GAMES: Controller could help disabled with access **Page 26**

BOOKS: Dolly Parton traces her roots **Page 15**

MUSIC: Stones play notes of today and yesterday **Page 18**

EUROPE & PACIFIC WEEKEND EDITION

WORLD SERIES
Rangers, D-backs are in Fall Classic few saw coming
Page 48

STARS AND STRIPES®
stripes.com

Volume 82 Edition 139 ©SS 2023 FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2023 平成12年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊（土日除く） 発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価￥100 $1.00

Biden weighs striking Iranian proxies after troops attacked

By Dan Lamothe
The Washington Post

President Joe Biden faces mounting pressure to strike Iranian proxies that have repeatedly attacked — and injured — U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria this month, but he is weighing any decision to retaliate against his broader concern that the war in Gaza could be on the precipice of erupting into a regionwide tempest, according to U.S. officials and others familiar with the administration's deliberations.

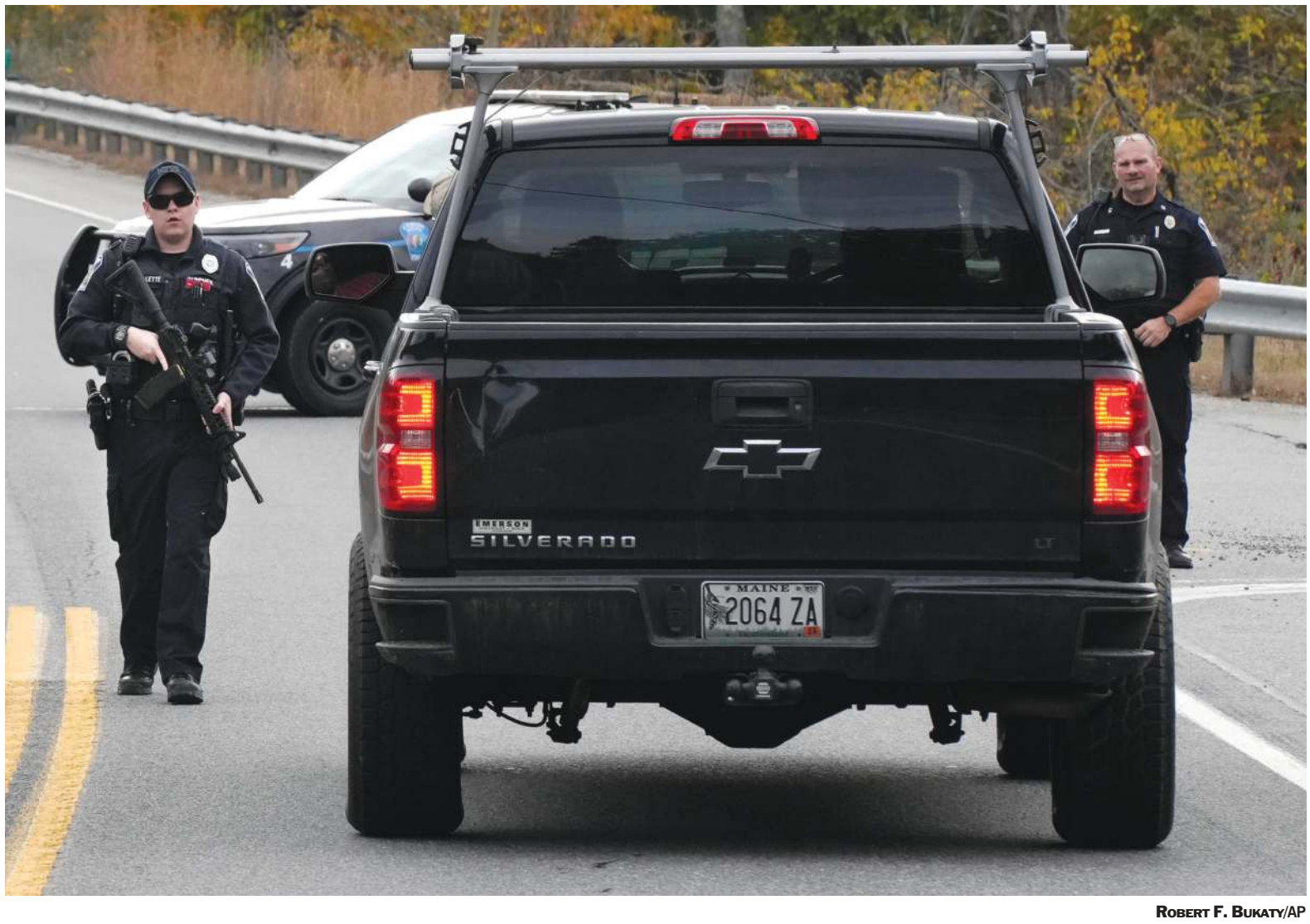
Biden said Wednesday that he warned Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, that if Tehran continues to "move against" U.S. forces in the Middle East, "we will respond."

The president's disclosure, delivered while standing beside Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in the White House Rose Garden, followed reports that nearly two dozen American troops were hurt within the past eight days after 14 or more aerial assaults on their bases in Iraq and Syria. An additional attack was

SEE PROXIES ON PAGE 7

Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

President Joe Biden said during a news conference Wednesday that he warned Iran's supreme leader against continuing attacks on U.S. troops in the Middle East.



Robert F. Bukaty/AP

Police officers stop to question a driver at a roadblock Thursday in Lisbon, Maine, during a manhunt for the suspect in Wednesday night's mass shootings in nearby Lewiston. Residents were advised to shelter in place, and schools were closed up to 50 miles away.

Manhunt in Maine

Army reservist suspected after mass killing at bowling alley and bar

By David Sharp
Associated Press

LEWISTON, Maine — Authorities carried out a massive search Thursday for a man who they say killed 18 people and wounded 13 at a bowling alley and bar in Maine that sent panicked patrons hiding under tables and behind bowling pins and gripped the entire state in fear.

Frightened residents stayed locked in their homes Thursday in cities as much as 50 miles away under a shelter-in-place advisory.

The shooting suspect, Robert Card, is considered armed and dangerous, authorities told a news conference. A warrant has been issued charging him with eight counts of murder. That number will rise when the other 10 victims have been identified, said Maine State Police Col. Col. William Ross.

A U.S. official said Card, a 40-year-old Army reservist, had been taken by police for an evaluation after military officials became concerned that he was acting erratically in mid-July.

The official said commanders in the Army Reserve's 3rd Battalion, 304th Infantry Regiment became concerned in mid-July that Card was acting erratically while the unit was training at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in New York.

The official said military commanders be-

SEE MAINE ON PAGE 10

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	$3.942	$4.526	$4.874	$4.954
Change in price	-1.6 cents	-3.3 cents	-3.0 cents	+12.8 cents
Netherlands	..	$4.574	$4.837	$5.200
Change in price	..	-6.4 cents	-6.4 cents	No change
U.K.	..	$4.526	$4.874	$4.954
Change in price	..	+3.1 cents	+3.4 cents	+1.7 cents
Azores	..	..	$4.724	..
Change in price	..	..	-6.9 cents	..
Turkey	..	..	$4.540	$5.223*
Change in price	..	..	-5.2 cents	+1.0 cents

Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective Oct. 27. The change in price is from Oct. 20.

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	..	$4.519	..	$4.599
Change in price	..	-5.0 cents	..	+10.0 cents
Okinawa	$3.579	..	..	$4.599
Change in price	-5.0 cents	..	..	+10.0 cents
South Korea	$3.659	..	$4.549	$4.629
Change in price	-4.0 cents	..	-6.0 cents	+10.0 cents
Guam	$3.649**	$4.229	$4.579	..
Change in price	-4.0 cents	-6.0 cents	-5.0 cents	..

***DieselEFD **Midgrade**
Pacific prices for the week of Oct. 27 - Nov. 2

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates

Euro costs (Oct. 27)	$1.03
British pound (Oct. 27)	$1.18
Japanese yen (Oct. 27)	146.00
South Korean won (Oct. 27)	1320.00

Commercial rates

Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
Britain (Pound)	1.2121
Canada (Dollar)	1.3826
China (Yuan)	7.3158
Denmark (Krone)	7.0756
Egypt (Pound)	30.9000
Euro	0.9481
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8217
Hungary (Forint)	362.52
Israel (Shekel)	4.0806
Japan (Yen)	150.26
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3092
Norway (Krone)	11.2336
Philippines (Peso)	57.04
Poland (Zloty)	4.22
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7513
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3710
South Korea (Won)	1357.77
Switzerland (Franc)	0.8973
Thailand (Baht)	36.30
Turkey (NewLira)	28.1591

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	8.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	6.00
Federal funds market rate	5.33
3-month bill	5.48
30-year bond	5.09

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.

TODAY IN STRIPES

Classified 36
Comics 34,38-39
Crossword 34,38-39
Faces 35
Opinion 40
Sports 41-48

STARS AND STRIPES
However you read us, wherever you need us.
Mobile • Online • Print

EUROPE | ADVERTISING | CustomerService@stripes.com | +49 (0) 0631.3615.9111 DSN: 314.583.9111

MIDDLE EAST | ADVERTISING | CustomerService@stripes.com | +49 (0) 0631.3615.9111 DSN: 314.583.9111

PACIFIC | ADVERTISING | PacificAdvertising@stripes.com | +81 (42) 552.2511 DSN: 315.227.7310

Round-the-world news for America's military.

Stripes.com supplies constant updates, on news of interest — including reports from our overseas military bases in Europe, Pacific, Southwest Asia and the Mideast, and coverage of the Pentagon and Capitol Hill.
Also available on mobile apps for Android and iOS.

STARS AND STRIPES®
Mobile • Online • Print

MILITARY

More financial assistance for troops urged

By John M. Donnelly
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — A bicameral and bipartisan bloc of 20 members of Congress is urging Armed Services leaders to write a final NDAA that provides more financial help for U.S. troops who have low incomes and often suffer food insecurity.

The group of lawmakers, in a Monday letter, called for an NDAA that rewrites the eligibility rules for the so-called basic needs allowance program. The coalition wants service members' basic housing allowances to no longer count as income under the basic needs program.

Nearly 1 in 4 active-duty service members — or about 286,800 people, not counting their family members — are beset by food insecurity, according to the most recent Pentagon survey of the force. Of those, about 120,000 deal with "extreme food insecurity," the department found.

But the basic needs allowance, which was created by the fiscal 2022 NDAA, is helping only about 2,400 troops — or just 0.8% of the 286,800 reportedly in need, CQ Roll Call disclosed in January, citing figures provided by the Defense Department.

The reason for the meager participation rates, the authors of Monday's letter said, is that counting the housing allowance in service members' incomes makes most needy military families ineligible.

"Our servicemembers are our military's greatest resource," they wrote. "When they experience hunger, we put our national security at risk."

The letter was led by Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., and Rep. Jimmy Panetta, D-Calif. Two Republicans, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers of Washington state, are signatories.

Also signing the letter were Democratic Sens. Richard J. Durbin of Illinois, Patty Murray of Washington, Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Cory Booker of New Jersey, Raphael Warnock of Georgia, Peter Welch of Vermont and John Fetterman of Pennsylvania plus Angus King of Maine, an independent who caucuses with Democrats.

The House Democratic signatories are Marilyn Strickland of Washington, Susan Wild of Pennsylvania, Jill N. Tokuda of Hawaii, Gwen Moore of Wisconsin, Sanford D. Bishop Jr. of Georgia, plus Mike Levin and Sara Jacobs of California.

The chair and ranking member of the House Armed Services Quality of Life Panel — Nebraska Republican Don Bacon and Pennsylvania Democrat Chrissy Houlahan, respectively — are on the record supporting the change but are not signatories to the letter.

Excluding the housing allowance from income calculations would result in 21 times as many military families receiving aid under the basic needs allowance, Rand Corp. said in a study earlier this year.

The House's fiscal 2024 NDAA would for the second straight year drop the requirement to include housing payments as income under the program. But the Senate's NDAA, for the second straight year, does not follow suit. And the Senate's approach has become law so far.

The group of 20 lawmakers who wrote Armed Services leaders on Monday would like Congress to break that pattern and adopt the House-passed language.

"This common-sense adjustment to the eligibility guidelines for the BNA will help ensure the majority of military families who struggle with food insecurity are able to access this critical support," the members wrote.

Military housing payments are not counted toward taxable income by the IRS and for most other federal programs, experts said.

Moreover, because the military's housing allowances predominantly go to defray expenses for troops who live off base in privately run housing, not to service members who live on base, the basic needs allowance creates a disparity among service members by inflating the income calculation of those who live off base, some critics say.

Restored parachute drying tower helping B-52 turnaround time

By Alex Wilson
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force on Guam recently completed a $2.4 million restoration for a parachute drying tower that's having a significant impact on bomber task force missions.

B-52H Stratofortress bombers deploy drogue parachutes — commonly called drag chutes — upon landing to minimize wear and tear on braking systems. But the chutes often pick up rocks and get wet "due to Guam's humid and rainy environment," according to 1st Lt. Ariana Wilkinson, a spokeswoman for the 36th Wing at Andersen Air Force Base.

Before the 90-foot, 200-pound chutes can be repacked and reused, airmen must remove the rocks and dry them with high-powered fans — previously a two-day process — she told Stars and Stripes in a recent email.

Restoration of Andersen's seven-story drying tower — out of commission for 11 years after the Air Force deemed it unfit for use — adds an industrial furnace to the process. Drying the chutes now takes between 12 and 18 hours, Wilkinson said, adding that turnaround time has effectively "quadrupled."

The B-52 is the only aircraft that uses drag chutes at Andersen, but the tower is capable of drying other parachutes as well.

"The reopening of it was another big win for the wing," Air Force Lt. Col. Edwin Pratt, commander of the 36th Operations Support Squadron, said in an Oct. 4 news release about the upgrades.

The Air Force has routinely sent B-52 and B-1 bombers to Guam from North Dakota and Louisiana since the task force missions began in 2018. The deployments typically last between two and six weeks.

The missions "demonstrate the credibility of U.S. forces to address a global security environment that is more diverse and uncertain than at any other time in recent history," Pacific Air Forces said last week in a statement announcing the latest rotation.

"Our Bomber Task Force units out of Minot Air Force Base and Barksdale Air Force Base no longer need to be concerned that a premature deployment of their parachute could have the potential of jeopardizing the next mission," Pratt said.

Zachary Wright/U.S. Air Force

A drogue parachute helps a B-52H Stratofortress slow down upon landing at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, on July 17.

The project is the result of a "multi-year collaborative effort" with the 36th Operations Support Squadron, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems and two contracting companies, Wilkinson added.

An undisclosed number of B-52s and airmen from Barksdale's 2nd Bomb Wing arrived at Andersen on Oct. 20 to "actively train during operations and exercises while integrating alongside Allies and partners throughout the region," the PACAF statement said.

That task force mission kicked off two days before a Barksdale-based B-52 participated in an unprecedented exercise with South Korea and Japan on Sunday.

The bomber joined two F-16 Fighting Falcons out of Osan Air Base, South Korea; two South Korean F-15K Slam Eagles; and two Japanese F-2s for an aerial drill that "demonstrated their security cooperation and solidarity," the South Korean air force said in a news release that day.

Days earlier, the bomber became the first B-52 to touch down on the Korean Peninsula in at least 30 years.

wilson.alex@stripes.com
@AlexMNWilson

Police: Bullet strikes vehicle driving near live-fire range in S. Korea

By David Choi and Yoo Kyong Chang
Stars and Stripes

A car driven by a South Korean man was hit by a stray bullet this week in Pocheon city, not far from a live-fire range where U.S. and South Korean troops often train, according to police.

An unidentified man around 40 years old was driving a SUV on a four-lane road when his windshield was struck by a bullet at 6:30 a.m. Tuesday, a Pocheon Police Station officer told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday.

The driver was not injured, according to the officer. South Korean officials regularly speak to the media on a customary condition of anonymity.

The incident happened less than a mile from the Rodriguez Rodriguez Live Fire Complex, roughly 16 miles from the Demilitarized Zone.

A different Pocheon officer said they suspect the bullet was 5.56 mm in size, the standard round used in rifles issued by the U.S. and South Korean militaries.

The officers said an investigation into the incident is ongoing.

U.S. Forces Korea did not immediately respond to a request for comment by phone Thursday.

choi.david@stripes.com
@choibboy

MILITARY

USFK says to avoid Itaewon for Halloween

Nightlife district in South Korea was site of deadly 2022 crowd stampede

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The U.S. military is ordering troops and other personnel to stay away from a popular nightlife district in the capital where 159 people died in a crowd stampede last Halloween season.

"All [U.S. Forces Korea] Servicemembers, families, civilians, and contractors should avoid the Itaewon area on Saturday," said an alert issued Thursday by the Defense Department's mass warning and notification system.

The Korean National Police Agency expects 100,000 to 150,000 people to gather in Itaewon to celebrate Halloween this weekend, along with several scheduled protests that include anti-U.S. groups, according to the message.

"USFK personnel should avoid the Itaewon area and refrain from all political activity," the order said.

Up to 2,000 police officers are expected in the area to control crowds and "prevent a second occurrence of last year's tragic loss of life," according to the alert.

Itaewon — a stone's throw from the U.S. Army's Yongsan Garrison — is among Seoul's most popular neighborhoods and is known for its bars, nightclubs and foreign restaurants.

As many as 100,000 people gathered there to celebrate Halloween on Oct. 29, 2022. The crowd became densely packed and in one narrow, sloping alley, people surged into a suffocating mass from which escape for many became impossible. The death toll reached 159, with dozens of injuries, according to the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasure Headquarters.

Three 2nd Infantry Division soldiers were recognized by their command for helping people out of the crowd. Military police stationed at Yongsan also sprang into action and provided first aid. The victims included 26 foreigners, among them two American university students. USFK said none of its 28,500 uniformed personnel or DOD employees were among the casualties.

South Korea's National Fire Agency conducted safety inspections this week and will implement "crowd dispersal" measures between Friday and Wednesday in Itaewon, Hongdae and Myeongdong, according to a press release Thursday.

The release advised revelers to refrain from wearing police or firefighter uniforms as Halloween costumes so emergency responders can conduct their duties "quickly at disaster sites."

The Ministry of Interior and Safety said it will use crowd-control equipment that tracks and predicts the density of a gathering based on cellphone usage.

choi.david@stripes.com

PHOTOS BY AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

A billboard near Shibuya Station in Tokyo warns against unauthorized outdoor Halloween gatherings.

Japanese mayor hopes virtual party keeps drunken revelers away

BY KELLY AGEE AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — The mayor of a city ward that attracts throngs of drunken, costumed revelers for unofficial street parties each Halloween hopes a virtual celebration will help keep the peace.

Shibuya — the pulsing center of Tokyo known for its shopping, nightlife and iconic scramble crosswalk — became a popular place to spend Halloween night in the early 2000s.

But a deadly crowd stampede at a similar celebration last year in South Korea's capital has prompted destinations like Shibuya to take a second look at crowd management and security.

"I ask those planning to visit Shibuya on Oct. 31 or days prior for Halloween to rethink their plans," Mayor Ken Hasebo said at a Sept. 12 news conference.

He renewed that plea in a video posted to the website for Virtual Halloween, a metaverse created in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experience is a partnership between Shibuya ward's tourism association and telecom company KDDI.

Sibuya Mayor Ken Hasebo asked that people looking to party go online for Virtual Halloween.

"Many people gather in Shibuya every year," Hasebo said in the video. "Annoyance acts by some people, such as troubles caused by on-street drinking, a great amount of littering and noise, have become a social issue."

Those who download the Virtual Halloween app — available free from the Apple Store and Google Play — can create avatars, dress them up in costumes and explore a digital recreation of Shibuya.

Virtual Shibuya will also be dressed up for Halloween between Friday and Tuesday, complete with jack-o'-lanterns, bats and ghosts.

A variety of musicians and comedians are scheduled to perform virtually during the event. Fruits Zipper, a seven-member idol group known for the hit "Watashino Ichiban Kawaii Tokoro," will take the stage Halloween night.

Avatars will be able to interact with one another, according to KDDI, and there will be opportunities to communicate with the musicians and comedians.

"I hope that Virtual Halloween has contributed as a way to solve social issues as well as a way to convey new culture for Shibuya," Hasebe said in the video.

Only time can tell whether revelers will be scared away by Shibuya's repeated requests to keep out on Halloween.

Just in case, the ward plans to place about 100 security guards in the scramble crossing area on Saturday and Tuesday. No drinking will be allowed on the streets near Shibuya Station between Friday evening and early Wednesday. The ward has asked 35 shops in the area to refrain from selling alcohol during this period.

agee.kelly@stripes.com
kusumoto.hana@stripes.com

US, South Korea, Japan condemn North's alleged munitions to Russia

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea, the U.S. and Japan strongly condemned what they call North Korea's supply of munitions and military equipment to Russia, saying Thursday that such weapons shipments sharply increase the human toll of Russia's war in Ukraine.

A joint statement by the top diplomats of South Korea, the U.S. and Japan came days after Russia's foreign minister scoffed at a recent U.S. claim that his country received munitions from North Korea, saying that Washington has failed to prove the allegation.

"We will continue to work together with the international community to expose Russia's attempts to acquire military equipment from (North Korea)," said the joint statement by South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa.

"Such weapons deliveries, several of which we now confirm have been completed, will significantly increase the human toll of Russia's war of aggression," it said.

The joint statement was meant to show the three countries' resolve to actively respond to a weapons transfer deal that Russia and North Korea have been pursuing in defiance of repeated warnings by the international community, South Korean Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lim Soosuk told reporters.

North Korea and Russia — both locked in separate confrontations with the U.S. and its allies — have recently taken steps to strengthen their military ties. Speculation about North Korea's provision of conventional arms to refill Russia's exhausted weapons stores flared last month, when North Korean leader Kim Jong Un traveled to Russia's Far East to meet President Vladimir Putin and visit key military facilities.

The U.S., South Korea and others believe North Korea seeks to receive sophisticated weapons technologies from Russia to enhance its nuclear program in exchange for its munitions supply.

During his visit to Pyongyang last week, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in a reception speech that Russia valued North Korea's "unwavering" support for its war on Ukraine. After returning to Moscow, Lavrov dismissed the U.S. accusation of the North Korean arms transfers, saying that "the Americans keep accusing everyone."

Earlier this month, the White House said that North Korea had delivered more than 1,000 containers of military equipment and munitions to Russia.

Thursday's Seoul-Washington-Tokyo statement said the three countries are closely monitoring for any materials that Russia provides to North Korea in support of the North's military objectives.

MILITARY

Number of suicides in military dipped in 2022

By Lolita C. Baldor
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of suicides among U.S. military members and their families dipped slightly in 2022, compared with the previous year, as the Defense Department tries to build prevention and treatment programs to address what has been a steadily growing problem over the past decade, The Associated Press has learned.

While the total number of deaths decreased overall, suicides among active-duty troops went up slightly, fueled by significant spikes in the Marine Corps and the Air Force. And because the overall size of the active-duty force is smaller now, the rate of suicides per 100,000 service members inched up, according to U.S. officials.

The officials said the suicide rate for the National Guard and the Reserve decreased a bit. The relatively stable numbers across the force come on the heels of a sharp drop in suicides in the Air Force, the Marines and the Navy from 2020 to 2021, and a similar decline for Army soldiers in the first six months of 2022.

Officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the findings before the report's public release. They said that due to the decreasing size of the active-duty force, they believe the rate of suicides, rather than the number, is a more accurate measure. More broadly, they said the changes in the suicide rate were not statistically significant and they are not enough to determine yet if prevention and treatment programs are working.

Instead, defense officials said the long-term trend still points to increasing deaths, although the relative stability in the numbers for 2022 gives them some cautious encouragement.

Historical similarities in who dies by suicide and how they do it continue. Young, male troops still make up the vast majority of the suicides — at 93%. And 70% of the time, troops use a firearm. But the department has so far shied away from any major gun safety changes.

An independent committee recommended earlier this year that the department implement a series of gun safety measures to reduce suicides in the force, including waiting periods for the purchase of firearms and ammunition by service members on military property.

The panel said the department should also raise the minimum age for service members to buy guns and ammunition to 25 and should require anyone living in military housing to register all privately owned firearms. In addition, the panel said the department should restrict the possession and storage of privately owned firearms in military barracks and dorms.

Last month, however, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin released a new campaign to address suicides in the force, and the department chose not to implement the key firearm changes suggested by the panel. Instead, the Pentagon said it would "incentivize" secure firearm storage, provide more storage locations and do more public education on how to safely store guns — similar to steps that officials have talked about in the past.

The Defense Department officials said there are a number of legal challenges to enacting some of the gun safety measures. They said the department has been working on the issue for several years and believes a better, modern education campaign tailored for the young military audience can help.

In addition, they said there are restrictions on doing an anonymous survey on the matter to glean more information from the force and determine what would be effective changes. They said the department hasn't ruled out taking additional steps in the future.

Austin, however, did agree to enact a number of other recommendations made by the panel, including efforts to modernize suicide prevention training, expand counseling, reduce the stigma of seeking mental health assistance and increase the number of staff and health providers.

The Defense Department has been grappling with widespread shortages of mental health personnel and a difficult push to reduce the stigma of seeking help. A number of military bases have also enacted a wide array of new programs, which range from required counseling visits to stress relief education and recreational outings.

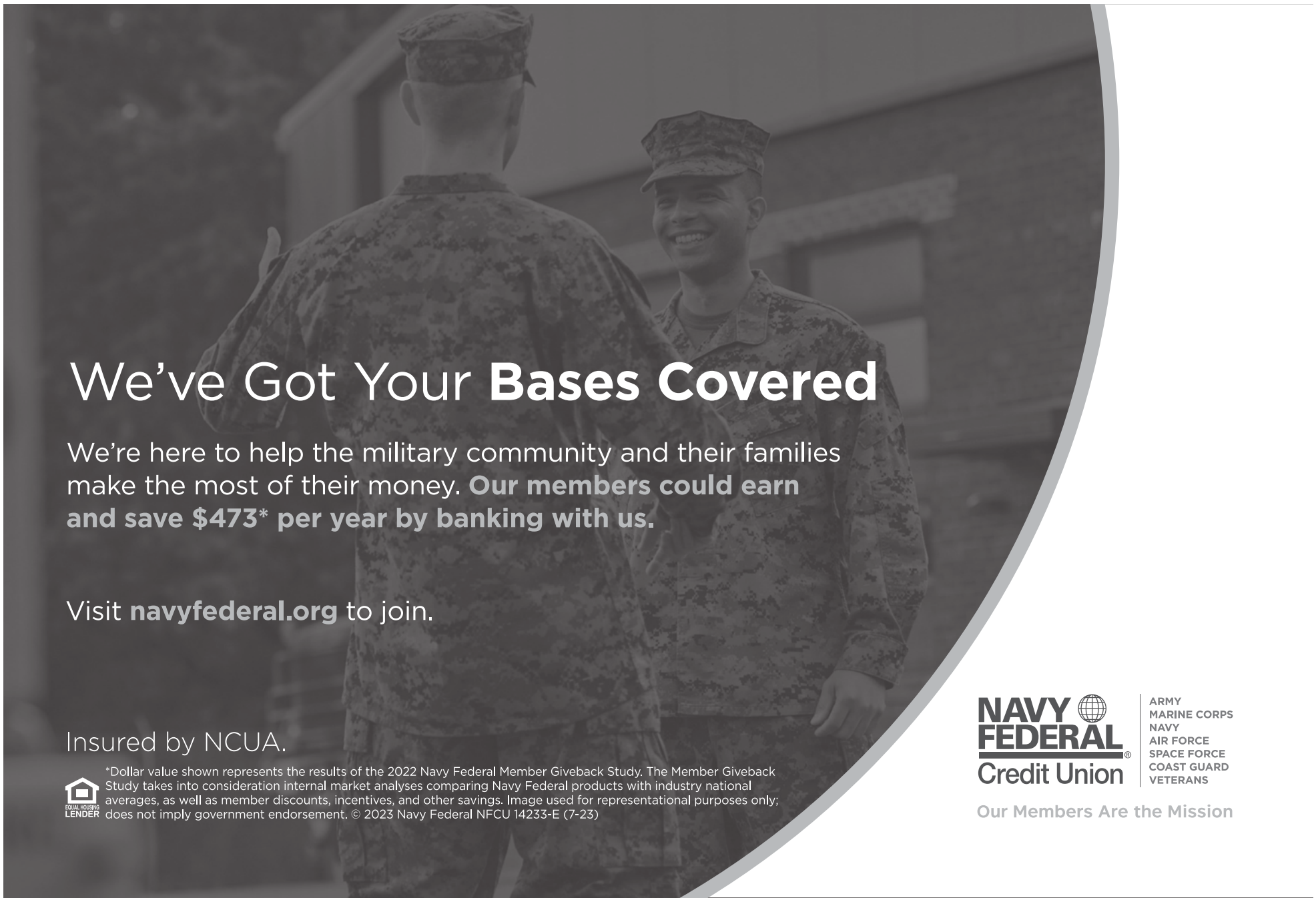
The new report found that family stress, including relationship problems and behavioral health issues, are common factors.

Suicides among family members differ in that more than half of the spouses who die are female. And while there are far fewer male spouses across the military, at just 14%, they represent 48% of spousal suicides.

According to the latest data, there were 492 suicides among active duty, Guard and Reserve troops, down from 524 in 2021. And suicides among family members dropped from 202 in 2020 to 168 in 2021. The family death totals are a year behind the service member data, because they come from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For the active duty, there were 331 suicides in 2022, compared with 328 in 2021. Of those, Army suicides dropped from 175 in 2021 to 135 in 2022. The Marine Corps saw the biggest increase, from 43 to 61, followed by the Air Force, which increased from 51 to 64, and the Navy went from 59 to 71. The Space Force had none.

The Army National Guard also saw a large decrease, from 105 to 82, while the Air Guard remained the same, at 15. The Reserves dipped from 76 to 64, with only the Air Force Reserves showing an increase.



MILITARY

Soldier honored for saving car crash victim

By Phillip Walter Wellman
Stars and Stripes

A soldier who hauled a badly injured woman from a smoking vehicle following a car crash near Fort Knox, Ky., has been awarded the Army's highest honor for noncombat heroism.

Staff Sgt. Aschlynd Spidell-Flores was presented last Friday with the Soldier's Medal during a ceremony at the base, where she also met the woman she saved, Dianna McMahan, for the first time since the accident happened a little over year ago, the Army said in a statement Monday.

An information technology specialist assigned to Human Resources Command, Spidell-Flores was driving home from work when she heard McMahan's car crash into another vehicle just ahead of her, the statement said.

The two cars had collided and struck the guard rail. She began prying open the first car's door until realizing that the driver was dead. Saffire Doss was later pronounced dead at the scene from her injuries, Kentucky State Police said.

Spidell-Flores ran to the other car, where she saw McMahan alive and inside.

There were "fires everywhere," Spidell-Flores said in a video broadcast by WDRB, the Fox television affiliate in Louisville. "I could see sparks under the car, so I was like, 'if I don't get her out of the car, this could be it.' "

McMahan's vehicle had a significant gas leak and there were several fires near the cars, according to the Army.

"I was asking her if she was OK," Spidell-Flores was quoted in the statement as saying. "When she finally responded, I told her I was going to get her out."

After pulling McMahan out of the car and getting her to a safe distance, Spidell-Flores used her belt as a tourniquet around McMahan's lower leg. She stayed with McMahan until first responders arrived.

Both women fought back tears as they recounted the events of Oct. 3, 2022.

"The only thing I remember from the accident is her voice saying 'we're going to get you out of here,' McMahan told WDRB. "It was like the voice of an angel. It was very calm.

"It's an overwhelming thankful feeling to finally be able to hug ... the person who saved my life."

The crash fractured both of McMahan's feet, broke six ribs and caused some brain trauma, NBC television affiliate WAVE in Louisville reported, adding that McMahan still needs physical therapy.

After Spidell-Flores's award ceremony, she was promoted to staff sergeant in accordance with her career achievements, the Army said.

"Staff Sgt. Spidell-Flores changed the lives of a lot of people that day," Col. Jeanette Martin, director of the Human Resources Command's Enterprise Modernization Directorate, said while presenting Spidell-Flores with the Soldier's Medal.

"She's providing first aid to the victim after pulling her from her vehicle, among smoke and fire with no regard for herself," Martin said. "She did that selflessly without any thought about 'what if.'

"So not only are we honoring a great soldier, we're honoring an all-around great American."

The Soldier's Medal is the highest peacetime award for an act of heroism in a noncombat situation. Fewer than 300 soldiers currently on active duty have been awarded the Soldier's Medal, according to the Army.

"I could have gotten injured," Spidell-Flores said in the statement. "Her car was hot. When I put my forearm on the steering wheel to lean her back, it was like steaming hot, but I didn't care what I had to do to get her out, what could have happened. I didn't care."

wellman.phillip@stripes.com
@pwwellman

Maria McClure/U.S. Army

Army Staff Sgt. Aschlynd Spidell-Flores, left, and Luke Cooper, Dianna McMahan's brother, listen as McMahan describes her recovery from injuries in a car crash last year. Spidell-Flores was awarded the Soldier's Medal on Oct. 20 for saving McMahan's life.

Troops part of $8M credit firm payout

By Kyle Alvarez
Stars and Stripes

One of the three major American credit bureaus will pay $8 million for not taking required steps to prevent active-duty service members and other U.S. consumers from landing on prescreened lists for insurance and credit card solicitations, among other lapses.

TransUnion also was ordered by the U.S. government to fix its broken practices, which resulted in failure by the company and two subsidiaries to process freezes and locks on people's credit reports on time, according to a statement from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

The $8 million total consists of a $5 million fine and up to $3 million in consumer compensation.

TransUnion will contact affected consumers regarding the payout, the bureau statement said.

Security freezes and locks are designed to minimize the risk of identity theft by preventing third parties from gaining access to consumers' credit reports. Scammers can use information in reports to open fraudulent accounts.

Since at least 2003, TransUnion failed to institute or remove security locks and freezes in a timely manner for tens of thousands of consumers, according to a bureau order issued Oct. 10.

"These consumers did not know about this failure, and some were told that their requests had been honored when they had not," the order said.

Because of reliability issues with TransUnion's systems, customer requests sometimes had to be registered by hand, but the credit bureau didn't keep up with demand, according to the order.

Those systems issues, which were known to TransUnion, "steadily accumulated and were left unresolved for years," the order said. Active-duty military personnel who requested extension of the precautions were among the people affected, as TransUnion "failed to continue to exclude those consumers from marketing lists for prescreened offers," according to the CFPB.

Another problem that TransUnion let fester, the report said, was differing database information for the same person.

Errors pertaining to active-duty alerts and extended fraud alerts were identified in a 2018 audit, but TransUnion regarded them as low risk and left the problem unresolved for over a year, the bureau wrote in the report.

An active-duty alert is supposed to provide a two-year exclusion for military personnel from lists given to third parties for the purpose of credit or insurance solicitations. About 32,000 consumers were affected by these errors, the report said.

Medical command in Europe has new leader

By Jennifer H. Svan
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — A new leader took charge Thursday of the U.S. Army's medical readiness and patient care in Europe and Africa, an assignment that follows a big change in how military health care records are managed overseas.

Brig. Gen. Roger Giraud took command of Medical Readiness Command, Europe, and its 6,000 medical personnel, during a ceremony at the Army's base in Sembach. He also takes over as command surgeon for U.S. Army Europe and Africa. Giraud arrives from Joint Base San Antonio, where he was deputy commanding general of operations at U.S. Army Medical Command.

Stepping aside for Giraud after 16 months on the job is Brig. Gen. Clinton Murray, who is returning to Texas to lead the Army Medical Center of Excellence at Fort Sam Houston. Before coming to Germany, Murray was the commander of Brooke Army Medical Center, Texas.

Murray led the Army's only overseas-based medical readiness command through part of the pandemic, Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine and the switch to MHS Genesis, which aims to provide a single, digital medical record for service members, veterans and their families.

All Defense Department hospitals and clinics in Europe switched to Genesis late last month, which was "probably the most emotional event" of his time in command, Murray said, "not only for the health care providers and the leaders but clearly for the family members and the beneficiaries."

