already appears to have everything it takes to rule. She’s a dragon rider and possesses pure Valyrian blood, but she’s not a man and history is not on her side. The king’s cousin, Princess Rhaenys Targaryen (Eve Best), was denied her birthright years before. She’s now known as “The Queen Who Never Was.” Also vying for the throne is Rhaenyra’s uncle, Prince Daemon Targaryen (Matt Smith), a violent and impetuous warrior whom some call crazy. (Insanity will emerge as a given among the inbred Targaryen royalty.) It’s a strong setup for all manner of familial treachery — preferably atop a dragon.

There are plenty of the flying beasts to go around in these pre-“Game of Thrones” times. We’re even treated to a “Dracarys!” command by the episode’s end, fueling the fire for a new, engrossing chapter in HBO’s epic.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

BY SANDY WEST
Kaiser Health News

Brykyta Shelton found herself standing in a checkout line of a big-box retailer, uncomfortably aware as a woman ahead of her stared at her sandaled feet.

Shelton had been taking medication for months for what her doctor said was toenail fungus, but one nail still looked gross.

After Shelton completed her purchase, the woman pulled her aside and said that, while she wasn't a doctor, she thought Shelton was dealing with something more serious than fungus.

"She's like: 'I know I'm just a random stranger, but please, go get it checked out by someone else,'" said Shelton, who lives in a Maryland suburb of Washington, D.C.

Shelton, now 42, took the advice.

The initial lab work didn't give a clear diagnosis, but her new doctor said he was confident she had acral lentiginous melanoma, a form of skin cancer. Additional testing proved him right. While rare, it is the most common subtype of melanoma in Black people, like Shelton. It is the disease that killed reggae star Bob Marley at age 36, and is most often found on skin less frequently exposed to the sun, such as the hands, the soles of the feet and under nails. Researchers do not understand what causes acral lentiginous melanoma, and they don't know how to prevent it. It is often overlooked in skin checks or misdiagnosed.

Skin cancer, in general, is often missed or misdiagnosed in Black patients.

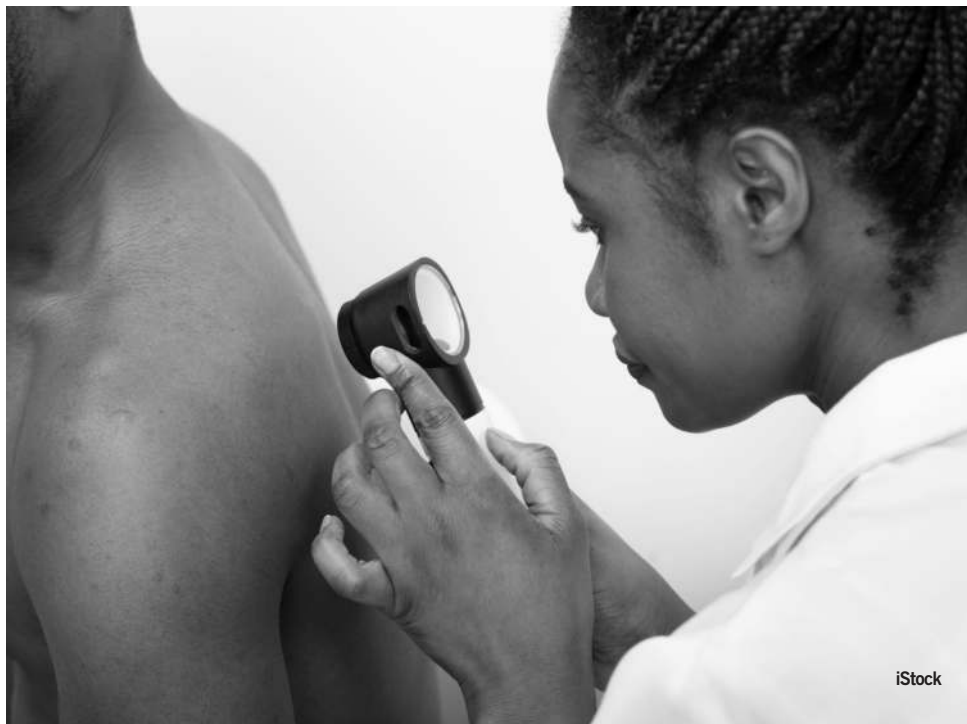
Historically, Black people and those with dark skin have been left out of efforts to combat skin cancer. Long neglected by sunscreen manufacturers and a medical community lagging in diversity and cultural competency — the acknowledgment of a patient's heritage, beliefs and values — many have not been informed about sun safety or how to check their skin for signs of damage or cancer.

To be sure, skin cancer rates are lower for people with dark skin tones. Melanoma is more than 20 times as common in white people as in African Americans, with an overall lifetime risk of 1 in 38 for white people compared with 1 in 1,000 for Black people. Melanin does provide some protection against sun damage, so those with more of it — those with darker skin — are better protected than those with fairer skin.

But overall, Black patients are more likely to be diagnosed with various forms of skin cancer at more advanced stages and have a higher mortality rate, said Dr. Janiene Luke, with the Skin of Color Society, a nonprofit that works to educate doctors and the public on skin health.

The five-year melanoma survival rate among non-Hispanic Black people is 66%, compared with 90% for non-Hispanic white people, according to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And 1 in 3 Black men or women diagnosed with melanoma in the U.S. die of the disease, compared with at least 1 in 7 for non-Hispanic white people, says the American Cancer Society.

Given the known disparities in outcomes, Dr. Valerie Harvey, president of the Skin of Color Society, said two areas of research are needed: studying educational initiatives to see if awareness might lead to earlier diagnosis and improved survival; and determining risk factors in patients with dark skin, especially factors leading to the occurrence of melanoma in



Dermatology's deadly disparity

Skin cancer is often missed or overlooked in patients with dark skin, diagnosed at more advanced stages

places less exposed to the sun.

Improving cultural competency and diversity within dermatology is just one step toward improving diagnosis and outcomes. According to the most recent data, fewer than 3% of dermatologists nationwide are Black. Orthopedics is the only medical specialty with a smaller share.

Dermatology has traditionally been one of the most competitive specialties in medicine, said Dr. Michelle Henry, a clinical instructor of dermatology at Weill Cornell Medicine. In addition to stiff academic requirements, admission to dermatology programs also depends on connecting with mentors and extensive networking, which can be expensive. And that, Henry said, has traditionally created barriers for Black medical students who want to pursue dermatology.

"There are so many hurdles that make

it difficult for a lot of students of color to do the things that they need to do in such an uber-exclusive and small space," she said.

Recent initiatives to help students overcome those barriers are beginning to work, said Dr. Susan Taylor, vice chair for diversity, equity and inclusion in the dermatology department at the University of Pennsylvania and founder of the Skin of Color Society. Initiatives from the American Academy of Dermatology include holistic reviews of residency applications, mentorships and programs to increase interest among and prepare high school students for college and medical school.

Medical app company VisualDX is working to reduce disparities in medicine through Project Impact by creating a catalog of images reflecting various diseases in different skin colors. Skin cancers may appear different on fairer skin

than on darker skin, and because doctors may have been trained only with fair-skin depictions, the chance for misdiagnosis in people with dark skin increases.

Change has also come to the sunscreen industry.

Jorge Martínez-Bonilla, senior vice president and partner with Chicago market research company C + R Research, said failures within the medical community to provide adequate skin care for people with dark skin mirror the lack of availability of sunscreens to meet patients' needs, especially for Black people.

"What that has done is that it has pushed Black entrepreneurs, from one day to the next, to come up with their own solutions and their own products," Martínez-Bonilla said. "Not only from the lack of availability, but because these are the people who know their needs best."

Katonya Breaux is one of those entrepreneurs. She wasn't thrilled when, in her 30s and 40s, she noticed she was getting moles on her face and neck similar to those she'd seen on older family members while she was growing up. She assumed it was just part of aging. But her dermatologist said it was sun damage.

"I was, literally, shocked. I was like: 'But I'm Black,'" she said, adding that she had no experience with sunscreen growing up. "It was so foreign to me. I believed we just didn't need it."

After struggling to find a sunscreen that didn't leave a residue or feel like it was burning her skin, she worked with a chemist who helped her create a tinted mineral-based sunscreen. At first, she intended it just for her personal use, but she ultimately launched Unsun Cosmetics. The Los Angeles-based company educates about skin care and sells products designed for consumers with dark skin.

Shontay Lundy also struggled to find a sunscreen that didn't "leave a blue, purple or other-colored hue on my skin." Until, she said, "I realized it didn't exist."

So, in 2016, she developed products that left no residue, ultimately launching Black Girl Sunscreen.

Education is fundamental to her company's advertising, Lundy said. "Our mission is to equip people of all ages and skin tones with the right sunscreen products to take their skin health seriously and protect themselves from sun damage."

Shelton, whose chance encounter in a store's checkout line led to her cancer diagnosis, said she has become an evangelist for skin self-checks and sunscreen, and is now known at her local pool as "the sunblock lady." The kind of skin cancer she had may not have stemmed from sun exposure, but it increased her awareness about skin damage and other types of skin cancers.

She has been cancer-free since the doctor successfully removed the tumor on her toe and she underwent chemotherapy and radiation. But the experience was traumatic.

"It's life-altering," she said.

Still, she said, she's resumed an active and full life. She said she will forever be grateful to the stranger who pulled her aside that day, as well as the doctor who disbelieved the first set of labs that came back, opting instead to trust his instincts to immediately begin treatment.

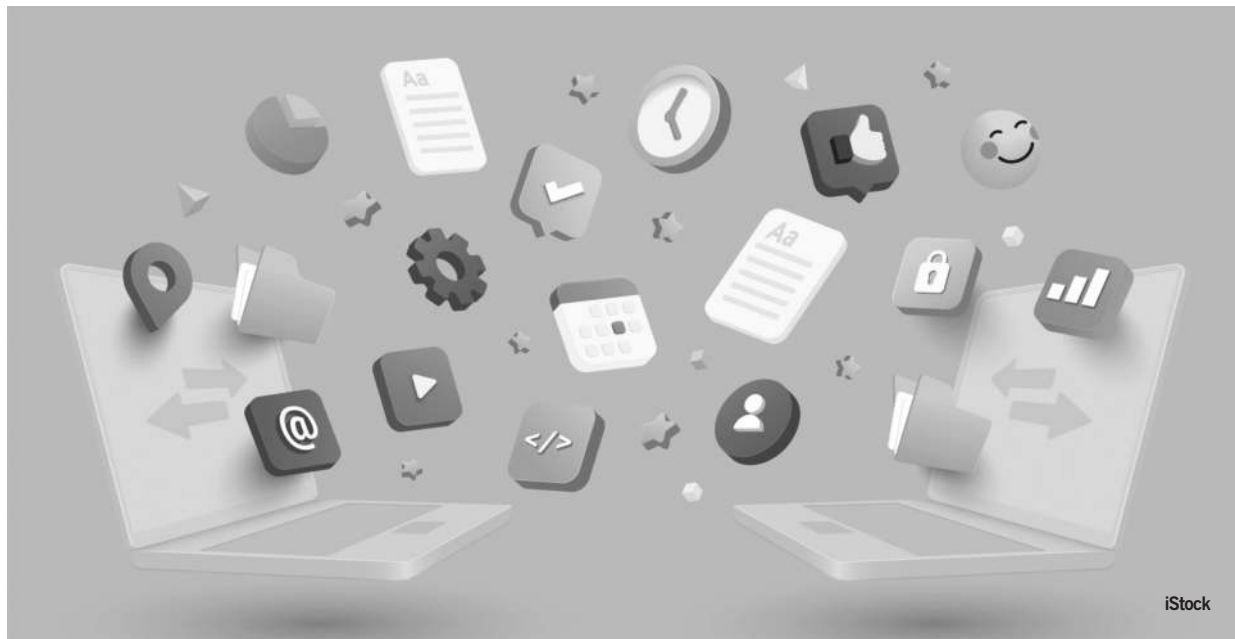
Tips for avoiding skin cancer for all skin tones

- Avoid direct sun, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Keep babies out of the sun entirely.
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher every day. Reapply every two hours or after swimming or activity/sweating.
- Don't leave sunscreen in the car, because temperature fluctuations can cause it to break down and become less effective.
- Wear clothing that covers arms and legs.
- Wear a broad-brimmed hat to protect the face, ears and neck.
- Wear ultraviolet (UV)-blocking sunglasses.
- Avoid indoor tanning beds.
- Examine skin from head to toe every month. Look for dark spots or patches, or areas that are growing, bleeding or changing; sores that are slow to heal, or heal and return; patches of skin that feel rough and dry; and dark lines underneath or around fingernails or toenails. Be diligent in checking nail beds, palms, soles of the feet, the head, lower legs, the groin and other places that get little sun. Contact a doctor if you have any concerns.
- See a board-certified dermatologist at least once a year for a full-body examination.

Sources: Skin Cancer Foundation, American Academy of Dermatology, Dr. Janiene Luke, Dr. Michelle Henry, Katonya Breaux

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WEEKEND: FAMILY



Should we share Spotify?

Whether to combine online accounts a unique challenge for newlyweds today

BY TATUM HUNTER
The Washington Post

For 39-year-old David Koll, the decision to add himself to his new wife's insurance account was simple — he's a freelancer; she has a full-time gig. The choice was so easy, in fact, that the newlyweds decided to write down two lists of all of their most important digital accounts and decide which they should combine.

There were nearly 60 entries: "Hewlett-Packard, Headspace, two Bank of America accounts," Koll read from his list. "Somehow five different Apple accounts."

Then came the deliberation. Koll's older relatives tend to share family email addresses, but he would never want access to his wife's messages, he said. To make things more complicated, some of Koll's accounts, like Hulu, technically belong to an ex-girlfriend. Now that he's married, using it feels "weird."