The rollout has resulted in fewer available routine appointments and increased wait times for care, a change compounded in some locations by the scarcity of off-base health care. The delays and shortages will end as workers learn the system over the next few months, military medical officials have said.

Army health care personnel "did amazing" in launching the new system, Murray said.

Giraud said he looks forward to building on the command's success "at an important and critical time in our nation's history."

svan.jennifer@stripes.com
@stripesktown

Michael Abrams/Stars and Stripes

Gen. Darryl Williams, left, commander of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, shakes hands Thursday with Brig. Gen. Roger Giraud, the new commander of Medical Readiness Command, Europe, in Sembach, Germany.

MIDEAST

US shares hard lessons on urban combat

ABED KHALED / AP

Palestinians inspect the damage of destroyed houses after Israeli airstrikes Tuesday on Gaza City.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The prospect of Israeli forces launching an assault into Gaza's dense urban neighborhoods, where militants use civilians as human shields, brings back searing memories of the deadly battles the U.S.-led coalition fought against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

For Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his military leaders, that intense combat and the thousands of civilians killed in airstrikes and neighborhood gunfights in Mosul and Raqqa are lessons to be shared as Israel prepares for a possible ground invasion against Hamas.

"In our conversations with the Israelis, and as we've made very clear, we're continuing to highlight, the importance of mitigating civilian casualties and ensuring that ... things like safety corridors are thought through," Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon spokesman, said Tuesday.

The U.S. can paint a vivid picture of civilian slaughter. During the eight-month siege to liberate Mosul from Islamic insurgents, as many as 10,000 people were killed, including at least 3,200 civilians from airstrikes, artillery fire or mortar rounds between October 2016 and the fall of the Islamic State group in July 2017, according to an Associated Press investigation. About the same number of civilians were killed or taken hostage by militants and used as human shields as they fled the city.

Austin, Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Eric Kurilla, head of U.S. Central Command, and other senior military commanders all spent time in the region around then and watched the violence unfold. They were keenly aware of efforts to set up humanitarian corridors and decisions to pause operations while civilians were warned to move away. So as they are speaking to their Israeli counterparts on an almost daily basis, they are sharing advice on the challenges of urban warfare, the threats of booby traps and roadside bombs and the drive to protect the innocent while rooting out insurgents hidden in schools, mosques and homes.

"Sharing our 20 years of lessons learned is occurring up and down the chain," said Navy Capt. Jereal Dorsey, the spokesman for Brown.

Underscoring that priority, the U.S. has sent a team of military advisers to Israel, including Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James Glynn, who helped lead special operations forces against the Islamic State group. Glynn, who also served in Fallujah during some of the most heated urban combat there at the height of the Iraq War, will be able to advise the Israelis on how to mitigate civilian casualties in urban warfare.

Retired Army Gen. Joseph Votel, who took over U.S. Central Command in 2016 when Austin retired and oversaw the operations, said the most important message for the Israelis — which has been delivered by Austin, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and President Joe Biden — is that it's not what Israel does in its pledge to destroy Hamas, but how the military does it.

"How you orchestrate this campaign really matters," said Votel. "And they have to do this in a way that reflects values and the concern for innocent Palestinians who themselves are being held hostage by Hamas."

He added that there are many similarities and some key differences between those missions and a potential assault into Gaza. Hamas, he said, is better armed, with more sophisticated explosives and other weapons supplied by Iran. And the labyrinth of tunnels under Gaza is far more developed and lengthy than those seen in Raqqa.

He said the U.S. and coalition allies had more time to prepare for the battle to retake Mosul. And he said that as the coalition moved down the Euphrates River, it stopped and paused operations a number of times in order to meet with local tribal leaders and try to get innocent civilians out of the line of fire.

Proxies: Retired generals join in call to respond to attacks

FROM PAGE 1

recorded Wednesday, after three rockets were launched at a U.S. outpost in northeast Syria and one landed inside, a defense official said. No one was reported injured.

A senior administration official, who like some others interviewed for this report spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss U.S. government calculations, said that "nothing has changed about our prerogatives" to protect deployed service members, but "we're also not blind to the fact that there are other forces at work now, and we want to be informed by what else is going on in the region."

As the administration has surged combat power and defensive equipment to the Middle East, Republicans in Congress have implored Biden to respond to the attacks.

They were joined on Wednesday by retired Gen. Joseph Votel, whose final posting, as the head of U.S. Central Command, afforded him firsthand insight into Iran's support for militia groups throughout the Middle East. Votel, whose reputation as a nonpartisan military commander earned him admirers in Democratic and GOP administrations, said during an online panel discussion that the United States has "unfortunately" allowed the attacks to become "a little bit of a norm" by not responding to them uniformly.

"We will have to do that," Votel said. "I think we are at the point where we can probably do that now, and we should." With the additional military assets dispatched to the region, he added, "we can and should respond more directly to these threats on our troops."

Iranian proxies have harassed deployed U.S. forces for years, flying self-detonating drones into remote outposts and, at times, provoking an American response. That happened in March, when Biden directed retaliatory airstrikes after an American contractor was killed and other U.S. personnel were wounded by such an attack in Syria. The president said then that Tehran should "be prepared for us to act forcefully to protect our people."

The deliberations now are complicated by the Oct. 7 cross-border rampage in Israel by Hamas militants based in Gaza. The assault killed more than 1,400, compelling Israel to declare war. Hamas is part of the broader network receiving training and weapons from Iran, prompting concerns that other heavily armed proxy forces, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, could join the conflict.

Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., an Iraq War veteran, said in an interview that the Middle East is a "tinderbox" at the moment, putting at odds the administration's mandate to protect American troops with its efforts to avoid being drawn into a larger conflict in which U.S. forces also could be at risk. Biden and his top advisers, are "walking a fine line quite well," he said, but the situation could change at any moment.

"Given the volatility in the region today, I think it's unwise for any U.S. officials to publicly declare a line in the sand," he said. "There are clearly entities in the Middle East that want a war, and we don't want to play into that."

Senior Pentagon officials this week have warned that they see the prospect for "significant escalation" against U.S. personnel across the Middle East in coming days. The U.S. Embassy in Kuwait underscored that point on Wednesday, issuing an alert that said U.S. officials were aware of threats made on social media by Alwiyat al-Waad al-Haq, an Iraq-based militia with ties to Iranian-backed actors that have claimed numerous attacks against U.S. troops. "U.S. citizens," it stated, "are advised to remain alert."

Kenneth "Frank" McKenzie, a retired Marine Corps general who led Central Command from 2019 to 2022, said the infusion of U.S. firepower into the region, including the deployment of two aircraft carrier strike groups and additional air-defense units and fighter squadrons, should send a very clear message to Iran.

"Our posture in the region is getting significantly more powerful every day, and they're going to pay attention to that," McKenzie said.

Like Votel, McKenzie attributed the rise in attacks on U.S. forces in part to the decision not to routinely address earlier incidents. It's likely, he added, that Central Command will develop options to do so, and then it will be up to Biden whether and how the United States responds.

"The Iranians tend to push until someone pushes back," McKenzie said. "I would think that, at some point, you would want to push back — but that's not a military decision." He stopped short of echoing Votel's call to do so now.

With the recent proxy attacks, Iran is testing the United States and looking for vulnerabilities, said Bradley Bowman, senior director of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. From Tehran's perspective, he said, "there's really no downside" to doing so as the United States says that it wants to avoid a broad regional war.

Bowman, an Iraq War veteran, said one sensible approach might be to launch airstrikes specifically at militias in Syria, to prevent Iranian officials from stirring up domestic politics against the U.S. in Iraq. There are about 900 American troops in Syria and another 2,500 in Iraq, with both groups focused on preventing a resurgence of the Islamic State group.

"If you have these attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria and we don't respond in some way, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to think that we're going to get more of the same," he said. "The goal here is to prevent a smaller problem from becoming larger. We cannot permit cost-free attacks on our troops."

MIDEAST

Israeli troops briefly raid northern Gaza

Incursion aimed to 'prepare the battlefield' for an expected full-scale ground invasion

By Najib Jobain, Kareem Chehayeb and Amy Teibel
Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli troops and tanks briefly raided northern Gaza overnight, the military said Thursday, engaging with Hamas fighters and targeting anti-tank weapons in order to "prepare the battlefield" before an expected ground invasion.

The raid came after after more than two weeks of devastating airstrikes in the small, densely-populated territory — with more than 250 in the past 24 hours — and as the U.N. and other world leaders warn of a dire humanitarian crisis getting worse.

Israel has imposed a suffocating siege on Gaza since Hamas' bloody rampage and hostage-taking across southern Israel ignited the war. Residents are running out of food, water and medicine, and U.N. workers have barely any fuel left to support their relief missions across Gaza, where more than 1 million Palestinians have been displaced.

The rising death toll in Gaza is unprecedented in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza said Thursday more than 7,000 Palestinians have died in the conflict, a figure that could not be independently verified. Even greater loss of life could come if Israel launches a ground offensive aimed at crushing Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007 and survived four previous wars with Israel.

Israeli airstrikes in the southern city of Khan Younis leveled more than eight homes belonging to an extended family, killing at least 15 people. Ambulances raced to the scene as dust from the collapsing buildings hung in the air.

The blast zone was a chaotic wasteland of crumbled concrete and twisted metal. Rescuers carried wounded people covered in gray dust. The body of a boy was dug out from beneath a concrete slab, where his head had come to rest next to the foot of another person entombed in the wreckage.

The Israeli military says it only strikes militant targets and accuses Hamas of operating among civilians in an attempt to protect its fighters. Palestinian militants have fired thousands of rockets into Israel since the war began. One struck a residential building in the central city of Petah Tikva, without wounding anyone.

Hamas' military wing said Thursday that Israeli bombardment has so far killed about 50 of the at least 224 hostages the militants abducted during its Oct. 7 assault. There was no immediate comment from Israeli officials, who have denied previous, similar claims.

The conflict has threatened to ignite a wider war across the region.

Hezbollah, an Iranian-funded ally of Hamas operating out of Lebanon, has repeatedly traded fire with Israel along the border. Israel has carried out airstrikes in Lebanon, Syria and even the occupied West Bank. The United States has sent to the region two aircraft carrier strike groups with a number of ships, along with additional fighter jets and other weaponry and personnel.

Israel has vowed to crush Hamas' capacity to govern Gaza or threaten Israel again, while also saying it doesn't want to reoccupy the territory from which it withdrew soldiers and settlers in 2005. That could prove a daunting challenge, since Hamas is deeply rooted in Gaza, with political and charity organizations as well as a formidable armed wing.

Benny Gantz, a retired general and a member of Israel's war Cabinet, said any possible ground offensive would be only "one stage in a long-term process that includes security, political and social aspects that will take years."

"The campaign will soon ramp up with greater force," he added.

During the overnight raid, soldiers killed fighters and destroyed militant infrastructure and anti-tank missile launching positions, the military said. It said no Israelis were wounded. There was no immediate confirmation of any Palestinian casualties.

Israeli Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, a military spokesman, said the limited incursion was "part of our preparations for the next stages of the war."

Israel said it had also carried out around 250 airstrikes across Gaza in the last 24 hours, targeting tunnel shafts, rocket launchers and other militant infrastructure. Its reported targeting could not be independently verified.

HATEM ALI/AP

Palestinians look for survivors after an Israeli airstrike in Rafah, Gaza Strip, on Thursday.

ARIEL SCHALIT/AP

Residents of Kibbutz Kfar Azza, near the border with the Gaza Strip, that was overrun by Hamas militants in the unprecedented Hamas attack on Israel, hold pictures of their loved ones during a protest calling for the return of more than 220 people captured by Hamas militants, in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Thursday.

The Gaza Health Ministry says more than 7,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war in less than three weeks, a figure that includes the disputed toll from an explosion at a hospital. That is more than three times the number of Palestinians killed in the six-week-long Gaza war in 2014. The ministry's toll includes more than 2,900 minors and more than 1,500 women.

On Wednesday, the wife, son, daughter and grandson of Wael Dahdouh, a veteran Al-Jazeera correspondent in Gaza, were killed in an Israeli strike. Dahdouh and other mourners attended the funerals on Thursday wearing the blue flak jackets used by reporters in the Palestinian territories.

The fighting has killed more than 1,400 people in Israel, mostly civilians slain during the initial Hamas attack, according to the Israeli government.

The warning by the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, over depleting fuel supplies raised alarm that the humanitarian crisis could quickly worsen. Israel is still barring deliveries of fuel — needed to power generators — saying it believes Hamas will take it for military use.

About 1.4 million of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have fled their homes, with nearly half of them crowded into U.N. shelters. Hundreds of thousands remain in northern Gaza, despite Israel ordering them to evacuate to the south, saying those who remain might be considered "accomplices" of Hamas.

In recent days, Israel has let more than 70 trucks with aid enter from Egypt, which aid workers say is insufficient and only a tiny fraction of what is needed.

"This is ... a drop in the ocean," said William Schomburg, an official with the International Committee of the Red Cross in Gaza. "We are trying to establish a pipeline."

More than half of Gaza's primary health care facilities and roughly a third of its hospitals have stopped functioning, the World Health Organization said.

At Gaza City's al-Shifa Hospital, the lack of medicine and clean water have led to "alarming" infection rates, the group Doctors Without Borders said. Amputations are often required to prevent infection from spreading in the wounded, it said.

Nine Arab countries — including key U.S. allies and nations that have signed peace or normalization deals with Israel — issued a joint statement Thursday calling for an immediate cease-fire and an end to the targeting and death of civilians.

"The right to self defense by the United Nations Charter does not justify blatant violations of humanitarian and international law," said the statement, signed by Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Morocco.

NATION

New House speaker faces same GOP tests

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican Mike Johnson is the new speaker of the House, but the ally of Donald Trump inherits many of the same political problems that have tormented past GOP leaders, tested their grasp of the gavel and eventually chased them out of office.

When the House convenes Thursday it will be a bustle of activity, making up for lost time during the weeks of chaos since the ouster of Kevin McCarthy. But the goodwill toward Johnson blurs the political fault lines challenging the Louisianan's ability to lead the GOP majority as it faces daunting issues ahead.

By Nov. 17, Congress must fund the government again or risk a shutdown. President Joe Biden wants an additional $105 billion in military and humanitarian aid for Israel and Ukraine. And Republicans are eager to resume their impeachment inquiry into Biden over his son's business dealings.

"This has been a grueling process," Johnson said Wednesday after he took the gavel. "The challenge before us is great but the time for action is now, and I will not let you down."

Johnson, 51, swept through on the first ballot with support from all Republicans anxious to put the past weeks of tumult behind and get on with business.

He was quickly sworn into office, second in line to the presidency.

A lower-ranked member of the House GOP leadership team, Johnson emerged as the fourth Republican nominee in what had become an almost absurd cycle of political infighting since McCarthy's ouster as GOP factions jockeyed for power.

While not the party's top choice for the gavel, the deeply religious and even-keeled Johnson has few foes and an important GOP backer: Trump.

MATT MCCLAIN/The Washington Post

Rep. Mike Johnson, R-La., who was elected House speaker Wednesday, addresses House members.

Biden called to congratulate the new speaker and said it's "time for all of us to act responsibly" to fund the government and provide aid for Ukraine and Israel.

"We need to move swiftly," the president said in a statement.

In the House, far-right members had refused to accept a more traditional speaker, and moderate conservatives didn't want a hardliner. But the affable Johnson, who has been in office less than a decade, drew lawmakers together through his evangelical faith, his conservative roots and Trump's nod after more seasoned leaders had failed.

Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who led the small band of eight hard-liners who ousted McCarthy, said, "You watch and see how much this House of Representatives can actually get done under Mike Johnson."

Democrats quickly criticized Johnson as an extreme conservative, a strict opponent of abortion access and an architect of Trump's legal effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election he lost to Democrat Biden.

"Republicans have chosen a MAGA acolyte to push an extreme agenda in the House at the expense of middle-class families," said Rep. Suzan DelBene, the chair of the Democrats' campaign committee, referring to Trump's Make America Great Again campaign slogan.

Anxious and exhausted, Republican lawmakers are desperately trying to move on.

Lawmakers quickly reconvened to get back to work, approving a resolution saying the House "stands with Israel" and "condemns Hamas' brutal war." Next, they turned to a stalled government funding bill.

Rather than take a scheduled work period at home, the Republicans rearranged the House calendar to return to Washington next week and keep pushing through the various government funding bills ahead of the Nov. 17 deadline.

In a letter to colleagues, Johnson outlined priorities that include providing a stopgap government funding bill, into next year, to prevent a November shutdown — almost the same move that led to McCarthy's ouster.

And while Johnson has spoken of the importance of helping fund Israel in the fight against Hamas, he has shown little interest in providing additional money for Ukraine as it battles Russia into the brutal winter months.

Most Republicans voted against the budget deal McCarthy struck with Biden earlier this year, demanding steeper spending cuts than the levels they agreed to. Johnson will need to navigate the far-right demands with the realities of keeping the government functioning.

Similar Republican infighting chased former GOP speakers John Boehner, Paul Ryan and Newt Gingrich to early departures. The difference now is that Republican rules allow any single lawmaker to force a vote to remove the speaker from office, the threat that ultimately ousted McCarthy.

Johnson's rise comes after a tumultuous month, capped by a head-spinning Tuesday that within a span of a few hours saw one candidate, Rep. Tom Emmer, the GOP whip, get nominated and then quickly withdraw after Trump bashed his nomination.

Overnight, the endorsements for Johnson started pouring in, including from the failed speaker hopefuls.

Rep. Jim Jordan, the hard-charging Judiciary Committee chairman backed by Trump, gave his support, as did Majority Leader Steve Scalise, the fellow Louisiana congressman rejected by Jordan's wing, who stood behind Johnson after he won the nomination.

A lawyer specializing in constitutional issues, Johnson had rallied Republicans around Trump's legal effort to overturn the 2020 election results.

The congressman, who drew on his Christian beliefs, said to the American people watching, "Our mission here is to serve you well and to restore the people's faith in this House."

US sees rise in Jewish, Muslim harassment since Hamas attacks

BY CLAUDIA LAUER
Associated Press

Muslim and Jewish civil rights groups say they've seen large increases in reports of harassment, bias and sometimes physical assaults against members of their communities since the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks.

The Anti-Defamation League and the Council on American-Islamic Relations saw increases in reported instances, many involving violence or threats against protesters at rallies in support of Israel or in support of Palestinians over the last two weeks as war broke out between Israel and Hamas. Other attacks and harassment reported by the groups were directed at random Muslim or Jewish people in public.

A spokesperson for the Council on American-Islamic Relations said Wednesday that the organization's chapters and national office had received 774 reports of bias-related acts between Oct. 7 and Oct. 24. The national headquarters had 110 direct reports during that period, compared to 63 for all of August. The council's leaders believe it's the largest wave of complaints since December 2015, when then-presidential candidate Donald Trump declared his intent to ban Muslim immigration to the U.S. in the wake of the San Bernardino mass shooting that left 14 people dead.

The reported acts since Oct. 7 include an Illinois landlord fatally stabbing a 6-year-old Muslim boy and wounding the boy's mother, police say, as well as the arrest of a Michigan man after police say he asked people in a social media post to join him in hunting Palestinians.

"Public officials should do everything in their power to keep the wave of hate sweeping the nation right now from spiraling out of control," said Corey Saylor, research and advocacy director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Saylor noted that former President George W. Bush's visit to a mosque after the 9/11 attacks had a calming effect on the backlash felt in Muslim communities. He called on President Joe Biden to visit with Americans who lost family members in Gaza.

The Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism reported in a statement Wednesday the organization recorded at least 312 reports of antisemitic acts between Oct. 7 and Oct. 23 — compared to 64 recorded during the same time period in 2022. Those reports included graffiti, slurs or anonymous postings, as well as physical violence such as a woman being punched in the face in New York by an attacker who the league says said, "You are Jewish."

The 312 reports included 109 anti-Israel sentiments spoken or proclaimed at rallies the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism found to be "explicit or strong implicit support for Hamas and/or violence against Jews in Israel," according to the statement.

Jewish civil rights organizations in the United Kingdom, France and other countries across Europe, Latin America, North Africa and elsewhere have also tracked increases in antisemitic acts in the past few weeks compared to 2022. League officials said London police had received 218 reports of antisemitic crimes between Oct. 1 and Oct. 18, which was 13 times greater than the numbers reported in 2022.

NATION

Maine: Shooter spent time at mental health facility

FROM PAGE 1

came concerned about Card's safety and asked for the police to be called. New York state police took Card to the Keller Army Community Hospital at West Point for evaluation, the official said.

The official was not authorized to publicly discuss information about the incident and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Card enlisted in the Army Reserve in December 2002 and was a petroleum supply specialist who had achieved the rank of sergeant first class, a spokesperson for the service said. He was assigned to a training facility in Saco, Maine.

A police bulletin document that had been circulated to law enforcement officials as Card was identified as a person of interest in the attack, said he had been committed to a mental health facility for two weeks in the summer of 2023. It did not provide details about his treatment or condition but said Card had reported "hearing voices and threats to shoot up" the military base.

On Wednesday, Lewiston Police reported an active shooter incident at Schemengees Bar and Grille and at Sparetime Recreation, a bowling alley about 4 miles away. A number of parents and children were at Sparetime as part of a children's bowling league.

One bowler, who identified himself only as Brandon, said he heard about 10 shots, thinking the first was a balloon popping.

"I had my back turned to the door. And as soon as I turned and saw it was not a balloon — he was holding a weapon — I just booked it," he told The Associated Press.

Brandon said he scrambled down the length of the alley, sliding into the pin area and climbing up to hide in the machinery.

ANDROSCOGGIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE/AP

In this image taken from video released, an unidentified gunman points a gun while entering Sparetime Recreation in Lewiston, Maine, on Wednesday.

"I was putting on my bowling shoes when it started. I've been barefoot for five hours," he said.

The bowling alley is home to traditional tenpin bowling as well as candlepin, a variant of bowling found in New England.

It's located about 2 miles north of the Bates College campus, on the outskirts of downtown. The alley has a small bar and is popular for local bowling leagues and children's parties.

Wednesday was "industry night" at Schemengees Bar and Grille, with 25% discounts offered to customers who work in the bar or restaurant industry.

"In a split second your world gets turn upside down for no good reason," the business posted online, saying "great people in this community" were lost.

After the shooting, police, many armed with rifles, took up positions while the city descended into eerie quiet — punctuated by occasional sirens — as people hunkered down at home.

Schools as far away as Kennebunk, more than 50 miles from Lewiston, closed out of caution on Thursday. And schools and public buildings were closed in Portland, the state's largest city.

Bates and Bowdoin colleges canceled classes, as did the Gorham and Portland campuses of the University of Southern Maine.

Diana Florence said her son, a sophomore at Bates College, stayed in his dorm with his roommate with the blinds closed.

Her daughter is a senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which was locked down twice last month, once when a professor was killed and again two weeks later when a man brandished a gun in the student union building.

"I could not believe it — that this is happening again. It's happening to my son after it just happened to my daughter," she said in a phone interview Thursday.

Ten-year-old Zoey Levesque, who was at the bowling alley with her mother, told WMTW-TV she was grazed by a bullet.

"It's scary," she said. "I had never thought I'd grow up and get a bullet in my leg. And it's just like, why? Why do people do this?"

The Androscoggin County Sheriff's Office released two photos of the suspect on its Facebook page that showed the shooter walking into an establishment with a weapon raised to his shoulder.

It's the 36th mass killing in the United States this year, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University.

A shelter-in-place advisory was issued Wednesday night for Androscoggin County.

That included the community of Lisbon, about 8 miles away, after a "vehicle of interest" was found there, authorities said.

It was extended Thursday to Bowdoin, which is in Sagadahoc County.

Wednesday's death toll was staggering for a state that in 2022 had 29 homicides the entire year.

Author Stephen King responded to the shootings Thursday morning in a pair of posts on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"The shootings occurred less than 50 miles from where I live. I went to high school in Lisbon. It's the rapid-fire killing machines, people. This is madness in the name of freedom. Stop electing apologists for murder," he wrote.

Maine doesn't require permits to carry guns, and the state has a long-standing culture of gun ownership that is tied to its traditions of hunting and sport shooting.

Florence, of New York, said she and her son at Bates College spoke and texted late into the night, and that he was shaken up but OK. Meanwhile, she was left angry.

"I think this is about our laws, frankly. That we cannot seem to pass any sort of sensible gun laws or attack mental health in the way we should," she said.

"And our kids are paying the price. And even if they're not killed or injured, the trauma that is going to linger long past the semester is palpable."

Stars and Stripes reporter Doug G. Ware contributed to this report.

Judge keeps Trump's $10K fine for gag order violation

BY JENNIFER PELTZ
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A New York judge reaffirmed Thursday a $10,000 fine he'd imposed on Donald Trump over an out-of-court comment that the former president made during his civil business fraud trial.

The development came after Trump's lawyers urged Judge Arthur Engoron to rethink the penalty. The judge fined Trump on Wednesday after finding that his comments to TV cameras outside the courtroom violated a gag order that bars participants in the trial from commenting publicly on the judge's staff.

Outside court Wednesday, the Republican presidential frontrunner complained that Engoron, a Democrat, is "a very partisan judge with a person who's very partisan sitting alongside him, perhaps even much more partisan than he is."

The comment came weeks after Engoron imposed the gag order in the wake of a Trump social media post that disparaged the judge's principal law clerk. She sits next to Engoron, and Trump's lawyers had groused a bit earlier about the clerk's facial expressions and role in the case.

Summoned Wednesday to the witness stand to explain his comment, Trump said he was talking not about the clerk but about witness Michael Cohen — his former lawyer and fixer who was testifying against him at the time.

On Wednesday, Engoron called Trump's contention "not credible," noting that the clerk is closer to him than is the witness stand.

Trump's lawyers insisted anew Thursday that Trump was talking about Cohen. They pointed out that right after his reference to the person "sitting alongside" the judge, Trump said: "We are doing very well, the facts are speaking very loud. He is a totally discredited witness" — a reference to Cohen.

Trump lawyer Christopher Kise argued that it meant the person "alongside" the judge was also Cohen. "To me, the 'he' in that sentence is referring to the person in the immediately preceding sentence," Kise said.

Engoron agreed to look at the entirety of the remarks and reconsider the penalty.

About an hour later, he said he was standing by the fine, pointing to what he called "a brief but clear transition" between the mention of the person "alongside" the judge and the comment about the "discredited witness."

"That was, to me, a clear transition from one person to another, and I think the person originally referred to was my clerk," Engoron said.

Trump attended the trial for two days this week, but wasn't in court on Thursday.

The case involves a lawsuit that New York Attorney General Letitia James filed last year against Trump, his company and top executives. She alleges Trump and his business chronically lied about his wealth on financial statements given to banks, insurers and others. Trump denies any wrongdoing.

In a pretrial ruling last month, Engoron found that Trump, chief financial officer Allen Weisselberg and other defendants committed years of fraud by exaggerating the value of Trump's assets and net worth on his financial statements.

As punishment, Engoron ordered that a court-appointed receiver take control of some Trump companies, putting the future oversight of Trump Tower and other marquee properties in doubt. An appeals court has blocked enforcement of that aspect of Engoron's ruling, at least for now.

The civil trial concerns allegations of conspiracy, insurance fraud and falsifying business records. James is seeking $250 million in penalties and a ban on Trump doing business in New York.

American Doctors & Staff

We Offer

- Family Dentistry
- Registered Dental Hygienists
- Cosmetic Dentistry
- Crowns / Bridges
- Root Canals
- Oral Surgery
- Whitening
- Implants
- Periodontist

UNITED CONCORDIA® | TRICARE®

RAMSTEIN DENTAL CARE

06371 406230

Poststrasse 1, 66877 Ramstein

RamsteinDental@gmail.com

www.RamsteinDental.com

Best of GERMANY 2023 KAISERSLAUTERN WINNER

Best of GERMANY 2023 8 TIME WINNER

WIESBADEN DENTAL CARE

06119 887 2650

Bahnstrasse 14, 65205 Wiesbaden

WiesbadenDentalCare@gmail.com

www.WiesbadenDental.com

Best of GERMANY 2023 RHEIN MAIN WINNER

Best of GERMANY 2023 8 TIME WINNER

NATION

Autoworkers reach deal with Ford, step toward ending strike

By Tom Krisher
Associated Press

DETROIT — The United Auto Workers union said Wednesday it has reached a tentative contract agreement with Ford that could be a breakthrough toward ending the nearly 6-week-old strikes against Detroit automakers.

The four-year deal, which still has to be approved by 57,000 union members at the company, could bring a close to the union's series of strikes at targeted factories run by Ford, General Motors and Jeep maker Stellantis.

The Ford deal could set the pattern for agreements with the other two automakers, where workers will remain on strike. The UAW called on all workers at Ford to return to their jobs and said that will put pressure on GM and Stellantis to bargain. Announcements on how to do that will come later.

"We told Ford to pony up, and they did," President Shawn Fain said in a video address to members. "We won things no one thought possible." He added that Ford put 50% more money on the table than it did before the strike started on Sept. 15.

UAW Vice President Chuck Browning, the chief negotiator with Ford, said workers will get a 25% general wage increase, plus cost of living raises that will put the pay increase over 30%, to above $40 per hour for top-scale assembly plant workers by the end of the contract.

Previously Ford, Stellantis and General Motors had all offered 23% pay increases. When the talks started, Ford offered 9%.

Assembly workers will get 11% upon ratification, almost equal to all of the wage increases since 2007, Browning said.

Typically, during past auto strikes, a UAW deal with one automaker has led to the other companies matching it with their own settlements.

GM said in a statement it is "working constructively" with the union to reach an agreement as soon as possible. Stellantis also said it's committed to reaching a deal "that gets everyone back to work as soon as possible."

Browning said temporary workers will get more in wage increases than they have over the past 22 years combined. Temporary workers will get raises over 150% and retirees will get annual bonuses, he said.

"Thanks to the power of our members on the picket line and the threat of more strikes to come, we have won the most lucrative agreement per member since Walter Reuther was president," Browning said. Reuther led the union from 1946 until his death in 1970.

PAUL SANCYA/AP

United Auto Workers member Marcel Edwards carries On Strike signs from the picket line to Local 900 headquarters at the Ford Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne, Mich., on Wednesday.

Jobless aid claims rises slightly over past weeks

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The number of Americans applying for jobless benefits rose last week but remains historically low as the labor market continues to show strength amid high interest rates and inflation.

Jobless claim applications rose by 10,000 to 210,000 for the week ending Oct. 21, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The previous week's applications were the fewest in eight months.

Jobless claim applications are considered a proxy for layoffs.

The four-week moving average of claims, which smooths out some of the week-to-week volatility, rose by 1,250 to 207,500.

Overall, 1.79 million people were collecting unemployment benefits the week that ended Oct. 14, about 63,000 more than the previous week.

In an effort to stem persistent inflation, the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times since March of 2022. The central bank's goal is to cool the economy and labor market and bring down rising wages, which it says feeds inflation. However, the labor market and the broader economy have held up better than expected.

In September, employers added 336,000 jobs, raising the average gain for each of the past three months to a robust 266,000.

US economy grew to strong 4.9% rate last quarter

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The nation's economy expanded at a robust 4.9% annual rate from July through September as Americans defied higher prices, rising interest rates and widespread forecasts of a recession to spend at a brisk pace.

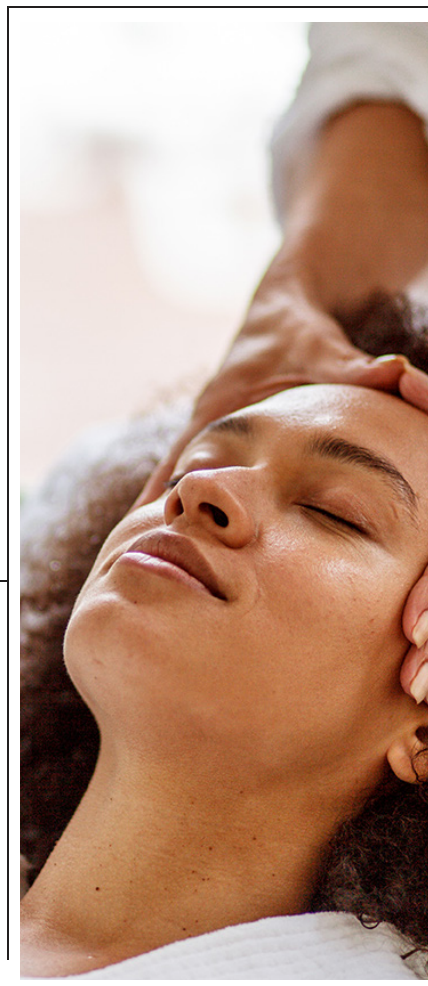
The Commerce Department said the economy expanded last quarter at the fastest pace in more than two years — and more than twice the 2.1% annual rate of the previous quarter.

Thursday's report on the nation's gross domestic product — the economy's total output of goods and services — showed that consumers drove the acceleration, ramping up their spending on everything from cars to restaurant meals. Even though the painful inflation of the past two years has soured many people's view of the economy, millions have remained willing to splurge on vacations, concert tickets and sports events.

Last quarter's robust growth, though, may prove to be a high-water mark for the economy before a steady slowdown begins in the current October-December quarter and extends into 2024. The breakneck pace is expected to ease as higher long-term borrowing rates, on top of the Federal Reserve's short-term rate hikes, cool spending by businesses and consumers.

The growth figures for the third quarter revealed that federal, state, and local governments ramped up their spending, and businesses built up their stockpiles of goods in warehouses and on shelves, which helped drive growth higher. The economy managed to accelerate despite the Fed's strenuous efforts to slow growth and inflation by raising its benchmark short-term interest rate to about 5.4%, its highest level in 22 years.

Several Fed officials acknowledged in speeches last week that the most recent economic data showed growth picking up by more than they had expected. Still, most of the policymakers signaled that they will likely keep their key rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, unchanged when they meet next week.



GIFT YOURSELF MASSAGES ALL YEAR

Foreign Service Benefit Plan

Worldwide health and prescription coverage, as well as generous alternative benefits.