Newlyweds don't need extra challenges, but Koll is wading through one unique to today's couples. The average online American has upward of 150 digital accounts, according to password-management company Dashlane. That's a decadeslong record of an autonomous life lived online. Deciding whether to combine accounts — and sometimes cut ties with previous account holders — is both a practical and philosophical quandary for the lovestruck. Still, it's worth making a game plan with your partner, says Erin Lowry, author of "Broke Millennial Talks Money: Scripts, Stories, and Advice to Navigate Awkward Financial Conversations."

In some ways, creating joint accounts feels vulnerable, like erasing your own digital footprint, said Megan Fritts Cabrera, an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock. So much could go wrong: Death, divorce, weird joint social media accounts. It's a classic "prisoner's dilemma," she said. "Loosely put, it's where two or more people are stuck in a situation where if they decide to bet on trusting each other, then the outcome will be the best. But if one of them decides to bet on trusting the other and the other decides to bet on self-preservation, then the person who bet on trust is going to lose out."

That may be especially true of accounts that come with contracts, like cell plans.

Cabrera, 31, and her husband, 32, combined most of their accounts, including banking. But years dealing with spotty reception in the Midwest taught them that two cell networks are better than one — they're both still on their parents' family cell plans.

Some accounts, like streaming services, don't come with scary multiyear contracts. But combining them

comes with risks nonetheless.

For Cabrera and her husband, a combined Spotify was off the table from the get-go: She's afraid her "guilty pleasure" tracks will pop up at unexpected moments. (She wouldn't say on the record which songs are to blame.)

Negotiating with a partner over shared finances or closet space is tough. But digital accounts can be even tougher because we don't know what set of expectations we're supposed to be negotiating from, said Cabrera, whose research focuses on technology and human agency.

Some people like Nina Rizzo, a program manager at a Bay Area nonprofit, take it upon themselves to develop criteria. When she's deciding whether to combine an account with her soon-to-be husband, she said she uses three pillars: cost, coordination and utility. Will it save them money? Could they still coordinate effectively if the accounts are separate? And, perhaps most importantly, is changing the account a giant pain in the butt?

For instance: Rizzo briefly considered changing her last name, she said. Then she thought about how long it would take to rename her dozens of digital accounts.

For many baby boomer couples, separate online lives would be unthinkable, said Don Cole, a marriage therapist and clinical director at marriage research organization the Gottman Institute. But today — thanks in part to mid-century legal changes that allowed women to hold financial accounts in their own names — mashing together online identities feels at best a cost-saving chore, at worst a violation of autonomy.

Each partner will have a different threshold for autonomy and togetherness, Cole said. Successful couples are the ones who talk about those differences.

As in all marital conflicts, opinions on cell plans and streaming accounts say something deeper, he said. If one partner insists on having an accessible list of family passwords, that might speak to their need for security. If the other wants separate Amazon accounts, that might be because they value privacy. When conflict arises, brainstorm how you can meet each other's foundational needs and support each other's visions of a happy relationship, he advised.

There's no tipping point where couples officially become "too separate" in their dealings, according to Cole. But the Gottman Institute's decades of research into successful marriages has found that couples who make a habit of "turning toward" each other rather than "turning away" have a greater chance of staying together.

"You don't have to share everything to be a family, but you do have to share some stuff," he said.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



The pitfalls of eating regional specialties

Living overseas in the military provided our family with unique opportunities to learn about foreign cultures firsthand. We didn't imagine what it would be like to be European while stationed in England and Germany, we simply lived it. We believed that sampling local foods was a necessary part of the experience, but many Americans shy away from this aspect of the adventure.

The pervasiveness of McDonald's provides a safe haven for those whose taste buds are less adventurous. While we ducked into many a European McDonald's to hit the bathroom, my husband and I encouraged (READ: forced) our family to broaden their food horizons beyond french fries. This philosophy was not without its drawbacks, however, and we now have a host of interesting (READ: nauseating) tales of our experiences.

While awaiting housing in Stuttgart, my meat-loving husband ordered the "wurst salat" at a Vaihingen restaurant, envisioning the German version of a chef salad. However, what he was served was devoid of vegetables, unless you count the massive pile of sliced raw onions, which was tossed with julienned cold cuts that looked like fleshy rubber bands and tasted like the mystery meat in bologna and hot dogs.

One spring in Spain's Costa Brava, I ordered fresh-caught fish at a restaurant overlooking the azure Mediterranean Sea. As the waiter set the dish before me, I could almost hear Billy the Big Mouth Bass singing "Take Me to the River" as the fish stared at me from the plate. Some may say it's gauche of me to be turned off by whole-roasted fish, but it felt wrong eating a creature that looked like it might be enjoying the sea views.

On a fall trip to Berchtesgaden, one of our guests ordered the "Leberknodelsuppe" just because it was fun to say. Giggling, we all repeated the tongue-twisting word until the bowl was presented to the table. A large grayish dumpling sat in a broth bath. Cutting into the doughy ball, its pungent, iron-rich aroma clued us in on what should have been obvious — "leber" is liver, and this German delicacy was made from that particularly bloody organ meat.

One cannot escape getting caught up in the festive, albeit touristy, atmosphere at the Hofbrauhaus in Munich, and part of the experience is ordering a liter of beer and a heaping helping of hearty Bavarian food. Swinging my stein to and fro, I ordered the traditional "Schweinshaxe," a Bavarian specialty. Not realizing I'd requested a roasted pig's knuckle, I was surprised at the effort it took to extract the meat morsels that were tangled among cartilage, skin and bone.

On a day trip to Strasbourg, France, our family stopped at an outdoor restaurant on a lovely cobblestone square. Interested in the mix of German and French cultures, I ordered "Sûrkrût Royale," an Alsatian sauerkraut dish. Soon, I was presented with a steaming heap of sauerkraut, with potatoes, onions, dumplings and at least seven varieties of pork nested among its pickled strands. Wursts and pork loin were among the few cuts of meat I could recognize, but the rest were unidentifiable slabs. Although I was squeamish about the gelatinous bits, the scent of bacon and white wine motivated me, and I found the dish to be a delectable treat.

Despite the queasiness that inevitably springs forth when we recall these culinary tales, our family is still sampling indigenous cuisines. Be it Belgian mussels in creamy beer broth, southern shrimp and grits, spicy Croatian cevapi, saucy Japanese Okonomiyaki, traditional British bangers and mash, fresh Alaskan salmon, hearty Portuguese sopas or pork-filled Hawaiian manapua, every delicious regional dish we stumble upon makes it worth every fish head, hunk of fat and organ meat that makes its way to our table.

So, Buen Provecho, Smaczne, Smaklig måltid and Bon Appetit! But don't forget to pack the Alka Seltzer just in case.

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

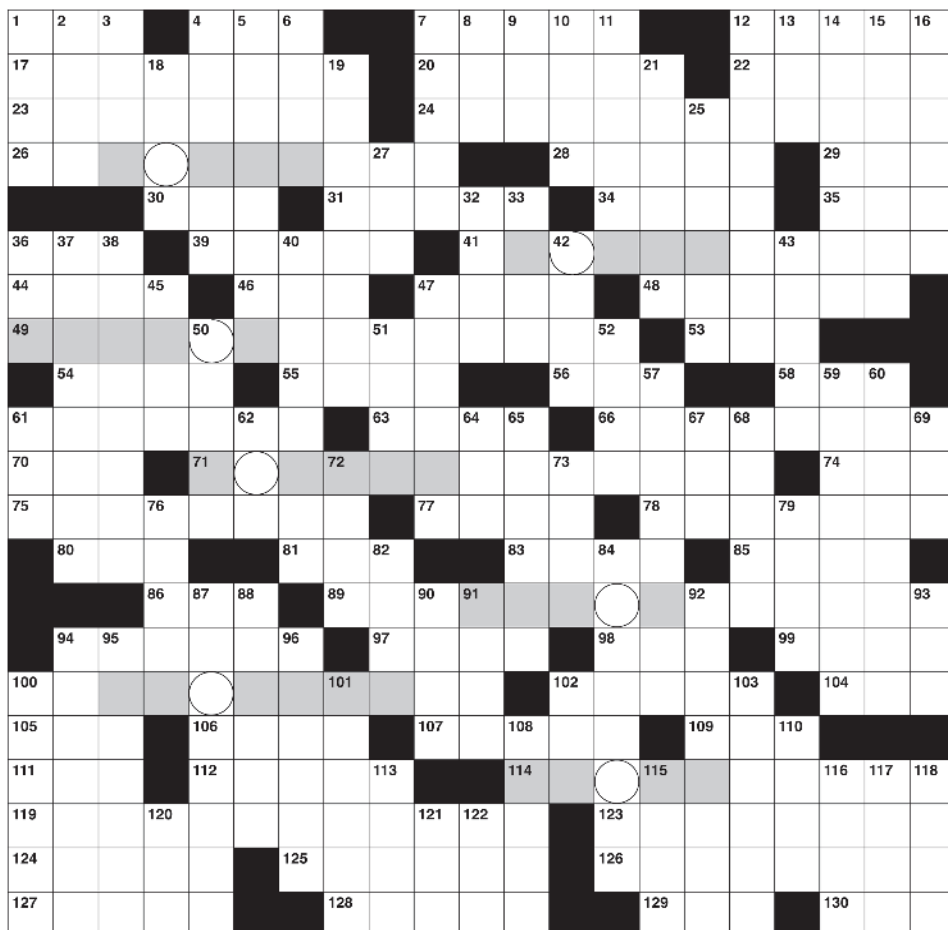
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

IN THE MONEY

BY JEFF CHEN AND JIM HORNE / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Jim Horne is a musician and writer from Newcastle, Wash. He is the founder of XWord Info, a website for crossword enthusiasts. He was the original writer (2008-11) for Wordplay, now The Times' daily crossword column. Jeff Chen is a professional crossword constructor and writer in Seattle. This is their fourth collaboration (and first Sunday) for the paper. — W.S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Hotel chain operated by Hilton
 - 4 Banned insecticide
 - 7 Big voices with big egos
 - 12 Some users of Cyrillic script
 - 17 Antique furniture expert, perhaps
 - 20 Like bills in arrears
 - 22 Freak out
 - 23 100 percent
 - 24 Sight at a checkout counter
 - 26 Golfer who won the 1998 Masters (Italy)
 - 28 Attach, as a patch
 - 29 "Baa, baa" ma
 - 30 "Rosy-fingered" Greek goddess
 - 31 Snitch out
 - 34 Zip
 - 35 World's end?
 - 36 Grp. led by Mahmoud Abbas beginning in 2004
 - 39 Apples and pears, botanically
 - 41 Seethe (Norway)
 - 44 Queen Latifah's given first name
 - 46 Playwright ____-Manuel Miranda
 - 47 Benefit
 - 48 Pipsqueaks
 - 49 Give up all at once (Ecuador)
 - 53 Org. with a Summer League
 - 54 Churn
 - 55 Response from a therapist
 - 56 Were, for one?
 - 58 "If we don't end ____, ____ will end us": H. G. Wells
 - 61 Calculus expert?
 - 63 "Inventing ____" (2022 Netflix hit)
 - 66 Die-hard
 - 70 Gate in digital logic
 - 71 Major player in U.S. economic policy (Egypt)
 - 74 Retired jersey number for the 76ers' Moses Malone
 - 75 Post-it notes, e.g.
 - 77 Cousin of a plum
 - 78 It's good for three points
 - 80 Where you might get into hot water
 - 81 ____ Hortons (Canadian chain)
 - 83 Statistician Silver
 - 85 Land with an accent over its first letter
 - 86 Big inits. in TVs
 - 89 Boarding group? (Switzerland)
 - 94 Causes for pauses
 - 97 God: Lat.
 - 98 Stephen of "V for Vendetta"
 - 99 Except for
 - 100 Activity for Santa (Rwanda)
 - 102 Scouts B.S.A. members since 2019
 - 104 Marks, as a ballot
 - 105 "OK, you get it," for short
 - 106 De ____ (freshly)
 - 107 Used room service, e.g.
 - 109 Hamm of women's soccer fame
 - 111 Nickname that's three consecutive letters of the alphabet
 - 112 Torus-shaped gasket
 - 114 One who walks to work? (Qatar)
 - 119 What this puzzle's circled letters are with respect to the surrounding shaded squares?
 - 123 Quite eccentric
 - 124 Noted underground adventurer
 - 125 Sad ass
 - 126 Burger topping that jacks up the cholesterol
 - 127 Rich sources
 - 128 Kidney-related
 - 129 Asphalt component
 - 130 Daily ____ (news blog)
 - 8 ____ spot
 - 9 Seconds, in brief
 - 10 Open-mouthed responses
 - 11 Tempresses in the "Odyssey"
 - 12 Create an elaborate series of deceptions
 - 13 Part of L.V.
 - 14 Got in the game, perhaps
 - 15 Watch parties?
 - 16 Focus for 15-Down
 - 18 It's a drag
 - 19 Seats
 - 21 Big name in power tools
 - 25 Fail
 - 27 Monitors at school, briefly
 - 32 ____-Eaters
 - 33 Kindle competitor
 - 36 "ASAP!"
 - 37 Sondheim and Bernstein's collaborator on "West Side Story"
 - 38 Pungent party bowlful
 - 40 Ultra-aggressive
 - 42 Freshly
 - 43 Quite a fight
 - 45 Fighting
 - 47 "____ días!"
 - 50 Instantly get along well
 - 51 Rush
 - 52 Home of the David Geffen School of Drama
 - 57 Laundry product
 - 59 Like some 401(k) contributions
 - 60 It's touchy to hit
 - 61 "____ Rheingold"
 - 62 "The Chi" channel, familiarly
 - 64 It has a devoted following on Sundays
 - 65 Expiates, with "for"
 - 67 "____ out!"
 - 68 Formal farewell
 - 69 Modifier in digital logic
 - 72 "Oh, really?"
 - 73 Catch a few waves?
 - 76 Lloyd of women's soccer fame
 - 79 Talk smack about
 - 82 Skirt style
 - 84 Getting bored with
 - 87 Suggests
 - 88 Kind of cat or rabbit
 - 90 Flat top?
 - 91 Target of a joke
 - 92 Region of Croatia associated with a canine breed
 - 93 "Did you ring?"
 - 94 Hybrid farm animal
 - 95 Site acquired by Match.com in 2011
 - 96 London's ____ Row
 - 100 Liquor from Mexico
 - 101 Like em dashes vis-à-vis en dashes
 - 102 Benitez of TV news
 - 103 Fuse by heating below the melting point
 - 108 Bomb produced in the 1950s
 - 110 Ritalin target, for short
 - 113 Marvin who sang "Sexual Healing"
 - 115 Offended
 - 116 Food that's a national emblem of Wales
 - 117 "Thus . . ."
 - 118 Standard operating procedures, for short
 - 120 Clinch
 - 121 Plasma particle
 - 122 Ambrose Burnside was its first president, for short