FSBP'S HEALTH BENEFITS COVERS UP TO 50
• MASSAGES
•CHIROPRACTIC VISITS
•ACUPUNCTURE VISITS

FEHB HIGH OPTION PLAN OPEN TO ELIGIBLE FEDERAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES.

afspa.org/fsbp

Paid Ad. No Federal endorsement of advertiser intended.
*Up to $60 per visit; 50 visits per year for each type of service. All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations, and exclusions set forth in the Foreign Service Benefit Plan's Federal brochure (RI 72-001)

afspa FOREIGN SERVICE BENEFIT PLAN Caring For Your Health Worldwide

Ecker HONDA & ACURA
• Accident Repairs
• Body Work
• Maintenance
• Warranty - Work
• Damage Estimates
• Tax Free
www.honda-ecker.de
hauptstuhl@honda-ecker.de
Mon-Fri 0800 - 1700 • Sat 0900-1300
06372-4607 • Kaiserstr. 79, 66851 Hauptstuhl

WEEKEND

Rolling Stones return with 'Hackney Moss'

Music, Pages 18-19

Rebel in rhinestones

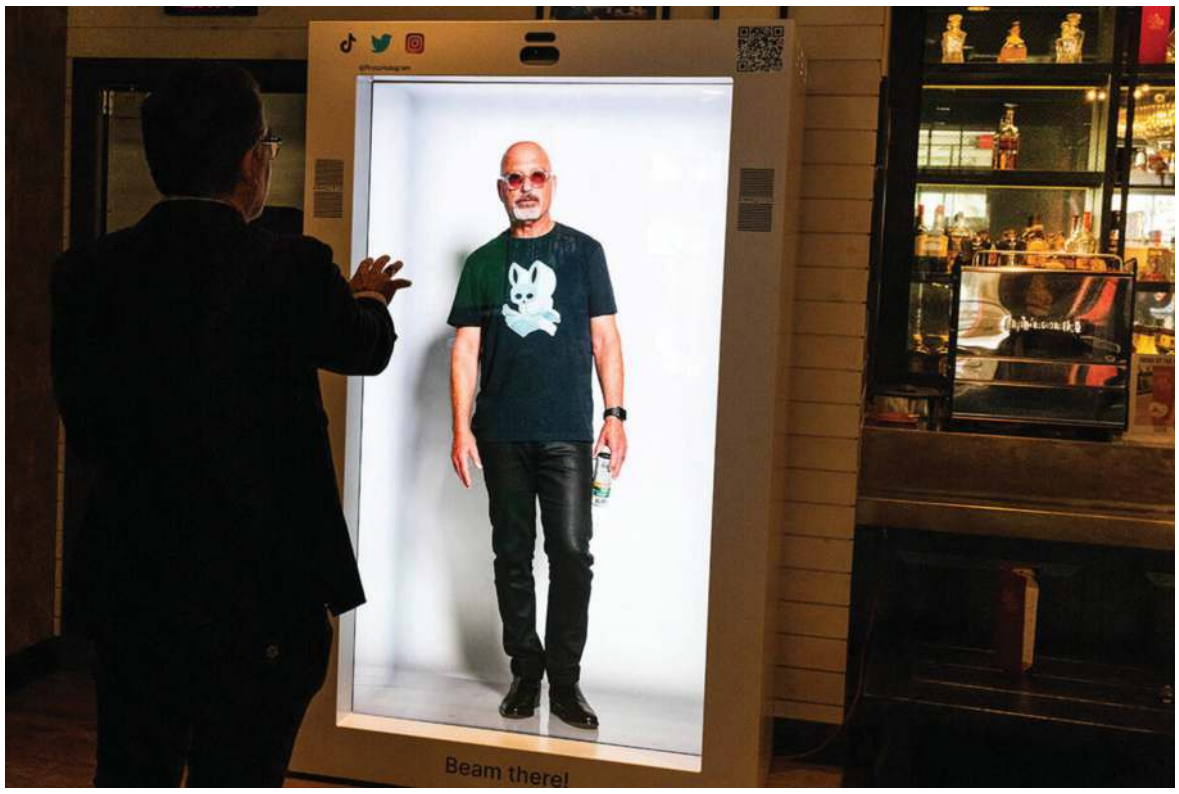
Dolly Parton details her lifetime of elaborate, sparkly looks through the photo-heavy book 'Behind the Seams'

Books, Pages 15-16

Dolly Parton has released a new book, "Behind the Seams: My Life in Rhinestones."
Netflix

Travel & Food — 20-25 Video games — 26-27 Movies — 28-30 Health — 32 Crossword — 34

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



BIZUAYEHU TESFAYE/TNS

Howie Mandel listens to a reporter's question as he appears as a live hologram in a Proto device during an interview with the Las Vegas Review-Journal at the Jimmy Kimmel Comedy Club on Sept. 11 in Las Vegas.

Be anywhere, everywhere

Selfies with celebrities just the start of holographic technology potential

BY JOHN KATSILOMETES
Las Vegas Review-Journal

Howie Mandel was made for Proto, and vice versa.

The legendarily germophobic comic and judge on "America's Got Talent" has found the ideal platform to get up close and personal with fans. Proto is a new form of technology incorporating life-size holographic figures. The machine is displayed in the lobby of Jimmy Kimmel's Comedy Club at Linq Promenade in Las Vegas. Find it, and sometimes Kimmel, next to the bar.

Proto is a big, white, refrigerator-style box with a glass front. It has been accurately described as a phone booth (for those who remember those communications boxes) and a teleporter from "Star Trek's" USS Enterprise.

The human figure, in this case Mandel, appears inside and looks like he is talking while standing near the club's entrance. But he is actually speaking from Proto Studios in Van Nuys, Calif. It's a highly advanced, multidimensional Zoom experience.

"I can see you standing there, with your hand on your hip, in real time," Mandel said. "This could be a meet-and-greet. You could turn around and take a selfie with me if you wanted to. But I can also do so many other things, whether it's entertain, educate, sell you something. There could be graphics on this, as a touch screen. But please, don't touch me."

As Mandel says, Proto makes it possible for a comic to appear on stage and address the crowd or even perform a stand-up set from a remote location. This opens the possibilities that fans can pay to see a star comic perform "live" but not really in the room.

"I can play as many venues as I like and interact with all those audiences at the same time," Mandel said. "I can literally do a world tour and never leave my house."

The 4K video system, from Los Angeles-based Proto, is billed as the world's first holographic communications platform and patented hologram machine that makes "holoportation" a reality.

Proto won four Innovation awards at the 2023 CES show. The company was founded by CEO David Nussbaum in 2019.

Within three years, Nussbaum raised $3 million in venture capital funding for the project. The entrepreneur says Kimmel's Club is just the start of widespread use of the technology, in Las Vegas and elsewhere.

"I can see our technology being used as holographic greeters in lobbies, holographic dealers at tables," Nussbaum said, following Mandel in the Proto box. "I see it also being used as holographic directors and at some concierge services in places like hotels, in restaurants and department stores."

Over the summer, "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" was the first late-night TV show to use Proto, beaming Kimmel and guest Chris Pratt from his studio in Burbank, Calif., to Disneyland to prank parkgoers. Videos from the stunt drew millions of views.

Some of the comedians who have used Proto include Kenan Thompson, Whitney Cummings and Andy Kindler. Jon Stewart's Stand up for Heroes event at Lincoln Center in New York also utilized Proto.

Mandel says within five years, "Proto" is going to be a verb, similar to how smartphone users have adopted "texting" as a communication term.

"This technology is, I think, as exciting as the iPhone was when it came out," Mandel said. "I can be anywhere and everywhere without going anywhere."

"I can play as many venues as I like and interact with all those audiences at the same time. I can literally do a world tour and never leave my house."

Howie Mandel

Protect your iPhone 15 with these new cases

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

With the launch of the new iPhone 15 comes new accessories, with a lot to choose from.

Catalyst hit my inbox first by introducing its new Influence and MagSafe compatible cases for the Apple iPhone 15 series of smartphones. The new rugged Catalyst cases add a layer of protection and a design feature to prevent drops before they happen. They are available in two designs: a standard case ($39.99) and one specifically made for the Apple iPhone MagSafe wireless charging functionality ($59.99).

The Influence cases have several layers of protection, including 2½ times more drop protection than the military standard of 10 feet. They have an anti-slip grip, a removable drop-prevention lanyard and four corner attachments. Users can attach accessories to these corners, such as key rings or carabiners. The cases have patented forwarded-facing audio technology developed for crystal-clear sound. A non-slip grip surrounds the cases while keeping all the iPhone buttons and controls accessible, including the new USB-C charging port.

Catalyst also is releasing Tempered Glass Screen Protectors ($39.99) for all four iPhone 15 sizes. They are ultra-thin and lightweight, maintaining perfect display clarity while providing shatter- and scratch-resistant protection. They are fingerprint-free and case-friendly.

Online: catalystcase.com

The iPhone 15 has a new USB-C connection, which is why Raycon Global's new 3-foot **Magic 180** ($24.99) and the 6-foot **Magic 180 Pro** ($34.99) are game-changers. They feature three interchangeable magnetic attachment charging tips (USB-C, Apple Lightning and micro USB), which can be switched out quickly. They attach to a swiveling 180-degree port to connect to your device at an optimal angle.

Both models are rated to provide 100 watts of power delivery and have a protective neck on both ends. They are both made of durable braided nylon but the Magic 180 Pro also has a slightly thicker, more robust silicon material offering even more protection. The Pro also includes a USB-C to USB-A converter. An additional 3-pack of Magic Tips can be purchased for $9.99.

Online: rayconglobal.com

Zagg has announced XTR3 screen protectors and protective cases infused with Graphene, which they call one of the strongest materials on earth.

Glass XTR3 ($59.99), made with Hexiom impact technology, is touted by Zagg as 10 times stronger than traditional glass screen protection. It also features anti-reflective technology and a smooth coating to reduce the friction of your finger on the display. An EZ Apply installation system is included.

The XTR3 is made with up to 30% post-consumer recycled glass and features blue light filtration with Eyesafe technology. According to Zagg, Graphene is harder than a diamond, yet more elastic than rubber and much stronger than steel.

Among the new cases is the MagSafe-compatible **Milan Snap** ($49.99). It features a semi-transparent surface enhanced with subtle, nature-inspired imagery. The Milan Snap is rated as safe from drops up to 13 feet.

The MagSafe-compatible **Crystal Palace Snap with Kickstand** ($54.99) features an integrated stand for hands-free viewing, which folds back flush with the case when it's not in use. The **Manhattan Snap** ($49.99) is also MagSafe compatible and is designed for the professional traveler who values protection, convenience and sleek sophistication. It has a slim profile, comfortable ripple grip and 13 feet of drop protection.

Zagg's lineup of 12 new iPhone 15 cases can be seen at Zagg.com.

CATALYST/TNS

The Catalyst Influence cases for iPhone 15 offer 2½ times more drop protection than the military standard of 10 feet.

ZAGG/TNS

The Zagg Milan Snap has subtle, nature-inspired imagery and is rated as safe from drops up to 13 feet. It is MagSafe-compatible.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Glitz and a good heart

Dolly Parton traces origins of her style, successful career through photo-centric 'Behind the Seams'

BY EMILY YAHR
The Washington Post

Dolly Parton is used to people staring at her — it comes with the territory as one of the world's most beloved celebrities. But long before she was a cultural icon, she caught a lot of looks with her signature style: big hair, tight skirts, high heels, long nails, heavy makeup. The aesthetic was patterned after a woman in her rural Tennessee hometown to whom everyone referred as the "town tramp," but who Parton thought was absolutely beautiful.

As a result, Parton repeatedly was told as she tried to launch her career as a country singer-songwriter: No one will ever take you seriously if you dress like that.

"I came here when I was 18, and so I guess everybody was probably thinking they were trying to protect me. I was a country girl, too, and they thought I didn't know any better," Parton, 77, told The Washington Post in a recent video interview from Nashville. "And truth is, I didn't. But the greater truth was, I didn't care."

Parton dismissed the critics and doubled down on the flamboyant fashions, now as much a part of her empire's origin story as her legendary singing (more than 100 million records sold; she is the first female country singer to sell 1 million copies of an album) and songwriting (she has confirmed that she wrote "I Will Always Love You" and "Jolene" within the same short time period).

On Oct. 17, Parton released a photo-centric book that traces her fashion journey and career called "Behind the Seams: My Life in Rhinestones," written with Holly Gesorge-Warren and curated by her niece Rebecca Seaver, the director of her archive.

In the book, she describes a powerful country music executive, Chet Atkins, who was concerned that her "big hair and all those gaudy clothes" would hold her back. A few years later, when she became a star, she said, he dryly asked, "Ain't you glad that you listened to me back then?" and promised he wouldn't give her any more advice.

"Behind the Seams" delves into Parton's denim and jumpsuits and sparkles as a rising country star in the 1970s, her elaborate gowns and sparkles as a rising Hollywood star in the 1980s and a mix of it all — plus more sparkles — in the 1990s through the present day. But Parton's main idea is stated plainly at the end of the book, when she emphasizes the lesson that helped propel her into superstardom: "You can't live your life trying to please other people." Wear what makes you feel best, she advises, and it will have a positive effect on everything else, no matter whether others think that your clothes are embedded with too many jewels.

"I just perform better when I shine," Parton said. "When the light hits me, I like to feel the light, I like to walk in the light, whether I'm onstage or not."

She uses the book to answer questions that people may have always wondered: Does she ever re-wear outfits? (Of course.) How does she walk in those high heels? (They're custom-made, but the real answer is "very carefully and very often.") Does she ever wear flats? (That was our question, and she confirmed that she occasionally does if she's doing a workout, but she wished they made high-heeled sneakers, because it feels "very strange.") Who are her style icons? (RuPaul is one of them, and she loves

SEE PARTON ON PAGE 16

Netflix

Dolly Parton, pictured during a 2021 musical tribute on Netflix, has always been famous, but recently she has produced television specials, been inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2022, released a book and next month is scheduled to drop a new rock album.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Netflix

Dolly Parton inspects the wardrobe backstage for the 2019 Netflix series "Dolly Parton's Heartstrings." The main idea of her new book is that "You can't live your life trying to please other people."

Parton: Singer-songwriter also releasing a rock album

FROM PAGE 15

seeing the drag queens dressing as Dolly Parton on "RuPaul's Drag Race.")

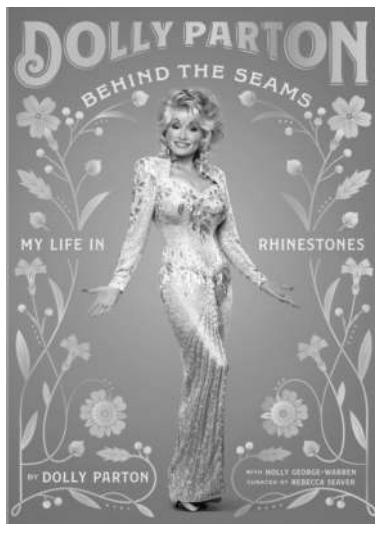
Parton also spends a great deal of time giving credit to anyone who has helped craft her style over the years, such as her mother; her earliest makeup artist; and her longtime creative director, Steve Summers.

"Seeing this book all laid out like that, it gave me a whole new appreciation for them, actually," she said. At one point, her hairstylist started making charts to keep up with her hundreds of wigs that she began wearing when all of the "bleaching, perming, sitting under a hair dryer, and teasing" on TV and on tour became too much for her real hair.

Parton is one of our culture's most outspoken celebrities about undergoing cosmetic surgery. ("I'll look as young as my plastic surgeons will allow me," she told Oprah Winfrey a few years ago, though she has been addressing the topic in interviews for decades.) Still, she doesn't talk much about aging in the book, aside from a mention of how she doesn't love the way her hands now look, so she wears a lot of gloves. But she's completely open about addressing the long-stigmatized subject.

"I've always talked openly about anything that I've ever had done or might do. I say, 'I'm a workhorse that looks like a show horse,'" she said. "So I think as long as you're on camera, you got to make the most of everything. And if you can afford it, and you've got a desire to do it and you're not scared to do it, if it makes you feel better about yourself, I'm for you doing anything."

She's so famous for her candor that it almost seems like a law



that, if Parton is a presenter or host of an awards show, there must be a reference to her breasts. At the 2017 Screen Actors Guild Awards, she joked about security confusing her ID with her "double D's"; at the 2019 Country Music Association Awards, the hosts noted that there were "racks" of clothing backstage, but Parton had "the biggest"; and the 2022 Academy of Country Music Awards made sure to include an Energizer Bunny-Playboy Bunny bit.

Parton reiterated that she's very much in on the joke, and the only thing that bothers her is if someone dwells on the topic for too long.

"We can't very well ignore them, can we?" she said, before making a crack about the "elephants in the room." "That's also a part of my persona and just part of what makes me, me. And I tell better jokes about them than anybody else."

Recently, Parton has experienced something of a Dollyssaince. She's always been supremely famous, but all of a sudden, there was a Netflix series and TV special and podcast

VIJAT MOHINDRA/Butterfly Records

Parton is adding more leather for the promotion of her new rock album, "Rockstar," which drops Nov. 17. She said her new rockstar-themed ensembles reflect her rebellious attitude, which her new book suggests she's had since the beginning of her career.

and buzz about her Imagination Library and charity work, and everyone realized they were absolutely obsessed with her. (Just a scan of the headlines from around 2020 and 2021: "How Dolly Parton became the world's best-loved celebrity"; "How Dolly Parton became a secular American saint"; "Is There Anything We Can All Agree On? Yes: Dolly Parton.")

So it was not shocking last year when she received a nomination to be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame; it was, however, somewhat shocking that she publicly (though kindly) asked that the nomination be revoked, because she didn't feel she had earned it. The Rock Hall refused; ultimately, she was inducted into the 2022 class.

Parton said she truly didn't feel as if she deserved the honor until she learned that the nomination wasn't only for artists categorized as "rock" singers, but also for those who had an impact on many genres, such as fellow country legend Willie Nelson, who will be inducted this year.

"They often put them in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame because they made that much of an influence. And when you're as old as me and Willie Nelson, you think, 'Well, I guess we have kind of influenced a lot of people,'" she said. "So then I thought: 'Well, I'm not going to act ugly about it. And if they're going to put me in there, I will accept it gracefully.' And I did."

Her induction directly inspired her first rock album, "Rockstar," which will drop Nov. 17 — along with some of her new rockstar-themed ensembles, which she said reflect her rebellious attitude. The release features a few original songs and loads of famed covers and collaborations, such as "Let It Be" with Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, Peter Frampton and Mick Fleetwood; "Night Moves" with Chris Stapleton; "What's Up?" with Linda Perry; and "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" with Pink and Brandi Carlile.

"Everybody that I asked did say yes," she said of the long list of celebrity features. She would have loved to include Cher, but although they tried to make it work, they didn't have enough time.

One track she wrote herself was "World on Fire," which includes the lyrics: "Don't get me started on politics. / Now how are we to live in a world like this? / Greedy politicians, present and past, / they wouldn't know the truth if it bit 'em in the ass." Many were surprised to even hear her utter "politics," as one theory about her universal appeal is that she refuses to elaborate on anything political. Even now, Parton says the song was about no one in particular.

"I wasn't talking about Biden and Trump any more than I was talking about all the leaders of the world when I said that line. ... I might as well have said, 'Leaders of the world, present and past, we better make a change and we better make it fast,'" she said, adding that world leaders "are just not doing what we need to do to have a world that we can be happy in." This wasn't political, she insisted; this was her as a concerned citizen.

The album also briefly sparked the rare Parton backlash, as Parton — a longtime advocate of the LGBTQ+ community — received criticism online for a duet on her album with Kid Rock, who recently filmed himself shooting cases of Bud Light after the brand collaborated with transgender actress and influencer Dylan Mulvaney.

"Well, first of all, I had already done that song with Kid Rock before that controversy even started. But I am the kind of person — I accept people for who they are. I try not to criticize, condemn things as much as I just accept people," Parton said. "So I can't speak for Kid Rock. I can't speak for you. I can only speak for me. I try to love people. ... All I can do is love everybody. And if they need to change, that's between them and God."

Parton knows a lot of people are watching her every move. She hears it all the time from the younger generation who discovered her through her appearance on her goddaughter Miley Cyrus' show, "Hannah Montana," or the new singer-songwriters who were inspired by her to move to Nashville.

While she remains flattered that they feel as if they can learn from her journey, she also wants them to be themselves.

"Nobody should be like somebody else. Don't try to be me," she said. "And I never tried to be anybody else. You be you."

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Pop star's personal past

Spears' memoir shares singer's take on public, private events

BY MARIA SHERMAN AND ANDREW DALTON
Associated Press

Britney Spears' memoir "The Woman in Me," released Tuesday, reveals the pop superstar's personal take on events that have played out publicly in her decades as one of the most scrutinized figures in American life, along with private moments that she previously kept under wraps.

The book details her childhood and rise to stardom, along with her marriages, her nearly-14-year court conservatorship and even a brief mention of a July incident where she was hit in the face by security for NBA player Victor Wembanyama.

Much of "The Woman in Me" focuses on the father and sons, the husbands and boyfriends, who have dominated her life, for better and for worse. Several chapters are devoted to her relationship with Justin Timberlake, including deeply personal details about a pregnancy, abortion and painful breakup. In others, she chronicles her custody fight with ex-husband Kevin Federline, and how it fueled what was viewed as a public meltdown.

Spears speaks much less of recent events, making no mention of her pending divorce from Sam Asghari, whom she describes as holding her hand while she addressed a judge during a key hearing that freed her from court control in 2021.

In the opening dedication, she writes simply, "For my boys, who are the loves of my life."

Here are some of the details revealed in "The Woman in Me":

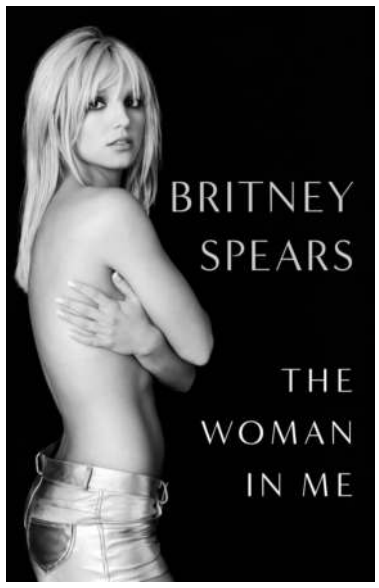
The Timberlake years

For a period at the turn of the millennium, Spears and Timberlake were America's it couple. As Spears writes, they were in love — but purity was a facade. "There were a couple of times during our relationship when I knew Justin had cheated on me. Especially because I was so infatuated and so in love, I let it go, even though the tabloids seemed determined to rub my face in it," she writes.

Although Spears was painted in the press as the unfaithful one, she says she only stepped out on the relationship once, to kiss choreographer Wade Robson, confirming a long-speculated rumor.

She also writes of her pregnancy and Timberlake's dismay, first reported in excerpts published by People last week.

"I'm sure people will hate me for this, but I agreed not to have



the baby. Abortion was something I never could have imagined choosing for myself, but given the circumstances, that is what we did," she writes.

They decided she would not go to a doctor or hospital: "It was important that no one find out about the pregnancy or the abortion, which meant doing everything at home," she writes, adding that they didn't tell her family.

She describes the physical pain of the medication abortion as "excruciating."

"I kept crying and sobbing until it was all over," she writes. "It took hours, and I don't remember how it ended, but I do, 20 years later, remember the pain of it, and the fear."

Magical musical moments

The song that launched Spears' solo career, "... Baby One More Time," was directly inspired by Soft Cell's "Tainted Love." Spears was listening to it the night before she was going in to record with famed Swedish producer Max Martin (who Spears describes simply as "magic.") She wanted to mimic the English synthpop duo's sound, so she stayed up late, giving her voice the fried, raspy tone that would become iconic.

The concept for the music video, too, was her idea. Jive Records wanted her to "play a futuristic astronaut," she writes. "I told the executives at the label that I thought people would want to see my friends and me sitting at school, bored, and then as soon as the bell rang, boom — we'd start dancing."

Heartbreak

She says Timberlake broke up with her via text message while making his 2002 solo debut album, "Justified."

"He started being very standoffish with me. I think that was because he'd decided to use me as ammunition for his record, and so it made it awkward for him to be around me staring at him with all that affection and devotion," she writes.

In the period following the breakup, Spears became isolated, writing that she experienced serious social anxiety.

She found herself living in an apartment alone in New York for a few months, rarely leaving. (One of her few visitors? Madonna, who dreamt up their 2003 kiss at the MTV Video Music Awards as a reclamation of personal autonomy.)

Not long after, Spears felt pressured by her father to do what would become an infamous interview with Diane Sawyer, in which the host pushed her to explain what she did to Justin Timberlake to cause him "so much pain."

"I felt like I had been exploited," she writes, "set up in front of the whole world."

Representatives for Timberlake did not respond to messages seeking comment.

Motherhood and mental health struggles

In 2004, Spears married dancer Kevin Federline and they had two sons together. After the children were born, she says she suffered from perinatal depression, displaying symptoms of sadness, anxiety and fatigue.

"Being a new mom is challenge enough without trying to do everything under a microscope," she writes. "With Kevin away so much, no one was around to see me spiral — except every paparazzo in America."

The couple divorced in 2007.

A custody standoff

Spears describes what she calls a "SWAT team" bursting into a bathroom where she was holding 16-month-old son Jayden, instead of returning him to Federline as required. The moment in January 2008 led to her being hospitalized on a 72-hour psychiatric hold and was a major factor in the establishment of a court conservatorship that took over her life.

She said that amid a custody battle, she felt that Federline and his lawyers were keeping her kids from her for longer and longer stretches. She had already put 2-year-old Sean Preston in the car of a security guard who had come to get him when she became "terrified that I wouldn't get the kids again if I gave them back."

That's when she fled to the bathroom.

AP

"The Woman in Me," the highly anticipated memoir of Britney Spears, shown here in 2019, is now widely available to the public.

"I just couldn't let him go. I didn't want anyone taking my baby," she writes. "Before I knew what was happening, a SWAT team in black suits burst through the bathroom door as if I'd hurt someone."

An attorney for Federline did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

The shaved head

Other moments in her slide toward the conservatorship were anything but private, and Spears gives her take with a degree of emotion previously kept in check by those surrounding her.

She says she shaved her own head at a Los Angeles salon as an act of rebellion against the media, the paparazzi and her family, who expected her to behave like a pretty and proper pop star even though she was "out of my mind with grief" over the custody battle.

"Shaving my head was a way of saying to the world: F— you," she writes.

A few days later at a gas station, she attacked the car of a photographer with an umbrella.

She writes that the man would not stop taunting her and asking her "terrible" questions, including how it felt not seeing her kids, as he smirked, at "one of the worst moments in my whole life." She says he was clearly trying to provoke a reaction, and to her regret she gave him one.

"You can't even do any damage with an umbrella," she says. "It was a desperate move by a desperate person."

Her father takes control

When the court established the conservatorship in February of 2008, Spears said her father, with the power of law behind him, established absolute control over her life decisions and finances, at one point even telling her, "I'm Britney Spears now."

Spears says he forced her to break up with the photographer she had been dating, and subjected anyone else she wanted to date to extensive background checks.

She said he persistently told her she looked fat, and put the staff that surrounded her on strict instructions not to allow her any unapproved food.

But she said she felt that from the start the arrangement existed so that he could pay himself handsomely, while her allowance left her hardly able to buy dinner for her dancers.

"He's always been all about the money," she writes.

An attorney for Spears' father declined comment. But James Spears has said in multiple court filings that he only ever acted in her best interest.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

DANIEL LEAL/TNS

From left: Keith Richards, Ron Wood and Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones pose at a launch event for their new album, "Hackney Diamonds," at Hackney Empire in London on Sept. 6. The 12-track LP is the band's first album of original material since 2005's "A Bigger Bang."

England's oldest hit makers

With their return, the Rolling Stones gather no moss on 'Hackney Diamonds'

BY MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

Seven songs into the vigorous new Rolling Stones album, and there it is: the instantly identifiable thwack of Charlie Watts' snare drum.

A slinky yet propulsive disco-rock jam, "Mess It Up" is one of two tracks on "Hackney Diamonds," the Stones' first set of original material in 18 years, for which Watts laid down his drum parts before he died at age 80 in 2021; the other one, "Live by the Sword," arrives directly after "Mess It Up" and complements Watts' signature wallop with

Elton John on barrelhouse piano and an appearance by the Stones' retired bassist, Bill Wyman.

"It's too late to say you're sorry," Mick Jagger sings in the latter against the swarming guitars of Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood. "And soon it will be gone."

The tunes with Watts serve as a kind of historical anchor on a 12-track LP that otherwise seeks a path forward with help from Steve Jordan, the longtime Stones associate who plays drums on the rest of "Hackney Diamonds," and producer Andrew Watt, a pop hit-maker known for his work with Justin Bieber, Miley Cyrus and Post Malone.

It wants to matter today without betraying yesterday.

You're allowed to wonder, of course, whether the Stones were right to proceed without Watts, whose steadfast drumming didn't just drive the band's music for decades but provided some of its most indelible hooks as well: Think of the bawdy funk groove in "Honky Tonk Women" or the strutting hi-hats in "Miss You"; try to imagine someone else finding their way into a song like Watts did on "Start Me Up."

But moving on is simply what the Stones do, as they established in the '60s and '70s after the departures of Brian Jones and Mick Taylor and as they reminded everyone two years ago when they hit the road mere weeks after Watts' death. Fresh blood in the studio is an old habit too: Remember the Dust Brothers' involvement, a year after Beck's "Odelay," in "Bridges to Babylon"?

Jagger, now the band's senior member at age 80, has said that the Stones recruited Watt because they needed an outside figure to "crack the whip" — a role the producer has fulfilled on recent albums by fellow veterans such as Ozzy Osbourne and Iggy Pop.

And indeed Watt's presence here seems less about moderniz-

SEE STONES ON PAGE 19

WEEKEND: MUSIC

On 'Enlisted,' Morgan gets a little help from his friends

By Maria Sherman
Associated Press

In July, country music star Craig Morgan reenlisted in the Army Reserves on the historic Grand Ole Opry stage. At age 59, the process required a waiver and an extensive physical test. It also inspired the title for the new EP he had been working on: "Enlisted," released Oct. 20.

The six-song collection includes two new tracks and a few reimaginations of his hits, alongside A-list and up-and-coming collaborators like Blake Shelton, Trace Adkins, Luke Combs, Lainey Wilson and Jelly Roll.

The Opry holds particular meaning to Morgan — it's not only a stage he's frequented, but it is also where he spent his last evening with his 19-year-old son Jerry, who drowned in 2016. "After what happened, happened, everything takes on a new meaning," he says. "Us not having his physical presence, (he) was missed."

Previously, Morgan served 17 years in the Army and Army Reserve with the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions as an E-6 Staff Sergeant and Fire Support Specialist. He says he's always regretted not hitting the 20 years of service mark, and reenlisting allows him the opportunity.

Morgan hopes he inspires others to do the same. "Recruiting is the worst that it's been since the inception of the military," he says. "I'm marrying both my worlds, my world of music and my world of military."

As for the EP — Morgan says he wasn't crazy about the idea of re-recording some of his biggest hits. His manager wanted him to redo "Redneck Yacht Club," and he wasn't sure — until he performed another hit, "Almost Home," at the Opry in 2022 with up-and-comer Jelly Roll and was confronted with his songs' impact.

Jelly Roll was almost moved to tears when he described how the song gave him hope. "I realized that 'Almost Home,' what it did for Jelly impacted a whole new audience as well as my old audience," Morgan says. "And I thought there might be a place to revisit these songs."

"Enlisted" features a new recording of the track with Jelly Roll ("He epitomizes what love is," Morgan says of the rapper-turned-country singer. "No barriers, no walls"). Country Music Awards favorite Wilson joins Morgan on "International Harvester."

"Redneck Yacht Club," too, gets a facelift, now with Jimmy Buffet -style steel drums and contributions from Shelton, who was featured in the original 2005 music video.

John Amis/AP

Country star Craig Morgan, 59, reenlisted in the Army Reserves in July, and the process inspired the title of his new EP.

"I absolutely love him. He's my favorite idiot," Morgan says of his longtime friend. "I called him up and said, 'I'm re-cutting some songs. I want you on 'Redneck Yacht Club,' because, I don't know if you remember, but your mullet-ed self was in the video.'" Shelton, of course, said yes.

As for the two new tracks, Morgan partnered with Combs on "Raise the Bar," and Adkins on "That Ain't Gonna Be Me."

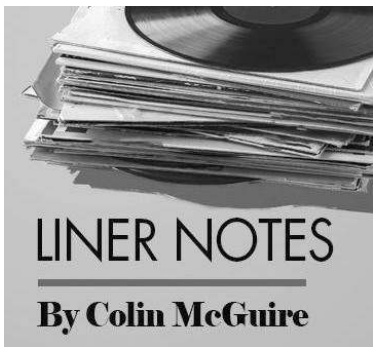
"Enlisted" reworks Morgan's biggest hits and celebrates the current country musician generation. "There's something to be said about singing a song that the majority of our populace wants to be able to relate to, or can relate to," he says. "And that's what great country does, I believe."

'Lahai' cements crooner Sampha's place at forefront of modern R&B

If it's not his silky, quirky, soulful voice, it's the sparseness in the music. If it's not the top-shelf list of collaborators, it's the tastemaker credibility he's garnered over the better part of a decade. If it's not having a track on a list of the best songs of 2010, it's winning the actual Mercury Prize. By whichever metric you choose, Sampha has quietly become one of the most essential voices in modern-day R&B.

And to think. He's only two albums in.

Leave it to album No. 2, "Lahai," to cement the singer's place in forward-thinking soul music for as long as he wants it. The



London-born crooner made no bones about being at his best when he wades in loss on 2017's excellent "Process." His latest set follows that template but takes it to an even more introspective high without having to explicitly outline where his head is at via the spoken word. Instead, he decides to deconstruct his own existential crises with the moody, at times even catchy sonic structures that paint a picture as dark as it is deep, but as bright as it is hopeful.

Take opening track "Stereo Colour Cloud," which combines the ethereal with a trip-hop groove that echoes in and out of consciousness. Only when those drums escape does the singer's thoughtful voice begin to harmonize with itself, creating a fun energy that isn't always promised from a Sampha song. Once the track begins to explore its final third and the "I miss you" refrain settles into a brilliant pattern, you're ready to fully dive into the most sonically pleasing therapy session popular music has seen all year.

Traveling directly to "Spirit 2.0" proves as much. Released in June as the set's lead single, the track is made to stick in your soul, complete with choral bounce and Sampha's undeniable vocal accents.

"Jonathan L. Seagull" continues that trend with a decidedly more gospel texture, utilizing to the fullest some piano and a spacey falsetto courtesy of the leading man. "Evidence" is then unspeakably pretty while keeping true to the singer's moody formula. Built around the idea that "you're enough evidence for me," it embodies everything Sampha confronts on this album even if neither he nor the listener can pinpoint precisely what that is.

No matter. That's what makes an artist like this so special. When you can combine the ambiguous with the universal, the width of your connectivity is almost entirely unmatched. "Lahai" proves that Sampha stands peerless among those who think critically, feel intensely and express fearlessly.

It's a scary combination — and it's one you have to hope he never stops exploring.

Stones: Icons prove they still have it on latest star-filled set

FROM PAGE 18

ing than about streamlining; there are no obvious synth sounds or tinny trap beats, though Jagger does seem to be singing about Instagram in "Mess It Up," where he accuses someone of having "shared my photos with all your friends." (Maybe that viral shot at the Thirsty Beaver wasn't his idea.)

The songs blend the same ingredients the Stones have been using since the beginning — blues, rock, soul, country, gospel — but they're tighter and punchier than on any of the band's previous late-era LPs. Catchier too: "Hackney Diamonds" — the title refers to broken car windows in a once-rough East London neighborhood — opens rat-a-tat with three cuts Watt co-wrote with Jagger and Richards, each with a sticky melody you can almost imagine catching hold on TikTok. "Angry" and "Get Close" are fuzzed-out rockers built around dive-bombing guitar riffs; "Depending on You" is a country-ish lope with a disarmingly tender vocal from Jagger, who spends most of the album sneering rather than swooning.

"Bite My Head Off," with more sharp-angled licks from Richards and Wood — and a punky bass line played by Paul McCartney — has the frontman happily yowling about "f—ing with your brain," while "Live by the Sword" offers up a series of dubious wise-guy aphorisms: "If you look like a whore, better be hardcore / If you live by the clock, well, you're in for a shock." Jagger's singing is strong throughout "Hackney Diamonds," not least in "Driving Me Too Hard," another gaslighting lover's complaint after "Angry" and "Bite My Head Off" in which he reaches notes you might have thought were beyond him.

Wisely, though, Watt seems most interested in showcasing the Stones' glorious guitars, which keep threatening to overflow the tidy structures of these songs. Flinty, unpredictable, endlessly splintering: Even after half a century, nobody has come close to replicating the weave of sound Richards and Wood can still get in a song like the surging "Whole Wide World" or "Driving Me Too Hard," which echoes the cascading effect of "Tumbling Dice."

As the group's timekeeper, Jordan maintains a steady if recognizably human pulse beneath it all.

"Hackney Diamonds" closes, intriguingly, with two songs that roll back the album's high-polish approach. First is "Sweet Sounds of Heaven," a shaggy, slow-building R&B epic with shrieking guest vocals from Lady Gaga and churchy keys by Stevie Wonder. Second is a seriously stripped-down rendition of the Muddy Waters tune that inspired the band's name: "Rolling Stone Blues," presented here with just Jagger singing and playing harmonica and Richards scratching at his guitar like it was a mosquito bite.

For a band as long-lived as this one, it's probably foolish to hear the song as a denouement. But then you can't defy an expectation without setting one first.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

The character and characters of Rothenburg

Many consider Germany's Rothenburg ob der Tauber to be the best-preserved medieval town in Europe ... and many also consider it a horrible tourist trap. It's true that everyone in the town makes their living from tourism, and the storybook streets are indeed stampeded midday by visiting tour groups. The town even created its own "traditional" pastry — the Schneeball (snowball) — to complement all the faux traditional Christmas ornaments it sells.