GUNSTON STREET

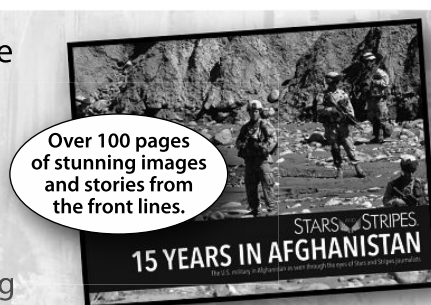


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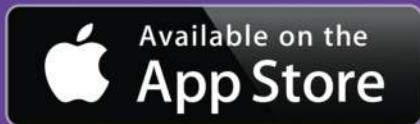
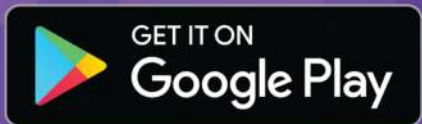
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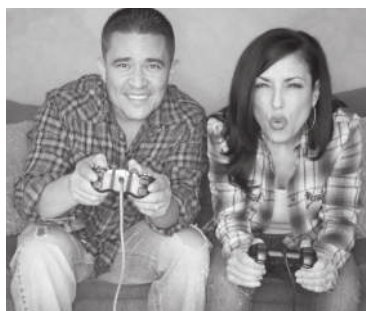
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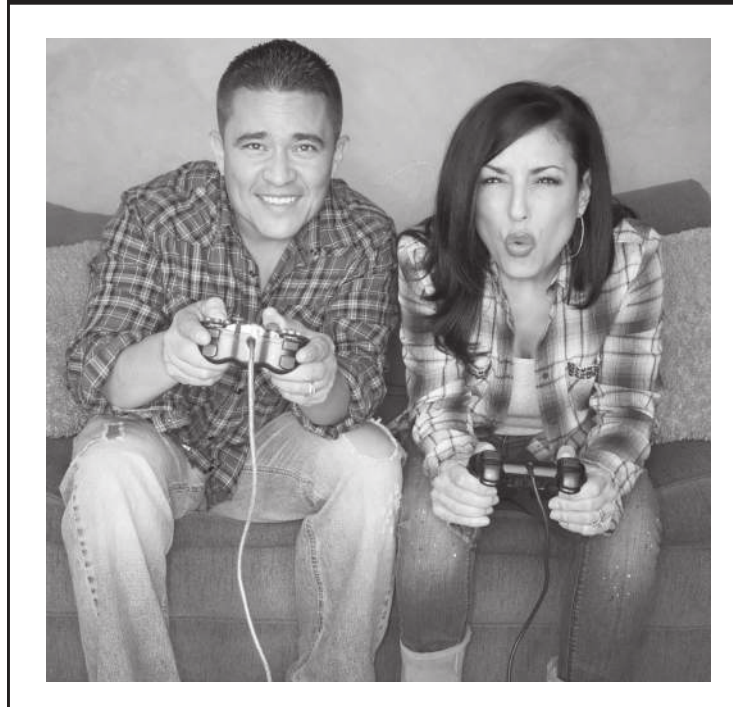
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CELESTYAL CRUISES

STARS AND STRIPES

OPINION

NC justices' liberal road map for overturning elections

BY JASON WILLOCK

The Washington Post

If American states are laboratories of democracy, they're also laboratories of democratic decay. North Carolina — close to the median state by party vote share — is offering a grim lesson in how polarization can lead to the partisan nullification of democratic outcomes. This time, it's Democrats striking while they have the chance.

There's no violent mob involved in North Carolina's election nullification; the process is far more respectable than that. Last Friday, a four-justice Democratic majority on North Carolina's Supreme Court (justices in the state are elected in partisan contests) invented a new constitutional theory that could allow for the invalidation of two Republican-supported constitutional amendments that passed in 2018.

Both amendments were approved by the requisite 60% of the state legislature. One, a voter-identification measure, was then ratified by voters with more than 55% of the state's popular vote; another, a limit on the state's top income-tax rate, was ratified with more than 57% support.

How could amendments passed according to the process prescribed in the North Carolina Constitution violate that same constitution? North Carolina's Supreme Court majority claims in *NAACP v. Moore* that because the state legislature was gerrymandered in 2011, it likely lacked the authority to submit one or both amendments to voters. Legislators "can only exercise the sovereign power that the people have transmitted to the legislature if they validly hold legislative office," the majority says.

But North Carolina's legislators did validly hold their offices. A federal lawsuit filed in 2015 established that the state impermissibly took race into account in redistricting, with

the U.S. Supreme Court weighing in twice (in 2017 and 2018). The resulting remedy was to put in place new district lines for the 2018 elections. The elections for representatives in the 2011 districts were never invalidated, and North Carolina officials "hold their positions," the state constitution says, "until their successors are chosen and qualified."

The U.S. Supreme Court, in a 1962 redistricting case, wrote that "a legislature, though elected under an unfair apportionment scheme, is nonetheless a legislature empowered to act." North Carolina's liberal justices are creating a novel exception — that legislatures adjudicated to contain gerrymanders can pass ordinary legislation, but not advance certain constitutional amendments.

This is an arbitrary distinction with extraordinary implications. "The door has been opened," the three-justice dissent notes, "for judicial dissolution of legislative authority in the future." Gerrymandering has been a feature of American politics since the founding. What other laws, in North Carolina or elsewhere, might be called into question if lawyers can excavate a role for redistricting mischief in their passage?

If governors or presidents misbehave, they can be voted out of office — and if legislatures are gerrymandered, they can be redrawn. But Americans need to have confidence that the institutions that govern them do so legitimately. The certification of elections is an important process because it confers authority on elected officials.

Confidence in that authority is declining as Donald Trump attacks Joe Biden's election and progressives denigrate the Constitution as undemocratic. Now partisan judges in a key swing state have announced that legislatures elected under the rules in place when votes were cast may be retroactively deemed to not have been real legislatures at all. We don't

want to keep pulling on this thread.

The events in North Carolina show the complexity of majority rule in America's federal system. Some progressives celebrated the result of Kansas's 59% vote to maintain abortion rights but worried that in certain states, gerrymandering will prevent the "true" will of the people from being expressed. Maybe so, but in North Carolina, the voting and tax measures were subject to an up-or-down plebiscite. They won convincing victories even in a strong Democratic election year.

So who is frustrating small-d democracy in America's ninth-most-populous state: the 170-member legislature, which put the measures on the ballot, or the seven-member North Carolina Supreme Court, which may set the results aside? The answer should be clear to everyone involved.

At the beginning of the last decade, the legislature drew district lines aggressively to give the GOP an advantage, and in 2016 it tried to limit the powers of the incoming Democratic governor, Roy Cooper. The Democratic court's latest usurpation of the legislature is best understood as another partisan escalation that is straining the foundations of state government.

As Princeton's Keith E. Whittington notes, the dissent "practically begged the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn this case." But Democrats might lose their one-vote majority on the North Carolina Supreme Court in November's election, and a Republican-controlled court could reverse the decision. Pressure is building in American democracy's North Carolina "laboratory" — but Washington, rather than stepping into the breach, may be wiser to step back and let the experiment proceed.

Jason Willock writes a regular Washington Post column on legal issues, political ideas and foreign affairs.

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GOP lost in NY, but the party had a good night elsewhere

BY HENRY OLSEN

Special to The Washington Post

Democrats are rightly ecstatic over the surprise win by Pat Ryan over Republican Marc Molinaro in Tuesday's special election in New York's 19th Congressional District. But the GOP had a good night, too.

Sometimes you win by not losing, and that's what happened to Republicans in other important races. Garden-variety conservatives beat back challenges from a series of ultra-MAGA or highly controversial candidates whose victories could have harmed the party's image.

These MAGA defeats mean that Republicans stopped adding fuel to Democrats' bonfire. Alt-right activist Laura Loomer was defeated in Florida's 11th District. Had she won, she would have made national news as the next Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene. The party also rejected state Rep. Anthony Sabatini, a MAGA favorite who rejects the 2020 presidential election results, in Florida's 7th District, and controversial businessman Carl Paladino in New York's 23rd.

Conventional figures also won less heated primaries.

Nick LaLota, a former city councilman and chief of staff to the Suffolk County legislature, easily defeated cryptocurrency executive Michelle Bond in a primary for nomination to a Long Island seat, and former or current elected officials won primaries in three safely red

districts in Florida and Oklahoma.

The results confirmed that Republicans can still go for the safe, tired and slightly boring candidate despite the MAGA trend. Here again, no news is good news.

The party also continued its push for more diversity. Two Florida women — Anna Paulina Luna and former state secretary of state Laurel Lee — won primaries in seats they are likely to win this fall. House Republicans look set to have record numbers of women and people of color among their ranks after November's elections. It's taken a while, but the GOP is finally starting to look more like America. This will likely help the party win more votes from women and people of color in the future.

The Florida primary results also continue a trend of growing Republican turnout compared with 2018. That wasn't the case in New York's 19th District special election, where turnout was higher in Democratic counties than in Republican ones. But in most states so far, Republican turnout has been up from the last midterm while Democratic turnout has been flat. That portends well for the GOP in November, as the party that garners more primary voters has also prevailed in each midterm election since 2006.

Democrats have often argued that the GOP's turnout edge was because Republicans — and independents, where state law permits — have been voting in contested statewide races, which can fuel voter interest.

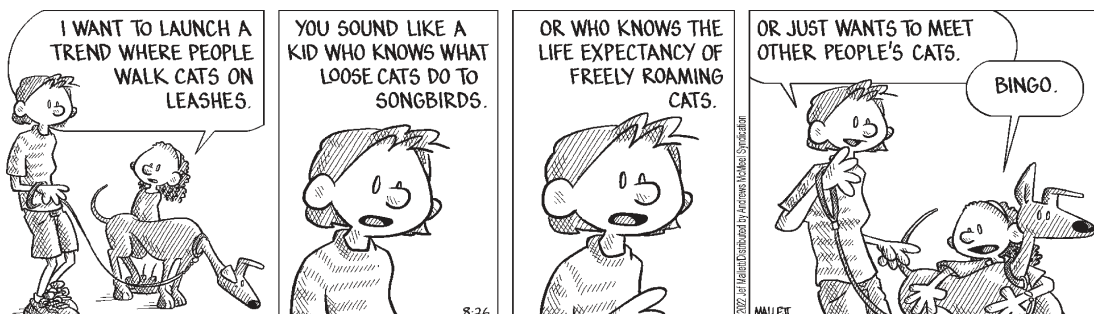
But that wasn't the case in Florida, where the action was all on Democrats' contested gubernatorial primary. Despite this, Republican turnout in the state was up 6% from 2018, while Democratic turnout was flat. This, combined with the GOP's voter registration surge in Florida since 2020, shows that Dobbs has not dented the Sunshine State's rightward shift.

This fact suggests that the Supreme Court's overruling of *Roe v. Wade* might have a demographically limited impact. Election guru Dave Wasserman points out that Democratic overperformance in post-Dobbs special elections has been in places with large numbers of college-educated white voters. That may be good news for Democrats like Michigan's Elissa Slotkin, whose district includes Michigan State University. It's likely to be cold comfort for those running in Texas' Hispanic-dominated Rio Grande Valley or those seeking white, working-class seats such as Maine's 2nd Congressional District or Ohio's 9th. It's probably not coincidental that the Democratic incumbents in the Maine and Ohio seats explicitly distance themselves from President Joe Biden and aren't focusing on abortion.

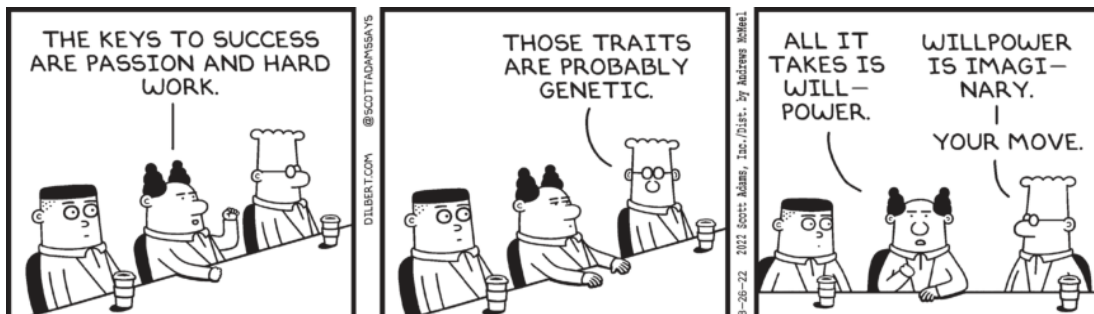
The evidence so far shows that Democrats might avoid the red wave that many, including myself, have anticipated. But Tuesday's results also show that reports of GOP collapse are greatly exaggerated.