Yet when I pass through its medieval gates, I feel like a kid who just got a three-day pass for all the rides at Disneyland. I love Rothenburg, but I've long wondered why, exactly.

Perhaps it's because medieval life comes alive in its cobbled alleys. The ramparts are intact — complete with arrow slits. Half-timbered buildings show old-time lofts with warehouse doors and pulleys on top for hoisting (the lofts were once filled with a year's supply of grain so the town could survive any siege). The Night Watchman stokes his lamp and walks wide-eyed tourists through the back lanes telling stories of hot oil and great plagues. The monastery garden still has its medicinal herbs. And the Medieval Crime and Punishment Museum shows graphically how people were disciplined back when life was nasty, brutish and short.

On one visit, I finally realized why I like Rothenburg so much. In spite of its Schneeballen, constant tour groups and Christmas trinkets, it is a community of real characters. And a small enough community where all the characters know each other.

Norry — the man whose guest-house was so old and mustache so droopy that the "Addams Family" theme song would get stuck in my head with each visit — invented a cross between a trombone and a saxophone that he calls a Norryphone. Now with each visit I boogie on his honky-tonk piano while Norry improvises.

Across town is Mario's "Old Franconian Wine Stube." Mario — a bohemian chef and Gene Wilder look-alike — fastidiously checks each dinner plate as it leaves his kitchen. (He also rents cozy rooms upstairs that have an upscale "Lord of the Rings" atmosphere.)

Rick Steves

Spry Klaus, who runs a B&B above his grocery store, used to take travelers jogging with him each evening. Marie-Therese sold kitschy German knickknacks so enthusiastically that when she took me to her house for dinner, I felt like I'd entered the innards of a cuckoo clock. Every time I walk under her house, I remember the old woman who lived in the wall who loved showing off her World War II bullet wound. She's gone now.

I sense no competition among the town's many shopkeepers. At the An Ra Mode shop, Anett sells her flowery clothes, but she also started an initiative called "Handmade in Rothenburg," a coalition between 10 local business owners who meet weekly to support each other and collaborate on ideas to strengthen the community. Businesses here are often passed down from generation to generation.

Take the Friese Shop — cuckoo with friendliness, trinkets and souvenirs — which has been open for more than 90 years. Long owned and operated for many years by Anneliese, it's now lovingly run by her son, with help from his daughter, nieces and their friend.

On my last evening in town, everyone seemed to be at Mario's. Norry was playing chess with Martin, the potter at the next table.

Europe Through the Back Door staff

Rick Steves jams with Rothenburg resident Norry playing his "Norryphone."

I've noticed that, for observant travelers, some of the best social moments combust among hotel and restaurant staff after a long day of work, and after most guests have said "ciao." It happens in a pub after hours in Galway when the door is locked and the musicians play on. It happens on the Italian Riviera when the anchovies are eaten, the dishes are washed and the guitars come out. And in small-town German hotels when a family and the hired help stow their workplace hierarchy with their aprons and take out a special bottle of wine.

I told Mario of a wonderful hotel I'd just found, run by a man who reminds me of the Wizard of Oz enjoying a relaxed retirement. He concurred and marveled at how I am able to uncover the characters of the town.

I marvel at — in Rothenburg — how easy that is.

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

Europe has its share of suitably spooky destinations

When it comes to eerie environments, it's hard to beat that of structures built ages back and long abandoned. To experience vibes in sync with the spooky season, consider a visit to one of these destinations:

Craco, Italy: The province of Matera, in Basilicata, the arch of Italy's boot, is home to an abandoned village that has served as the set for many films, including "The Passion of the Christ" and the James Bond 007 film "Quantum of Solace." Founded by the Greeks in the sixth century, the village clung to life until 1963, when the pressure wrought by constant expansion led to a devastating landslide and forced the evacuation of the town. Visitors can stroll among the ruins and walk through the alleys of what was once a thriving hilltop town built amid a barren, craggy landscape. Access to the village is allowed only to those accompanied by an accredited guide. They must also purchase entry cards for 13 euros, available online. Craco can be visited from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. daily from April 1 to Oct. 31 and from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Fridays through Sundays from Nov. 1-March 31. For tickets, go to oltrelartecraco.it/tickets

Karen Bradbury

Pydna, Germany: Pydna, also known as Wueschheim Air Station, is a former American missile base in Kastellaun, in the Hunsruck region of the Rhineland-Palatinate. Where various weapons, including those with nuclear capabilities, once stood ready to strike, tens of thousands of fans of electronic music gather annually to dance and celebrate life in these rather unsettling surroundings. Festival facilities use the same bunkers that once held missles under the operational control of the 38th Tactical Missile Wing of the U.S. Air Force. Those wishing to party in a place that might have served as the launchpad to the destruction of humanity should plan now to attend the next upcoming Nature One festival, slated for Aug. 1-4 in 2024. Admission is restricted to those aged 16 or over, and tickets go for 109 euros plus booking fees. Online: nature-one.de/en/ticket

iStock

Skulls abound in the catacombs of Paris.

Heidelberg, Germany: Heidelberg was one of several German cities in which a type of amphitheater and gathering site known as a Thing was constructed at the beginning of the Nazi era. These structures were conceived and built as grand-scale projects for the staging of events meant to pique a sense of awe and nationalistic sentiment. For extra wow factor, Heidelberg's Thing was built atop the city's so-called Holy Mountain. The Thing's post-war era roles have included hosting jazz concerts organized by the U.S. forces and nocturnal gatherings on Walpurgis Night, a night when witches are believed to gather and cast their spells.

The still-intact structure is easily reached by means of a brisk uphill walk on a forested trail winding high above the well-known Philosopher's Way. Entry is free. Online: heidelberg.de/hd/HD/Besuchen/thingstaette.html

Paris: While many visitors to the City of Light have heard of the city's famous catacombs, far fewer of them have actually ventured into their depths. Those with a penchant for the macabre can trade views of fine art and colossal architecture for that of vaults housing the remains of countless souls tranferred from Paris' cemeteries in the late 1700s into the depths of a disused quarry in an attempt to protect public health. It takes about one hour to walk the mile-long, five-story underground route leading past these final resting places. Tickets to the ossuary, which go for 10 euros and up, must be booked online at least seven days in advance over the official website. Online: catacombes.paris.fr/en

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ROBINSON CHÁVEZ/The Washington Post

Sea turtles feed at a shallow reef in Napili. Hawaii laws protect endangered, threatened and indigenous species, including all turtles.

How to be a good guest on Maui

4 ways to share the responsibility, travel righteously as tourism returns after August wildfires

BY ANDREA SACHS
The Washington Post

For visitors headed to Maui, the etiquette lessons begin in the air.

Shortly before an American Airlines flight landed at Kahului Airport, a video appeared on seat-back screens. In the short film, passengers learned about "kuleana," the Hawaiian word for "responsibility."

"Kuleana is at the heart of our culture," the narrator intoned over images of a group joyfully digging their hands into mucky earth. "And as guests in our home, we ask that you share our kuleana during your stay."

The video is part of the Hawaii Tourism Authority's "Malama Hawai'i" campaign. (Malama means to care for, protect and preserve.) To alleviate the pressure of overtourism on its culture and natural resources, the state is asking visitors to give back. This appeal has grown even louder following the August wildfires that devastated Lahaina.

The phased reopening of West Maui, which started on Oct. 8, has ushered in a new era of tourism, so these instructions may be more important than ever.

"We want you to leave the place better than you found it," said Mufi Hannemann, president and chief executive of the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association.

For visitors new to regenerative tourism, Hawaii officials and residents offer tips for traveling "pono," or righteously. And unlike the islands' fruits and vegetables, which must remain in the state, you can take these best practices home with you.

Be kind and patient

As we learned during the coronavirus pandemic, you don't know what hardships someone may be experiencing. In Maui, this is especially true.

When engaging with locals, be thoughtful and kind. Even a seemingly benign question like, "How are you?" can be loaded. When interacting with hospitality workers, exude empathy and practice patience. Some establishments are still short-staffed or have recently welcomed back islanders who lost loved ones or their homes.

"Please be mindful of what everybody's going through," said Gregg Nelson, general manager of the Napili Kai Beach Resort, which reopened on Oct. 8. "The staff is ready to welcome people back, but at the same time, they are a little apprehensive and worried about what guests are going to ask them."

Keep exchanges simple with an "Aloha" and "Mahalo," if you feel comfortable using the Hawaiian language.

Immerse yourself in Hawaiian culture

For a deeper understanding of Hawaii's centuries-old culture and traditions, go beyond the luau.

"People come here and want to experience the paradise," said Paula Martinez, volunteer coordinator at the Hua Momona Farms, "but it would be more valuable if tourists immersed themselves in more of the culture and really learn about the history of Hawaii."

Though wildfires destroyed Lahaina's historic district, the island is home to many other historical and cultural attractions, such as the Iao Valley State Monument (reservations required for out-of-state visitors) and the Sugar Museum. In addition to an art gallery, the Maui Center for Arts and Culture hosts some of the island's biggest events, such as the Maui Ukulele Festival, the Hawaii International Film Festival and the Hawaiian Airlines Made in Maui County Festival, which combines two tenets of regenerative tourism — a cultural deep dive centered on local products.

To graduate from observer to participant, attend a cultural workshop. Whalers Village in Kaanapali has resumed its free classes in ukulele, coconut-frond weaving and hula dancing.

Volunteer in the kitchen or with pets

On Maui, dedicating a few hours of your vacation time to helping others is more critical and appreciated than ever. Once the urgent needs subside, visitors can continue volunteering.

"Tourists who come might do a beach cleanup or they might do a tree planting," said Maui Mayor Richard Bissen. "They can do something that benefits the island."

Maui visitors can easily find volunteer opportunities that match their interests and schedules. Maui Nui Strong and Hungry Heroes Hawaii (HHH) are valuable hubs of information. For instance, HHH has sign-ups for Upcountry Kitchen in Kula and Hua Momona Farms, which in addition to meal-prep shifts seeks help with harvesting.

For guests more keen on working in nature than in the kitchen, Maui Cultural Lands holds volunteer outings every Saturday. Guests help with preservation projects in the Honokowai Valley, an archaeologically and ecologically rich area. Tasks have included clearing rock walls and heiau, an ancient Hawaiian temple, and planting native flora.

"We do 90 minutes of work and have lunch and talk story," said Ekolu Lindsey III, the organization's president. "I will walk people around and introduce them to whatever they're interested in."

Maui Humane Society rescued so many animals from Lahaina's burn site that it had to open a second facility. At its main center in Puunene, volunteers can comfort cats recovering from singed whiskers and burned paws. The nonprofit suspended its Beach Buddies program but is still running Dog on Demand, a similar experience. Depending on availability, visitors can take a dog on a daylong adventure. Each pup comes with a doggy backpack filled with supplies and recommendations for canine-friendly beaches and hikes.

Because of the airlines' restrictions on transporting animals from Hawaii, the organization is seeking volunteers who can escort a dog or cat to the mainland. Upon arrival, the receiving shelter will oversee the animal's care and adoption.

Protect the ocean environment

As director of sustainable tourism with Trilogy Excursions, Capt. Riley Coon has strong opinions about skin care.

"Spraying sunscreen is not cool," he said, referring to the harmful nanoparticles contained in some types of sprays that can hurt the environment. For an eco-friendly alternative, he recommends sun-protective clothing and a little zinc oxide on the face.

If you can't change your sunscreen preferences, choose a reef-safe variety. Since 2021, Hawaii has banned products containing oxybenzone and octinoxate, which endanger coral.

On the beach and in the water, give marine life a wide berth to avoid stressing the animals and, depending on the species, violating the law. (Hawaii laws protect endangered, threatened and indigenous species including humpback whales, Hawaiian monk seals, numerous species of dolphins and all turtles.) Also, don't use the coral as a bench or step stool.

Before heading to the beach, pick up a marine debris monitoring collection bag at the PacWhale Eco-Adventures' Ocean Store in Wailuku. The MOC Marine Institute also offers beach cleanup kits with 72-hour advance notice. Elsewhere in the state, Sustainable Coastlines Hawaii organizes large-scale cleanups and outreach events. The Ocean Conservancy offers a guide for DIY beach missions.

The marine institute rescues, rehabs and releases injured sea turtles. Because of limited access in Lahaina, its staff have not been able to keep as close an eye on the sea turtles as before the fires. If you notice a turtle in distress, call the hotline at 808-286-2549.

Gems from the stems

Family tour of Giffords Hall Vineyard in England is quite the grape escape

BY KYLE ALVAREZ
Stars and Stripes

A vineyard may not be a place many people think to visit when they're in England. But maybe it should be.

My time in England has been filled with adventures in castles and natural landmarks, but a tour of Giffords Hall Vineyard gave my family a new, tasty perspective on the country we have called home for the past 2½ years.

On a sunny Tuesday afternoon, my wife, kids and I were given a personal tour by Linda Howard, the owner of Giffords Hall. Her warm, funny personality was a delight, and she shared with us her plethora of knowledge about viniculture.

Linda and her late husband, Guy, took over the vineyard in 2005 and have won nine awards since opening their brand in 2009.

She walked us around the grounds, explaining the assortment of grapes and pointing out what makes each varietal special. She even let us eat grapes straight from the vine, which our children thoroughly enjoyed.

We also were introduced to her flock of black sheep, which wander throughout the paddocks. Two magnificent rams are named after her celebrity crushes, Daniel Craig and Prince Caspian.

The sheep are given free rein and help the vineyard practice minimal intervention principles as part of the Sustainable Wines of Great Britain program.

The vineyard is set on 19 acres of ancient glacial riverbed and hosts native flora and fauna such as deer, hares and owls.

After touring the grape-growing areas, we headed to the winery, where we met Woody, a minority partner who was monitoring the fermentation process.

He showed us the large stainless steel barrels filled with white grape juice and explained the way the grapes are pressed. Whenever I hear that topic discussed, I can't help but recall the famous "I Love Lucy" episode where Lucy and Ethel are stomping around in giant barrels filled with grapes.

Thankfully, Giffords Hall employs a much more hygienic and efficient method, a large stainless steel press that gently squeezes the grapes.

During harvest season, Giffords Hall hires seasonal workers to hand-pick the grapes. They include a family of Romanians who have been doing the job for 14 years and Ukrainian refugees who came after fleeing the Russian invasion of their country.

From the fermentation area, we were taken to a barn where we saw square containers filled with "baby wine" and a Macedonian winemaker hard at work.

My wife took a sip straight from the containers and said it tasted how it was described: baby wine. She described it as a bit sweet. The grape flavor stood out due to being in transition from grape juice with alcohol to the final fermented product.

After being shown the barrels in which red wines are fermented, my wife and I enjoyed our wine tasting right inside the barn. Besides the cheese and wine pairing the two of us chose, my wife opted for an additional sparkling wine flight.

The Edmundsbury, a pinot noir and rondo blend known as Red Ed, was my favorite. It had a subtle flavor, and the cranberry notes in it stood out to me.

I also appreciated that it didn't taste too sweet. Compared with other red wines I've had, this one was light and airy.

Giffords Hall Vineyard

Address: Hartest, Bury St Edmunds, England
Prices: Dependent on group size and package. Small (2-6 people) from 44 to 73.75 pounds per person. Larger groups get bigger discounts per person.
Hours: Tuesday through Sunday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Information: Online: giffordshall.co.uk; Phone: +44 01284 830799

Kyle Alvarez

PHOTOS BY KYLE ALVAREZ/Stars and Stripes

Grapes hang on a vine Oct. 17 at Giffords Hall Vineyard in Bury St Edmunds, England. The vineyard is on a 19-acre glacial riverbed, which allows for certain varietals of grapes to thrive.

The sign at the entrance to Giffords Hall Vineyard.

A sparkling wine flight at Giffords Hall Vineyard.

Penelope Alvarez eats grapes picked off the vine at Giffords Hall Vineyard.

Linda Howard, the owner of Giffords Hall Vineyard, explains the fermentation process in the vineyard barn. The winemaker is hard at work in the background.

My wife's favorite was the bacchus, which she described as dry but with hints of vanilla and an almost champagne aftertaste.

Our tour ended with a visit to the gift shop, where we stocked up on our favorite wines from the tasting and bought souvenirs.

England isn't a place I ever thought of for its wine. But we learned that as the world gets warmer, top winemakers have been purchasing land in East Anglia for growing quality grapes.

Giffords Hall is among those who have pioneered the growing fine wine culture in England, and I can't wait to bring our friends and family back for a visit.

alvarez.kyle@stripes.com
@Kal2931

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

PHOTOS BY ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

Muu Mozzarella celebrates the heritage of mozzarella di bufala Campana DOP through reimagined versions of traditional Neapolitan cuisine. The restaurant has two locations in Naples as well as eateries in Milan and Caserta.

More mozzarella cheese, please!

Muu eateries in Italy use the ingredient and other buffalo milk products in inventive ways

AFTER HOURS ITALY

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

It's hard to overstate the pleasure of good mozzarella di bufala Campana.

The semisoft cheese made from the milk of the Italian Mediterranean water buffalo is shaped and cut by hand into porcelain-like balls of varying sizes. If you haven't tried it, you're missing out.

Muu Mozzarella was founded by two Neapolitans who clearly love the cheese. Their menu is focused on mozzarella and other buffalo milk products, which they use for a fresh take on traditional dishes.

Mozzarella often is served with tomatoes and basil or cured meats, and during the summer with melon, in the four regions of central and southern Italy where the cheese has the official protected origin appellation known as DOP.

The simpler arrangements highlight the scent of fresh milk upon cutting into the cheese, which yields to a slight grassy flavor that is both delicate and intense.

Muu inventively uses mozzarella and other buffalo milk products to replace some ingredients typical of Neapolitan cooking. For instance, a Pink Lady apple accompanied by bite-sized mozzarella balls tossed in basil pesto.

Fried zucchini flowers stuffed with buffalo ricotta and seasoned with Sichuan pepper.

Nerano di bufala, a vegetarian pasta dish made with zucchini and three types of cheeses.

Rattacasa is Muu's take on the traditional Neapolitan favorite of pasta with potatoes. It uses smoked buffalo mozzarella instead of provolone.

There is also sausage and friarelli, or broccoli rabe, tacos with smoked buffalo cream, warm potato chips with a smoked buffalo fondue and a deconstructed cannoli made with buffalo ricotta.

Moving down the menu, the variety of salads, sandwiches, pasta, fish and meat entrees leaves plenty to consider.

During a recent visit, my companion and I opted to start with a southern Italian favorite, fried zucchini flowers. In this case, the dish was reimagined with buffalo ricotta and Sichuan pepper. It arrived hot and with the flowers visible under a crispy breaded crust.

I often find this appetizer disappointing because it can be heavy and flavorless. But Muu's version was light, balanced and not overcooked. The lightly seasoned ricotta added richness but did not overwhelm the delicate flavor of the flower. I didn't taste the pepper but didn't miss it.

For my entree, I was tempted to try the latte e pepe, fresh square-cut spaghetti cooked in buffalo milk with lemon, pepper and a pistachio garnish. But I couldn't resist the rattacasa, Muu's take on the traditional Neapolitan pasta with potatoes and smoked provola cheese.

It arrived in a metal pan topped with a lid that also functioned as a grater for an accompanying cube of Parmesan cheese.

Muu's version used smoked buffalo mozzarella to give the dish a rich sauce that nicely coated the pasta and potatoes, with plenty left over for scraping up with fresh bread.

The smoked cheese offered heft without the heaviness typical of this comfort-food favorite. I'd happily order it again.

We also tried the Nerano di bufala, fresh pacchero pasta with zucchini cream, and buffalo caciocavallo and pecorino cheeses. The dish was dotted with stracciatella buffalo cheese and garnished with zucchini chips.

My dining companion enjoyed the velvety zucchini sauce but found the pasta a bit too al dente. I thought the dish lacked the flavor punch of spaghetti alla Nerano, which is traditionally made with fried zucchini, provolone del Monaco cheese and basil.

While the zucchini chips were reminiscent of the traditional version's, they didn't add much to the dish except for an unpleasant crunchiness.

For dessert, we turned down tiramisu and cheesecake for the cannolo scomposto featuring buffalo ricotta, chocolate chips and homemade dulce de leche wafers.

The whipped, lightly sweetened buffalo ricotta was the star of this treat, which included a drizzle of dulce de leche. While I found the wafers bland, my counterpart appreciated their thinness and crunch.

With its bright, modern decor, excellent service and emphasis on putting a new twist on old Italian favorites, Muu is sure to make Italy's mozzarella di bufala producers proud.

bath.alison@stripes.com
@alisonbath_

Muu Mozzarella

Address: Via Partenope, 18, Naples. There are also branches in the Chiaia neighborhood, Milan and Caserta.
Hours: Noon to 1 a.m. daily
Prices: Appetizers and light bites, 6-14 euros; charcuterie platters, 30 euros; pasta, 12-16 euros; fish and meat, 14-18 euros; salads, 10-14 euros; desserts, 7 euros. Beer, wine and liqueurs available by the glass or bottle ranging from 3-90 euros.
Information: Phone: +39 081 764 4540, Online: muumozzarella.it

Alison Bath

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Sickening scares at haunted hospital

Fuji-Q Highland park attraction possibly the largest, most terrifying worldwide

BY KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

Those who dare to take on the Super Scary Labyrinth of Fear will find the abandoned Jikyu General Hospital at the back of the Fuji-Q Highland theme park. It'll take nearly an hour to navigate the decrepit structure, and those who enter are not allowed to turn back.

At Fuji-Q Highland, a theme park near the base of Mount Fuji, lies what some consider to be the largest and most frightening haunted house in the world.

Those who muster the courage to seek out the Super Scary Labyrinth of Fear will find the abandoned Jikyu General Hospital at the back of the park.

It'll take nearly an hour to navigate the decrepit structure, which is surrounded by warning signs and a creepy-looking stone wall topped with barbed wire.

Once inside, you'll be guided to a large room with a big screen showing a video that explains in Japanese how zombies and ghosts have overrun the hospital. Be sure to glance up here for a surprise.

Then your group — between one and six people — will be set loose to wander the two-story hospital's dark halls and creepy rooms with only a tiny flashlight.

I ventured alone, though I bumped into several groups that told me to go ahead of them; they looked too frightened to proceed.

Those who enter are not allowed to turn back, though emergency exits do exist for the extremely faint of heart. I witnessed four people bail out due to fear.

My favorite part was the decaying morgue. The room was cold and featured dead bodies lying on cadaver trollies. Some were in body bags, while others were sliced open or missing limbs from some brutal accident.

No more spoilers, but I will reveal that the most frightening part, for me, involved an elevator and one of my deepest fears.

Labyrinth of Fear tickets — 4,000 yen (nearly $27) for parkgoers with a one-day pass; 8,000 yen otherwise — often sell out quickly; guests are advised to arrive at Fuji-Q Highland early to secure a time slot for the experience. Tickets can be purchased near the attraction.

When I went at noonish on a Saturday, only a handful of tickets remained for later in the day.

Be advised: elementary school students must be accompanied by someone who is junior high school age or older. There are steps in the building, so those who cannot climb stairs should not enter. No photography or videography is allowed inside the attraction.

agee.kelly@stripes.com
@KellyA_Stripes

KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

Some consider the Super Scary Labyrinth of Fear, staged inside the abandoned Jikyu General Hospital in Japan's Fuji-Q Highland, to be the largest and most frightening haunted house attraction in the world.

AARON KIDD/Stars and Stripes

Fuji-Q Highland is a popular Japanese amusement park near the base of Mount Fuji.

On the QT

Directions: Inside Fuji-Q Highland amusement park, about two hours or less by car from area military bases. 5-6-1 Shinnishihara, Fujiyoshida, Yamanashi 403-0017
Times: Open daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Costs: 4,000 yen for patrons with a one-day pass; 8,000 yen otherwise.
Food: There are a plethora of options throughout the park.
Information: Online: fujiq.jp

Kelly Agee

NEW TO THE PACIFIC?
Contact CustomerHelp@stripes.com to get your free copy of
Welcome to the Pacific magazine!
STARS AND STRIPES
Digital edition also available. Download online.

WEEKEND: FOOD

Delicious or disgusting?

Love it or hate it, feelings run high over seasonal candy corn treat

BY LEANNE ITALIE
Associated Press

Cruel joke for trick-or-treaters or coveted seasonal delight? The great Halloween debate over candy corn is on.

In the pantheon of high-emotion candy, the classic shiny tricolor kernels in autumn's white, orange and yellow are way up there. Fans and foes alike point to the same attributes: its plastic or candle-like texture (depending on whom you ask) and the mega-sugar hit it packs.

"I am vehemently pro candy corn. It's sugar! What is not to love? It's amazing. It's like this waxy texture. You get to eat it once a year. It's tricolor. That's always fun," comedian Shannon Fiedler gushed on TikTok. "Also, I know it's disgusting. Candy corn is objectively kind of gross, but that's what makes it good."

Or, as Paul Zarcone of Huntington, N.Y., put it: "I love candy corn even though it looks like it should taste like a candle. I also like that many people hate it. It makes me like it even more!"

Love it or loathe it, market leader Brach's churns out roughly 30 million pounds of candy corn for the fall season each year, or enough to circle planet Earth about five times, the company says. Last year, that amounted to $75 million of $88.5 million in candy corn sales, according to the consumer research firm Circana.

When compared to top chocolate sellers and other popular confections, candy corn is niche. But few other candies have seeped into the culture quite like these pointy little sugar bombs.

While other sweets have their haters (we're looking at you Peeps, Circus Peanuts and Brach's Peppermint Christmas Nougats), candy corn has launched a world of memes on social media. It inspires home decor and fashion. It has its knitters and crocheters, ombre hairdos, makeup enthusiasts and nail designs.

And it makes its way into nut bowls, trail mixes, atop cupcakes and into Rice Krispie treats. Vans put out a pair of shoes emblazoned with candy corn, Nike used its color design for a pair of Dunks, and Kellogg's borrowed the flavor profile for a version of its Corn Pops cereal.

Singer-actor Michelle Williams is a super fan. She recorded a song last year for Brach's extolling her love.

As consumers rave or rage, Brach's has turned to fresh mixes and flavors over the years. A Turkey Dinner mix appeared in 2020 and lasted two years. It had a variety of kernels that tasted like green beans, roasted bird, cranberry sauce, stuffing, apple pie and coffee.

It won't be back.

"I would say that it was newsworthy, but perhaps not consumption-worthy," said Katie Duffy, vice president and general manager of seasonal candy and the Brach's brand for parent Ferrara Candy Co.

The universe of other flavors has included s'mores, blueberry, cotton candy, lemon-lime, chocolate and, yes, pumpkin spice. Nerds, another Ferrara brand, has a hard-shell version.

It's unclear when candy corn was invented. Legend has it that Wunderle Candy Co. in Philadelphia first produced it in 1888 in collaboration with a longtime employee, George Renninger. It was called, simply, Butter Cream, with one type named Chicken Corn. That made sense in an agrarian-society kind of way.

Several years later, the Goelitz Confectionery Co., now Jelly Belly, began to produce candy corn, calling it Chicken Feed. Boxes were adorned with a rooster logo and the tagline: "Something worth crowing for." Brach's began candy corn production in 1920.

Today, kids delight in stacking candy corn in a circle, points in, to create corncob towers. As for nutrition, 19 candy corns amount to about 140 calories and 28 grams of sugar. To be fair, many other Halloween candy staples are in the same ballpark.

Ingredient-wise, it couldn't be more straightforward. Candy corn is basically sugar, corn syrup, confectioner's glaze, salt, gelatin, honey and dyes, among some other things.

Candy corn fans have their nibbling rituals.

Margie Sung is a purist. She's been partial since childhood to the original tricolor kernels. She eats them by color, starting with the white tip, accompanied by a warm cup of tea or coffee.

"To this day, I swear the colors taste different," she laughed.

Fact check: No, according to Duffy.

Don't get people started on Brach's little orange pumpkin candies with the green tops. That's a whole other conversation.

JULIA RUBIN/AP

Halloween wouldn't be the same without a debate over candy corn.

"The candy pumpkins? Disgusting," said the 59-year-old Sung, who lives in New York. "Too dense, too sweet, not the right consistency."

She likes her candy corn "borderline stale for a better consistency." Sung added: "Unfortunately, I can't eat too many because I'm a Type 2 diabetic."

Aaron Sadler, the 46-year-old spokesman for the city of Little Rock, Ark., and its mayor, doesn't share his candy corn. He keeps stashes at home and in a desk drawer at his office.

"My fiancee can't stand that I like candy corn," he said. "I buy it and I get this look of disdain but I don't care. I just keep plugging on."

To the haters, 71-year-old fan Diana Peacock of Grand Junction, Colo., scolded: "They're nuts. How can they not like it?"

Au contraire, Jennifer Walker fights back. The 50-year-old Walker, who lives in Ontario, Canada, called candy corn "big ole lumps of dyed sugar. There's no flavor."

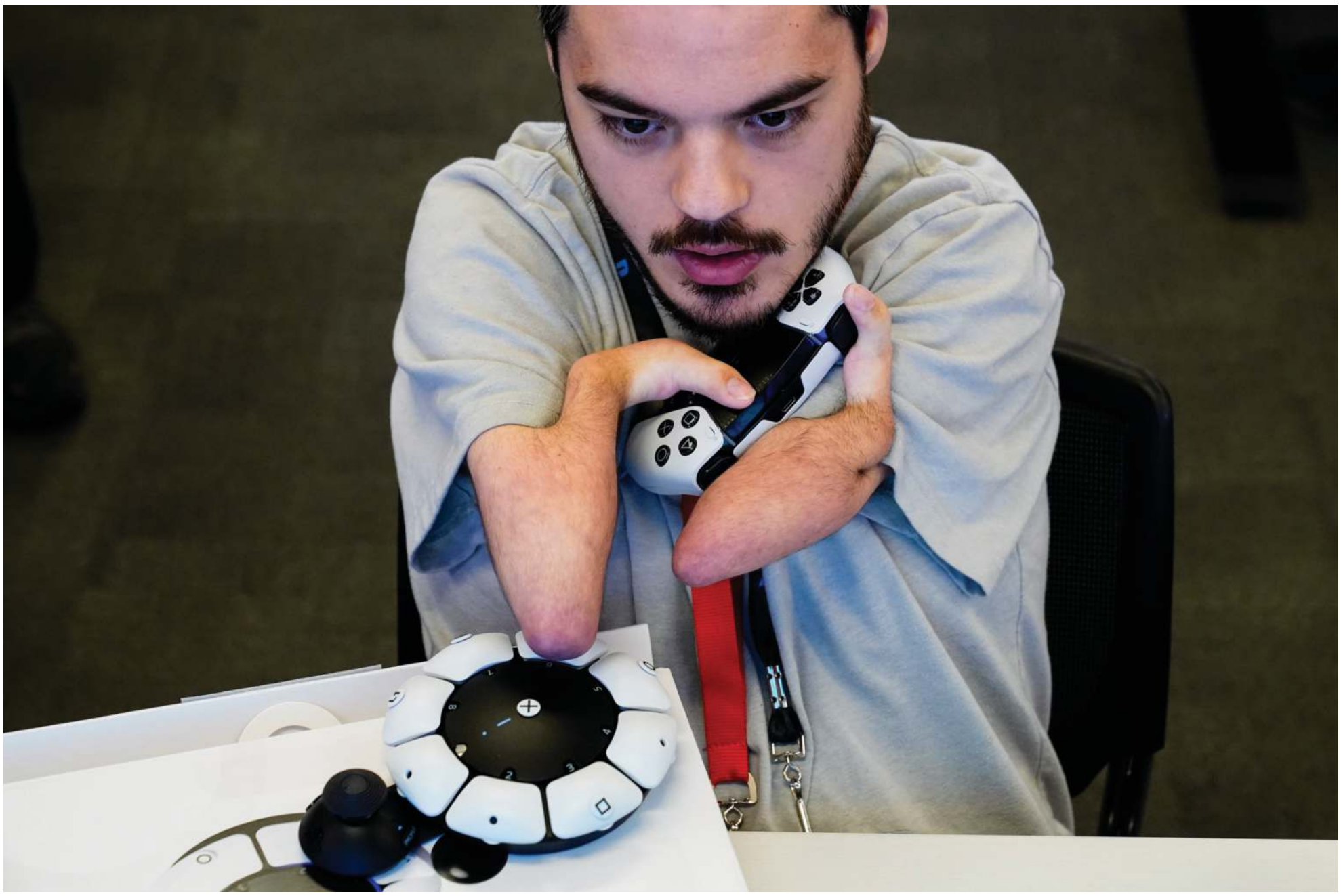
Her Ontario compatriot in Sault Ste. Marie, Abby Obenchain, also isn't a fan.

"A bowl of candy corn looks to me like a bowl of old teeth, like somebody pulled a bunch of witch's teeth out," said Obenchain, 63.

Candy corn isn't just a candy, said 29-year-old Savannah Woolston in Washington, D.C.

"I'm a big fan of mentally getting into each season, and I feel like candy corn is in the realm of pumpkin spice lattes and fall sweaters," she said. "And I will die on the hill that it tastes good."

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



PHOTOS BY GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP

Martin Shane uses a Sony Access controller to play a video game at Sony Interactive Entertainment headquarters on Sept. 28 in San Mateo, Calif.

Making gaming more accessible

Upcoming Sony controller for PlayStation designed to make playing easier for people with disabilities

BY BARBARA ORTUTAY
Associated Press

Paul Lane uses his mouth, cheek and chin to push buttons and guide his virtual car around the Gran Turismo racetrack on the PlayStation 5. It's how he's been playing for the past 23 years, after a car accident left him unable to use his fingers.

Playing video games has long been a challenge for people with disabilities, chiefly because the standard controllers for the PlayStation, Xbox or Nintendo can be difficult, or even impossible, to maneuver for people with limited mobility. And losing the ability to play the games doesn't just mean the loss of a favorite pastime, it can also exacerbate social isolation in a community already experiencing it at a far higher rate than that of the general population.

As part of the gaming industry's efforts to address the problem, Sony has developed the Access controller for the PlayStation, working with input from Lane and other accessibility consultants. It's the latest addition to the accessible-controller market, whose contributors range from Microsoft to startups and even hobbyists with 3D printers.

"I was big into sports before my injury," said Cesar Flores, 30, who has used a wheelchair since a car accident eight years ago and also consulted with Sony on the controller. "I wrestled in high school, played football. I lifted a lot of weights, all these little things. And even though I can still train in certain ways, there are physical things that I can't do anymore. And when I play video games, it reminds me that I'm still human. It reminds me that I'm still one of the guys."

The Sony Access controller can rest on a table or wheelchair tray or be mounted on a tripod. Its buttons and thumbsticks are also customizable.

Putting the traditional controller aside, Lane, 52, switches to the Access. It's a round, customizable gadget that can rest on a table or wheelchair tray and can be configured in myriad ways, depending on what the user needs. That includes switching buttons and thumbsticks, programming special controls and pairing two controllers to be used as one. Lane's Gran Turismo car zooms around a digital track as he guides it with the back of his hand on the controller.

"I game kind of weird, so it's comfortable for me to be able to use both of my hands when I game," he said. "So I need to position the controllers away enough so that I can be able to to use them without clunking into each other. Being able to maneuver the controllers has been awesome, but also the fact that this controller can come out of the box and ready to work."

Lane and other gamers have been working with Sony since 2018 to help design the Access controller. The idea was to create something that could be configured to work for people with a broad range of needs, rather than focusing on any particular disability.

"Show me a person with multiple sclerosis and I'll show you a person who can be hard of hearing, I can show someone who has a visual impairment or a motor impairment," said Mark Barlet, founder and executive director of the nonprofit AbleGamers. "So thinking on the label of a disability is not the approach to take. It's about the experience that players need to bridge that gap between a game and a controller that's not designed for their unique presentation in the world."

Barlet said his organization, which helped both Sony and Microsoft with their accessible controllers, has been advocating for gamers with disabilities for nearly two decades. With the advent of social media, gamers them-

SEE CONTROLLER ON PAGE 27

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Getting plugged in

AbleGamers founder Barlet says the nonprofit helps people with disabilities build friendships

BY BARBARA ORTUTAY
Associated Press

Mark Barlet founded AbleGamers in 2004. It's a nonprofit that works to combat social isolation among people with disabilities using "the power of video games." Most recently, his organization worked with Sony to help create its new Access controller, designed to make it easier for people with disabilities to play.

PETER HAMLIN/AP Illustration

Associated Press: How are gamers with disabilities playing without these controllers?

I mean, oftentimes it was cobbling things together in order to play. It was making compromises on how they could position a standard controller in a really unique way or 3D printing a solution that helped them reach this button over here or over there or gravitating away from consoles and maybe moving into PC gaming where there were many more options at the time for USB type things to plug in. It was really about compromising and finding what best got us there. Those solutions oftentimes came with drawbacks like fatigue, discomfort and various things like that.

Why are video games important for your community?

The reality is people with disabilities are 56% more likely to be socially isolated than their non-disabled friends. Think about what gaming is today — we game with our friends, we game with our families. There's so many social interactions that belong in gaming. And when you look at someone, especially a profoundly disabled person, you know, a system that allows them a good controller and a well-crafted video game gives them an opportunity to really get out there and make friends and find those shared loves that we build friendships on.

And the other thing is the fact that I'm disabled isn't the defining factor of who I am. It's that we're sharing this game and I'm good at it. And so that creates these rich social experiences that oftentimes people with disabilities have a much harder time having because of the accouterments that come with being disabled.

What about the representation of people with disabilities in video games? Is that something that you would also like to see more of?

I would like to see more of it. ... Game companies are working on that. We have sensitivity readers in our organization and we're getting scripts and we're getting mocap (motion capture) ideas from game companies so that they can represent disabilities in a really unique way. So there are people with disabilities reading scripts on storylines of individuals with disabilities to make sure it's accurate. And so I think we're going to see more representation in the future.

Controller: Access may help aging users with arthritis, other conditions

FROM PAGE 26

selves have been able to amplify the message and address creators directly in forums that did not exist before.

"The last five years I have seen the game accessibility movement go from indie studios working on some features to triple-A games being able to be played by people who identify as blind," he said. "In five years, it's been breathtaking."

Microsoft, in a statement, said it was encouraged by the positive reaction to its Xbox Adaptive controller when it was released in 2018 and that it is "heartening to see others in the industry apply a similar approach to include more players in their work through a focus on accessibility."

The Access controller will go on sale worldwide on Dec. 6 and cost $90 in the U.S.

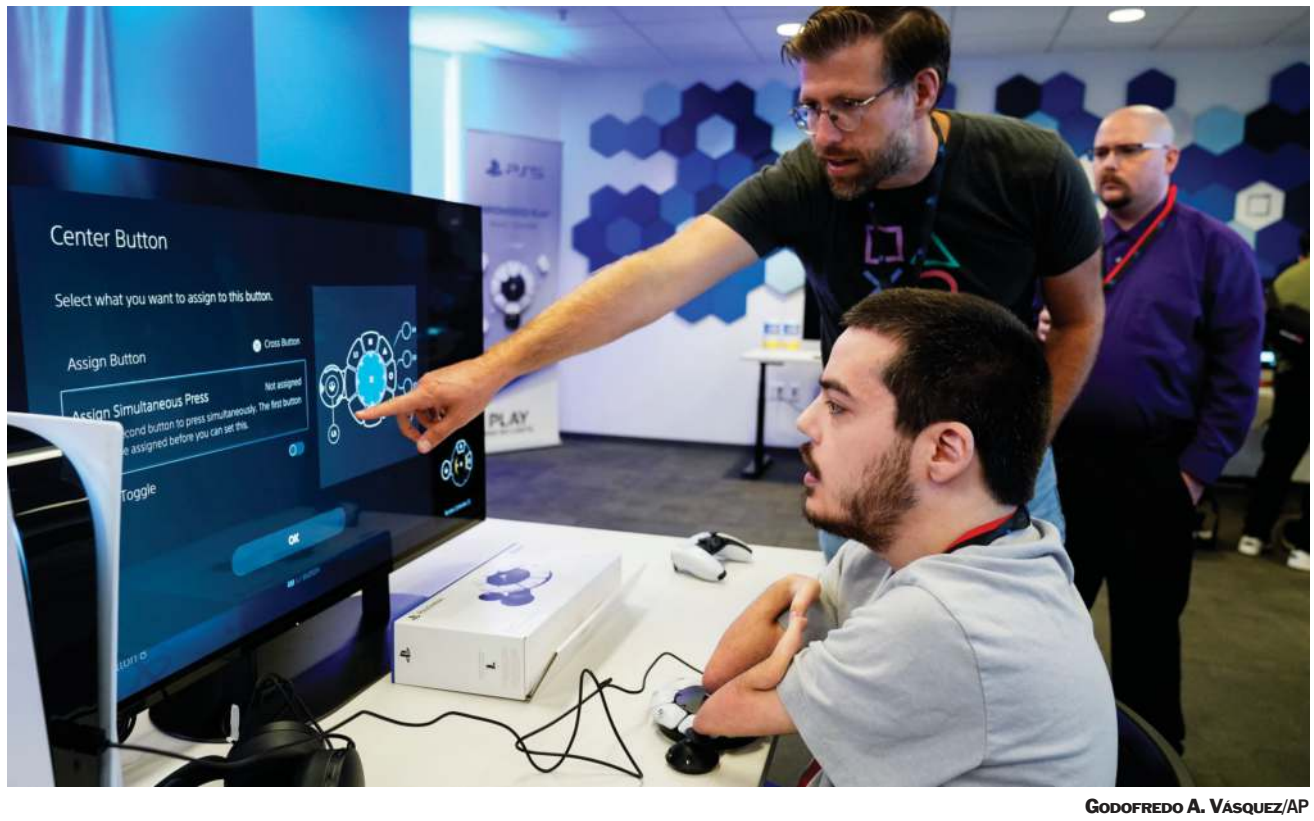
Alvin Daniel, a senior technical program manager at PlayStation, said the device was designed with three principles in mind to make it "broadly applicable" to as many players as possible:

First, the player does not have to hold the controller to use it. It can lay flat on a table, wheelchair tray or be mounted on a tripod, for instance. It was important for it to fit on a wheelchair tray, since once something falls off the tray, it might be impossible for the player to pick it up without help. It also had to be durable for this same reason — so it would survive being run over by a wheelchair, for example.

Second, it's much easier to press the buttons than on a standard controller. It's a kit, so it comes with button caps in different sizes, shapes and textures so people can experiment with reconfiguring it the way it works best for them. The third is the thumbsticks, which can also be configured depending on what works for the person using it.

Because it can be used with far less agility and strength than the standard PlayStation controller, the Access could also be a game-changer for an emerging population: aging gamers with arthritis and other limiting ailments.

"The last time I checked, the average age of a gamers was in their forties," Daniel said. "And I have every expectation, speaking for myself, that they'll want to continue to game, as I'll want to continue to game, because it's entertainment for us."



GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP

Martin Shane, seated, customizes the button layout on the Sony Access controller Sept. 28.

After his accident, Lane stopped gaming for seven years. For someone who began playing video games as a young child on the Magnavox Odyssey — released in 1972 — "it was a void" in his life, he said. Starting again, even with the limitations of a standard game controller, felt like being reunited with a "long lost friend."

"Just the the social impact of gaming really changed my life. It gave me a a brighter disposition," Lane said. He noted the social isolation that often results when people who were once able-bodied become disabled.

"Everything changes," he said. "And the more you take away from us, the more isolated we become. Having gaming and having an opportunity to game at a very high level, to be able to do it again, it is like a reunion, (like losing) a close companion and being able to reunite with that person again."

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Fatally flawed

Video game-based film 'Five Nights at Freddy's' inadvertently funny, a terrible attempt at horror

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Just in time for Halloween comes "Five Nights at Freddy's," a video game adaptation with the potential treat of demented Chuck E. Cheese-like animatronic creatures running amok. But the trick turns out to be on us.

The movie — built from Scott Cawthon's video game about anthropomorphic robots killing people — poorly fits into this vehicle and the problems start with the creatures themselves.

Yes, they have unsettling bright eyes and teeth. But, c'mon, one wears a bow tie, like a guest on PBS. They're more threadbare than eerie. Yes, they stomp around like The Terminator, but one is a chubby chicken with the slogan "Let's Eat." They look about as scary as overgrown Care Bears with a drinking problem. One is, we're not kidding, a cupcake.

Caught between PG and R, as well as lost at the crossroads of inadvertent comedy and horror, the PG-13 "Five Nights at Freddy's" has to go down as one of the poorest films in any genre this year.

Like the video game, our hero here is a night watchman who is mysteriously hired to look after the ruins of an abandoned children's pizza-and-games restaurant. We learn that it was shuttered in the '80s due to a raft of missing kids.

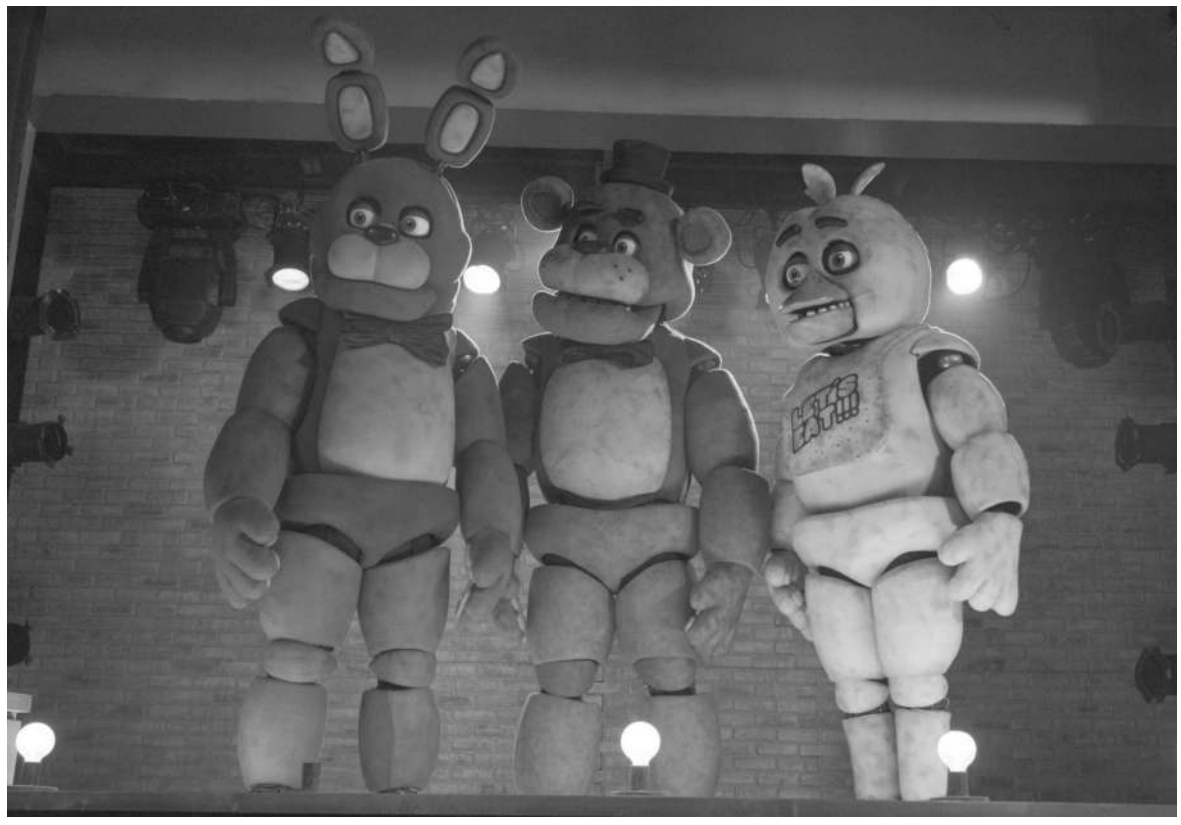
Josh Hutcherson plays the guard with a mix of hotheadedness and compassion.

"Just do your job and you'll be fine," he is advised. "Don't let the place get to you."

Why has he taken this silly job? To keep custody of his young sister, Abby (a very good Piper Rubio), proving he's a good guy. Other actors include the great Mary Stuart Masterson, slumming it as his aunt, and Matthew Lillard chewing scenery as if it were a slice of pepperoni.

Director Emma Tammi — using a script credited to her, Cawthon and Seth Cuddeback — do their darndest to fill the film up with a backstory and a reason for there to be murderous animatronic characters in the first place.

So we have family betrayal, the lifetime pain of an abducted sibling, a possible romantic interest and a plot so tortured it should have a cameo in "Saw."



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

From left, Bonnie, Freddy Fazbear and Chica are murderous Chuck E. Cheese-like animatronic robots in "Five Nights at Freddy's," the movie based on Scott Cawthon's video game.

"I made a mistake. I don't want this," our hero screams toward the end, and you can feel the movie theater's paying audience agreeing wholeheartedly.

There are so many questions that will keep you awake. Why was "Talking in Your Sleep" by the Romantics used so heavily? Why do the scriptwriters not understand human decay? Why does the dialogue often veer from flirty to angry so abruptly in the same scene? Why is it revealed only in the last 10 minutes that the maniacal Care Bears can talk?

It's ironic that much of the coolest action happens in a dream state. You may need to nudge your seatmates awake to rejoin the show when that happens. Maybe that's why "Talking in Your Sleep" was needed?

The filmmakers waste the rare attempt in a horror flick to make a kids' ball pit scary, but the absolute lowest point is when the supposedly murderous animatronics — Freddy Fazbear, Bonnie, Chica and Foxy — host a kiddie dance party. It's as if even they can't overcome their inner nature, having originated from Jim Henson's Creature Shop. This whole thing should have remained a game.

"Five Nights at Freddy's" is rated PG-13 for strong violent content, bloody images and language. Running time: 110 minutes. Now playing in select AAFES theaters and streaming on Peacock.

Good scares currently available on streaming services

BY KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

Oct. 23 was National Horror Movie Day (they have a day for everything), but really, all of Halloween week, even all of October, is a good time to watch a horror movie — why limit it to a single day?

If you're a horror fan and you haven't yet subscribed to Shudder — the streaming service for all things horror and genre films — you're missing out. Shudder has two new films that launched Friday: **"When Evil Lurks,"** an Argentinian demonic possession movie directed by Demián Rugna that has been hailed one of the best horror movies of the year, and **"Suitable Flesh,"** a Lovecraftian erotic thriller from director Joe Lynch, starring Heather Graham and Barbara Crampton.

If you're in the need for even more deep cut thrills and chills, the streaming service from Arrow Video has you covered when it comes to horror and cult films. They've programmed channels including "Shocktober 31" that have been airing horror movies throughout October.

But the mainstream streaming services also have underrated horror films in their collections, so here are some selections to help you stop the scroll and get watching faster with these hidden horror gems:

On Netflix, check out Richard Shepard's disturbing and unpredictable **"The Perfection,"** starring Allison Williams and Logan Browning as two superstar violinists dueling for the top spot at a prestigious school. This film takes twists and turns you will never suspect, and cemented Williams as one of our finest scream queens between "Get Out" and "M3GAN."

While you're there, stream **"Lights Out,"** the debut feature of "Shazam" director David F. Sandberg. The film centers around a spirit that can only be seen when the lights are off, and it's an ingenious premise for this efficiently spooky movie.

IFC MIDNIGHT/TNS

Siiri Solalinna in Finnish creature horror flick "Hatching," about a girl and her egg.

On Max, check out two wildly different under-the-radar horror movies. The first one, **"House,"** sometimes called "Hausu," is a 1977 Japanese cult film by Nobuhiko Obayashi about a supernatural house that eats young schoolgirls. The tone of "House" is more experimental horror comedy, but this wacky movie is required viewing if you've never seen it.

For something on the bloodier and more brutal end of the spectrum, Jeremy Saulnier's **"Green Room"** is an unforgiving horror flick set in a neo-Nazi punk club in the Pacific Northwest. It features a standout performance from the late, great Anton Yelchin alongside Imogen Poots, Alia Shawkat and Patrick Stewart.

On Peacock, cue up the "Tales From the Crypt" classic **"Demon Knight,"** starring Billy Zane and Jada Pinkett Smith. This 1995 horror comedy directed by Ernest Dickerson is a blast. Then check out the South Korean zombie epic **"Train to Busan,"** one of the most emotional and suspenseful zombie movies of all time.

Over on Hulu, there's a wealth of indie horror, including the insouciant feminist dating app revenge flick **"Fresh,"** directed by Mimi Cave, written by Lauryn Kahn, and starring Daisy Edgar-Jones and Sebastian Stan. There's also the incredibly creative and stylish British horror flick **"Censor,"** directed by Prano Bailey-Bond and starring Niamh Algar, set during the 1980s hysteria about "video nasties" in Britain. Rounding out the trio of daring feminist horror is **"Hatching,"** a fantastical Finnish creature feature about a young girl and her egg, directed by Hanna Bergholm.

Kanopy, the streaming site you can access for free with a library card, features a great selection of unique horror films. Check out **"The Wind,"** a psychological horror Western directed by Emma Tammi, the director of the newly released "Five Nights at Freddy's."

Along those same lines, **"The Other Lamb"** is a horror film set in a polygamist cult in the European wilderness, directed by Polish filmmaker Małgorzata Szumowska. For more folk horror, Ben Wheatley's **"In the Earth"** combines the COVID-19 pandemic with folk horror tropes to create a film that's truly sinister and disturbing, set in the woods of England. Something a bit more playful and stylized — but no less sinister — is Peter Strickland's campy **"In Fabric,"** about a deadly dress.

Stream all these movies on Kanopy for free.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

‘Pain Hustlers’ a Blunted ‘Dopesick’

Actress helps to elevate the slight, yet still brisk and punchy, drug-scandal drama

BY MARK MESZOROS
The News-Herald (Willoughby, Ohio)

We are told from the onset that “Pain Hustlers” is “inspired by real events.”

It quickly becomes clear that what that means in this case is the movie, though largely entertaining, is not telling a dramatized true tale set within the country’s opioid crisis.

Its characters — including those played by appealing leads Emily Blunt and Chris Evans — never feel all that authentic. And as for what transpires ... let’s just say “Pain Hustlers” isn’t afraid to lay it on a little thick now and then.

That said, does this story of ambitious folks getting caught up in pushing doctors to prescribe a potentially harmful drug in the hopes of lining their pockets ring true at various points? Oh, sure.

Its genesis was screenwriter Wells Tower being sent journalist Evan Hughes’ 2018 New York Times article “The Pain Hustlers,” about the scandal surrounding the company Insys Therapeutics. Furthermore, the book Hughes would later write, eventually titled “Pain Hustlers: Crime and Punishment at an Opioid Startup” and developed alongside the movie, serves very loosely as its basis.

However, “Pain Hustlers” — helmed by David Yates, the director of seven movies in the “Harry Potter” universe — is more interested in being engaging than it is in hitting hard.

It wants us to invest in Blunt’s Liza Blake, a scrappy if not always reliable single mom whom Evans’ Pete Brenner meets at the exotic dance club where she works. Looking to do the best she can for teen daughter Phoebe (Chloe Coleman, “Gunpowder Milkshake”) and needing to move out of her judgmental sister’s garage, Liza takes Pete up on an offer for a sales position at Zanna, the failing Florida-based pharmaceutical company where he’s in management and works with people he despises.

NETFLIX/AP

Chris Evans as Brenner, left, Andy Garcia as Neel, center, and Emily Blunt as Liza, employees of a profit-driven pharmaceutical company in “Pain Hustlers.”

She is given just one week to hook a “whale” — a doctor who will prescribe the company’s fentanyl-based drug, Lonafen, intended to relieve pain in cancer patients. With much effort, she finds that whale, Brian d’Arcy James’ Dr. Lydell, whom Chloe refers to at one point as “Doctor Sketchball.”

Soon, more prescriptions are being written by more doctors, money is flowing into Zanna and rules increasingly are being bent and broken by drug representatives and doctors alike.

While Liz and Pete are making the highly profitable moves, the puppetmaster is Zanna head Dr. Jack Neel (Andy Garcia). He talks of creating the drug because the idea of his wife being in pain while she died of cancer broke his heart, but he’s also obsessed with the company maintaining its incredible growth rate.

Yates and Tower want us to have someone to root for, so Emily — after buying an incredible home and paying “enhanced tuition” at her daughter’s exclusive private school — develops a conscience. She worries about what doctors agreeing to prescribe Lonafen for not-FDA-approved uses will mean for patients and wants to take steps to make Zanna less of a target for federal officials. However, Jack — an increasingly paranoid germaphobe who has worked to isolate himself from the actions of his employees — isn’t interested.

Thanks to the almost always compelling Blunt (“Edge of Tomorrow,” “A Quiet Place”), it is, in fact, pretty easy to care about what happens to Liza, whose motivation for (eventually) doing the right thing includes her daughter’s need for a pricey medical procedure. She’s no angel: Blunt is so good that we forget that for big stretches of “Pain Hustlers.”

It’s a little harder to worry about what will become of Pete, a character given little dimension by Tower and Yates and who, for some reason, has been provided with a distracting Boston accent by Beantown native Evans (“Avengers: Endgame,” “Knives Out”).

We wouldn’t have minded a bit more screen time for Garcia (“Expend4bles”), who adds a little color to “Pain Hustlers” as the eccentric if ultimately loathsome Jack.

Likewise, the film doesn’t find quite enough for the talented Catherine O’Hara (“Best in Show,” “Schitt’s Creek”) to do as Jackie, Liza’s loose-cannon mother, whom she hires to be a sales representative. (What could go wrong there?)

“Pain Hustlers” doesn’t ignore the damage the drug is doing to the people taking it and their loved ones, but that isn’t where its focus lies. The movie wants to be “The Wolf of Wall Street” rather than something akin to the excellent Hulu limited series “Dopesick.” As a result, it feels a bit slight, short story writer Tower’s lack of screenwriting experience perhaps showing a bit.

On the other hand, in Yates’ hands, it’s brisk and punchy. There’s simply something to be said from any streaming offering that doesn’t stagnate.

“Pain Hustlers” shines more light on a shady and dangerous world, one in which doctors are incentivized to write prescriptions and where profit can be more important to some than quality health care. It isn’t the first work to do that, and it isn’t the best.

But at least it has Emily Blunt.

“Pain Hustlers” is rated R for language throughout, some sexual content, nudity and drug use. Running time: 122 minutes. Now streaming on Netflix.

‘Old Dads’ pointlessly recycles long list of politically correct grievances

BY MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

The new Netflix movie “Old Dads” has a title problem. It really should be called “Old Dads Yelling at Clouds” or “Old Dads Raging at QR Codes.” It’s designed for people who find it hard to navigate Netflix and so blame millennials for being woke.

Bill Burr, who directs from a script by him and Ben Tishler, leads a meandering, unfunny assault on politically correct culture that would seem perfectly in place in the 1990s. It’s so dated there’s even a mention of Halliburton.

The whiff of deep, old-school morass about modern life comes from the moment the movie begins with the Miramax logo and a rock guitar solo, two clear signals we’re going back to a time when making fun of Starbucks cup sizes was funny.

Burr, who plays a 51-year-old dad with a young son and another child on the way, is immediately ranting about the lack of parking spots, mechanical scooters, preschool etiquette, Twitter, emotional learning, vaping and paper straws. Cutting-edge humor, this is not.

“No offense, you’re just coming across a little old, you know? A little out of touch,” a younger guy tells Burr’s character, who responds: “Like your generation? Filming yourselves while you’re flipping water bottles?”

The plot is loosey-goosey, never anything engrossing and more like a series of set pieces for Burr to act badly. Burr plays one of three old dads — the other two played by Bobby Cannavale and Bokeem Woodbine — who once owned a high-end throwback jersey company and have sold it, returning as employees to a 28-year-old new boss, who fancies himself a disruptor. “I appreciate you,” he tells them, which naturally enrages them.

Strap in for a lot of purposely baiting slurs and then amazement that there’s pushback. “Is it ever over with these people?” whines Burr’s character, whose style of parenting is to rub dirt into a child’s wound to make them more macho.

While Burr is a boiling cauldron of grievances, Cannivale’s character tries too hard to be cool — saying things are “fleek” and he’s “gotta bounce” — and Woodbine’s character’s carefully curated life is suddenly under threat. Things go south for them when they “exercise free speech” — in other words, spew misogynist hate.

Netflix

Bobby Cannavale, Bokeem Woodbine and Bill Burr star in “Old Dads.”

In one scene, the three old dads try to trap a millennial into using the n-word when he sings along to N.W.A’s “Straight Outta Compton.” Why? That will apparently expose the hypocrisy of the younger generation. But it doesn’t. It’s also a moment lifted from another earlier Netflix movie, “You People.”

There’s no way this cinematic slop would lead to a strip club, is there? That’s where Burr’s character comes to a realization, and where the others come to their own realizations. That they should be better men? No, it’s too late for that. You can’t teach an old dad new tricks.

Viewers would be better off watching videos of water bottles being flipped in the air for almost two hours.

“Old Dads” is rated R for language, sexual material, nudity and brief drug use. Running time: 104 minutes. Now streaming on Netflix.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

ANAKLE FILMS/AP

Nigerian action thriller "The Black Book" tells a gripping story of corruption and police brutality. It has spent three weeks among Netflix's top 10 English-language titles globally.

Speaking truth to power through art

New Netflix thriller 'The Black Book,' about delayed justice in Nigeria, a global hit and boon for Nollywood film industry

BY CHINEDU ASADU
Associated Press

A Nigerian action thriller that tells a gripping story of corruption and police brutality in Africa's most populous country has reached record viewership numbers on Netflix charts globally. It's a reminder of the power and potential of Nigeria's rapidly growing film industry.

"The Black Book" has taken the streaming world by storm, spending three weeks among the platform's top 10 English-language titles globally, peaking at No. 3 in the second week.

Effiong

It garnered 5.6 million views just 48 hours after its Sept. 22 release and by its second week was featured among the top 10 titles in 69 countries, according to Netflix.

"Films are made for audiences, and the bigger the audience for a film, the better the chances of your message going out," producer Editi Effiong told The Associated Press. "The reality for us is that we made a film, made by Nigerians, funded by Nigerian money, go global."

Nollywood, Nigeria's film industry, has been a global phenomenon since the 1990s when it rose to fame with such films as "Living in Bondage," which was released in 1992, and "Aníkúlápó," a thriller with Kunle Afolayan, which was released in 2022 and peaked at No. 1 on Netflix's global chart. It is the world's second-largest film industry after India based on number of productions, with an average of 2,000 movies released annually.

"The Black Book," a $1 million movie financed with the support of a team of experts and founders of Nigeria's tech ecosystem, is Effiong's first feature film.

It spans a period of 40 years from when military regimes killed and arrested dissidents at will until the present day, when police brutality and abuse of power remain rampant.

The film opens with the abduction of family members of the head of the Nigerian oil regulatory agency, aided by corrupt police officers working for top politicians.

To cover their tracks, the police kill a young man framed as the suspect in the kidnapping not knowing he was the only child of a former special operative who abandoned his weapons for the pulpit.

In his prime, the character of ex-officer-turned-pastor Paul Edima — played by Nigerian movie icon Richard Mofe-Damijo — was known as Nigeria's "most dangerous man" with a past punctuated by assassinations and involvement in several coups across West Africa.

> **"It is a fictional narrative, but this is what Nigeria was."**
>
> **Editi Effiong**
> producer, "The Black Book"

Portrayed as a repentant man who has turned over a new leaf after being inspired by his favorite Bible passage 1 Corinthians 5:17, Edima feels compelled to take revenge for his son's death after failing to convince authorities his son is innocent.

The issue of delayed justice is not new in Nigeria. Many last Friday remembered the deadly protests of Oct. 20, 2020, when young Nigerians demonstrating against police brutality were shot at and killed. Three years later, rights groups say many victims of police abuse still haven't gotten justice.

For Edima, justice for his son comes at a cost. One by one, he hunts down the officers behind his son's death, leading him to the army general behind the plot — coincidentally his former boss.

"It is a fictional narrative, but this is what Nigeria was," Effiong told the AP.

He believes Nigeria is not doing a good job of teaching its history in the schools and helping young people understand how the country's past is shaping the present.

"A society must be changed positively by art, and so there was an orientation on our part to, through the film we are going to make, reflect on this issue (of police brutality)," Effiong said.

While a government-commissioned panel of inquiry investigated the protest shootings in Nigeria's economic hub of Lagos in 2020, Effiong attended its meetings and provided live updates via his page on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. At the same time, pre-production for the movie already had begun.

"We must tell the truth in spite of the circumstances," he said. "Justice is important for everyone: the people we like and the people we do not like — especially the people we do not like."

Some have said the movie's plot is similar to that of the American action thriller "John Wick." It is a surprising but flattering comparison that also testifies to the movie's success, Effiong said.

The movie also has been lauded for signifying the potential of the film industry in Nigeria as well as across Africa. The continent's streaming on-demand video (SVOD) market is expected to boast a robust 18 million subscribers, up from 8 million this year, according to a recent report from market intelligence firm Digital TV Research.

According to a Netflix spokesperson, entertainment with local stories remains the core of the platform's main objective in sub-Saharan Africa. "Africa has great talent and world-class creatives, and we are committed to investing in African content and telling African stories of every kind," Netflix said in a statement.

In Nigeria, the movie industry is at "the point right now where the world needs to take notice," Effiong said.

He said that's because "'The Black Book' is a film by Black people, Black actors, Black producers, Black money 100%, and it's gone ahead to become a global blockbuster."

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Nothing more terrifying than adolescence

Gateway horror, life lessons at heart of teen-led series 'Goosebumps,' 'Fright Krewe'

BY TRACY BROWN
Los Angeles Times

Many coming-of-age stories are reminders that being a teenager is a terrifying time. Is your crush going to notice you today? (Do you even want them to?) How long until your classmates forget about the time you accidentally called your math teacher "mom"? Is your future really going to be decided by how you score on one test? Do people talk about how your hobbies are weird or — even worse — boring?

Adolescence can be a fraught time when these everyday dilemmas feel like the end of the world, which makes it a gold mine for stories that blend these metaphorical monsters with supernatural ones. Just look at shows from "Stranger Things" to "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

Timed to America's favorite spooky season, two new teen-led horror shows launched this month: DreamWorks' New Orleans-set animated series "Fright Krewe" (first season available now on Hulu and Peacock), and "Goosebumps," a new adaptation of R.L. Stine's popular book series (streaming on Hulu and Disney+; new "Goosebumps" episodes land Fridays).

Developed by Rob Letterman, who directed the 2015 "Goosebumps" film, and Nicholas Stoller ("Bros," "The Muppets"), the new series follows a group of teens (Zack Morris, Isa Briones, Miles McKenna, Ana Yi Puig and Will Price) who start experiencing supernatural happenings after a Halloween party. It turns out the house they secretly borrowed to throw said party — now owned by their new teacher (Justin Long) — is haunted, and they get wrapped up in a town mystery.

"The kids in the show are dealing with super crazy things like haunted cameras and giant worms, but, actually, the scariest thing is being a high schooler today," said Pavun Shetty, an executive producer on "Goosebumps." "Their teacher might be possessed by a ghost, but that's not as horrifying as getting rejected when you ask someone out."

According to Shetty, who grew up reading the books and watching the '90s TV series, the goal with the new "Goosebumps" was to create an "elevated take" on the iconic stories, which involved slightly aging up the sensibilities, compared to those of previous incarnations, in order to broaden the scope and appeal of the show. Stine's popular books are aimed toward a tween audience, although, as Shetty points out, part of their draw is that they don't pander or talk down to kids.

Executive producer Conor Welch, who describes "Goosebumps" as "the first book series that made reading feel fun as opposed to a task or chore," notes that "a hallmark of the book series is that it is both actually scary and actually funny at the same time."

"We talked a lot about the idea that laughs and scares often have a very similar cadence and rhythm to them," Welch said. "It's setup, setup, surprise. That surprise in a joke is a punch line, and that surprise in a scare is a jump scare or something that unexpectedly catches you off guard."

Disney+ and Hulu

From left, Isa Briones, Will Price, Miles McKenna, Zack Morris and Ana Yi Puig star in "Goosebumps," a new adaptation of R.L. Stine's popular book series.

Hulu

From left, Pat, Stanley, Soleil, Maybe and Missy in New Orleans-set "Fright Krewe."

Rather than a direct, anthologized adaptation, the new series pulls inspiration from a number of Stine's most popular books — including "Say Cheese and Die!," "The Haunted Mask," "The Cuckoo Clock of Doom," "Go Eat Worms!" and "Night of the Living Dummy" — for an original, serialized narrative. Shetty and Welsh assured that not only is the show Stine-approved, the author was involved from the earliest stages of development, including reading the scripts.

The first five episodes of the series focuses on a different core teen character dealing with individual supernatural challenges that he or she accidentally helped unleash. The producers explain that each of these challenges are "really linked to who they are as a person."

"The specific totems that these kids find in the haunted house that are from the books really prey on their insecurities," Shetty said. "So there's a little bit of a lesson involved there."

Similarly, "Fright Krewe" also features a group of teens having to deal with an evil supernatural entity they accidentally unleashed into the world. And the animated series leans into each teen's individual personalities and insecurities in its own unique way.

Created by horror maestro Eli Roth and author James Frey, the series was developed in part because they noticed a dearth of gateway horror for kids outside of beloved classics like "Beetlejuice."

"It feels like there's a real void if you want your kids to become scary movie fans," said Roth, an executive producer on the series. "You can't go from zero to 'Hostel.' You need those in-between steps."

"Fright Krewe" follows a group of high school classmates (voiced by Sydney Mikayla, Grace Lu, Terrence Little Gardenhigh, Chester Rushing and Tim Johnson Jr.) who are initially anything but friends. A mishap during detention results in them accidentally releasing an evil demon, gaining special powers and discovering that all of the supernatural creatures from their local legends are not only real but are among their neighbors.

In the show, which is inspired by and respectful of its New Orleans setting, the teens are each bestowed individual powers by five different voodoo spirits known as Loa. And as showrunners Joanna Lewis and Kristine Songco explain, "there's a reason all the Loa chose who they chose."

"What we wanted to do was take whatever that character's journey was ... and [their] Loa relationship would help them grow," Lewis said. "That thing that either they needed to work on, or already had a proclivity towards, the Loa relationship ... helps them" bring it out.

Stanley, for instance, is a good-natured jock who lacks confidence academically who is chosen by Ayizan, a Loa associated with knowledge. While Pat, the new kid who struggles to connect and make friends, is chosen by Papa Legba, a Loa linked to communication.

A hallmark of these coming-of-age horror shows is that the scares are not meant "to just traumatize them," Roth says.