Henry Olsen is a Washington Post columnist and a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

Frazz



Dilbert



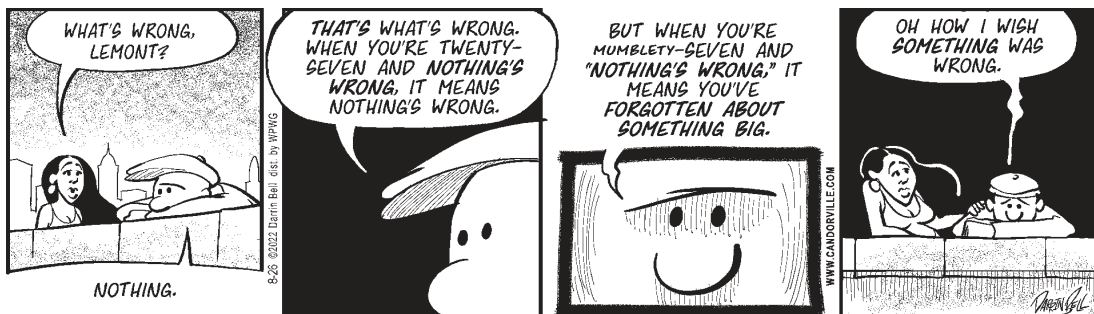
Pearls Before Swine



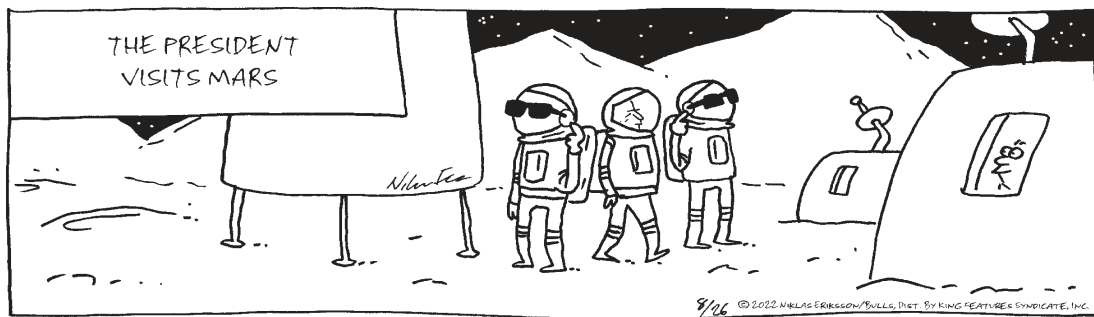
Non Sequitur



Candorville



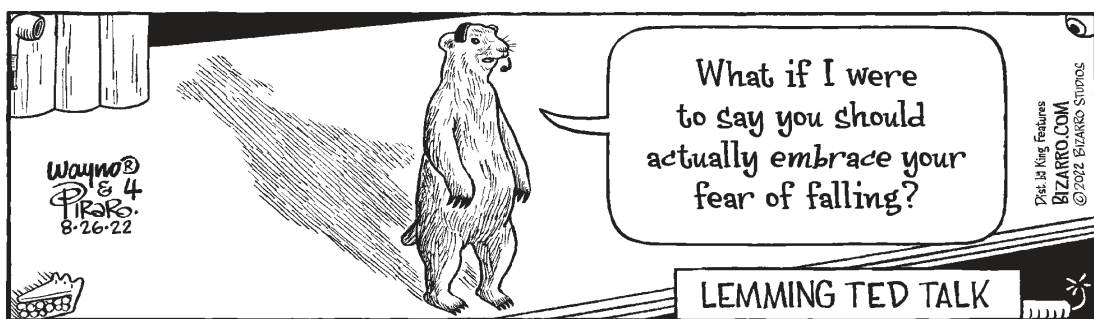
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11
12						13				14		
15						16				17		
		18				19				20		
21	22			23				24				
25			26		27		28					
29				30			31			32	33	34
			35			36				37		
38	39	40				41		42		43		
44					45			46				
47				48				49			50	51
52				53				54				
55				56				57				

ACROSS

- 1 Persian Gulf emirate
- 6 Little lie
- 9 Chances, for short
- 12 Winner's gesture
- 13 "All bets — off"
- 14 Haw preceder
- 15 Thesaurus compiler
- 16 Bach's "Coffee —"
- 18 Deserves
- 20 Legal document
- 21 Salonga of "Miss Saigon"
- 23 Commotion
- 24 Deli array
- 25 Arsenal supply
- 27 Wear down
- 29 "Othello" character
- 31 Indian instruments
- 35 Mea —
- 37 Coin aperture
- 38 Be buoyant
- 41 — out a living
- 43 Glacial
- 44 Hoops great Monroe
- 45 Ornamental beetle
- 47 Cheery refrain
- 49 Arcade pioneer
- 52 Revue segment
- 53 Prohibit
- 54 Serious
- 55 That lady

- 56 Walgreens alternative
- 57 On mom's side

- 22 Brit. record label
- 24 1501, in Roman numerals
- 26 Available for work
- 28 Japanese seaport
- 30 Snip
- 32 "Open sesame" speaker
- 33 Sinbad's bird
- 34 Pigs' digs
- 36 Praline nuts
- 38 Greek cheeses
- 39 Coniferous tree
- 40 Emulate Douglass
- 42 Obliterate
- 45 Serb or Croat
- 46 Heaps
- 48 "Shark Tank" network
- 50 Emeritus, briefly
- 51 Hot temper

Answer to Previous Puzzle

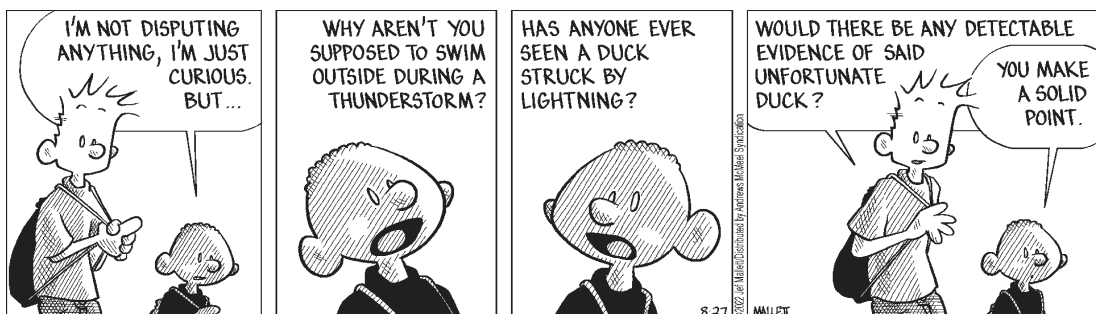
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G	E	E	K		I	S	H		E	I	R	E
R	A	N	I		G	E	E		U	B	E	R
E	N	A	B	L	E			W	A	L	E	S
				O	E	R			W	A	R	
A	H	A	B		I	N	A		W	H	I	L
B	E	L			A	A	U			A	E	S
S	E	G	M	E	N	T	S		M	N	O	P
				E	E	L			T	R	Y	
D	A	R	N	I	T			R	A	S	H	A
A	S	I	A					A	L	I	T	A
S	T	A	G					L	E	A	I	D
H	O	N	E					K	I	N	C	A

8-26

CRYPTOQUIP

SD QGA MWVSL NVLLVW EVQEWV
 YCWW RCLF KVAQ YCLHWVZZ,
 IWQQFZGMNCLH CLZVMDZ.
 CD'Z S LQ-RWVS KQLV.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT WOULD SOMEONE CALL AN ERRAND RUNNER FOR A FILM SET'S CHIEF ELECTRICIAN? THE GAFFER GOFER.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals P

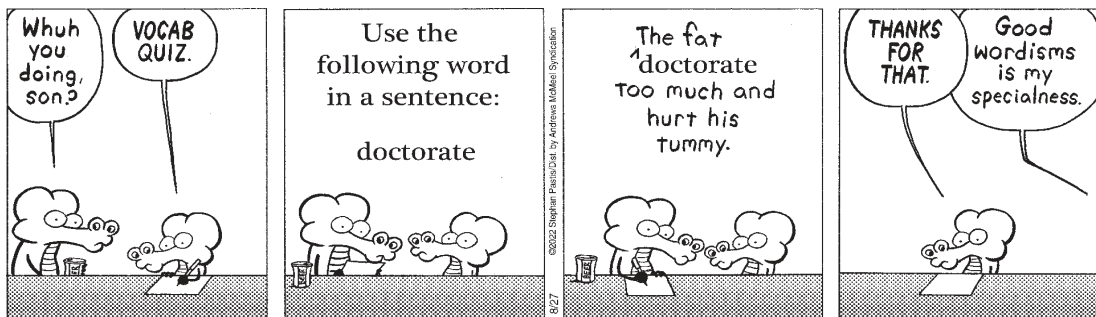
Frazz



Dilbert



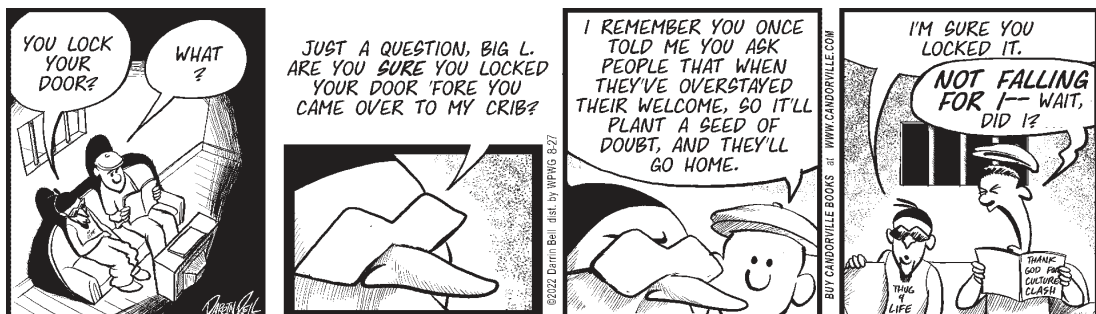
Pearls Before Swine



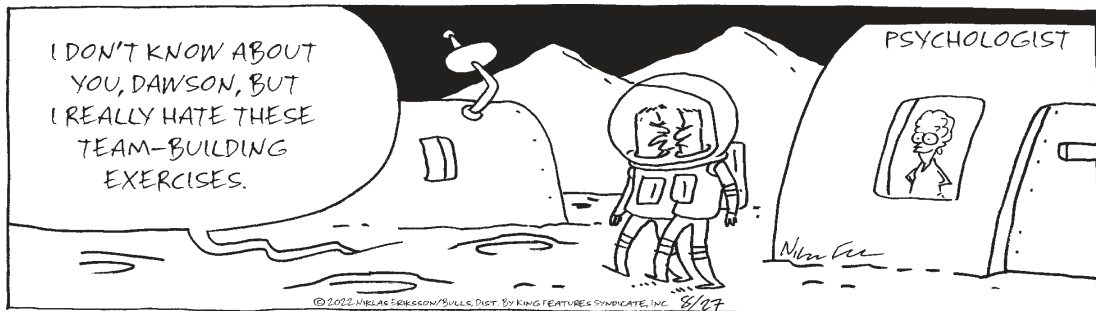
Non Sequitur



Candorville



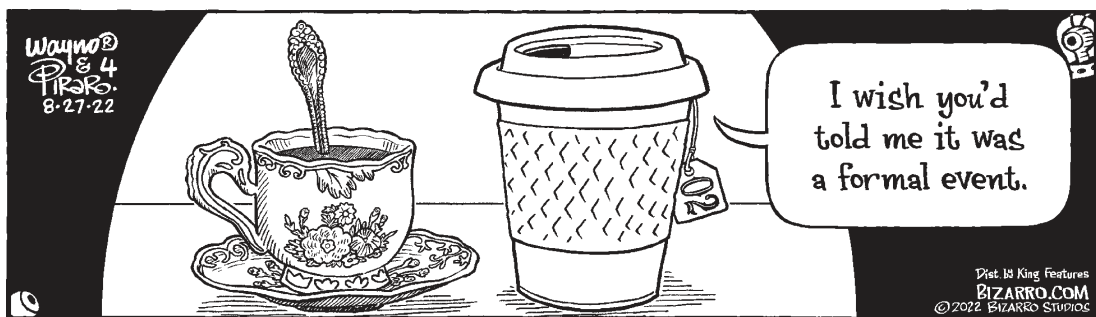
Carpe Diem



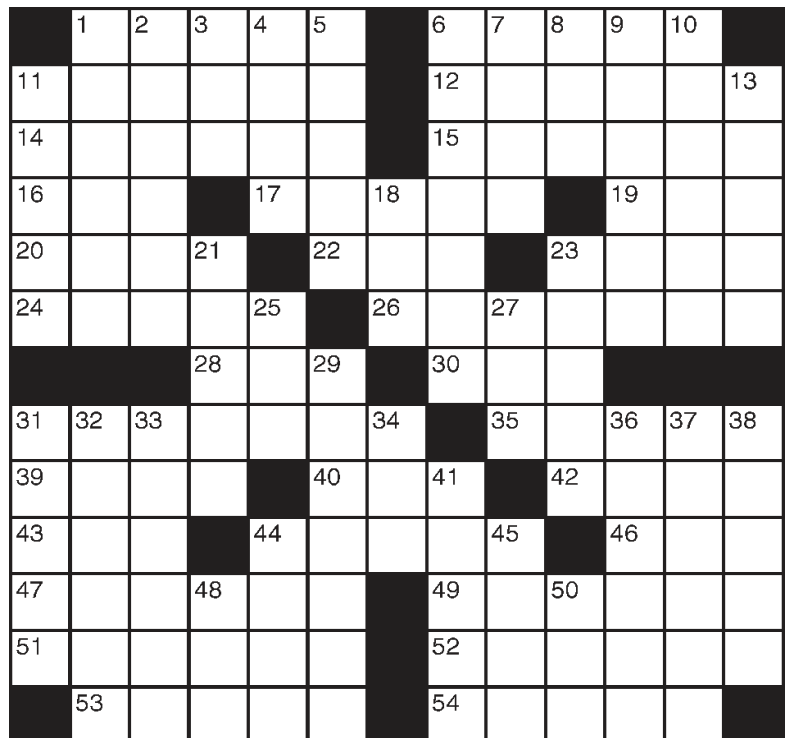
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 German sausage
- 6 Hoops great
- 11 More minuscule
- 12 Succeed
- 14 Ridiculous
- 15 Eventually
- 16 Bygone bird
- 17 Valleys
- 19 Pensioned (Abbr.)
- 20 Taking action
- 22 Label
- 23 Corrida bull
- 24 Tennis star
- 26 Dessert that jiggles
- 28 Violin tuner
- 30 Novelist
- 31 "The Peasant Dance" painter
- 35 Everglades wader
- 39 Give temporarily
- 40 Lumber unit
- 42 Wrestling style
- 43 "Nasty!"
- 44 Thread holder
- 46 Damage
- 47 South Carolina river
- 49 La Brea attraction
- 18 Trail the pack
- 21 Recorded
- 23 Zesty flavors
- 25 Pants part
- 27 Director Spike
- 29 Smooth writing implements
- 31 Ecstasy
- 32 Summaries
- 33 Detangle
- 34 Brit's restroom
- 36 Ado
- 37 Inbox fillers
- 38 Civil wrongs
- 41 Arose
- 44 Ooze
- 45 Cowardly Lion portrayer
- 48 Ring decision
- 50 Arctic explorer John

DOWN

- 1 Actress Ryder
- 2 Tacit
- 3 Estuary
- 4 Dispatch
- 5 Pick up the tab
- 6 Classic catalog giant
- 7 Catches some rays
- 8 Tolkien creature
- 9 Christie sleuth
- 10 Arm bones
- 11 Shakespeare's "— of Athens"
- 13 Rockies range

Answer to Previous Puzzle



8-27

CRYPTOQUIP

JLHGQAXVLW SXARTA DG YMLAIT

XC WSDPWDGI SLWTA XHW XC

PXL RDGI-STW YJXWMDGI:

WMT SADGIVLPWTA.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: AT OUR CLEAN KENNEL PEOPLE WILL FIND ZERO WINGLESS, BLOODSUCKING INSECTS. IT'S A NO-FLEA ZONE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals G

SCOREBOARD/NBA

PRO SOCCER

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	14	4	9	51	51	20
CF Montréal	14	8	4	46	47	41
NYCFC	13	7	6	45	48	30
New York	11	8	8	41	41	33
Orlando City	10	10	6	36	30	37
Inter Miami CF	10	10	6	36	34	42
Columbus	8	6	11	35	34	29
New England	8	8	10	34	38	40
Cincinnati	8	8	10	34	43	46
Charlotte FC	10	15	2	32	34	42
Toronto FC	8	13	6	30	40	47
Chicago	8	12	6	30	28	36
Atlanta	7	10	9	30	36	40
D.C. United	6	16	4	22	28	55

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
LAFc	18	5	3	57	55	26
Austin FC	14	6	6	48	55	36
FC Dallas	11	8	9	42	39	32
Minnesota	12	9	5	41	42	36
Real Salt Lake	10	8	8	38	34	35
Nashville	9	9	9	36	38	36
LA Galaxy	10	11	4	34	40	37
Vancouver	9	11	7	34	32	46
Seattle	10	13	3	33	35	34
Portland	7	8	12	33	43	44
Colorado	8	10	8	32	37	40
San Jose	6	11	9	27	42	54
Houston	7	14	5	26	32	43
Sporting KC	7	15	5	26	30	49

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday's games

Los Angeles FC at Austin FC
Seattle at Portland

Saturday's games

Houston at Minnesota
Miami at New York
Toronto FC at Charlotte FC
Columbus at Cincinnati
Colorado at Philadelphia
CF Montréal at Chicago
San Jose at Sporting Kansas City
Real Salt Lake at FC Dallas
Nashville at Vancouver

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego	8	5	4	28	24	15
Portland	7	2	7	28	37	18
Houston	8	5	4	28	29	21
Kansas City	7	4	5	26	21	21
OL Reign	6	4	6	24	20	15
Chicago	6	5	5	23	22	22
Angel City	6	5	4	22	16	17
Orlando	5	5	6	21	19	31
North Carolina	4	6	4	16	30	27
Louisville	2	6	8	14	16	22
Gotham FC	4	11	0	12	12	32
Washington	1	6	9	12	16	21

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Wednesday's game

North Carolina 3, Portland 1

Friday's games

OL Reign at Orlando

Saturday's games

Chicago at Louisville
Washington at Houston
San Diego at Portland

Sunday's games

Angel City at Gotham FC
North Carolina at Kansas City

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA playoffs

(x-if necessary)

First Round

(Best-of-three)

Las Vegas 79, Phoenix 63
Las Vegas 117, Phoenix 80
Chicago 2, New York 1
New York 98, Chicago 91
Chicago 100, New York 62
Chicago 90, New York 72
Connecticut 2, Dallas 1
Connecticut 93, Dallas 68
Dallas 89, Connecticut 79

Wednesday: Connecticut 73, Dallas 58
Seattle 2, Washington 0
Seattle 86, Washington 83
Seattle 97, Washington 84

Semifinals

(Best-of-five)

No. 1 Las Vegas vs. No. 4 Seattle
Sunday: at Las Vegas
Wednesday, Aug. 31: at Las Vegas
Sunday, Sept. 4: at Seattle
x-Tuesday, Sept. 6: at Seattle
x-Thursday, Sept. 8: at Las Vegas
No. 2 Chicago vs. No. 3 Connecticut
Sunday: at Chicago
Wednesday, Aug. 31: at Chicago
Sunday, Sept. 4: at Connecticut
x-Tuesday, Sept. 5: at Connecticut
x-Thursday, Sept. 8: at Chicago

TENNIS

Winston-Salem Open

Wednesday
At Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, N.C.
Purse: \$713,635

Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Men's Singles
Round of 16

Richard Gasquet, France, def. Steve Johnson, United States, 6-7 (3), 6-4, 6-3.
Adrian Mannarino, France, def. Albert Ramos-Vinolas (8), Spain, 6-3, 6-3.
Botic Van de Zandschulp (2), Netherlands, def. Jaume Munar (15), Spain, 6-3, 6-3.
Maxime Cressy (4), United States, def. Lorenzo Sonego (14), Italy, 6-7 (4), 6-2, 7-6 (3).
Laslo Djere, Serbia, def. Jason Kubler, Australia, 7-6 (4), 6-7 (9), 6-3.
Benjamin Bonzi (10), France, def. Thiago Monteiro, Brazil, 7-5, 6-2.
Jack Draper (13), Britain, def. Dominic Thiem, Austria, 6-1, 6-4.
Marc-Andrea Huesler, Switzerland, def. Ilya Ivashka (11), Belarus, 7-6 (2), 3-6, 7-6 (3).

Tennis in the Land

Wednesday
At Flats West Bank
Cleveland
Purse: \$251,750

Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Women's Singles
Round of 16

Madison Brengle, United States, def. Ekaterina Alexandrova (3), Russia, 3-6, 7-5, 7-5.
Bernarda Pera, United States, def. Barbora Krejickova (1), Czech Republic, 6-4, 6-1.
Zhang Shuai, China, def. Martina Trevisan (2), Italy, walkover.
Liudmila Samsonova, Russia, def. Laura Siegemund, Germany, 6-2, 6-1.

Championnats Banque Nationale de Granby

Wednesday
At Tennis St-Luc - Les Loisirs de Granby
Granby, Canada
Purse: \$251,750

Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Women's Singles
Round of 16

Tatjana Maria, Germany, def. Anna Bondar (4), Hungary, 6-3, 6-2.
Diane Parry, France, def. Tereza Martincova (8), Czech Republic, 6-3, 7-6 (1).
Daria Saville (9), Australia, def. Katherine Sebov, Canada, 6-1, 6-0.
Marta Kostyuk (10), Ukraine, def. Marina Stakusic, Canada, 6-7 (3), 6-4, 6-1.
Rebecca Marino, Canada, def. Jasmine Paolini (3), Italy, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.
Wang Xiyu, China, def. Cadence Brace, Canada, 7-6 (4), 6-1.

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball

MLB — Suspended New York Mets RHP Richard Cardoza from Dominican Summer League (DSL), Kansas City Royals LHP Jeremy Castro (DSL), San Francisco RHP Ricardo Estrada (DSL); Arizona LHP Miguel Gonzalez (DSL), Houston RHP Jose Serrano (DSL) and Atlanta INF Christian Suarez (DSL) for 60-games without pay after testing positive for a performing-enhancing substance.

American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Claimed RHP Phoenix Sanders off waivers from Tampa Bay.
BOSTON RED SOX — Reinstated RHP Bryan Bello from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Josh Winckowski to Worcester (IL).
CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Agreed to terms with 1B Riley Jepsen on a minor league contract.
MINNESOTA TWINS — Placed RHP Cole Sands on the 15-day IL. Recalled LHP Devin Smeltzer from St. Paul (IL).
NEW YORK YANKEES — Optioned CF Estevan Florial to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL).
OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Claimed RHP Tyler Cyr off waivers from Philadelphia.

National League

CHICAGO CUBS — Selected the contract of RHP Luke Farrell from Iowa (IL). Optioned RHP Anderson Espionza to Iowa. Transferred RHP Kyle Hendricks to the 60-day IL. Recalled RHP Kervin Castro from Iowa. Placed LHP Steven Brault on the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Nicholas Padilla to Iowa.
MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Reinstated RHP Adrian Houser from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Trevor Kelley to Nashville (IL). Snet RHP J.C. Mejia outright to Nashville. Reinstated RHP Jake Cousins from the 60-day IL and optioned him to Nashville.
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Placed INF Brandon Belt on the 10-day IL, retroactive to August 21. Recalled OF Bryce Johnson from Sacramento (PCL).

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association

MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES — Named Jonathan Wallace director of player personnel and Iowa Wolves general manager.
SAN ANTONIO SPURS — Re-signed G Joe Wieskamp.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Placed DB Darrell Baker on injured reserve.

YOUTH BASEBALL

Little League World Series

At Williamsport, Pa. UNITED STATES

GREAT LAKES REGION, Hagerstown, Ind.; METRO REGION, Massapequa, N.Y.; MID-ATLANTIC REGION, Hollidaysburg, Pa.; MIDWEST REGION, Davenport, Iowa; MOUNTAIN REGION, Santa Clara, Utah; NEW ENGLAND REGION, Middleboro, Mass.; NORTHWEST REGION, Bonney Lake, Wash.; SOUTHEAST REGION, Nolensville, Tenn.; SOUTHWEST REGION, Pearland, Texas; WEST REGION, Honolulu, Hawaii

INTERNATIONAL

ASIA-PACIFIC REGION, Taipei City, Chinese Taipei; AUSTRALIA REGION, Brisbane, Australia; CANADA REGION, Vancouver, British Columbia; CARIBBEAN REGION, Willemstad, Curacao; EUROPE-AFRICA REGION, Bologna, Italy; JAPAN REGION, Takarazuka, Japan; LATIN AMERICA REGION, Managua, Nicaragua; MEXICO REGION, Matamoros, Mexico; PANAMA REGION, Aguadulce, Panama; PUERTO RICO REGION, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico

Double Elimination

Wednesday, Aug. 17

Game 1: Willemstad (Curacao) 2, Managua (Nicaragua) 0
Game 2: Nolensville (Tenn.) 5, Middleboro (Mass.) 3
Game 3: Vancouver (British Columbia) 7, Brisbane (Australia) 0
Game 4: Honolulu (Hawaii) 11, Bonney Lake (Wash.) 1

Thursday, Aug. 18

Game 5: Taipei City (Chinese Taipei) 2, Bologna (Italy) 0
Game 6: Hagerstown (Ind.) 8, Davenport (Iowa) 7
Game 7: Matamoros (Mexico) 6, Guaynabo (PR) 1
Game 8: Pearland (Texas) 8, Hollidaysburg (Pa.) 3

Friday, Aug. 19

Game 9: Aguadulce (Panama) 9, Willemstad (Curacao) 3
Game 10: Nolensville (Tenn.) 11, Santa Clara (Utah) 2
Game 11: Vancouver (British Columbia) 6, Takarazuka (Japan) 0
Game 12: Honolulu (Hawaii) 12, Massapequa (N.Y.) 0

Saturday, Aug. 20

Game 13: Bologna (Italy) 12, Brisbane (Australia) 7
Game 14: Davenport (Iowa) 6, Bonney Lake (Wash.) 3

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL preseason

Thursday's games

Green Bay at Kansas City
San Francisco at Houston

Friday's games

Buffalo at Carolina
L.A. Chargers at New Orleans
Seattle at Dallas

DEALS

ATLANTA FALCONS — Reinstated LB Deion Jones from the physically unable to perform (PUP) list. Waived DB Cornell Armstrong from injured reserve with a settlement. Placed DT Jalen Dalton on injured reserve.

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Placed WR Slade Bolden on injured reserve.

DALLAS COWBOYS — Waived DB Tino Ellis from injured reserve with a settlement.

DENVER BRONCOS — Waived DE Marquiss Spencer from injured reserve with a settlement. Placed OT Casey Tucker on injured reserve.