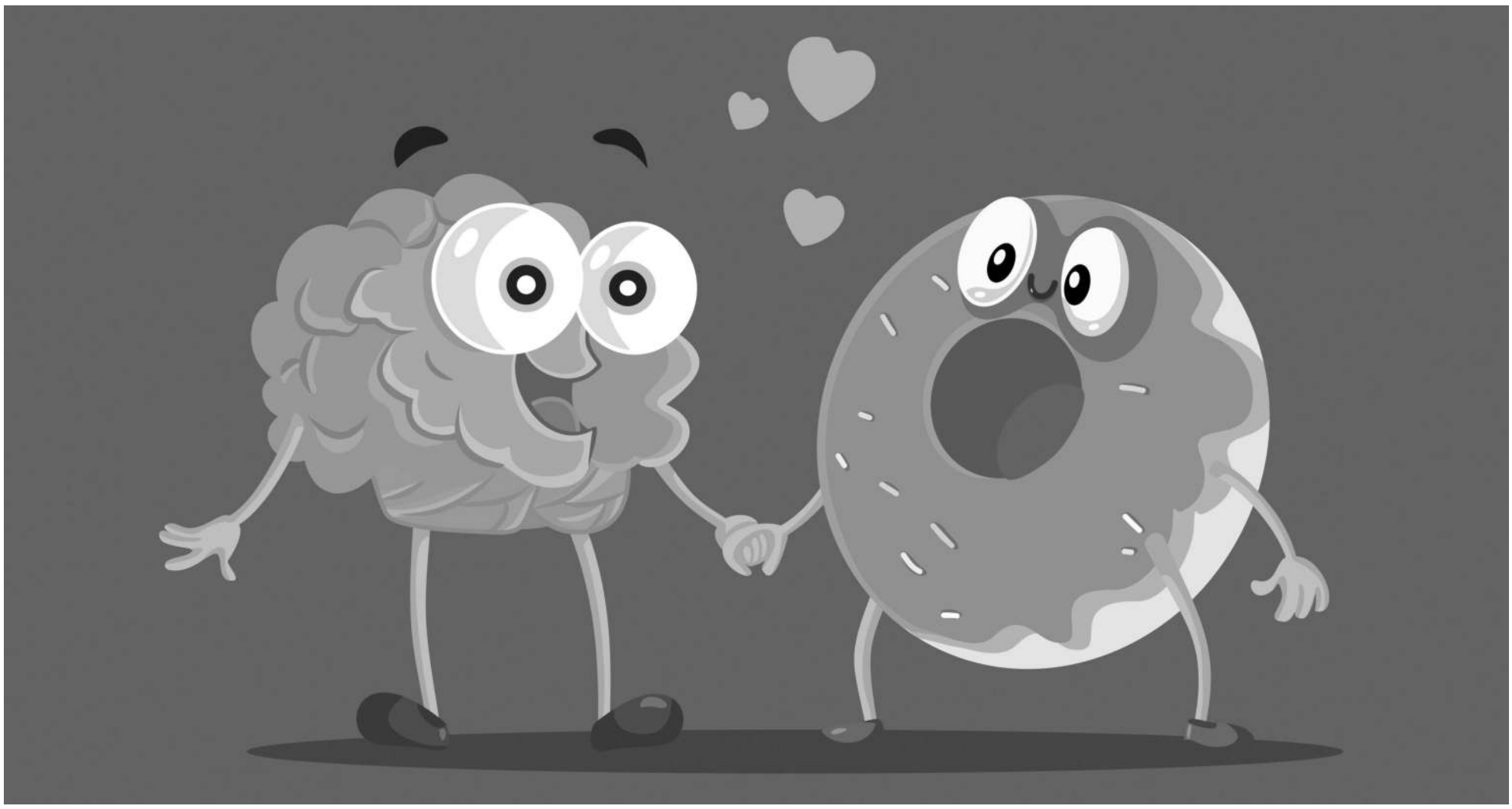
But it's not just a lack of violence or gore that sets horror for teen and tween audiences apart from the more adult variety.

"There's so many great messages and life lessons that you can shoehorn into scary" stories, Roth said. "All the things that kids suddenly have to start dealing with now that they're older, when you put it in the context of a supernatural show, it really gives kids a healthy way to express those fears and it shows them that you can overcome these things."

But beyond any aspirational themes and potential life lessons, the "Fright Krewe" creatives know the key to hooking audiences is a good story with characters that audiences can care about.

"Caring is the heart of fear," Lewis said. "You're not afraid if you don't care. So we knew we wanted to make characters that our audience could connect to and relate to and want to spend time with."

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



iStock

Eating sweets every afternoon or perhaps after dinner can cause the brain to release the reward hormone, dopamine, that makes us feels good and further reinforces the habit.

Do you crave sugar after eating?

Harvard Medical School instructor explains why and offers some helpful tips for curbing your sweet tooth

BY DR. TRISHA PASRICHA
Special to The Washington Post

It's a terribly tempting time of year for those who crave sweets. Halloween candy is all around us, and it's just the beginning of the holiday season.

For many, the post-dinner evening hours are some of the most vulnerable. Why do so many people seem to crave sweets after dinner, and what can they do to combat their cravings?

Trisha Pasricha, an instructor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, has some tips for sweets-craving sufferers. She advises:

You've probably noticed that hunger is not a prerequisite for sweet cravings. Our sense of hunger and fullness are largely regulated by hormones that can be triggered by the contents of our stomachs and small intestines. A food craving, on the other hand, can occur even when we are otherwise feeling perfectly satiated.

To help curb sugar cravings after a meal, try this:

■ Incorporate a variety of flavors, textures and smells into your main course.

■ Create new habits after mealtime.

One theory for why we crave sweets, even when we're full, is called sensory specific satiety. We may be too full to eat another bite after stuffing ourselves at Thanksgiving with savory foods like turkey and mashed potatoes and gravy. But if a different food is offered — say, pumpkin pie or a chocolate dessert — people tend to eat more.

Researchers think this may be related to our nutritional need for a balanced diet, but it also helps explain why we often have room for dessert. By enhancing your main course with more variety, you might not feel something is missing at the end of the meal.

Another piece of the puzzle has to do with learned behaviors. Much of the literature around food cravings supports the idea that they are a conditioned response. Remember Pavlov's dog? People can get used to eating a specific food in a certain context. Maybe having ice cream is how you relax after dinner, or maybe you refuel with a latte and a slice of cake in the afternoons. That pattern can release the reward hormone, dopamine, that makes us feels good and reinforces the habit.

What is happening when you most frequently desire sweets? Try breaking up those associations for a few weeks — like experimenting with other ways to reduce stress like yoga or bad reality TV, instead of eating a brownie, after dinner. After a while, you may notice you don't crave a sweet with those same stimuli anymore.

How to curb sugar cravings

Enjoying sweets in moderation is perfectly normal. But if cravings are hindering your efforts to eat a healthy diet, here are other tips that can help:

■ Try smaller, less frequent portions of your favorite sweets. A classic study from researchers at Northwestern University in 1975 found that people who ate a more restrictive diet were more likely to go overboard when given a chance at sweets than people who didn't diet. You can also practice mindful eating to savor the experience.

■ Don't swap out real sugar with sugar substitutes. Some sugar substitutes are far sweeter than sugar, which won't exactly help address the cravings. And according to the World Health Organization, not only do these not help with weight loss if that's your goal, but they can lead to other health problems.

■ Get some sleep. Are you reaching for something sweet at the end of the day when you're tired? A 2013 study published in Nature Communications found that the more exhausted people feel, the more they desire high-calorie foods.

■ Ask your doctor about medications. GLP-1 agonists like Ozempic are well known to curb cravings, including for sweets and alcohol. But not everyone is a candidate. Check with your physician.

Why we crave sweets

Researchers have long studied why sweets hold such power over living creatures. In fact, one experiment found that rats preferred intensely sweet substances even over cocaine.

We're also living in a world of meticulously engineered, aggressively marketed and cheap sugar-dense desserts and snacks that did not exist several generations back. This makes it harder than ever to break the pattern.

Why some people have a "sweet tooth" and others don't actually remains something of a scientific mystery, but there are a few myths about it that research has debunked. Contrary to what many believe, there is no clear association between obesity and sweet food preference.

How much sugar can I have in a day?

The American Heart Association recommends:

■ For men: No more than 36 grams of added sugar per day.

■ For women: No more than 25 grams of added sugar per day.

Added sugars aren't just found in sweets. Foods such as salad dressings, ketchup and even tomato sauce can also have added sugar. So can drinks. For example, one scoop of vanilla ice cream can have 14 grams of added sugar. A 12-ounce soda can have 39 grams.

To stay within the recommended range, it helps to check nutrition labels and minimize your consumption of ultra-processed foods, which have been linked with chronic diseases.

We have much work to do on a public health level about sugar intake. There's also a lot of shaming around how we eat and obesity that make these discussions hard — even with your physician. Find a health care team who recognizes obesity is as much a disease as hypertension and can help guide you toward a path that meets your goals.

WEEKEND: FAMILY

iStock

Getting a tiny child into a carseat can be a gymnastic event in its own right.

Your toddler is a trainer

Modern parenting can be considered a daily gym workout of its own

By Caitlin Gibson
The Washington Post

How often do you exercise? If you are a parent of very small children — with little time to think an uninterrupted thought, much less get to the gym or yoga class — your answer might be "rarely" or just a bitter snort. You might not be surprised that one recent study found that adults with two or more children below the age of 5 reported 80 fewer minutes of weekly vigorous physical activity compared to those with no children or just one child. But here's the good news: You're probably getting more vigorous exercise than you think, thanks to the multitude of compulsory workouts incorporated into the daily reality of parenthood!

Here are just a few that might seem familiar:

Gentle-parenting squats: Your toddler is upset because she wants the blue Play-Doh, no, the red Play-Doh, no, actually she wants a banana, and every time she expresses a new opinion, you lower yourself from a standing position to her level on the ground in order to gently validate her feelings and explain that you don't even have any Play-Doh, but she can absolutely have a banana, except now she wants a Popsicle.

Sunscreen sparring: The familiar ritual of applying a sufficient layer of sunblock to every inch of exposed skin on your child — who absolutely refuses to hold still for a single second — will test your endurance and reflexes as well as your mental stamina.

Playground-rescue body contortion: Your kid has reached a high platform at the playground and is very proud but now can't get down. This means you're now squeezing yourself through a too-narrow tube to get to him or her, or trying to scale a climbing wall built for smaller legs, and then wrangling him or her back down to the correct altitude while operating completely outside your own center of gravity.

The parking lot sprint: Your kid abruptly pulls free of your grip and makes a beeline toward moving cars, flooding your brain with panicked adrenaline, and suddenly you are Usain Bolt.

The toothbrush pinfall: A daily wrestling match wherein the baby or toddler's shoulders must be held to a flat surface (the floor, a bed) for a count of three, because three seconds is definitely all you're going to get in terms of brushing his or her teeth, even though the dentist said two minutes was ideal.

The toy-under-the-couch leg sweep: A Hot Wheels car has rolled all the way beneath the couch to the back wall, and your kid needs this toy urgently, so you lie down on the floor and sweep your leg beneath the furniture until you can nudge the car back within reach with your toes. Alternate your legs for maximum benefit: right leg for Hot Wheels car, left leg for Lego, right leg for fallen Cheez-It, and so forth.

Bath time backbends: Instead of arching your spine backward, as in a typical yoga backbend, this exercise involves being hunched miserably forward over the side of the tub as you try to shampoo your child's hair while he or she squirms away and shrieks that there's water in his or her eyes. (There is not.)

Car seat calisthenics: You have run out of time to democratically negotiate with the tiny tyrant who refuses to acquiesce to his or her car seat buckles, so it's time to break a full-body sweat as you battle his or her relentless wiggling, back-arching and hand-shoving attempts to stop you from strapping him or her in.

Disaster-aversion lunges: Your toddler is about to drop his or her dinner plate on the floor, or spill your wine on the carpet or hoist himself or herself over a deck railing — until you save the day with one heroic, swooping stride.

Outfit-change agility training: The baby has spit up for the fifth time this morning, so you retrieve a sixth onesie, put one arm in a sleeve, then put the other arm in a sleeve, then put the first arm back in a sleeve again because the baby wiggled it free while you were wrangling the second arm, then try to align all the snaps along the legs, then realize you missed one snap and the onesie is now lopsided, then re-snap the snaps, then realize that the baby spit up again while you were re-snapping, so it's time to find a seventh onesie and/or start another load of laundry.

The flailing-child stair-climb: It's time for bed, but your small child declines to ascend the steps to his or her room, so he or she must be physically transported against his or her will. Works the arms, back, core and legs — and if your kid manages to escape your grasp and flee back downstairs, you might even get in a few reps.

The couch-flop: Post-workout recovery is essential. Traditionally, this involves stretching, hydration and a power bar; in this case, it involves complete immobility, an adult beverage and ice cream. Don't forget to go to bed early: Your tiny trainers will be waiting for you at 6 or possibly 5 a.m.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari

The haunted house that made me a scaredy-cat

A certain small-town fundraiser during a cool, clear October in the 1970s became an event that I'll never forget.

Back then, Halloween activities involved more than a one-night candy-grab. To start, there were pumpkins to carve, without the benefit of kid-safe carving kits or elaborate stencils. On a bed of newspapers, we wielded sharp knives, piercing flesh, scooping guts and carving orange skin into faces using triangles and squares. Lit up on front porches, jack-o'-lanterns gave off an eerie glow, along with the sickening stench of pumpkin cooking over candle flame.

Furthermore, Halloween costumes had to be planned, especially if you had to make your own like I did (which explains why I was a "hobo" or "an old lady" year after year). The phrase "Trick or Treat?" was taken literally back then. Just in case someone picked "trick," kids practiced magic stunts, knock-knock jokes and dance moves in advance.

But on the night of the fundraiser, I wasn't carving pumpkins, planning my costume or practicing my trick. I was in my parents' station wagon, on our way to the U.S. Junior Chamber (aka Jaycees) "Haunted Jail House" event. Too young to stay home alone, my parents brought me along. My mother volunteered to sell hot cocoa and cookies in the concessions booth and my father volunteered to play "Igor," the hunchbacked assistant to Dr. Frankenstein.

After my father parked, we walked up Eighth Street toward the "Old Jail House." All I knew about the creepy abandoned building was that it was our town's jail back in the olden days.

Later in life, Google helped me learn that the ornate brick Italianate structure was built in 1887 to house the sheriff and his family in the decorative street side of the building and to imprison up to 32 criminals in the back. The main cells were located on four floors with long vertical barred windows, and the solitary confinement cells were in a basement dungeon.

"Typical of small town jails, [it] provided, in the same facility, overnight housing for drunks, fighters, vagrants and committers of a myriad of other minor wrongs, as well as those tried and convicted of major crimes ... On fewer occasions, jail residents were awaiting the carrying out of the ultimate sentence of the courts — hanging," the historical records read, explaining that the last execution took place inside the jail on November 23, 1913.

In a jovial mood, my father put on his burlap Igor costume and offered to show me around the old jail before the event started. "OK, Daddy," I reluctantly agreed, sensing that he wanted me to be gutsy.

The next part is foggy, but I recall dark, filthy concrete walls. Metal bars. Rust. High ceilings that dripped. Echoing staircases. Insect carcasses. The smell of mildew. My father laughing. The undeniable feeling of agony, pain and fear.

I knew the people dressed in horrifying costumes in the old cells were just Jaycees pretending to be zombies, monsters and ax murderers. I knew the blood, guts and gore were fake. Regardless, it felt real, and it was the most terrifying moment of my young life.

The next thing I remember, I was sitting on the curb outside of the concessions booth, with my back to the jail, holding a cup of hot cocoa given to me by my mother. I had stifled my tears and screams in the jail, afraid to disappoint my father, but now, I gripped my cup tightly so as to hide the tremble in my hands.

I'm not sure if I was simply too young, or if the old jail really was haunted, but the fear I experienced that night stayed with me. Nowadays, this scaredy-cat carves happy rather than angry jack-o'-lanterns, wears funny rather than scary costumes and watches psychological thrillers rather than horror ones. And always, I pick hayrides over haunted houses, every time.

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com." Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

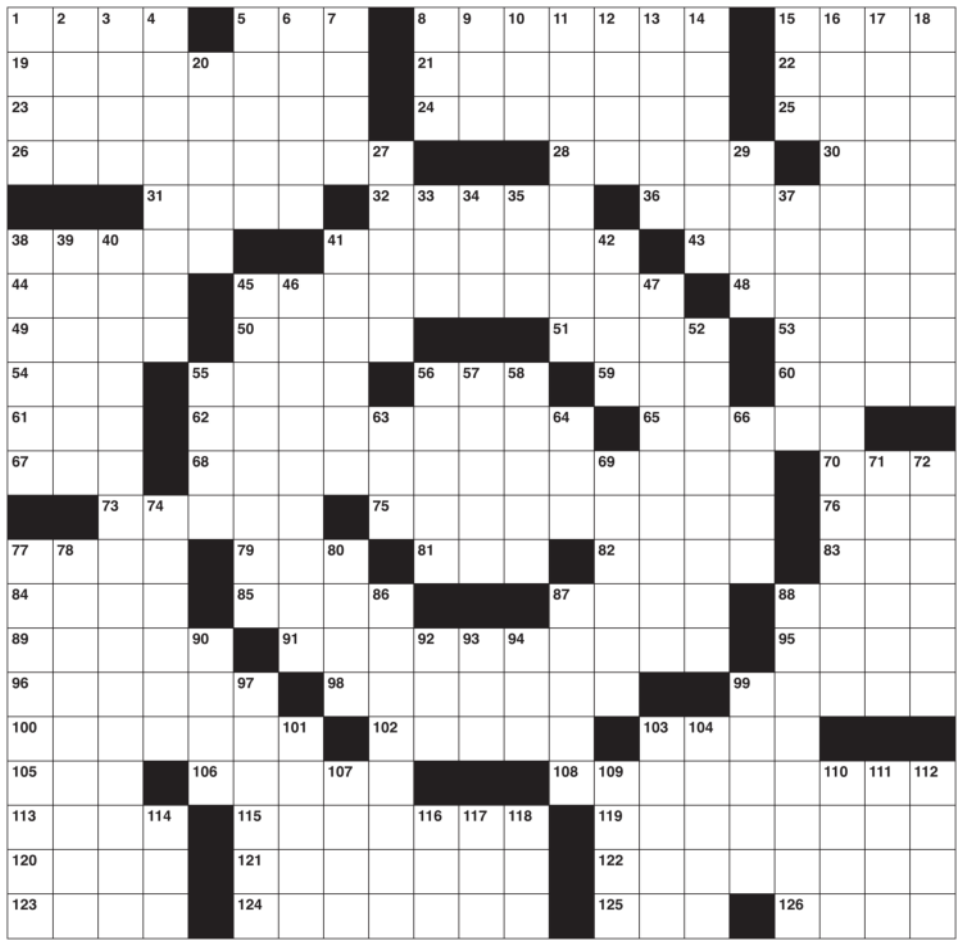
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

DOING DOUGHNUTS

BY JEFF CHEN AND JULIANA TRINGALI GOLDEN / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Jeff Chen is a writer in Seattle and a frequent crossword contributor for The Times. Juliana Tringali Golden is an editor in Northern California, making her fourth appearance here. The idea for this puzzle was Juliana's. She says she always wanted to create a crossword with a doughnut theme, and when Jeff showed her some blank grids he'd made with interesting patterns, this one, with a torus shape in the middle, "screamed 'doughnut' to me!" — W. S.



ACROSS

1 Pieces of praise
5 Host
8 D-lister's quest
15 Anjou alternative
19 Hot sauce with a reduplicative name
21 About whom an early critic said: "Can't act, can't sing. Balding. Can dance a little"
22 Opposite of baja
23 Case study?
24 "Definitely, leave it to me!
25 Japanese noodle dish
26 "I declare this doughnut to be a truly tasty treat!"
28 Blends
30 Egg ____ yung
31 Final opponent in many a video game
32 Source of division at a wedding
36 Download in progress?
38 Cube's 12
41 Items of apparel in the song "My Favorite Things"
43 Blows past
44 Turn into a puddle, maybe
45 "Here's one way to eat a doughnut without getting icing on your nose . . . "
48 2006 Amy Winehouse hit
49 La Perla purchases
50 ____ Day, nickname for Billie Holiday
51 Dawson of "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay"
53 Work (up)
54 Alternative to Betsy
55 Stew
56 Mark in a shell game
59 Sign of a sellout
60 One way to have something down
61 Night before
62 Pulls rank on, in a way
65 Character asked to "shine down," in a children's song
67 ____ student
68 "Let's raise a glass to this outstanding doughnut!"
70 Tolkien's Treebeard, for one
73 Mideast rulers
75 Interrupts when it's not one's place to do so
76 It "shines with a mournful light, like its own tear," in an Andrew Marvell poem
77 Prix ____ menu
79 "Lemme think . . ."
81 Originally named
82 Natural leaders, it's said
83 Corsica, par exemple
84 Likely to offend, for short
85 Telenovela, e.g.
87 "____ everybody?"
88 Inventory: Abbr.
89 D.E.A. agent
91 "It is an undeniable fact that this doughnut is awesome!"
95 Long span of time
96 Massages
98 Downtempo electronica genre
99 Like those celebrating a day of visibility on March 31
100 Heading on a certain neighborhood poster
102 Lure in the "Odyssey"
103 Foofaraws
105 Certain filler words
106 Like a baseball shutout
108 "This doughnut is the talk of the town!"
113 Pass quickly (through)
115 Small houses in the Southwest
119 Movie featuring Mickey Mouse in a wizard's cap
120 "Me as well!"
121 Magazine "real estate"
122 Frozen treat named for a playful animal
123 Little copper?
124 Keep going
125 "Get it?"
126 Their first five parts are often disguised, for short

DOWN

1 Oil-industry acronym
2 Megacelebrity, maybe
3 "Red" leader
4 Some blackjack wagers
5 Makes, as money
6 Pod cast?
7 Response to "Cómo estás?"
8 "Come to think of it . . ."
9 When doubled, a fly
10 Symbols in social media handles
11 Clothing
12 "Bones"
13 Sonicare competitor
14 Civil rights activist Sylvia who was awarded a Presidential Medal of Freedom
15 German lead-in to haus
16 "This doughnut would be great dipped in milk!"
17 Game popular in Brooklyn streets
18 What has good coverage for retirement?
20 Mazatlán moola
27 Symbol of freshness
29 Foofaraw
33 TV "Cousin"
34 Chateau ____ Michelle (Washington winery)
35 Headed up
37 Pithy review
38 Symbol
39 Get
40 "I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts . . ."
41 Up-to-date
42 Doesn't move
45 An annual vaccination can limit its spread
46 Japanese noodle joint
47 Fixed completely
52 Indeed, quaintly
55 Two inside an ellipse
56 Garfunkel's partner in song
57 Treasure
58 Trattoria bowlful
63 Cheer squad's cry
64 Numbered things in N.Y.C.
66 Subway stops: Abbr.
69 Gets ready for a Ms. Olympia contest, perhaps
71 Civil rights icon Mandela
72 Many fans of the "Enola Holmes" franchise
74 Hotbeds of tourist activity
77 Genre for George Clinton or Earth, Wind & Fire
78 Like rocks or clocks, but not a fox or an ox
80 Pull up
86 They're called "white carrots" in Scotland
87 Gets something straight?
88 Snickers alternatives
90 One-eyed god
92 Kid often nicknamed "Trey"
93 "Rough Translation" podcaster
94 Not just "a"
97 Bit of movie-theater candy
99 Dense cake
101 A, B, C or D, but rarely E
103 Banded gemstone
104 Author of "De vulgari eloquentia"
107 Former governor of Georgia?
109 Popular tabloid subjects
110 Org. with "Informed Delivery" emails
111 The Promised Land
112 Nukes
114 Great deal
116 Mai ____
117 Coolers, for short
118 Word with "to work" or "to stun"

GUNSTON STREET

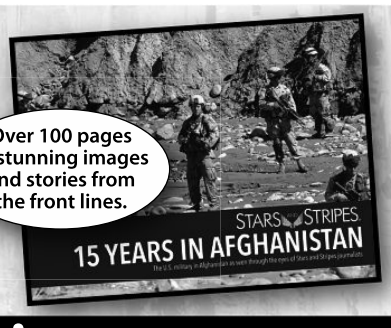
"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

STARS AND STRIPES 15 YEARS IN AFGHANISTAN

The story of the U.S. military's role in Afghanistan, as seen through the eyes of Stars and Stripes journalists covering America's longest war.

Only $14.99 with Free Shipping



ORDER NOW at www.stripesstore.com

FACES

The last new Beatles song

‘Now And Then,’ constructed with the aid of artificial intelligence, coming out next week

BY DAVID BAUDER
Associated Press

Sixty years after the onset of Beatlemania and with two of the quartet now dead, artificial intelligence has enabled the release next week of what is promised to be the last “new” Beatles song.

The track, called “Now And Then,” will be available Nov. 2 as part of a single paired with “Love Me Do,” the very first Beatles single that came out in 1962 in England, it was announced Thursday.

“Now And Then” comes from the same batch of unreleased demos written by the late John Lennon, which were used by his former bandmates to construct the songs “Free As a Bird” and “Real Love,” released in the mid-1990s.

Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr and George Harrison worked on “Now And Then” in the same sessions, but technological limitations stood in the way.

With the help of artificial intelligence, director Peter Jackson cleared those problems up by “separating” Lennon’s original vocals from a piano used in the late 1970s. The much clearer vocals allowed McCartney and Starr to complete the track last year.

The survivors packed plenty into it. The new single contains guitar that Harrison had recorded nearly three decades ago, a new drum part by Starr, with McCartney’s bass, piano and a slide guitar solo he added as a tribute to Harrison, who died in 2001. McCartney and Starr sing backup.

McCartney also added a string arrangement written with the help of Giles Martin, son of the late Beatles producer George Martin.

As if that wasn’t enough, they weaved in backing vocals from the original Beatles recordings of “Here, There and Everywhere,” “Eleanor Rigby” and “Because.”

“There it was, John’s voice, crystal clear,” McCartney said in the announcement. “It’s quite emotional. And we all play on it; it’s a genuine Beatles recording. In 2023 to still be working on Beatles music, and about to release a new song the public haven’t heard, I think it’s quite an exciting thing.”

AP

The Beatles, foreground from left, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, John Lennon and Ringo Starr on drums, perform Feb. 9, 1964, on the CBS “Ed Sullivan Show” in New York. With two of the four now dead, artificial intelligence has enabled the release of a “new” Beatles song.

“In 2023 to still be working on Beatles music, and about to release a new song the public haven’t heard, I think it’s quite an exciting thing.”

Paul McCartney

Harrison’s widow, Olivia, said he felt in the 1990s that the technical problems made it impossible to release a song that met the band’s standards. With the improvements, “he would have wholeheartedly” joined Paul and Ringo in completing the song now if he were still alive, she said.

Next Wednesday, the day before the song’s release, a 12-minute film that tells the story of the new recording will be made public.

Later in the month, expanded versions of the Beatles’ compilations “1962-1966” and “1967-1970” will be released. “Now And Then,” despite coming much later than 1970, will be added to the latter collection.

The surviving Beatles have skillfully released new projects, like remixes of their old albums that include studio outtakes and Jackson’s “Get Back” film.

This year, it’s the grand finale of new music.

“This is the last track, ever, that you’ll get the four Beatles on the track. John, Paul, George and Ringo,” Starr said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

Martin Scorsese doesn’t get Quentin Tarantino’s plan to retire: ‘I’m curious about everything still’

BY CARLOS DE LOERA
Los Angeles Times

It’s officially confirmed: Martin Scorsese is just built different, bro.

The “Killers of the Flower Moon” director weighed in on how he can’t really speak on another director’s trajectory when asked about Quentin Tarantino’s stated intention to retire from filmmaking after the conclusion of his 10th film.

“[Tarantino’s] a writer ... it’s a different thing,” Scorsese told the Associated Press. “I come up with stories, I get attracted to stories through other people — all different means, different ways. And so I think it’s a different process ... I respect writers and I wish I could just be in a room and create these novels. Not films, novels.”

He added: “I’m curious about everything still. That’s one of the things. If I’m curious about something, I think I’ll find a way. If I hold out and hold up, I’ll find a way to try to make something of it on film, but I have to be curious about the subject. My curiosity is still there. I couldn’t speak for Quentin Tarantino or others who are able to create this work in their world.”

Scorsese

Tarantino

In explaining that he couldn’t relate to Tarantino’s inclination to abandon filmmaking, the 80-year-old movie legend was asked by the interviewer if he was “just built differently.” Scorsese responded, “I am.”

While not identifying as a writer, Scorsese has screenwriting credits on seven of the movies he’s directed, including “Goodfellas,” “Casino,” Mean Streets,” “Silence” and his latest film, “Killers of the Flower Moon.”

The Oscar winner also revealed that he’s only just this year begun to read emails.

“[E]mails, they scare me,” he said. “It says ‘CC’ and there are a thousand names. Who are these people? ... Is this a personal email? What does that mean? And then what really gets me in the email, the system, is that you don’t know where you’re supposed to, how you’re supposed to respond. There’s all these hieroglyphics all over it, so I don’t know where to read.”

He presented an option, however. “[T]exting, to me, is possibly a little easier. At least it’s more specific.”

Scorsese isn’t the only director to comment on Tarantino’s 10-film plan, which is relevant as the “Pulp Fiction” director is in production on his 10th film, “The Movie Critic.”

“Licorice Pizza” filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson spoke about Tarantino’s decision in an incredulous manner during a 2018 film discussion of “Phantom Thread.”

“I know Quentin likes to say, ‘I’m making 10 movies and then I’m quitting.’ But I could never do that. I don’t know how he could say that, or how he could take himself seriously when he says that,” Anderson said. “This is what I want to do as long as I’m able to do it. ... I think things can become peculiar when directors don’t act their age maybe, or seeing them try to keep up with the kids or trying to be hip. That’s never a good look.”

Spears to get 25% of memoir’s net profits

Thanks to “The Woman in Me,” Britney Spears is about to cash in.

The “Toxic” singer, 41, will earn 25% of the net profits from her explosive memoir, which dropped Tuesday after a week of bombshell revelations, sources with direct knowledge told TMZ.

That percentage is expected to cover Spears’ reported $12.5 million advance, according to insiders.

The book has already flown off the shelves, with more than 400,000 copies sold thus far.

Spears reportedly went through periods where she had no desire to write — let alone finish — penning the memoir, though she was ultimately persuaded to do so by best pal and manager Cade Hudson, as sources told the outlet. Hudson even got a nod in the acknowledgement of the book.

The pop icon’s reluctance might have had something to do with the “heart-wrenching” experience she had revisiting the moments laid out in the book.

“This book has been a labor of love and all the emotions that come with it,” Spears said in a statement to People earlier this month. “Reliving everything has been exciting, heart-wrenching and emotional, to say the least.”

Nicki Minaj pushes back release of ‘Pink Friday 2’

Nicki Minaj is once again pushing back “Pink Friday 2.” The long-delayed album is now set to debut on the hip-hop star’s 41st birthday.

She insists it’ll be worth the wait and perhaps “the biggest gift I’ve ever given humanity thus far.”

The “Starships” and “Super Bass” rapper announced Tuesday on Instagram that the album will no longer come out on Nov. 17, but will drop instead on Dec. 8.

“Pink Friday 2” has been five years in the making and its lead single, “Super Freaky Girl,” dropped back in August 2022. The album was originally supposed to be released on Oct. 20. But the latest setback, the Young Money Entertainment artist explained, had to do with her label being unable to receive vinyl copies in time for the planned Nov. 17 release.

Minaj said she was given the option of releasing it as early as Dec. 1, but opted for the more meaningful date of Dec. 8.

“For about two reasons, I have changed my album date,” Minaj said, claiming that it had been changed “for some time now behind the scenes” due to a series of personal and professional issues.

“This entire album will be the biggest gift I’ve ever given humanity thus far. I can stand by that,” she said. “I will bet any amount of money that ‘Pink Friday 2: The Album’ is going to make people fall in love immediately.”

From TNS wire reports

Transportation 944

VEHICLE SHIPPING SERVICES

- International Shipping
- Import & Export
- Inland trucking *(U.S. & Europe)*
- Door to door pick-up/delivery service
- Customs clearance
- All Risk Marine Insurance
- Auto Insurance *(Germany only)*

Trans Global LOGISTICS EUROPE GMBH

For Further Information Please Contact

	GERMANY	UNITED KINGDOM	U.S.A
Phone:	+49-(0)6134-2592730	+44-(0)1638-515714	+1-972-602-1670 Ext. 1701
Toll-free:	0800-CARSHIP (Germany only)		+1-800-264-8167 (US only)
E-Mail:	info@transglobal-logistics.de	enquiries@carshipuk.co.uk	info@tgal.us
WEB:	www.transglobal-logistics.de	www.carshipuk.co.uk	www.tgal.us

For 2nd POV Shipments - Offices / Agencies near Military Installations

Transportation 944

Ship Cars and Containers to and from the USA

WSA WORLDWIDE SHIPPING AGENCY

OPENING HOURS: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mon - Fri
0800-522-6274 or 800-WSA-SHIP (972-7447)
For a free rate request, please email: info@worldwide-ship.de
Visit our Website: www.worldwide-ship.de

Off Duty? Amuse Yourself!

Concert, events, TV, movies, music, video games, celebrity antics...

Get entertained with...

STARS AND STRIPES

Are you in the picture?

Reading **Stars and Stripes** gives you a better handle on issues that affect you most.

No one covers the bases the way we do.

STARS AND STRIPES

STARS AND STRIPES

CLASSIFIED

	EUROPE	MIDDLE EAST	PACIFIC
Advertising	**Doug Dougherty** dougherty.doug@stripes.com +49(0) 631-3615-9000 DSN: 314-583-9000	**Doug Dougherty** dougherty.doug@stripes.com +49(0) 631-3615-9000 DSN: 314-583-9000	**Ichiro Katayanagi** PacificAdvertising@stripes.com DSN: 227-7313, CML +81 (42) 552-2511 ext.77313
Circulation	**Carlo Aquino** Aquino.Carlo@stripes.com +49 631-3615-9136 DSN: 314-583-9136	**David Schultz** Schultz.David@stripes.com +49 631-3615-9136 DSN: 314-583-9136	**Mari Mori** CustomerHelp@stripes.com +81(3) 6385.7333 DSN: 315-227-7333
Reader Letters	letters@stripes.com	letters@stripes.com	letters@stripes.com

ClassifiedsEUROPE

For information on Commercial Rates: **CIV: 0631-3615-9012 or DSN: 583-9012**

Announcements 040

SCAM FADS

Classifieds scams can target both sellers and buyers with classifieds advertisements.

Be aware of the common red flags.

Some of the latest Scam fads are:

- Vehicle buyers wanting to buy sight unseen and have the vehicle shipped through an agent using paypal.
- People saying Free Dog (different breeds) for adoption.

Automotive 140

SELLER BEWARE

Individuals placing classified advertising should use discretion in concluding the sale of their property. Not all potential buyers are reputable or honest. Stars and Stripes suggests that you take precautions to ensure that potential buyers are reputable and will be able to fulfill the terms of the sale. Stars and Stripes is not liable for the contractual relationship between sellers and buyers of merchandise advertised in the newspaper or on the web site.

Are you in the picture?

Reading **Stars and Stripes** gives you a better handle on issues that affect you most.

No one covers the bases the way we do.

STARS AND STRIPES

However you read us, wherever you need us.

Sell Your Stuff!

Take the fuss out of packing up for your next **PCS**—sell everything with Stripes ***free classifieds!***

STARS AND STRIPES

MILITARY STAR®

IT PAYS TO BE A ST★R!

shopmyexchange.com

OPEN

10% OFF
YOUR FIRST-DAY'S PURCHASES*

SAVE 5¢
ON EVERY GALLON OF FUEL*

10% OFF
AT PARTICIPATING EXCHANGE RESTAURANTS*

MILITARY STAR®

2% REWARDS
ON ALL PURCHASES*
(EXCHANGES, COMMISSARIES & ONLINE)

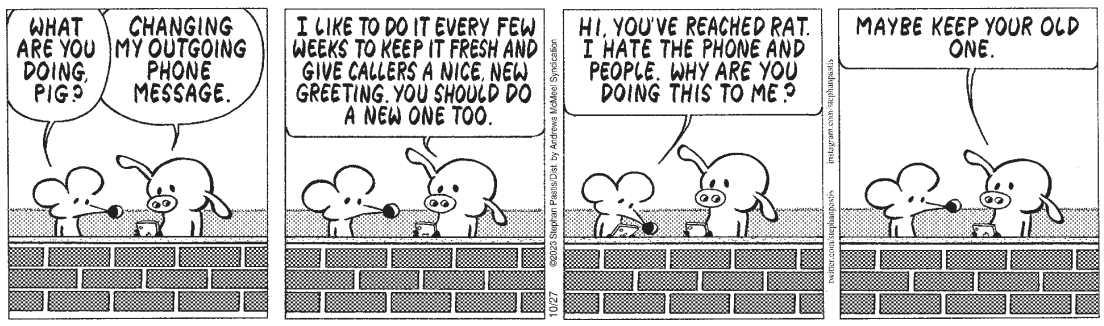
VISIT **AAFES.MEDIA/MILSTAR** TO LEARN MORE & START EARNING REWARDS TODAY!