DETROIT LIONS — Waived DB Brady Breeze from injured reserve with a settlement.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Traded T/G Cole Van Lanen to Jacksonville in exchange for an undisclosed draft pick. Waived G Cole Schneider and DB Donte Vaughn from injured reserve with a settlement. Placed WR Danny Davis and DB Vernon Scott on injured reserve.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Released CB Fabian Moreau.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Signed P Matt Haack.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Waived WR Gary Jennings from injured reserve with a settlement.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Placed DB Tevaughn Campbell, LB Damon Lloyd and DE Ty Shelby on injured reserve.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Released OT Jerald Hawkins from injured reserve.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Reinstated WR Sterling Shepard from the physically unable to perform (PUP) list. Claimed DB Harrison Hand off waivers from Minnesota and WR Jaylon Moore and WR Bailey Gaither off waivers from Baltimore. Waived WR Robert Foster with an injury settlement. Placed WRs Collin Johnson and Marcus Kemp on injured reserve. Released TE Jordan Akins.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Waived DB Jimmy Moreland from injured reserve with a settlement.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Waived LB Tuzar Skipper and RB Master Teague from injured reserve with a settlement. Waived DB Donovan Stiner. Claimed DB Elijah Riley off waivers from the New York Jets.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Placed OT Sam Schlueter on injured reserve.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Signed RB Ronnie Rivers. Placed LB Jon Rhttigan on the physically unable to perform (PUP) list.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Signed OLB Genard Avery. Placed WR Bug Howard on injured reserve.

Lake (Wash.) 3
Game 15: Managua (Nicaragua) 3, Guaynabo (PR) 1
Game 16: Hollidaysburg (Pa.) 7, Middleboro (Mass.) 5

Sunday, Aug. 21

Game 17: Willemstad (Curacao) 1, Bologna (Italy) 0
Game 18: Davenport (Iowa) 10, Santa Clara (Utah) 2

Monday, Aug. 22

Game 19: Managua (Nicaragua) 8, Takarazuka (Japan) 7
Game 20: Hollidaysburg (Pa.) 7, Massapequa (N.Y.) 1

Game 21: Taipei City (Chinese Taipei) 7, Aguadulce (Panama) 0
Game 22: Nolensville (Tenn.) 5, Hagerstown (Ind.) 2

Game 23: Matamoros (Mexico) 10, Vancouver (British Columbia) 0
Game 24: Honolulu (Hawaii) 6, Pearland (Texas) 0

Tuesday, Aug. 23

Game 25: Managua (Nicaragua) 8, Aguadulce (Panama) 1
Game 27: Willemstad (Curacao) 4, Vancouver (British Columbia) 2
Game 28: Pearland (Texas) 4, Davenport (Iowa) 0

Wednesday's games

Game 29: Taipei City (Chinese Taipei) 5, Matamoros (Mexico) 1
Game 30: Honolulu (Hawaii) 13, Nolensville (Tenn.) 0
Game 31: Willemstad (Curacao) 7, Managua (Nicaragua) 2

Game 32: Pearland (Texas) 8, Hollidaysburg (Pa.) 4

Thursday's games

Game 33: Matamoros (Mexico) vs. Willemstad (Curacao)
Game 34: Nolensville (Tenn.) vs. Pearland (Texas)

Saturday's games

International Championship
Game 35: Taipei City (Chinese Taipei) vs. Game 33 winner
United States Championship
Game 36: Honolulu (Hawaii) vs. Game 34 winner

Sunday's games

Third Place
Game 37: Game 35 loser vs. Game 36 loser

Championship

Game 38: Game 35 winner vs. Game 36 winner

New England at Las Vegas
Saturday's games

Jacksonville at Atlanta
L.A. Rams at Cincinnati
Arizona at Tennessee
Chicago at Cleveland
Philadelphia at Miami
Washington at Baltimore
Tampa Bay at Indianapolis
Minnesota at Denver

Bryant's widow wins suit

By Andrew Dalton
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Kobe Bryant's widow was awarded \$16 million as part of a \$31 million jury verdict Wednesday against Los Angeles County for deputies and firefighters sharing grisly photos of the NBA star, his 13-year-old daughter and other victims killed in a 2020 helicopter crash.

The nine jurors unanimously agreed with Vanessa Bryant and her attorneys that the photos invaded her privacy and caused emotional distress. She cried quietly as it was read.

The jury deliberated 4½ hours before reaching the verdict on Kobe Bryant Day, which is celebrated in LA on Aug. 24 because it represents his jersey numbers — 8 and 24 — and is the day after his birthday. He would have turned 44 on Tuesday.

After the verdict, Vanessa Bryant posted a photo on Instagram of herself with her husband and daughter.

"All for you!" the caption read. "I love you! JUSTICE for Kobe and Gigi!"

An attorney for the county declined comment on the verdict outside the courtroom.

The pictures were shared mostly between employees of the LA County sheriff's and fire departments including by some who were playing video games and attending an awards banquet. They were also seen by some of their spouses and in one case by a bartender at a bar where a deputy was drinking.

Vanessa Bryant tearfully testified during the 11-day trial that news of the photos compounded her still-raw grief a month after losing her husband and daughter, and that she still has panic attacks at the thought that they might still be out there.

"I live in fear every day of being on social media and these popping up," she testified. "I live in fear of my daughters being on social media and these popping up."

Her co-plaintiff Chris Chester, whose wife and daughter were also among the nine people killed in the crash, was awarded \$15 million.

"We're grateful for a jury and a judge who gave us a fair trial," said Chester's lawyer Jerry Jackson.



Bryant

LITTLE LEAGUE WORLD SERIES/MLB



TOM E. PUSKAR/AP

Holidaysburg, Pa., shortstop Tyler McGough makes a diving stop on a ball hit by Pearland, Texas' Malachi Clark during the sixth inning of Wednesday's game in South Williamsport, Pa.

Feel good run ends for Hollidaysburg

BY PRESTON SHOEMAKER
Associated Press

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — Hollidaysburg Little League extended its summer and staved off elimination for almost a month.

The Mid-Atlantic squad put together 10 straight elimination game victories dating to the Pennsylvania state tournament to make a run at the Little League World Series title.

After winning three more win-or-go-home games at the LLWS, the streak finally came to an end Wednesday night in an 8-4 loss to Pearland, Texas, which gave the team both its losses in the World Series.

Thousands of fans rallied behind the first local team to play in Williamsport since 2015. Hollidaysburg is located just over 100 miles southwest of the Little League complex and its team captured attention with big crowds and winning when it absolutely had to.

It was the first trip to the LLWS for Hollidaysburg, which finished fourth in the United States bracket. Manager Jim McGough said that all 11 of his players had made the trip prior to this year as fans, and that the experience of playing in this season's tournament is one that the town will never forget.

"It's been the best experience that we have ever had," McGough said. "We saw a lot of familiar faces from Hollidaysburg at the game tonight. Being able to have so much support from back home and from so many surrounding communities in Pennsylvania helped us soak in that they have really done a great thing."

The streak of elimination wins began in Little League's Pennsylvania state tournament. Hollidaysburg lost its second game to former World Series participant Keystone Little League. The boys followed the loss with five straight wins, including a revenge win over Keystone, to take the state title.

The regional tournament provided a similar experience, with Hollidaysburg losing its second game to Delaware only to outscore its next two opponents 17-1 to clinch a trip to the LLWS.

Hundreds of fans piled into buses to make the trip to South Williamsport last Thursday morning for the team's first game, which resulted in an 8-3 loss to the Southwest team from Texas.

Hollidaysburg found itself trailing in the fourth inning of an elimination game to New England on Saturday night. With his team needing a spark, the team's self-confident third baseman Chase Link launched a game-tying solo home run that sparked a four-run fourth inning as Pennsylvania went on to defeat New England 7-5.

Trailing 1-0 on Monday against New York, Link — who did a little shimmy every time he got in the batter's box — crushed a three-run home run to fire up his team and lead to a 7-1 win. On Tuesday against Indiana, another Link home run opened the scoring early as Hollidaysburg coasted to a 10-0 win in four innings.

Throughout the run, McGough said the team lived by a simple motto: "One team, 11 strong." In the game on Tuesday, six players contributed nine hits to live up to the mantra. They just didn't have enough against a Texas team that defeated Pennsylvania behind Corey Khan, who robbed a home run at the left-field wall and pitched the final three innings, giving up just one run.

McGough recalled dozens of videos that came in for the players mentioning the support of the town, including one from the entire Hollidaysburg School District faculty and another from Indianapolis Colts All-Pro long snapper Luke Rhodes, who is a Hollidaysburg native.

"They kept asking to play them over and over. That's a really cool feeling for the kids and they will enjoy this and have a lot of fun," McGough said.

MLB scoreboard

American League East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	76	48	.613	—
Tampa Bay	68	55	.553	7½
Toronto	67	55	.549	8
Baltimore	64	59	.520	11½
Boston	60	64	.484	16

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	66	56	.541	—
Chicago	63	61	.508	4
Minnesota	62	60	.508	4
Kansas City	51	75	.405	17
Detroit	48	77	.384	19½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	80	45	.640	—
Seattle	67	57	.540	12½
Texas	57	67	.460	22½
Los Angeles	52	72	.419	27½
Oakland	46	79	.368	34

National League East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	79	46	.632	—
Atlanta	78	48	.619	1½
Philadelphia	69	55	.556	9½
Miami	54	70	.435	24½
Washington	42	83	.336	37

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
St. Louis	71	53	.573	—
Milwaukee	65	58	.528	5½
Chicago	54	70	.435	17
Cincinnati	48	74	.393	22
Pittsburgh	47	77	.379	24

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	86	37	.699	—
San Diego	68	58	.540	19½
San Francisco	61	62	.496	25
Arizona	56	67	.455	30
Colorado	54	71	.432	33

Wednesday's games

Detroit 6, San Francisco 1
Oakland 3, Miami 2, 10 innings
Texas 16, Colorado 4
Washington 3, Seattle 1
Cleveland 7, San Diego 0
Toronto 3, Boston 2, 10 innings
Chicago White Sox 5, Baltimore 3
Houston 5, Minnesota 3
Tampa Bay 4, L.A. Angels 3, 11 innings
Kansas City 5, Arizona 3
Atlanta 14, Pittsburgh 2
Philadelphia 7, Cincinnati 5
Chicago Cubs 7, St. Louis 1
L.A. Dodgers 12, Milwaukee 6

Thursday's games

L.A. Angels at Tampa Bay
Cleveland at Seattle
Chicago White Sox at Baltimore
Toronto at Boston
Minnesota at Houston
N.Y. Yankees at Oakland
St. Louis at Chicago Cubs
Cincinnati at Philadelphia
Colorado at N.Y. Mets

Friday's games

L.A. Angels (Detmers 4-4) at Toronto (White 1-3)
Tampa Bay (TBD) at Boston (Wacha 8-1)
Detroit (Alexander 3-7) at Texas (Otto 5-8)
Arizona (Henry 2-2) at Chicago White Sox (Cueto 6-5)
Baltimore (Bradish 1-5) at Houston (McCullers Jr. 1-1)
San Diego (TBD) at Kansas City (Bubic 2-8)
San Francisco (Wood 8-10) at Minnesota (Ryan 9-6)
N.Y. Yankees (Cole 9-6) at Oakland (Sears 5-0)
Cleveland (Bieber 8-7) at Seattle (Gilbert 10-5)
L.A. Dodgers (Anderson 13-2) at Miami (TBD)
Cincinnati (Minor 2-10) at Washington (Cavalli 0-0)
Pittsburgh (Wilson 2-7) at Philadelphia (Wheeler 11-7)
Colorado (Freeland 7-8) at N.Y. Mets (Bassitt 11-7)
Chicago Cubs (Steele 4-7) at Milwaukee (Peralta 4-3)
Atlanta (Strider 7-4) at St. Louis (Quintana 4-5)

Saturday's games

L.A. Angels at Toronto
Tampa Bay at Boston
Detroit at Texas
Arizona at Chicago White Sox
Baltimore at Houston
San Diego at Kansas City
San Francisco at Minnesota
N.Y. Yankees at Oakland
Cleveland at Seattle
Pittsburgh at Philadelphia
L.A. Dodgers at Miami
Cincinnati at Washington
Chicago Cubs at Milwaukee
Colorado at N.Y. Mets
Atlanta at St. Louis

Teams will play other 29 next year

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK— Every major league team will play each other in the same season for the first time next year as the sport switches to its first balanced schedule since 2000.

As a result of the format switch agreed to in the March lockout settlement, high-profile games between division rivals such as Yankees-Red Sox, Dodgers-Giants and Cubs-Cardinals will be reduced from 19. Intradivision games will drop from 47% to 32%.

A team will host all of the other 29 clubs at least once every two seasons.

"I think it's great for the fans," Mets manager Buck Showalter said. "I'm so tired of playing the same people."

Major League Baseball said Wednesday it will open the 2023 season on March 30 and again will try to have every team start on the same day, which last occurred in 1968.

A team will play 13 games against each division rival for a total of 52 and six or seven against each other club in its league for a total of 64. The remaining 46 games are against interleague opponents: a home and road two-game series against a so-called natural rival and a single three-game series against each of the 14 other clubs in the opposite league.

"This new format creates more common opponents, both in the division and among your league opponents, so that typically when you're competing for the wild card, there's a much higher percentage of common opponents across divisions," said Chris Marinak, MLB's chief operations and strategy officer. "And we think that equity is good for the competition on the field."

"On the marketing side, we think that the new schedule gives our fans more opponents at home, so they get to see a broader array of clubs in their ballpark," Marinak said. "And probably more importantly, it gives us a chance for our star players to get exposure more nationally and be seen in more places throughout the season."

The American League used a balanced schedule from 1977-2000 and the National League from 1993-2000, with interleague play starting in 1997 and limited to 15-18 games per season for each team. Then-Commissioner Bud Selig had pushed for a return to an unbalanced schedule.

AL openers have Baltimore at Boston, the Chicago White Sox at Houston, Minnesota at Kansas City, the Los Angeles Angels at Oakland, Cleveland at Seattle and

Detroit at Tampa Bay.