Bizarro

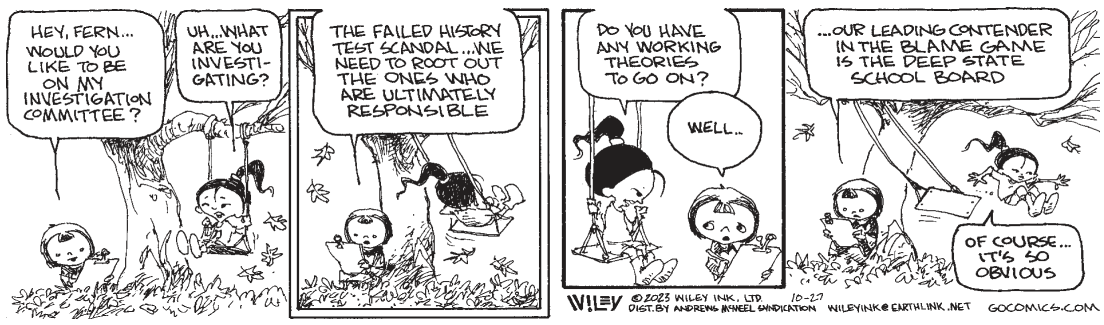
Loose Parts

Frazz

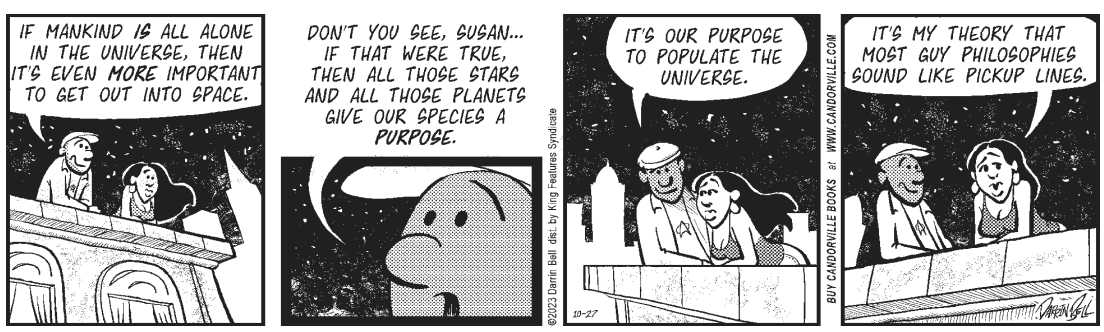
Pearls Before Swine



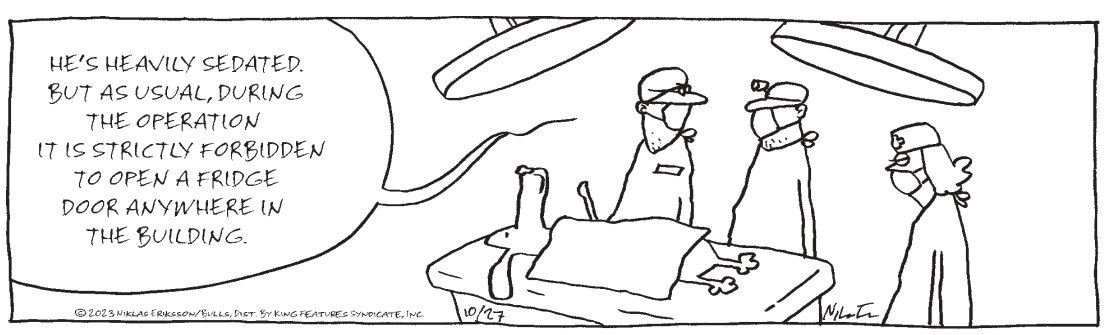
Non Sequitur



Candorville

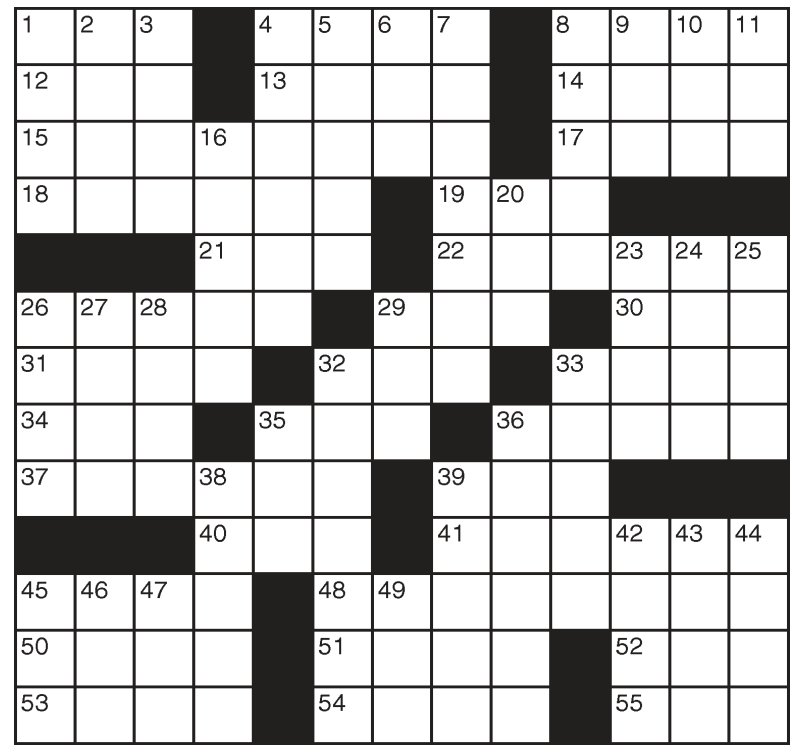


Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey

Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

1 Wrestling surface
4 Rain-delay cover
8 Graph line
12 Pub order
13 Mideast ruler
14 Queen of Carthage
15 Bama fan's cheer
17 Cameo shape
18 Orchestral instruments
19 Deli creation
21 Reply (Abbr.)
22 "Whatever works"
26 Lathers
29 Secret-protecting doc.
30 That girl
31 Moth variety
32 Pool stick
33 Hearty dish
34 Dye type
35 Sailor
36 Hen pens
37 Chocolate-coated treat
39 Day light
40 Gut-punch reaction
41 Noah's landfall
45 Syringe, for short
48 Calmly
50 Tech whiz
51 Wonka's creator
52 Water tester
53 Tiny amounts
54 Online auction site
55 Ninny

DOWN

1 Artist Chagall
2 Lotion additive
3 Snitch
4 Wyoming range
5 Out of whack
6 Free (of)
7 Officiate
8 Photoshop maker
9 VII doubled
10 Hollywood's Lupino
11 Fa follower
16 Andean beast
20 Ms. Thurman
23 Regarding
24 News anchor Smith
25 Evergreens
26 Exerciser's target
27 Greek liqueur
28 Shortly
29 Gist
32 Trust (in)
33 Sub detector
35 Sticky stuff
36 In a terse manner
38 Library collection
39 Former First Daughter
42 Ms. Hayworth
43 Big fusses
44 Golf props
45 Elev.
46 Pro vote
47 Walker, on a sign
49 Arrest

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	O	N	S		B	U	S	H		P	H	D
I	G	E	T		U	N	T	O		E	A	R
P	L	A	Y	G	R	O	U	P		E	R	A
S	E	L	L	E	R			E	G	R	E	T
			U	M		Y	A	D	I	G		
B	O	P	S		S	A	M		N	Y	E	T
B	A	R			C	H	A			N	O	S
C	R	O	C		A	O	L		S	T	E	P
		M	A	C	R	O		J	O			
D	O	G	M	A			C	U	R	D	L	E
O	D	O		P	I	N	E	G	R	E	E	N
L	O	W		E	V	I	L		O	M	N	I
E	R	N		S	E	A	T		W	O	O	D

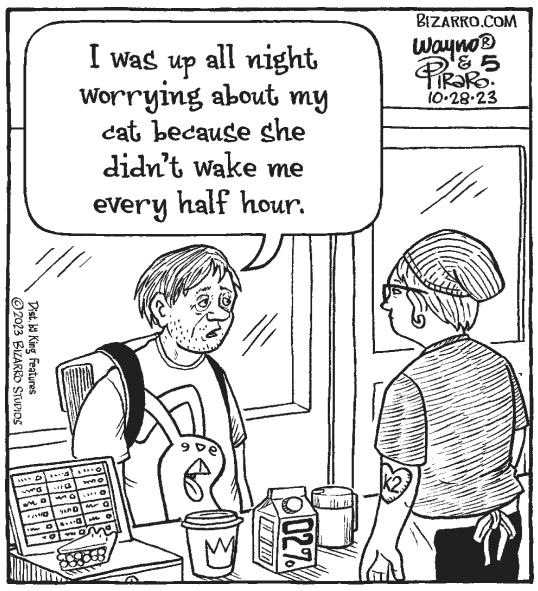
10-27 **CRYPTOQUIP**

HW SPO AYS AP KCUKZ XR KNHZ VUHYHA XRG MXNK RP VOLLKVV, IMXA GP SPO GP? KCPYLHVK HR WOAHZHAS.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NAME OF A HUGE STOVETOP COOKING CONTEST TAKING PLACE EVERY FOUR YEARS: THE SIMMER OLYMPICS.

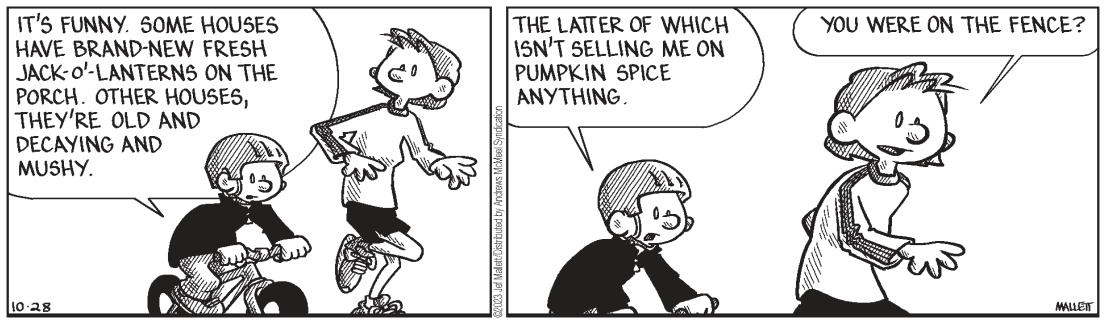
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals Y

Bizarro

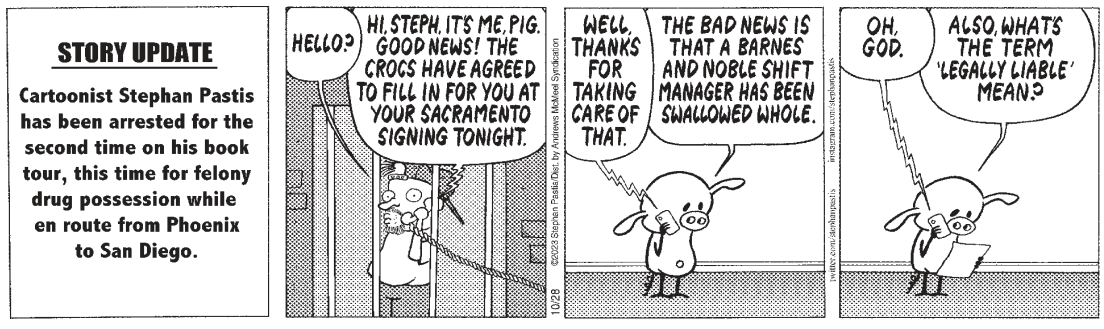


Loose Parts

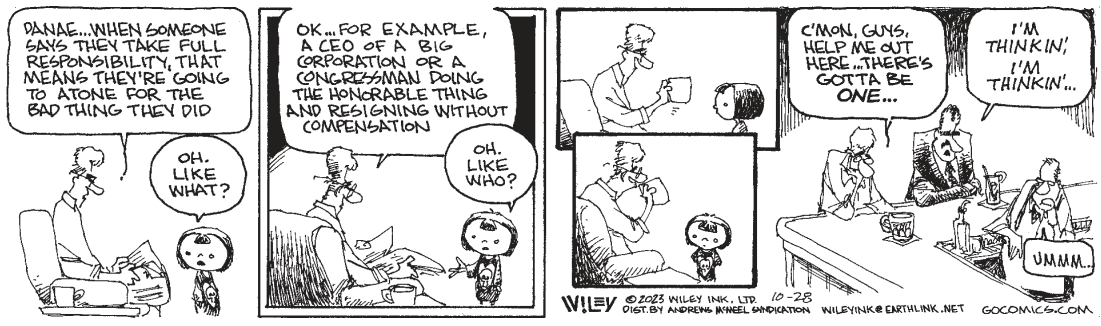
Frazz



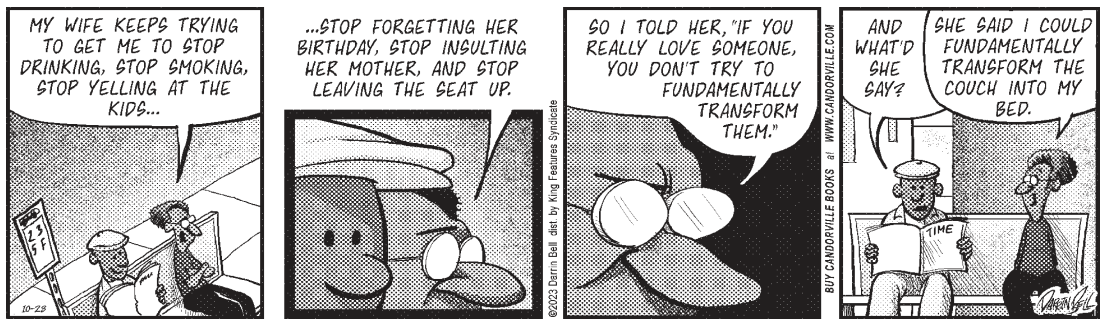
Pearls Before Swine



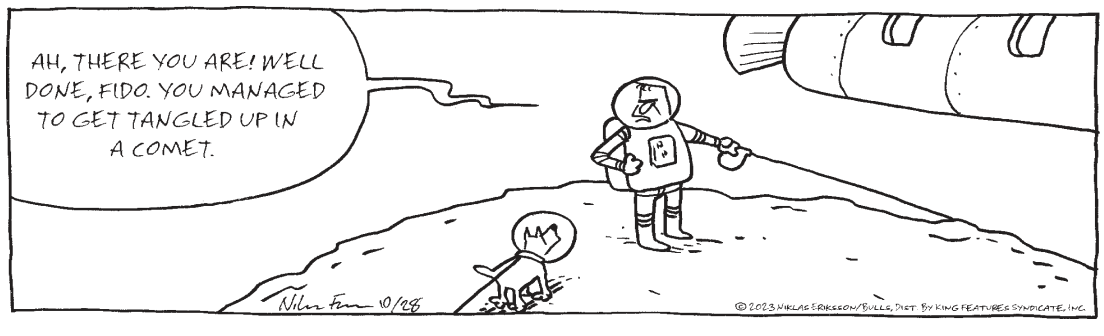
Non Sequitur



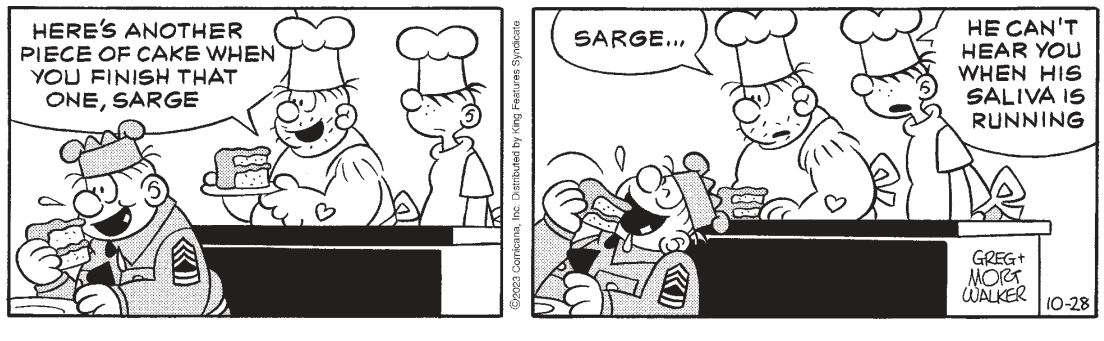
Candorville



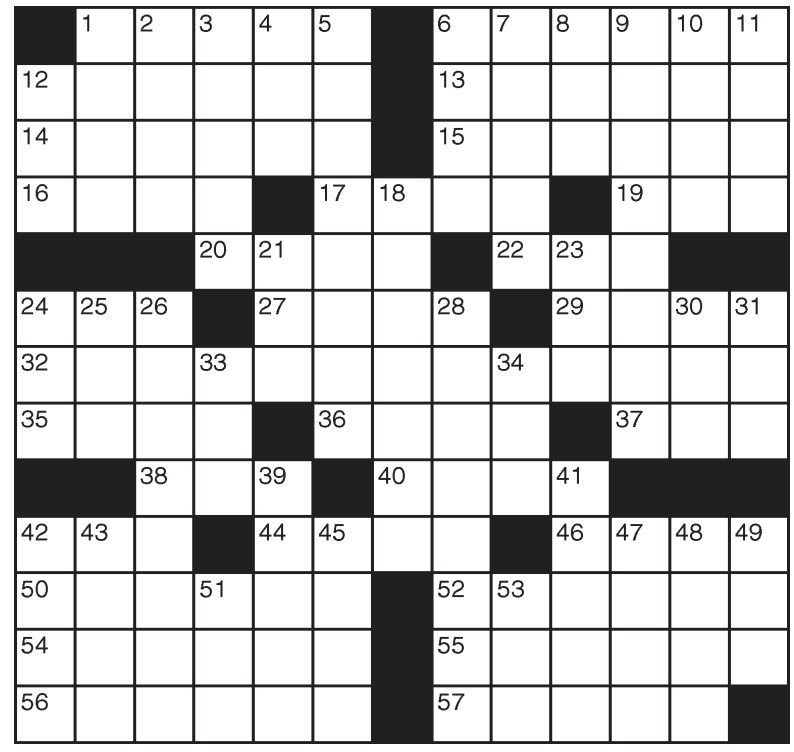
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

1 Pale purple
6 Hankered
12 Cuban port
13 Deli request
14 Speaker
15 "Mad Money" host Jim
16 "— She Lovely"
17 Aspiring atty.'s exam
19 Greek mountain
20 Guitarist Clapton
22 NBC weekend show
24 Jungfrau, e.g.
27 Tennis legend Arthur
29 Nevada neighbor
32 Carly Simon hit song
35 Anna's sister in "Frozen"
36 Big name in scat
37 Paris appellation
38 Med. plan option
40 Seniors' gp.
42 Embassy VIP
44 Engine noise
46 Congers
50 Flinches, say
52 Jerry of the Grateful Dead
54 Jughead's pal
55 Redacted
56 Show compassion
57 Apollo's birthplace

DOWN

1 Rock drummer Ulrich
2 Tennis great Lendl
3 Starbucks offering
4 Year in Spain
5 Belinda of the Go-Go's
6 Bygone Peruvian
7 Civil wrongs
8 Nashville-based awards org.
9 $10 portrait
10 Kept tabs on
11 Nickelodeon's "Explorer"
12 — polloi
18 Erudite person
21 Arctic explorer John
23 Almond, e.g.
24 Sailor's assent
25 Online guffaw
26 Resistance
28 Made it big?
30 "I love," to Ovid
31 Jacket's edge
33 "Kapow!"
34 Needlefish
39 Choose to participate
41 Danger
42 The "A" of UAE
43 Simple
45 Secondhand
47 Outside (Pref.)
48 Fibs
49 Feeling down
51 Greek X
53 Sports drink suffix

Answer to Previous Puzzle

M	A	T		T	A	R	P		A	X	I	S
A	L	E		E	M	I	R		D	I	D	O
R	O	L	L	T	I	D	E		O	V	A	L
C	E	L	L	O	S		S	U	B			
			A	N	S		I	M	E	A	S	Y
F	O	A	M	S		N	D	A		S	H	E
L	U	N	A		C	U	E		S	T	E	W
A	Z	O		G	O	B		C	O	O	P	S
B	O	N	B	O	N		S	U	N			
			O	O	F		A	R	A	R	A	T
H	Y	P	O		I	N	S	T	R	I	D	E
G	E	E	K		D	A	H	L		T	O	E
T	A	D	S		E	B	A	Y		A	S	S

10-28 CRYPTOQUIP

BMOS GNQMS VXP TOKK NS BMDH TOS QMXJSJ OWD EWXZPTNHQ TXHSDHSDZ HXNJDJ? EPWW-OHXWGOK OTSNUNSV.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU TRY TO EXPEL AN EVIL SPIRIT AND HAVE NO SUCCESS, WHAT DO YOU DO? EXORCISE IN FUTILITY.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals C

STARS AND STRIPES

Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
Laura Law, Chief Operating Officer
Lt. Col. Katie R. Fidler, Europe commander
John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Pacific commander
Michael Ryan, Pacific chief of staff

EDITORIAL

Robert H. Reid, Editor in Chief
reid.robert@stripes.com

Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation
moores.sean@stripes.com

Ann Pinson, Digital Managing Editor
pinson.ann@stripes.com

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast
Erik Slavin, Europe & Mideast Bureau Chief
slavin.erik@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9350; DSN (314)583.9350

Pacific
Aaron Kidd, Pacific Bureau Chief
kidd.aaron@stripes.com
+81.42.552.2511 ext. 88380; DSN (315)227.7380

Washington
Joseph Cacchioli, Washington Bureau Chief
cacchioli.joseph@stripes.com
(+1)(202)886-0033

Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News
bowers.brian@stripes.com

CIRCULATION

Mideast
David Schultz, District Manager
schultz.david@stripes.com
xsscirculation@stripes.com
+49(0)152.5672.5036; DSN (314)583-9111

Europe
Carlo Aquino, Circulation Manager
aquino.carlo@stripes.com
memberservices@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9136; DSN (314)583.9136

Pacific
Mari Mori, customerhelp@stripes.com
+81-3 6385.3171; DSN (315)227.7333

CONTACT US

Washington
tel: (+1)202.886.0003
633 3rd St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20001-3050

Reader letters
letters@stripes.com

Additional contacts
stripes.com/contactus

OMBUDSMAN
Ernie Gates

The Stars and Stripes ombudsman protects the free flow of news and information, reporting any attempts by the military or other authorities to undermine the newspaper's independence. The ombudsman also responds to concerns and questions from readers, and monitors coverage for fairness, accuracy, timeliness and balance. The ombudsman welcomes comments from readers, and can be contacted by email at ombudsman@stripes.com, or by phone at 202.886.0003.

Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) is published weekdays (except Dec. 25 and Jan. 1) for 50 cents Monday through Thursday and for $1 on Friday by Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APO AP 96301-5002. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA, Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit 45002, APO AP 96301-5002. This newspaper is authorized by the Department of Defense for members of the military services overseas. However, the contents of Stars and Stripes are unofficial, and are not to be considered as the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government. As a DOD newspaper, Stars and Stripes may be distributed through official channels and use appropriated funds for distribution to remote locations where overseas DOD personnel are located.

The appearance of advertising in this publication does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense or Stars and Stripes of the products or services advertised. Products or services advertised shall be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user or patron.

© Stars and Stripes 2023
stripes.com

OPINION

Iran's proxy forces aim to attack Americans

By Josh Rogin
The Washington Post

The Biden administration often says it wants to prevent the Israel-Gaza war from expanding across the region. But the near-daily attacks by Iranian-backed militias on U.S. troops in several Middle Eastern countries demonstrate that President Joe Biden's containment effort is cracking. Iran is already attacking U.S. bases using its proxy forces — and the United States has yet to formulate a proper response.

Since Oct. 17, a new coalition of armed groups called the "Islamic Resistance of Iraq" has claimed credit for at least 11 attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria. This organization didn't exist before the Israel-Gaza war erupted. But its membership, consisting of several Iranian-backed militia groups in Iraq (all of whom also operate in Syria), is a clear indication that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is pulling the strings.

Iranian-backed militias have used drones or rockets to attack U.S. military personnel at the al-Asad Air Base in western Iraq, al-Harir Air Base in Iraqi Kurdistan, al-Tanf garrison in Syria and the U.S. base at Conoco natural gas field in Syria — with multiple strikes on each location.

I spoke with two Syrian rebel commanders who partner with U.S. forces there in the fight against the Islamic State. They told me that the IRGC's notorious Quds Force has consolidated various militias under the new moniker to focus efforts and resources on one shared mission: targeting Americans.

"There has been absolutely no response to these attacks, which has resulted in the fact that the Iranian backed militias are getting much braver," said one Syrian rebel commander, who requested anonymity out of concern for his safety.

The Biden team looks like it is trying to downplay the events. Several U.S. personnel have been wounded, but the Pentagon hasn't commented on the numbers and the severity of the injuries. One U.S. contractor at al-Asad died of a heart attack while scrambling for cover on Oct. 18 during what the Pentagon later said was a false alarm.

On Oct. 19, a Pentagon spokesman noted the "uptick" in Iranian-militia attacks but said available information showed "no direct linkage" to the Oct. 7 Hamas terrorist attacks in Israel and Israel's response in Gaza. "It's important to separate these attacks from the current situation" in Israel, the spokesman said.

That same day, the Pentagon announced U.S. ships in the Persian Gulf had shot down three cruise missiles and more than a dozen drones launched by Iranian-backed Houthi forces in Yemen. The target of those drones remains unclear. But the connection between all these attacks and the Israel-Gaza war has been explicitly acknowledged — by Iran.

"I warn the U.S. and its proxy Israel that if they do not immediately stop the crime against humanity and genocide in Gaza, anything is possible at any moment and the region will go out of control," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said at a news conference in Tehran on Sunday.

To be sure, the Biden administration must be careful about feeding a cycle of escalation that could lead to a wider conflict. But that fear of escalation risks paralyzing policy. U.S. forces have responded to Iranian-backed militia attacks in Syria before while Biden was president. The logic then still applies now; failure to respond encourages these groups to get bolder.

Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, told me that U.S. military forces in Iraq and Syria don't have legal authorization to go after Iranian-backed militias properly. U.S. forces have authority to strike terrorist groups under current authorizations for the use of military force, but they don't explicitly allow for preemptive strikes against Iranian-backed militias.

"… I hope the administration will revise their position and support including Iran-backed proxies in an updated AUMF," he told me. "We cannot close our eyes to these very real threats to U.S. national security."

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., told me that Biden has the authority he needs to protect U.S. forces against imminent threats, but the United States should reexamine deploying thousands of troops across the region at all.

There are about 2,500 U.S. troops stationed in Iraq and 900 in Syria, plus an undisclosed number of U.S. contractors.

That's an interesting debate for later on. Right now, U.S. troops are there and in harm's way. The Pentagon redeployed two U.S. aircraft carrier groups to the region to increase deterrence against Iran or any other group that might want to expand the Israel-Gaza conflict. But as these attacks continue, it's becoming more and more apparent that this new "Islamic Resistance of Iraq" has not been deterred.

On Monday, White House spokesman John Kirby said Iran was not only spurring on these attacks but also facilitating some of them. He pledged the United States would not allow Iran to use proxies to attack Americans with impunity. It's time for the Biden team to match those words with action.

Josh Rogin is a columnist for the Global Opinions section of The Washington Post.

GOP found a speaker but now comes hard part

By Karen Tumulty
The Washington Post

It might turn out that the tortuous, humiliating process that finally put a warm body in the speaker's chair was actually the easy part for House Republicans.

On Wednesday, after 21 days in which the speakership sat vacant, the GOP majority finally settled on a little-known congressman from Louisiana for one of the most powerful positions in government — landing Rep. Mike Johnson second in line for the presidency.

Johnson's selection came after fractious Republicans spurned a trio of their top leaders to fill the job that became open when a handful of hard-right members engineered the ouster of previous speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., on Oct. 3. So narrow is the GOP hold on the chamber that none of its candidates could afford to lose the support of more than about five of their colleagues.

With Johnson holding the gavel, the House is again able to consider and move legislation — which is urgent at a time when the government is barely three weeks away from shutting down for lack of funding, money is needed to aid Ukrainian forces against Russian invaders and still more is being sought to support Israel after Hamas terrorists staged a mass slaughter there.

But it is questionable whether and how well any of this can happen with Johnson holding a tenuous grip on a GOP majority that remains as dysfunctional as it was at the outset of this debacle.

Johnson's unlikely ascension was more a product of exhaustion — of all the other alternatives and of the bitterness the whole process had engendered in the House Republican Conference — than any other factor.

The congressman from Louisiana is only in his fourth term, which makes him the least experienced speaker since the 19th century. He has held only a lower-level post in his party's House leadership.

As his name was placed in nomination before the assembled lawmakers in the House Chamber on Wednesday, Johnson gazed at his lap and, at least from my vantage in the gallery, appeared more humbled than thrilled as his colleagues hooted and cheered. As the roll was called, he scribbled notes on what looked like a draft of his acceptance speech.

Johnson is well-liked and affable, but his politics have a hard right edge. He voted against the most recent stopgap measure to keep the government open, which passed just hours before it would have shut down on Oct. 1. A close ally of former President Donald Trump, he opposed certifying the 2020 election results and led 126 Republican lawmakers in filing an amicus brief to the Supreme Court alleging election improprieties in Georgia, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan.

There was not a single Republican vote of dissent. Yet, Johnson will have no more job security than McCarthy did; his predecessor, in a concession to the bombthrowers in his party who ultimately did him in, allowed a rules change in which any lawmaker can call for a vote to "vacate the chair" at any time.

It might be that Johnson's conservative cred gives him some protection with that faction of the party — at least for a while. But he will face an early choice, between appeasing them and assuring a functioning government, when it comes time to negotiate the measure to keep the government in business.

He presumably will also be able rely on more seasoned lawmakers in navigating what lies ahead.

"The American people at one time had great pride in this institution, but right now, that's in jeopardy, and we have a challenge to rebuild and restore that trust," Johnson said as he spoke to the House for the first time as its speaker.

Is Johnson the person who can manage to make that happen? At least give him this: As improbable as it is that he would have found himself here, the nation's 56th speaker of the House has begun by clearly spelling out the most important and difficult challenge that lies ahead — for the institution he now leads, and the country that needs it to once again deliver as it was designed to do.

Karen Tumulty is an associate editor and columnist covering national politics.

SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Wednesday's scores

SOUTH
Jacksonville St. 41, FIU 16
SOUTHWEST
UTEP 37, Sam Houston St. 34

Schedule

Friday's games
EAST
Brown (3-3) at Penn (5-1)
SOUTH
FAU (3-4) at Charlotte (2-5)
Saturday's games
EAST
Columbia (2-4) at Yale (3-3)
Indiana (2-5) at Penn St. (6-1)
Howard (3-4) at Delaware St. (1-6)
Duquesne (4-3) at Sacred Heart (1-7)
Tennessee Tech (2-5) at Robert Morris (2-5)
Stonehill (3-4) at Wagner (2-5)
Umass (1-7) at Army (2-5)
Uconn (1-6) at Boston College (4-3)
Lafayette (6-1) at Georgetown (4-4)
Holy Cross (4-3) at Fordham (5-2)
Bucknell (2-5) at Colgate (3-4)
Merrimack (4-3) at St. Francis (Pa.) (2-5)
New Hampshire (4-3) at Rhode Island (4-4)
Princeton (3-3) at Cornell (3-3)
Delaware (6-1) at Towson (3-4)
Albany (NY) (5-3) at Maine (2-6)
Stony Brook (0-7) at Villanova (5-2)
Dartmouth (3-3) at Harvard (5-1)
SOUTH
Florida St. (7-0) at Wake Forest (4-3)
West Virginia (4-3) at UCF (3-4)
Monmouth (NJ) (3-4) at William & Mary (4-3)
Chattanooga (6-2) at VMI (3-4)
UT Martin (6-1) at Gardner-Webb (3-4)
ETSU (2-5) at Furman (6-1)
Morgan St. (1-5) at Norfolk St. (2-5)
Clemson (4-3) at NC State (4-3)
NC A&T (1-6) at Hampton (3-4)
Mercer (5-3) at W. Carolina (5-2)
Lindenwood (Mo.) (3-4) at Tennessee St. (5-2)
SE Missouri (3-4) at Nicholls (3-3)
Lincoln University (CA) (0-5) at Kennesaw St. (1-5)
MVSU (1-6) at Alcorn St. (4-3)
Bethune-Cookman (1-6) at Grambling St. (3-4)
The Citadel (0-7) at Samford (4-4)
Virginia (2-5) at Miami (5-2)
Southern Miss. (1-6) at Appalachian St. (3-4)
Campbell (4-3) at Richmond (5-3)
Florida (5-2) vs. Georgia (7-0) at Jacksonville, Fla.
Mississippi St. (4-3) at Auburn (3-4)
Alabama A&M (4-3) vs. Alabama St. (3-3) at Birmingham, Ala.
Duke (5-2) at Louisville (6-1)
Bryant (3-4) at Charleston Southern (3-4)
Prairie View (3-4) at Florida A&M (6-1)
North Alabama (3-5) at Austin Peay (5-2)
Arkansas St. (3-4) at Louisiana-Monroe (2-5)
Louisiana-Lafayette (4-3) at South Alabama (4-3)
Texas Southern (2-5) at Southern U. (4-3)
Marshall (4-3) at Coastal Carolina (4-3)
Tennessee (5-2) at Kentucky (5-2)
Presbyterian (3-4) at Davidson (5-2)
Vanderbilt (2-6) at Mississippi (6-1)
North Carolina (6-1) at Georgia Tech (3-4)
Northwestern St. (0-6) at McNeese St. (0-7)
Old Dominion (4-3) at James Madison (7-0)
MIDWEST
Houston (3-4) at Kansas St. (5-2)
Maryland (5-2) at Northwestern (3-4)
Oklahoma (7-0) at Kansas (5-2)
N. Iowa (4-3) at Illinois St. (4-3)
Valparaiso (1-6) at Butler (5-3)
Stetson (3-4) at Drake (4-3)
W. Michigan (2-6) at E. Michigan (4-4)
Indiana St. (0-7) at North Dakota (4-3)
Missouri St. (3-4) at Youngstown St. (4-3)
S. Dakota St. (7-0) at South Dakota (6-1)
Marist (4-3) at St. Thomas (Minn.) (5-3)
Murray St. (2-5) at N. Dakota St. (5-2)
Miami (Ohio) (6-2) at Ohio (6-2)
Pittsburgh (2-5) at Notre Dame (6-2)
Purdue (2-5) at Nebraska (4-3)
Michigan St. (2-5) at Minnesota (4-3)
S. Illinois (5-2) at W. Illinois (0-7)
Ohio St. (7-0) at Wisconsin (5-2)
SOUTHWEST
South Carolina (2-5) at Texas A&M (4-3)
Tulsa (3-4) at SMU (5-2)
Jackson St. (5-3) at Ark.-Pine Bluff (1-6)
Texas A&M Commerce (1-6) at Houston Christian (3-4)
Memphis (5-2) at North Texas (3-4)
BYU (5-2) at Texas (6-1)
Iowa St. (4-3) at Baylor (3-4)
East Carolina (1-6) at UTSA (4-3)
Tulane (6-1) at Rice (4-3)
Incarnate Word (6-1) at Lamar (4-3)
Tarleton St. (5-3) at Cent. Arkansas (5-2)
Troy (5-2) at Texas State (5-2)
Cincinnati (2-5) at Oklahoma St. (5-2)
FAR WEST
N. Colorado (0-7) at Montana (6-1)
Abilene Christian (4-3) at S. Utah (2-5)
Oregon (6-1) at Utah (6-1)
Southern Cal (6-2) at California (3-4)
Montana St. (6-1) at Idaho (5-2)
E. Washington (3-4) at Portland St. (3-4)
UC Davis (4-3) at N. Arizona (2-5)
Morehead St. (3-4) at San Diego (1-6)
Wyoming (5-2) at Boise St. (3-4)
Washington (7-0) at Stanford (2-5)
Air Force (7-0) at Colorado St. (3-4)
Colorado (4-3) at UCLA (5-2)
Washington St. (4-3) at Arizona St. (1-6)
E. Kentucky (3-4) at Utah Tech (2-5)
Idaho St. (3-4) at Sacramento St. (5-2)
Oregon St. (6-1) at Arizona (4-3)
New Mexico (3-4) at Nevada (1-6)
UNLV (6-1) at Fresno St. (6-1)
San Jose St. (3-5) at Hawaii (2-6)

PRO FOOTBALL

NFL

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Miami	5	2	0	.714	240	187
Buffalo	4	3	0	.571	198	118
N.Y. Jets	3	3	0	.500	113	119
New England	2	5	0	.286	101	177

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Jacksonville	5	2	0	.714	173	146
Houston	3	3	0	.500	135	113
Indianapolis	3	4	0	.429	178	191
Tennessee	2	4	0	.333	104	117

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Baltimore	5	2	0	.714	171	97
Cleveland	4	2	0	.667	134	115
Pittsburgh	4	2	0	.667	103	127
Cincinnati	3	3	0	.500	100	127

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Kansas City	6	1	0	.857	178	105
Las Vegas	3	4	0	.429	112	161
L.A. Chargers	2	4	0	.333	144	155
Denver	2	5	0	.286	148	217

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Philadelphia	6	1	0	.857	186	141
Dallas	4	2	0	.667	154	100
Washington	3	4	0	.429	140	190
N.Y. Giants	2	5	0	.286	85	174

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Atlanta	4	3	0	.571	115	133
Tampa Bay	3	3	0	.500	103	104
New Orleans	3	4	0	.429	133	127
Carolina	0	6	0	.000	112	186

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Detroit	5	2	0	.714	174	151
Minnesota	3	4	0	.429	151	152
Green Bay	2	4	0	.333	130	132
Chicago	2	5	0	.286	158	188

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
San Francisco	5	2	0	.714	201	109
Seattle	4	2	0	.667	144	118
L.A. Rams	3	4	0	.429	155	141
Arizona	1	6	0	.143	127	182

Thursday's game
Tampa Bay at Buffalo

Sunday's games
Atlanta at Tennessee
Houston at Carolina
Jacksonville at Pittsburgh
L.A. Rams at Dallas
Minnesota at Green Bay
N.Y. Jets at N.Y. Giants
New England at Miami
New Orleans at Indianapolis
Philadelphia at Washington
Cleveland at Seattle
Baltimore at Arizona
Cincinnati at San Francisco
Kansas City at Denver
Chicago at L.A. Chargers

Monday's game
Las Vegas at Detroit

Thursday, Nov. 2
Tennessee at Pittsburgh

Sunday, Nov. 5
Miami vs Kansas City at Frankfurt, Germany
Arizona at Cleveland
Chicago at New Orleans
L.A. Rams at Green Bay
Minnesota at Atlanta
Seattle at Baltimore
Tampa Bay at Houston
Washington at New England
Indianapolis at Carolina
Dallas at Philadelphia
N.Y. Giants at Las Vegas
Buffalo at Cincinnati
Open: Denver, Jacksonville, Detroit, San Francisco

Monday, Nov. 6
L.A. Chargers at N.Y. Jets

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
National League
CINCINNATI REDS — Sent RHP Ben Lively outright to Louisville (IL).
COLORADO ROCKIES — Sent RHPs Matt Koch and Karl Kauffmann and LHP Ty Blach outright to Albuquerque (PCL).
WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Sent 2B Michael Chavis, OF Blake Rutherford and RHP Hobie Harris outright to Rochester (IL).