NL openers are Milwaukee at the Chicago Cubs, Pittsburgh at Cincinnati, Arizona at the Los Angeles Dodgers, the New York Mets at Miami, Colorado at San Diego and Atlanta at Washington.

Interleague openers have San Francisco at the New York Yankees, Toronto at St. Louis and Philadelphia at Texas.

Other home openers are the Giants at the White Sox and the Mets at Milwaukee on April 3; San Diego at Atlanta, the Dodgers at Arizona, the Yankees at Baltimore, Boston at Detroit, Houston at Minnesota, Miami at the Mets and Cincinnati at Philadelphia on April 6, and Seattle at Cleveland, Washington at Colorado, Toronto at the Angels, the White Sox at Pittsburgh and Kansas City at San Francisco on April 7.

Toronto opens with 10 road games before hosting Detroit on April 11, a request made by the Blue Jays because of construction at Rogers Centre.

The schedule usually is updated with game times during the winter.

Next year's start is the earliest since 2019. The season will revert to 186 days from the 182 it was shortened to this year due to the lockout.

Natural interleague rivals include Mets-Yankees, Cubs-White Sox, Dodgers-Angels, Giants-Athletics, Reds-Indians, Marlins-Rays, Orioles-Nationals, Royals-Cardinals and Brewers-Twins.

Among the teams with no geographic interleague rivals, MLB paired Red Sox-Braves, Pirates-Tigers, Phillies-Blue Jays, Rangers-Diamondbacks, Astros-Rockies and Padres-Mariners.

Travel is roughly the same as the prior format, which had teams play 76 games against division foes, 66 against other clubs in the league (seven vs. six teams and six against four teams) and 20 interleague.

"The bulk of what dictates your travel is the number of trips you take, and this doesn't change the number of trips," said Chuck Torres, MLB's senior director of scheduling and broadcasting.

Other than within its own division, a team can host or visit a maximum of three teams from another division.

To combat exhaustion, each team was scheduled for seven off days among its last 67 days, three among its last 32 and one in its last 10.

The All-Star Game will be at Seattle's T-Mobile Park on July 11, eight days earlier than this year's game at Dodger Stadium. Then called Safeco Field, the ballpark hosted the 2001 All-Star Game.

SPORTS BRIEFS/NFL

BRIEFLY

OKC's Holmgren to miss season with foot injury

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma City forward Chet Holmgren, the No. 2 pick in the NBA Draft, will miss the 2022-23 season because of a right foot injury.

Holmgren was hurt while playing in a pro-am game last weekend in Seattle, near where he starred last season for Gonzaga, and the Thunder announced Thursday that he sustained a Lisfranc injury. Video appeared to show Holmgren was hurt on a play while defending LeBron James.

"We know Chet has a long career ahead of him within our organization and the Oklahoma City community," Thunder executive vice president and general manager Sam Presti said in a statement. "One of the things that most impressed us during the process of selecting Chet was his determination and focus. We expect that same tenacity will carry him through this period of time as we work together and support him during his rehabilitation."

The 7-foot Holmgren, who is from Minneapolis, averaged 14.1 points and was fourth in the nation last season with 3.7 blocked shots per game.

Unvaccinated Djokovic can't play in US Open

NEW YORK — Novak Djokovic will not play in the U.S. Open, as expected, because he is not vaccinated against COVID-19 and thus is not allowed to travel to the United States.

Djokovic announced his withdrawal from the year's last Grand Slam tournament on Twitter on Thursday, hours before the draw for the event was revealed.

"Sadly, I will not be able to travel to NY this time for US Open," Djokovic wrote, wishing luck to his fellow players, and said he would "keep in good shape and positive spirit and wait for an opportunity to compete again."

Play is scheduled to begin at Flushing Meadows on Monday.

In other tennis news:

■ Serena Williams' first opponent at what is expected to be the last tournament of her career, the U.S. Open, will be Danka Kovinic.

Win that, and Williams could face No. 2 seed Anett Kontaveit of Estonia in the second round.

The brackets for the women's and men's singles events were released Thursday by the U.S. Tennis Association.

Play begins Monday; first-round matches will be held that

day and Tuesday. There was no immediate word on when Williams will compete.

The 23-time Grand Slam champion, who turns 41 on Sept. 26, announced this month she was preparing to step away from her playing career. She did not explicitly say when she planned to stop but made it sound as if the U.S. Open would mark her farewell.

Report: Cowboys' Smith to miss several months

FRISCO, Texas — Dallas Cowboys left tackle Tyron Smith has a torn left hamstring and could be sidelined for months, according to an ESPN report.

Smith was injured during 11-on-11 drills in practice Wednesday night when he went to engage linebacker Leighton Vander Esch about 5 yards downfield before crumpling to the turf. He walked off the field without help.

The team initially said on its website Smith had a knee injury and an MRI was planned. ESPN, citing unidentified sources, later reported the 31-year-old had a torn hamstring.

The eight-time Pro Bowler has been hampered mostly by back, neck and shoulder injuries in recent years. Smith has missed at least three games each season since 2016, including a career-low two games in 2020 before season-ending neck surgery.

Injured Busch to miss start of NASCAR playoffs

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Kurt Busch will miss the start of NASCAR's playoffs with concussion-like symptoms that have sidelined him six for weeks, meaning two spots in the 16-driver field will be open Saturday night in the regular-season finale at Daytona International Speedway.

23XI Racing on Thursday withdrew the medical waiver that was holding Busch's spot in the playoffs.

"As much as I wanted and hoped to be able to get back in the No. 45 car to make a playoff run with our team, it's still not the right time for me," Busch said on social media. "In addition to not being cleared to return to racing, I know that I am not ready to be back in the car."

Busch has been out since he crashed in qualifying July 23 at Pocono. Ty Gibbs, the 19-year-old grandson of Joe Gibbs, has replaced Busch since he was injured.



GODOFREDO A. VASQUEZ/AP

San Francisco 49ers cornerback Samuel Womack III, left, runs after intercepting a pass in front of Green Bay Packers wide receiver Amari Rodgers during their preseason game Aug. 12 in Santa Clara, Calif.

Lately, it's been raining INTs for 49ers secondary

By JOSH DUBOW

Associated Press

AS SANTA CLARA, Calif. stout as the San Francisco 49ers were defensively last season when that unit helped carry the team to the NFC title game, there was one glaring weakness on that side of the ball.

The Niners struggled to take the ball away with interceptions with the most glaring example coming in the NFC championship game when Jaquiski Tartt dropped one in the fourth quarter against the Rams that could have helped seal a trip to the Super Bowl.

Since the start of training camp this summer, those missed chances and dropped interceptions have turned into takeaways with the improved San Francisco secondary showing off ball-hawking skills in practice and the first two exhibition games.

"You thirst for them every year. But sometimes when they come, they come and right now they're raining," cornerback Emmanuel Moseley said Monday. "We just have to catch the ones that are thrown to you and get the difficult ones. That's what we've been doing. I just hope they keep coming."

Moseley got one of three for the defense in practice on Monday in his return to action after being sidelined a couple of weeks with a hamstring injury. He also deflected a pass from Trey Lance that Talanoa Hufanga intercepted with linebacker Fred Warner getting the third.

That comes after San Francisco had three interceptions in the exhibition opener against Green Bay and two more on Saturday against Minnesota.

That's a far cry from the nine the Niners had last year, which was tied for the fifth fewest in the league.

"Honestly, it hasn't been stressed much of what we did last year, because to me, it doesn't matter," defensive coordinator DeMeco Ryans said. "What we did last year, we had a different group of guys out there. Last year is last year. How good can we be as the 2022 Niners defense? That's where we are challenging ourselves each and every day. ... Can we go get the ball more than we did the last practice than the last game we played? That's our challenge to us this year."



ABBIE PARR/AP

49ers defensive back Tayler Hawkins, center, celebrates with teammates Segun Olubi, left, and George Odum after intercepting a pass during a preseason game against Minnesota last Saturday.

The Niners have an improved secondary this season after being so decimated by injuries in 2021 that they had to throw in rookies before they were ready and sign guys off the street.

San Francisco's biggest free-agent addition this year was cornerback Charvarius Ward, whose aggressive approach in coverage has set the tone.

That has taken pressure off Moseley, who was in and out of the lineup the past two seasons because of injuries.

Rookie slot cornerback Samuel Womack has also been impressive with two interceptions in his exhibition debut.

"I think it's definitely the best since I've been here," said defensive lineman Arik Armstead, who is entering his eighth season in San Francisco. "Those guys can compete with the best of them in man and zone coverage. They're challenging guys and making it tough. And we're going against arguably the best receiving corps in the league, too, day in, day out. So I think those guys are making each other better."

NFL

Winston shows athleticism, not signs of injury for Saints

By **BRETT MARTEL**
Associated Press

METAIRIE, La. — The velocity with which Jameis Winston threw this week, and his form on a baseball-style slide during a scramble, generated talk of the New Orleans Saints quarterback's background as a two-sport athlete in college.

Such displays of all-around athleticism are a welcome sight for the Saints as Winston works to come back from reconstructive surgery on his left knee last year, as well as from a sprained right foot earlier in training camp.

"I can't wait to step back on the field and compete some more," Winston said Wednesday after the Saints' last practice before their preseason finale against the Los Angeles Chargers on Friday night. "One thing I know is I will not take this opportunity for granted ever again."

Saints coach Dennis Allen declined to say whether Winston would play against the Chargers. If he doesn't, Winston's scheduled start against Atlanta in New Orleans' regular-season opener on Sept. 11 would be his first live action since last Halloween, when his ACL was torn during a tackle by Tampa Bay linebacker Devin White.

Regardless of whether Winston must wait two more weeks to play, Allen asserted that his quarterback has "looked pretty good out there ... which has been really encouraging."

Winston said his foot sprain during practice on Aug. 8 was "not like a major injury." But he said it made more sense to rest than be on the field favoring his left foot while he's also rehabilitating his left knee, on which he still wears a brace.

Once Winston returned to 11-on-11 drills this week, he tested his mobility with a scramble down the middle of the field, finishing with a baseball-style slide.

"We all kind of held our breath," safety Tyrann Mathieu said. "He popped right back up. I think all those things are good for the team and good for our spirit."

Winston said Saints quarterbacks coach Ronald Curry had been "killing me because I told him I'm working on sliding and I'm bringing back my baseball days."

After the slide, Winston said, Curry playfully drew comparisons to Jackie Robinson.

"I was like, 'Thank you,'" Winston said. "If I can slide and steal home like Jackie Robinson, I'm doing good."

While Mathieu intercepted Winston in the back of the end zone during an 11-on-11 series at practice this week, the safety said he was impressed by a number of



GERALD HERBERT/AP

New Orleans quarterback Jameis Winston returned to practice this week, and his displays of all-around athleticism are a welcome sight for the Saints.

Winston's throws. Winston's highlights included completions during a two-minute drill to first-round draft choice Chris Olave near the right sideline and veteran Jarvis Landry on the left side, the latter going for a touchdown.

"He's got a mean out route," Mathieu said of Winston. "It's like real gas when he throws it. That's probably from his baseball days."

In addition to winning a Heisman Trophy and national championship as Florida State's QB, Winston played two seasons for the Seminoles' baseball team. In 2014, he made 24 relief appearances, posting a team-high seven saves and 1.08 ERA while striking out 31 batters in 33½ innings.

As a quarterback, Winston has a well-regarded ability to throw deep. The knock on him has been his mercurial decision-making, as well as unreliable accuracy on shorter passes.

The 28-year-old said he's made a point of "being more honest with myself about my strengths and weaknesses," and added that he has focused this offseason — with help from throwing coach John Beck — on shorter throws.

Winston said he's trying to deliver balls to playmakers in spots where they can quickly transition to running after the catch.

Receiving targets including running back Alvin Kamara, receiver Michael Thomas, Olave, Landry and the small but speedy Deonte Harty are all "guys who can extend plays with the ball in their hands," Winston noted.

Statistically, Winston's most prolific season came in 2019 — his last with Tampa Bay — when he passed for 5,109 yards, the NFL high that year, and 33 TDs. But he also was intercepted a league-high 30 times. The following offseason, the Bucs replaced Winston with Tom Brady.

Winston responded by signing with New Orleans, where he sought to learn from then-coach Sean Payton and record-setting quarterback Drew Brees.

Last season, after Brees' retirement, Winston won New Orleans' starting job and said he was trying to focus more on making good decisions than gunning for big results. It showed in his 14 TDs to just three interceptions in his seven starts, during which New Orleans went 5-2.

Now he'll try to build on that.

"I'm a different quarterback today than I was with my last game with the Saints," Winston said. "I take a lot of pride in trying to, and preparing to, get better every single year."



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Colts safety Julian Blackmon, right, breaks up a pass to wide receiver Michael Pittman Jr. during practice on Aug. 2. Both players have young former players as coaches they can relate to and learn from.

Ex-players showing Colts the ropes

By **MICHAEL MAROT**
Associated Press

WESTFIELD, Ind. — Indianapolis Colts receiver Michael Pittman Jr. cherishes his class time with Reggie Wayne.

Pittman knows few players are fortunate enough to learn the art of route-running from someone whose career numbers — 1,070 receptions, 14,345 yards and 82 touchdowns — rank among the league's best.

He understands Wayne is one of the city's most beloved athletes, and Pittman fully expects the three-time Hall of Fame finalist will celebrate one day in Canton, Ohio.

Until then, maybe especially then, Pittman will consider himself the lucky one.

"Reggie is not like any coach I've ever had," he said. "Because he played and he played very well, he understands the game outside of what a normal coach understands. Lots of coaches didn't get to play pro, so they don't really understand the ins and outs. Reggie understands everything."

It's one reason Colts coach Frank Reich kept offering Wayne a job and why Reich now leans so heavily on former players.

He knows guys with solid career résumés, established leadership skills and relatively recent NFL experience add instant credibility to a locker room because he was once that guy.

Reich served as the backup to Hall of Fame quarterback Jim Kelly on all four of Buffalo's AFC championship teams in the early 1990s. The Colts gave him a pathway into coaching in 2006.

He returned the favor last year by hiring Hall of Fame center Kevin Mawae and this year he brought in three former Colts — Wayne, linebacker Cato June and safety Mike Mitchell. For Wayne and Mitchell this is their first full year coaching and both have been welcome additions.

"We've got a lot of young safeties he (Mitchell) can teach because he's made plays in this league, he knows what works," said cornerback Stephon Gilmore, the NFL's 2019 Defensive Player of the Year. "Like I say all the time, if you've got that experience, it's always easy to teach."

At least, that's how players see it.

"I think players respect anyone who can help them get better and there is a factor of 'OK, you actually did this,'" said June, who started coaching preps in 2011 before moving into the college ranks and rejoining the Colts. "Yes, there is that there and I think it's like that with anybody. It's like I want to learn from a pilot that actually flew a plane. Is it necessary? Not at all."

Experience matters, though.

The 51-year-old Mawae still talks vividly about the heated, biannual battles he faced when Tennessee played Indy. During those four seasons, the Colts won three division crowns and reached two Super Bowls; Mawae's Titans won one AFC South title.

Yet today's players know Mawae's contributions didn't just come on the field. He also served as president of the NFL Players Association from 2008-12 and, together with then-Colts center Jeff Saturday, helped strike a deal to end the 2011 NFL lockout.

"I understand the game from not just on the field, but the backside of it as well," he said. "It's kind of funny. You walk a fine line because you're not one of them anymore, I'm on the coaches side. But at the end of the day, it's all about the game. It's about making players be the greatest they can be."

That philosophy benefits players such as Pittman most.

"These guys, they play 'Madden' all day, I'm not on 'Madden' anymore. So it's just a different world, a different feel," Wayne said. "But I think that's good to some degree. That way I can teach them who I am as I teach them how to get better."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Pick Six: These transfers could have an impact

BY STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

Southern California quarterback Caleb Williams isn't a typical transfer.

Rather than adapting to a new coach and an entirely new system, Williams followed Lincoln Riley from Oklahoma to USC. So he's playing for the same coach, albeit at a different school.

Williams believes that should help him build off the momentum he established last year, when he took over as the Sooners' starting quarterback midway through the season and threw for the most yards and touchdowns of any true freshman in school history.

"I didn't want to feel like a freshman again, having to go to a new place and learn a whole new offense," Williams said. "I for sure didn't want to go to a new school and be in that position and kind of feel how I felt last year. I wanted to keep progressing and really feel more free, be (with) Coach Riley Part 2 out there and enjoy playing more because I know more."

Williams' status as a quarterback transfer isn't unusual at all, even if his circumstances are rare. The NCAA rule changes allowing players to transfer without sitting out a full season have led to dramatic changes at the game's most important position.

The top two quarterbacks in the

2021 class according to composite rankings of recruiting sites compiled by 247Sports already have left the schools that initially signed them. Williams was ranked second. The top-ranked quarterback was Quinn Ewers, who transferred from Ohio State to Texas.

Ewers committed to Texas out of high school but changed his mind and enrolled at Ohio State. Ewers made just one appearance for the Buckeyes last season before heading home.

Five of the top 13 quarterbacks in the 2020 class according to the 247Sports Composite also have changed schools: Utah's Ja'Quinden Jackson (formerly at Texas), UNLV's Harrison Bailey (Tennessee), UCLA's Ethan Garbers (Washington), Nevada's Shane Illingworth (Oklahoma State) and Nebraska's Chubba Purdy (Florida State).

But there also are plenty of transfers at other positions who should have big seasons at their new schools.

Here's a look at six potential impact transfers aside from Williams and Ewers. Former schools are in parentheses.

USC WR Jordan Addison (Pittsburgh): Addison was the 2021 winner of the Fred Biletnikoff Award, given annually to college football's top receiver. He tied for the FBS lead with 17 touch-



SUE OGRONKI/AP

New Oklahoma quarterback Dillon Gabriel threw 32 touchdown passes and ranked second among all FBS players with 373.9 yards of total offense per game for UCF in 2020.

down catches and had a school-record 100 receptions for 1,593 yards while helping Pittsburgh win the Atlantic Coast Conference title. With former Pitt quarterback Kenny Pickett heading to the NFL's Pittsburgh Steelers and offensive coordinator Mark Whipple taking the same position at Nebraska, Addison headed west to catch passes from Williams.

Oklahoma QB Dillon Gabriel (UCF): Gabriel threw 32 touchdown passes and ranked second among all FBS players with 373.9 yards of total offense per game for UCF in 2020, but he played just three games last year before a broken clavicle knocked him out for the remainder of the season. Gabriel now takes over at Oklahoma, which has playing time available at quarterback now that Williams is at USC and Spencer Rattler has headed to South Carolina.

Alabama RB Jahmyr Gibbs (Georgia Tech): Gibbs gained 5.2 yards per carry

each of his two seasons at Georgia Tech and had a combined 1,206 yards rushing and 773 yards receiving during that stretch. He now figures to have a featured role for Alabama, which had two running backs selected in the first round (Josh Jacobs and Najee Harris) and two more taken in the third round (Damien Harris and Brian Robinson Jr.) over the last four drafts.

Notre Dame S Brandon Joseph (Northwestern): Joseph had six interceptions in 2020 and three more last season. He also had 79 tackles last year. He was an Associated Press All-America first-team selection in 2020 while helping Northwestern reach the Big Ten championship game. Joseph's arrival should fortify a Notre Dame secondary that must replace safety Kyle Hamilton, the Baltimore Ravens' first-round pick.

Michigan C Olusegun Oluwatimi (Virginia): Oluwatimi began his college career at Air Force and then made 32

starts at Virginia over the last three seasons. He played 910 snaps last season — the most of any ACC center — and was one of three finalists last year for the Rimington Trophy that goes annually to college football's top center. He now heads to Michigan, which won the Joe Moore Award last season for having college football's top offensive line.

Florida State DE Jared Verse (Albany): The Seminoles would love Verse to make the same kind of impact as Jermaine Johnson, another transfer defensive lineman who came over from Georgia and performed well enough his lone year at Florida State to get selected by the New York Jets with the 26th overall pick. Verse had 14½ sacks and 21½ tackles for loss in 15 games at Albany before moving up to the Football Bowl Subdivision level. Another transfer pass rusher to watch is Nebraska's Ochaun Mathis, a second-team all-Big 12 pick each of the last two seasons at TCU.

Gift: New LSU coach Kelly got 15 players from transfer portal

FROM PAGE 48

Kelly's charge at LSU is to revive a program that dropped off significantly since winning the national championship in 2019 under Ed Orgeron.

Kelly's group of 15 portal additions is ranked No. 3 and especially strong on the defensive side. The transfers of Arkansas three-year starting defensive backs Joe Foucha and Greg Brooks to LSU illustrate how cutthroat the game can be. Kelly acknowledges bringing in players from an SEC West rival isn't ideal. On the other hand, two LSU players transferred to the Razorbacks.

"I know many don't like to see that happen within the league. I'm not crazy about it, either," Kelly said. "But these are two Louisiana kids that wanted to play at LSU, and they have been great additions. I would say that when we were looking into the transfer portal, we wanted young men that had SEC experience and had ties to the state of Louisiana. Brooks and Foucha fit that to the T."



ROGELIO V. SOLIS / AP

Quarterback Jaxson Dart, above, left USC for Mississippi after Caleb Williams transferred from Oklahoma to USC.

Nebraska's Frost, 15-29 in four years, desperately needs a turnaround after taking a \$1 million pay cut and firing four offensive assistants near the end of a 3-9 season.

His 15 portal additions are ranked No. 7, and seven or eight probably will start in the opener. The biggest names are defensive end Ochaun Mathis (TCU) and quarterback Casey Thompson (Texas).

Frost said the number of transfers he'll pursue will vary from year to year and that 15 probably is on the high end.

No matter how many players are added, Frost said, there always is a concern about how transfers blend with returning players. So far, he's been pleased with the chemistry, and a trip to Ireland to play Northwestern on Saturday provides another opportunity for bonding.

"I couldn't be happier with that piece and the meshing of these parts," Frost said. "We haven't hit any adversity yet, and I think the first test of that will be when we hit some adversity."

Kiffin said he sees the portal evolving from being a way to add complementary pieces to a team to becoming the primary recruiting tool for some schools.

Kiffin likes to compare the portal and high school recruiting with NFL free agency and the draft. Pro teams frequently misjudge draft prospects because those players have never competed against NFL talent, Kiffin said, whereas a free agent with five years of experience is a known quantity.

"You're going to miss on a number of high school kids because you're just watching high school film," Kiffin said. "What's the talent level where they're at? And they're 16, 17 years old?"

"These (transfer) guys, you're not going to miss on as much because you're getting to watch them play Division I football, getting to talk to people that have coached them. And so the margin of error is less."

AP college football writer Ralph D. Russo contributed from Oxford, Miss.

TENNIS

US Open exhibition event benefits Ukraine

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Coco Gauff's shoes carried the message "Play for Peace" as she joined Rafael Nadal, Iga Swiatek and other tennis stars in a pre-U.S. Open exhibition event Wednesday night that helped generate more than \$1 million for humanitarian assistance in Ukraine.

"You guys all know me: I like to speak out when it's right," Gauff said after teaming with former player John McEnroe in a mixed doubles match against Nadal and Swiatek. "I'm glad that I was able to be a part of this."



Nadal



Swiatek

The U.S. Tennis Association said 100% of proceeds from sales of tickets to its "Tennis Plays for Peace Exhibition" in Louis Armstrong Stadium went to an international nonprofit organization. Other players participating included Ukrainian pros Dayana Yastremska and Katarina Zavatska, 2021 U.S. Open finalist Leylah Fernandez, Carlos Alcaraz, Maria Sakkari, Stefanos Tsitsipas and Jessica Pegula.

"It really means a lot to see so many people supporting Ukraine," Zavatska told the crowd, noting that it was her country's Independence Day. "I really hope and I wish that next year we will celebrate this day in freedom."

Tournament director Stacey Allaster said \$1.2 million was raised as part of the USTA's effort to generate at least \$2 million to benefit Ukraine by the end of the U.S. Open, which starts Monday.

"The daily fighting goes on. ... So every dollar that Ukraine can get is a life saved, a child fed," said Sergiy Stakhovsky, a former pro



FRANK FRANKLIN II / AP

Coco Gauff arrives Wednesday for the "The Tennis Plays for Peace" exhibition match to raise awareness and humanitarian aid for Ukraine.

player from Ukraine.

Earlier in the day, two-time major champion and former No. 1 Victoria Azarenka was dropped from the exhibition. Azarenka is from Belarus, which helped Russia launch its invasion of Ukraine in February. At least one Ukrainian tennis player, Marta Kostyuk, questioned having a Belarusian player participate Wednesday night.

The USTA issued a statement Wednesday, saying: "In the last 24 hours, after careful consideration and dialogue with all parties involved, Victoria Azarenka will not be participating ... this evening.

Vika is a strong player leader and we appreciate her willingness to participate. Given the sensitivities to Ukrainian players, and the ongoing conflict, we believe this is the right course of action for us." Azarenka and all players representing Russia or Belarus were banned from entering Wimbledon — which was held in June and July — because of the invasion of Ukraine. The USTA announced in June that it would allow those athletes to compete in the U.S. Open. Azarenka won the Australian Open in 2012 and 2013, and was the runner-up at the U.S. Open in 2012, 2013 and 2020.

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SPORTS



Benefit matches

Tennis stars play exhibitions to raise money for Ukraine » Page 47

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Gift that keeps on giving

Transfer portal allows teams to quickly shape contenders

BY ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

Mississippi's Lane Kiffin sought experienced players who could fill immediate needs on his football team.

Southern California's Lincoln Riley and LSU's Brian Kelly went to the transfer portal looking for star power as they attempt quick rebuilds at their new schools.

Nebraska's Scott Frost, meanwhile, is counting on the portal to help him save his job.

"I just looked at it like you would in the NFL," Kiffin said in an interview with The Associated Press. "Sometimes there are years you need to go sign more free agents than you do other years based off what you have and your needs. That part excites me about it, that you can fix problems fast."

Kiffin is trying to build off a 10-win season that ended in the Sugar Bowl. His group of 17 transfers is ranked as the No. 2 portal class in the nation, according to 247Sports, and is headed by quarterback Jaxson Dart — last season's starter at USC.



Kiffin

DID YOU KNOW?

USC has the nation's top-ranked class of transfers. Despite winning just four games last season, the addition of so much talent has earned the Trojans a No. 14 preseason ranking and made them a contender to win the Pac-12.

SOURCE: Associated Press

Dart left the Trojans a week after Riley's starter at Oklahoma, Caleb Williams, announced he would join his coach in Los Angeles. Williams and Biletnikoff Award-winning receiver Jordan Addison from Pittsburgh are the biggest names Riley landed in his portal class of 20 that's ranked No. 1.

USC won just four games last season, the fewest since 1991, but the addition of so much talent has earned the Trojans a No. 14 preseason ranking and made them a contender to win the Pac-12.

"The people we brought in here, the staff we brought in here, we didn't come here to play for second. We are not wired that way," Riley said. "We came here competitively to win championships, win them now and to win them for a long time. That will always be our expectation."

SEE GIFT ON PAGE 46



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ, ABOVE, AND CHRIS SEWARD, LEFT/AP

Above: Quarterback Caleb Williams transferred to Southern California after one season at Oklahoma. Left: The Trojans also got Biletnikoff-winning wide receiver Jordan Addison, who transferred from Pittsburgh.



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