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
CHICAGO BULLS — Waived Fs Derrick Favors and Kahlil Whitney.
DENVER NUGGETS — Waived C Amida Brimah and F Jamorko Pickett.
GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS — Waived G Yuri Collins.
INDIANA PACERS — Waived Gs Kyle Mangas and Darius McGhee and F Reid Travis.
MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES — Waived F Timmy Allen and G Jason Preston.
MILWAUKEE BUCKS — Waived Gs Jazian Gortman and Omari Moore and F Drew Timme.
MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES — Waived G Vit Krejci.
NEW YORK KNICKS — Waived G Jaylen Martin and F Isaiah Roby.
ORLANDO MAGIC — Waived G Miye Oni.

FOOTBALL
National Football League
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Waived RB Tony Gonzalez Jr. Designated QB Kyler Murray and S Budda Baker to return from the physcially unable to perform (PUP) list and injured reserve to practice.
ATLANTA FALCONS — Released S Jaylin Hawkins from the practice squad. Promoted S Micah Abernathy from the practice squad to the active roster. Signed RB Jacob Saylors to the practice squad.
BALTIMORE RAVENS — Signed S Andrew Adams to the practice squad.
DENVER BRONCOS — Re-signed WR Michael Bandy to the practice squad. Signed LiL'Jordan Humphrey from the practice squad to the active roster.
HOUSTON TEXANS — Placed S Eric Murray on injured reserve. Signed CB Alex Austin to the practice squad. Promoted CB D'Angelo Ross from the practice squad to the active roster. Claimed DE Myjai Sanders off waivers from Arizona. Released LB Cory Littleton.
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Promoted QB Nathan Rourke from the practice squad to the active roster.
LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Signed CB Tyler Hall. Placed S Roderic Teamer on injured reserve. Signed TE John Samuel Shenker to the practice squad.
LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Claimed S Jaylin Hawkins off waivers from Atlanta. Placed DB Raheem Layne on injured reserve.
LOS ANGELES RAMS — Placed RB Ronnie Rivers on injured reserve. Signed RB Myles Gaskin from the Minnesota practice squad.
MIAMI DOLPHINS — Designated CB Jalen Ramsey to return from injured reserve to practice.
MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Placed OLB Marcus Davenport on injured reserve. Reinstated RB Kene Nwangwu from injured reserve. Designated WR Jalen Nailor to return from injured reserve to practice. Signed WR Trishton Jackson to the practice squad.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Signed RB Patrick Taylor and DE William Bradley-King to the practice squad. Released DE Manny Jones and WR T.J. Luther from the practice squad.
NEW YORK GIANTS — Promoted OL Justin Pugh from the practice squad to the active roster. Released TE Lawrence Cager. Placed OT Joshua Ezeudu on injured reserve. Signed G Jalen Mayfield to the practice squad.
NEW YORK JETS — Traded WR Mecole Hardman to Kansas City.
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed WR Julio Jones to the practice squad.
PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Released CB Desmond King. Signed CB Darius Rush from Kansas City practice squad.
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Promoted WR Cody Thompson from the practice squad to the active roster. Signed WR Cody White and OT Greg Eiland to the practice squad. Released QB Holton Ahlers from the practice squad.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League
MINNESOTA WILD — Recalled F Sammy Walker from Iowa (AHL).
NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Assigned G Keith Kincaid to Chicago (AHL).
SAN JOSE SHARKS — Reassigned D Henry Thrun to San Jose (AHL).
VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Returned D Akito Hirose to Abbotsford (AHL). Recalled D Mark Friedman from Abbotsford.

SOCCER
Major League Soccer
NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION — Signed F Malcolm Fry to a contract beginning in 2024 through 2026.

GOLF

Maybank Championship

LPGA Tour
Thursday
At TPC Kuala Lumpur - West Course
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Purse: $3 million
Yardage: 6,596; Par: 72
First Round

Jasmine Suwannapura	32-31—63	-9
Hannah Green	33-31—64	-8
Peiyun Chien	33-32—65	-7
Linn Grant	33-32—65	-7
Grace Kim	34-31—65	-7
Gina Kim	31-34—65	-7
Rose Zhang	33-32—65	-7
Ayaka Furue	34-32—66	-6
Gaby Lopez	33-33—66	-6
Emily Pedersen	34-32—66	-6
Atthaya Thitikul	32-34—66	-6
Aditi Ashok	35-32—67	-5

TENNIS

Swiss Indoors Basel

Wednesday
At St. Jakobshalle
Basel, Switzerland
Purse: Euro 2,169,000
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Men's Singles
Round of 32
Ugo Humbert, France, def. Marcos Giron, United States, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (3).
Taylor Fritz (3), United States, def. Max Purcell, Australia, 7-6 (7), 7-6 (4).
Casper Ruud (2), Norway, def. Alexander Bublik, Kazakhstan, 7-6 (5), 6-2.
Felix Auger-Aliassime (6), Canada, def. Leandro Riedi, Switzerland, 6-3, 6-2.
Round of 16
Hubert Hurkacz (4), Poland, def. Jan-Lennard Struff, Germany, 6-1, 6-4.
Tomas Martin Etcheverry, Argentina, def. Andy Murray, Britain, 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-2.

Erste Bank Open

Wednesday
At Wiener Stadthalle
Vienna
Purse: Euro 2,409,835
Surface: Hardcourt indoor
Men's Singles
Round of 32
Borna Gojo, Croatia, def. Aslan Karatsev, Russia, 6-3, 6-3.
Gael Monfils, France, def. Daniel Altmaier, Germany, 6-4, 6-4.
Daniil Medvedev (1), Russia, def. Arthur Fils, France, 6-4, 6-2.
Jannik Sinner (2), Italy, def. Ben Shelton, United States, 7-6 (2), 7-5.
Round of 16
Karen Khachanov (8), Russia, def. Jiri Lehecka, Czech Republic, 6-3, 6-1.
Alexander Zverev (5), Germany, def. Cameron Norrie, Britain, 6-2, 6-4.

PRO SOCCER

MLS playoffs

Wednesday, Oct. 25
Eastern Conference Wild Card
New York 5, Charlotte 2
Western Conference Wild Card
Sporting Kansas City 0, San Jose 0, Sporting Kansas City advances 4-2 on penalties

First Round
Best -of-three
x-if necessary
Eastern Confernce
Philadelphia vs. New England
Saturday: at Philadelphia
Wednesday, Nov. 8: at New England
x-Sunday, Nov. 12: at Philadelphia
Orlando vs. Nashville
Monday: at Orlando
Tuesday, Nov. 7: at Nashville
x-Sunday, Nov. 12: at Orlando
Columbus vs. Atlanta
Wednesday, Nov. 1: at Columbus
Tuesday, Nov. 7: at Atlanta
x-Sunday, Nov. 12: at Columbus
Cincinnati vs. New York
Sunday: at Cincinnati
Saturday, Nov. 4: at New York
x-Saturday, Nov. 11: at Cincinnati
Western Confernce
Los Angeles FC vs. Vancouver
Saturday: at Los Angeles FC
Sunday, Nov. 5: at Vancouver
x-Thursday, Nov. 9: at Los Angeles FC
Houston vs. Real Salt Lake
Sunday: at Houston
Monday, Nov. 6: at Real Salt Lake
x-Saturday, Nov. 11: at Houston
Seattle vs. FC Dallas
Monday: at Seattle
Saturday, Nov. 4: at FC Dallas
x-Friday, Nov. 10: at Seattle
St. Louis vs. Sporting Kansas City
Sunday: at St. Louis
Sunday, Nov. 5: at Sporting Kansas City
x-Saturday, Nov. 11: at St. Louis

NWSL

Playoffs
Quarterfinals
Friday, Oct. 20
OL Reign 1, Angel City FC 0
Sunday, Oct. 22
Gotham FC 2, North Carolina 0
Semifinals
Sunday, Nov. 5
Gotham FC at Portland
OL Reign at San Diego
Championship
Saturday, Nov. 11
At Snap Dragon Stadium
San Diego
Semifinal winners

AUTO RACING

NASCAR Cup points leaders

Through Oct.; 23

1.	William Byron	4126
2.	Christopher Bell	4110
3.	Ryan Blaney	4106
4.	Kyle Larson	4105
5.	Tyler Reddick	4096
6.	Denny Hamlin	4089
7.	Martin Truex Jr	4089
8.	Chris Buescher	4063
9.	Brad Keselowski	2263
10.	Ross Chastain	2219
11.	Bubba Wallace	2216
12.	Kyle Busch	2210
13.	Joey Logano	2198
14.	Kevin Harvick	2170
15.	Michael McDowell	2145

PRO HOCKEY

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	6	6	0	0	12	19	7
Detroit	7	5	1	1	11	34	20
Toronto	6	4	2	0	8	23	20
Tampa Bay	7	3	2	2	8	23	24
Montreal	6	3	2	1	7	18	21
Ottawa	6	3	3	0	6	25	21
Florida	6	3	3	0	6	17	18
Buffalo	7	3	4	0	6	19	22

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
N.Y. Rangers	6	4	2	0	8	18	13
Philadelphia	6	3	2	1	7	18	16
New Jersey	6	3	2	1	7	24	23
Columbus	6	3	2	1	7	17	19
Carolina	7	3	4	0	6	28	33
N.Y. Islanders	5	2	2	1	5	13	17
Washington	6	2	3	1	5	13	23
Pittsburgh	6	2	4	0	4	17	20

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	6	6	0	0	12	28	12
Dallas	5	4	0	1	9	16	11
Minnesota	6	3	2	1	7	25	25
Winnipeg	6	3	3	0	6	20	23
Arizona	6	3	3	0	6	16	15
Nashville	7	3	4	0	6	20	19
St. Louis	5	2	2	1	5	11	15
Chicago	7	2	5	0	4	14	21

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	7	7	0	0	14	28	13
Vancouver	6	4	2	0	8	23	15
Los Angeles	6	3	2	1	7	27	22
Calgary	7	2	4	1	5	17	26
Seattle	7	2	4	1	5	16	25
Anaheim	6	2	4	0	4	14	17
Edmonton	6	1	4	1	3	17	27
San Jose	6	0	5	1	1	8	23

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Tuesday's games
Toronto 4, Washington 1
Buffalo 6, Ottawa 4
Tampa Bay 3, Carolina 0
New Jersey 5, Montreal 2
Dallas 4, Pittsburgh 1
Florida 3, San Jose 1
Colorado 7, N.Y. Islanders 4
Seattle 5, Detroit 4, OT
Anaheim 3, Columbus 2, OT
Winnipeg 4, St. Louis 2
Boston 3, Chicago 0
Minnesota 7, Edmonton 4
Vancouver 3, Nashville 2
N.Y. Rangers 3, Calgary 1
Los Angeles 6, Arizona 3
Vegas 3, Philadelphia 2

Wednesday's game
Washington 6, New Jersey 4

Thursday's games
Anaheim at Boston
Colorado at Pittsburgh
Columbus at Montreal
San Jose at Tampa Bay
Seattle at Carolina
Winnipeg at Detroit
Minnesota at Philadelphia
Ottawa at N.Y. Islanders
Toronto at Dallas
N.Y. Rangers at Edmonton
St. Louis at Calgary

Friday's games
Chicago at Vegas
Buffalo at New Jersey
Minnesota at Washington
San Jose at Carolina
Los Angeles at Arizona
St. Louis at Vancouver

Saturday's games
Anaheim at Philadelphia
Seattle at Florida
Detroit at Boston
N.Y. Islanders at Columbus
Ottawa at Pittsburgh
Toronto at Nashville
Winnipeg at Montreal
N.Y. Rangers at Vancouver
Vegas at Los Angeles

Sunday's games
Colorado at Buffalo
Minnesota at New Jersey
San Jose at Washington
Calgary vs. Edmonton at Commonwealth Stadium

Scoring leaders

Through Wednesday

	GP	G	A	PTS
Jack Hughes, NJ	6	4	13	17
Dylan Larkin, DET	7	4	10	14
Alex DeBrincat, DET	7	9	4	13
Mikko Rantanen, COL	6	5	7	12

NHL/NASCAR

JOHN LOCHER/AP

Golden Knights defenseman Shea Theodore, left, celebrates after scoring against the Philadelphia Flyers on Tuesday. Vegas is one of three teams who have won their first six games this season.

Avs, Bruins, Knights mark first time three win first six games

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

The defending Stanley Cup champion Vegas Golden Knights have picked up where they left off, the Boston Bruins are figuring out their game after an early playoff exit last spring and the Colorado Avalanche are winning while not yet playing their best hockey.

All three are undefeated to start the NHL season, making some history in the process. It's the first time the league has had three teams open a season with at least six wins in a row.

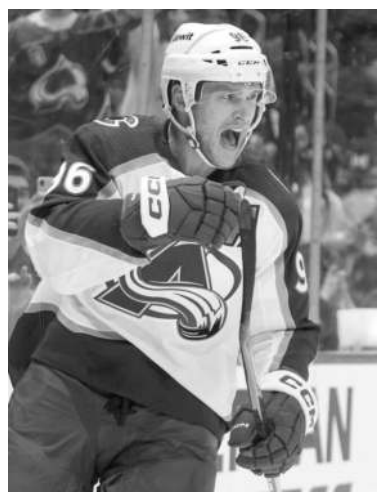
Vegas, which already has the best start for a reigning champ with seven consecutive victories, is the closest to tying the record for the longest winning streak to start a season: 10, by the 1993-94 Toronto Maple Leafs and 2006-07 Buffalo Sabres.

The Golden Knights scored twice in the final eight minutes of regulation Tuesday, rallying from down 2-1 to beat Philadelphia.

"We've got talent, for one," coach Bruce Cassidy said, when asked about the undefeated start. "We have different guys that can help you win. That's probably the simplest answer. We've got a lot of good players that can hurt you offensively."

So do the Bruins, even after the retirements of top centers Patrice Bergeron and David Krejci. After beating Connor Bedard and the Blackhawks in Chicago to improve to 6-0-0, coach Jim Montgomery said he was starting to see the team's identity build.

"You're starting to see us become a heavy, grinding team, which I think is what we're going to have to be," Montgomery said after the Bruins won their first six games for the second time in franchise history and first since 1937-38.



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

The Colorado Avalanche's Mikko Rantanen celebrates after scoring against the New York Islanders on Tuesday. Colorado improved to 6-0-0.

For the Avalanche, not so fast. Sure, they've won their first six after beating the New York Islanders 7-4 Tuesday, but they're not happy about how they're playing even though they set an NHL record with their 15th straight road win.

"We are fortunate to be 6-0," coach Jared Bednar said. "The guys realize that. We are still trying to improve."

One area that doesn't need improving is in net, where Alexandar Georgiev has a league-best six wins with a 1.98 goals-against average and .930 save percentage. Colorado went into the season as the favorite to win the Stanley Cup, and Georgiev's play is a good early indicator of those chances.

Drama around every turn

Scenarios galore as 6 drivers battle for 2 spots in championship

BY TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

HOMESTEAD, Fla. — There will surely be elaborate permutations to show all the possibilities of what awaits this weekend at Martinsville, when six drivers will battle for the final two spots in NASCAR's Championship 4.

If this guy does this, and this guy does this, or this guy doesn't do this … the scenarios are endless.

So, perhaps a simpler mindset, like the one Denny Hamlin has right now, is the way to go.

"Try to win it," Hamlin said.

That would work, too.

NASCAR's season has entered its next-to-last week, and good luck figuring out what might happen over the 500 laps around Martinsville's tight oval this coming weekend. Only two of these six drivers — Hamlin, William Byron, Ryan Blaney, Tyler Reddick, Martin Truex Jr. and Chris Buescher — will emerge with a chance to battle Kyle Larson and Christopher Bell in Phoenix on Nov. 5 to win the Cup Series title.

If any of those six win at Martinsville, they'll have a shot at the title. Any other result, break out the calculators.

"It's nice coming in here as far out as we did and leaving where we're at," Blaney said after finishing second at Homestead-Miami on Sunday — moving from seventh in the eight-driver playoff standings to fourth. "Just proud of that effort and we've got to go and perform well. Hopefully we can go do it again in Martinsville."

Larson got his berth in the final by winning at Las Vegas, Bell got his by winning at Homestead. Byron by far is in the best position of the six remaining contenders; he's 30 points clear of the top-four cutoff going into Martinsville. Blaney is 10 points ahead of fifth.

Everyone else either needs to win — which would be an automatic clinch for Phoenix — or get help. Reddick is fifth, 10 points back of Blaney. Truex and Hamlin are both 17 points back and Buescher is 43 points off the pace.

"I think it's hard to get in the Final Four. I'll tell you that," said Joe Gibbs, the owner of three of the playoff cars — Bell, Truex and Hamlin. "I don't think anything's a given … but we do have a chance."

Bell knows exactly what the six hopefuls will be thinking this week. He won at Martinsville last year to earn his title shot in Phoenix. He got his walk-off win a week earlier this year.

"Your outlook for the race is completely different. … Those guys have a lot more to race for than what I do now going into Martinsville, so the mentality is completely different for them than it is for me and you just have to be aware of that," Bell said.

Homestead showed, once again, that nobody ever has any idea what'll happen.

Bell was about to go a lap down and thought his car was one of the slowest in the race at one point Sunday. He was not thinking about winning until the final 10 laps. He was 13th in qualifying, ninth in the first stage, 22nd in the second stage and on top of all that, Homestead is not a track he's fond of.

And he won. A caution flag in the third stage gave him a chance, and he took full advantage.

> **"I think it's hard to get in the Final Four. I'll tell you that."**
>
> **Joe Gibbs**
> owner of three playoff cars

"A whirlwind," Bell said, "for sure."

Larson's day at Homestead ended when he tried to evade Blaney entering pit road and instead crashed into the 11 barrels of sand that protect drivers from directly smashing into the wall separating that alley from the track itself. A few tons of dirt went everywhere, and Larson was literally out in a cloud of dust.

"I'm sorry," Larson — who took the blame for what happened — said into his radio. "I did not expect him to slow down that much."

Not long afterward, two of the JGR cars experienced their own misfortune. Hamlin's steering failed and he wound up in the wall, and moments later, something happened to Truex's engine and smoke came out the back of his car.

Truex started Homestead from the pole, and the day went downhill quickly in what almost seemed to serve as a microcosm of his season. He made little effort to hide his frustration while talking on his radio and wound up finishing 30th. He won three times in 2023, but has one top-10 finish in his last nine starts.

"It shows you how hard our sport is because those were the two cars that for a while for us were up front." Gibbs said. "And it also shows you that in sports, and particularly in our sport, the 20 (Bell) was an example of just never giving up and just keep fighting."

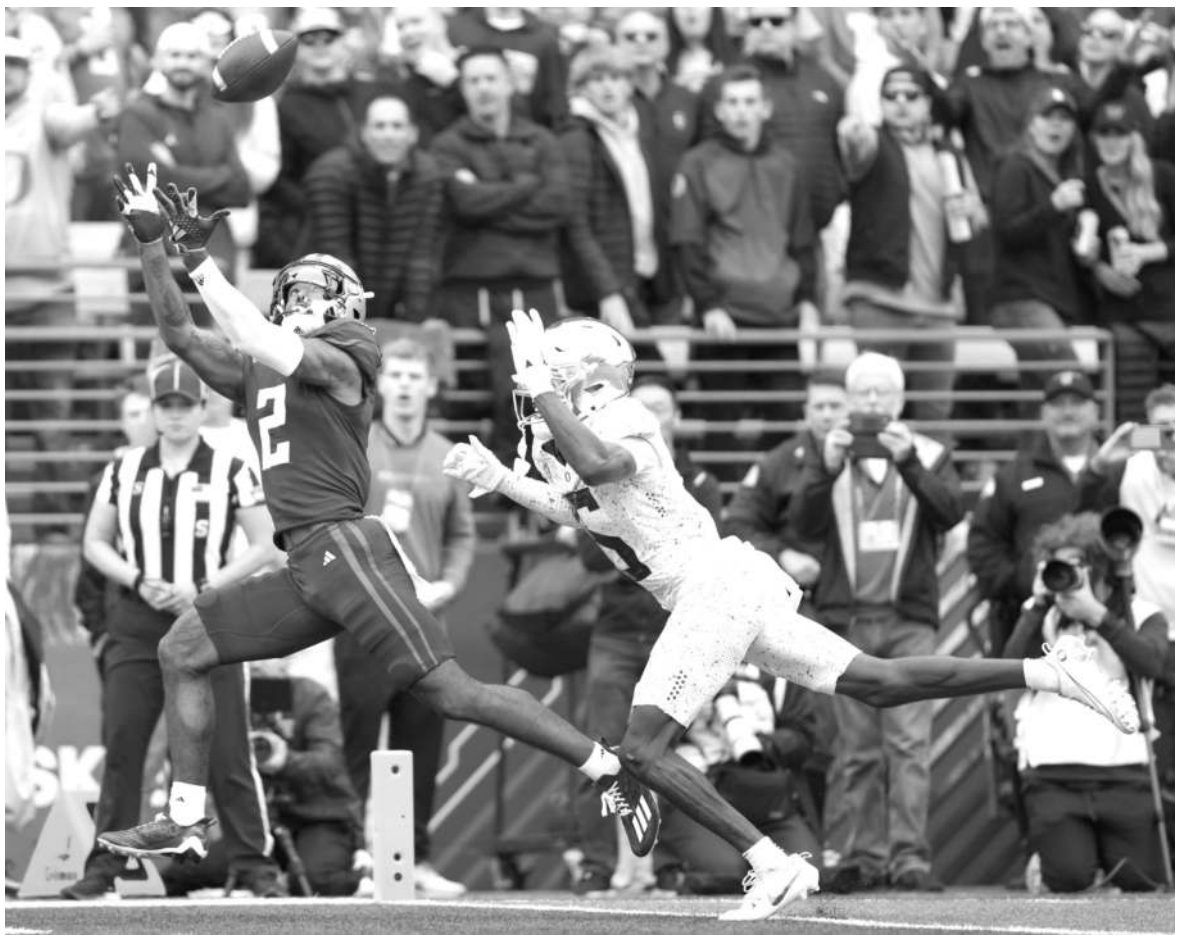
Hamlin has had success at Martinsville before. Now under the top-four cut line, he's going to need some more success there this weekend.

"I try to win every week," Hamlin said. "Not going to approach it any different. Just going to try to win."

TERRY RENNA/AP

Denny Hamlin makes a pit stop during the NASCAR Cup Series race at Homestead-Miami Speedway last Sunday. Hamlin is one of six drivers hoping to earn a spot in the championship race.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



LINDSEY WASSON/AP

Washington wide receiver Ja'Lynn Polk (2) makes a touchdown catch against Oregon defensive back Khyree Jackson on Oct. 14 in Seattle. Polk has 42 catches this season, five of which have been for touchdowns.

Penix's receivers are key for him in Heisman race

BY TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Before the season even began, Rome Odunze believed the way Washington's wide receivers complemented each other would lead to big things.

Turns out that for most of the first seven games for the fifth-ranked Huskies, Odunze was right.

"It's crazy because each position in our offense requires certain things, and I feel like we have the perfect fit in situations where they do a great job of putting people where they'll have success," Odunze said back in August.

Minus some of the issues caused by Arizona State last week, Washington quarterback Michael Penix Jr. has posted video game-like numbers that have landed him squarely in the Heisman Trophy race.

Throwing to one of the deepest sets of wide receivers in the country has clearly made Penix's job easier.

The Pac-12 is blessed with top-quality pass catchers this season. Oregon's Troy Franklin has eight touchdown catches and is averaging 109.9 yards per game. Jacob Cowing at Arizona also has eight TD catches. Washington State's Lincoln Victor had 16 catches last week against Oregon, and Xavier Weaver and Jimmy Horn Jr. have become the top targets for Shedeur Sanders at Colorado.

But no program can match the depth of the Huskies' wide receiver group.

"Like I always say, I've got the best receiving corps in the country," Penix said. "If anybody else says anything different, they've got to turn on the tape because those guys show each and every day."

It hasn't just been Odunze or Ja'Lynn Polk or Jalen McMillan carrying the load for Washington. It's been all of them at various times through Washington's seven-game unbeaten run to start the season.

At least one of those three has topped 100 yards receiving in six of the seven games so far. In five of those six, two of them reached the century mark. And that comes with McMillan having missed most of the past 4½ games with a leg injury. Had McMillan not been injured in the first half of Washington's big win at Michigan State, the Huskies likely would have seen all three hit the 100-yard mark in that victory.

The one game where none of those three approached 100 yards — Washington's 31-24 win at Arizona — backup Germie Bernard had eight catches for 98 yards in the victory. Even last week against Arizona State, when Washington's offense ran into problems and failed to score a touchdown, Polk still had nine catches for 102 yards.

"I think our guys have just seen this over and over where an opportunity arises and just being ready at that particular position, whoever it is, to come in and contribute and make a big play," offensive coordinator Ryan Grubb said.

Odunze was on every preseason and midseason All-America team and seems likely to be a first-round pick when the NFL comes calling next spring. Aside from his 6-foot-3 frame that has gotten stronger, he also tends to make his catches go for significant gains. Of his 45 receptions, 37 have gone for 10 yards or more. Throw in a 14-yard TD run and he has the most scrimmage plays of 10 or more yards in the country.

Not far behind is Polk, who has seen his profile grow exponentially this season. He had 41 catches and six touchdowns in 13 games last season. He has 42 catches and five touchdown catches in seven games this season. Thirteen of those catches have gone for 20 or more yards, tied for fifth nationally.

To an extent, McMillan has become the forgotten player of the three after injuring his leg in the first half against Michigan State. He returned for one series of the win over Oregon before going back to the sideline, although the expectation is he'll return this week against Stanford or next week at USC.

Before getting hurt, McMillan had 20 receptions in 3½ games after catching 79 passes a season ago.

Oregon-Utah matchup highlights Week 9 slate

BY ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

The Week 9 schedule in college football is sneaky good.

Even though there are only two Top 25 matchups, five ranked teams will go on the road for what should be challenging games.

No. 8 Oregon visits No. 13 Utah and No. 20 Duke is at No. 18 Louisville for what will probably be knockout games in the Pac-12 and ACC races, respectively.

No. 1 Georgia is a double-digit favorite against Florida for their annual neutral-site game in Jacksonville. But the Bulldogs haven't been as dominant and they are without star tight end Brock Bowers, and the Gators are just outside the Top 25 and much improved in Billy Napier's second year.

No. 3 Ohio State, coming off an emotional win over Penn State, heads to Big Ten West-leading Wisconsin. The Buckeyes have won nine straight against the Badgers, though they needed overtime to win the last two times they were in Madison.

No. 4 Florida State visits Wake Forest, which has three straight wins in the series. No. 11 Oregon State is at surprising Arizona, which has gone to overtime in two of its three losses and dominated a ranked Washington State two weeks ago. No. 21 Tennessee, which squandered a 20-7 halftime lead at Alabama last week, plays at Kentucky.

Best game

No. 8 Oregon (6-1, 3-1 Pac-12) at No. 13 Utah (6-1, 3-1), Saturday.

Utah has won two straight since its loss to Oregon State, and the Ducks followed their loss to Washington with a win over Washington State.

A year ago, Bo Nix gave a gutty performance on an injured leg and Oregon intercepted Cameron Rising three times while handing the Utes their first conference loss.

Utah's offense is building confidence coming off its two best games of the season, against California and Southern California, but yards and points will be harder to come by against the Ducks.

Oregon got good news on the injury front. Coach Dan Lanning said he expects top running back Bucky Irving and top cornerback Khyree Jackson to play.

Heisman watch

Florida State QB Jordan Travis goes against Wake Forest after playing one of his best games in leading the Seminoles' come-from-behind win over Duke last week.

Travis both ran and threw for touchdowns in the fourth quarter during the 38-20 win. Additionally, he passed 2000 Heisman Trophy winner Chris Weinke as FSU's all-time leader in total offense.

No. 8 Oregon (6-1)
at No. 13 Utah (6-1)
AFN-Sports
9:30 p.m. Saturday CET
4:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

No. 4 Florida State (7-0)
at Wake Forest (4-3)
AFN-Sports2
6 p.m. Saturday CET
1 a.m. Sunday JKT

UNLV (6-1)
at Fresno State (6-1)
AFN-Sports2
4 a.m. Sunday CET
11 a.m. Sunday JKT

Travis has accounted for multiple touchdowns in 14 consecutive games, the longest active streak in the country and tied with 2013 Heisman winner Jameis Winston for the Florida State record.

Numbers to know

1 — Oregon's turnovers, fewest in the nation.

5 — Eastern Michigan's home winning streak, its longest since a 10-game streak from 1986-88.

16 — Liberty's nation-leading number of interceptions through eight games, two more than it had in 13 games last season.

37.8 — Completion percentage by Iowa quarterback Deacon Hill, the lowest since at least 2000 by an FBS quarterback with as many attempts (98), according to Sportradar.

Under the radar

UNLV (6-1, 3-0 Mountain West) at Fresno State (6-1, 2-1), Saturday, 10:40 p.m. ET (FS1)

The Rebels are one of the feel-good stories in college football. They're 6-1 for the first time since 1984, when Randall Cunningham was the quarterback and Ickey Woods the running back, and Barry Odom is off to the best start by a UNLV first-year coach since Ron Meyer in 1973.

Picked ninth in the 12-team MWC in the preseason, UNLV is a half-game behind first-place Air Force after a walk-off win over Colorado State. The Bulldogs are in a three-way tie for third. Fresno State has won five straight over the Rebels.

Hot seat

Syracuse coach Dino Babers started 4-0 against light competition but is 0-3 in ACC play following losses to Clemson, North Carolina and Florida State. Granted, there's no shame in losing to those three. The problem is that the Orange weren't competitive in any of those games, getting outscored a combined 112-24.

This is Babers' eighth year — he's 40-52 — and it feels like he needs a strong finish to be back for a ninth. Only two of the five remaining opponents have winning records.

NFL

Bears QB Bagent ready to put his 'cannon' to use

By Gene Chamberlain
Associated Press

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Chicago Bears quarterback Tyson Bagent had reporters laughing Sunday after he led a 30-12 win in his starting debut against the Las Vegas Raiders.

The former Division II player hadn't completed a pass longer than 17 yards as the Bears stuck to their short game, but he said he has a "cannon" for an arm.

It seems the Bears could let him show off his arm strength Sunday night in his first road start against the Los Angeles Chargers.

"Yeah, I mean I think I have a strong arm," Bagent said Wednesday at Halas Hall. "I'm confident to make any play that's called. That's probably the extent of it."

Bagent starts again because of Justin Fields' dislocated thumb, after going 21-for-29 for 162 yards and a touchdown in the win.

Upon film review, NFL Next-Gen Stats said he averaged 2.1 air yards on his completions. But Bagent and coach Matt Eberflus expect their offense to be challenged more on short passes this week, so there may be a need to go up top.

"We're always going to look to stretch vertically and horizontally in the passing game," Eberflus said. "That's always something that we look at.

Chicago Bears (2-5)
at Los Angeles Chargers (2-4)
AFN-Sports
1:20 a.m. Monday CET
9:20 a.m. Monday JKT

"Really, you look at the defense that you're playing. If they give you those opportunities vertically, you're going to take those."

Like his arm, Bagent's story as an undrafted passer from Shepherd University is about to get a great deal of national attention because of the prime-time game with the Chargers.

Nothing seems to faze him.

"He's been the same guy," Eberflus said. "He's the same guy as he was last week. He's prepared, he's focused, he's got that determined look in his eye."

Bagent doesn't believe his head will be turned by all the fame.

After two straight losses, the Chargers defense will not be so impressed, and Bagent realizes the difficult assignment ahead facing former Bears edge rusher Khalil Mack and teammate Joey Bosa.

Kamil Krzaczynski/AP

Chicago Bears rookie Tyson Bagent looks to pass against the Raiders last Sunday. Bagent averaged just 2.1 air yards on his completions.

The Chargers had seven sacks for 50 yards in losses of another rookie, Las Vegas' Aidan O'Connell, earlier this season.

"Yeah, that's why the NFL is so hard," Bagent said. "You've got to know when to eat the play. You've got to know when to take advantage of the play. You've got to know when to escape and you've got to know when to just throw it away or take a sack."

Bagent relieved the injured Fields in the Bears' 19-13 loss to the Vikings in Week 6 and turned the ball over twice in the second half.

Bears wide receiver DJ Moore said neither of those mistakes, nor the first start or even national attention this week are likely to affect the rookie's focus.

"He didn't care if it was a Monday night game, Tuesday night game, whatever day of the week it is, he was going to go out and execute the best that he could," Moore said.

As for being able to execute a more demanding game plan this time, Bagent is confident there, too.

"I said it before, I don't really drop myself in any category of being a pocket passer, dual threat," he said. "I just like to make plays for the team, and once again, whatever I'm asked to do from the coaches is what we'll get done and what will happen.

"So I don't want to put any limits anywhere."

Games on AFN

L.A. Rams (3-4)
at Dallas Cowboys (4-2)
AFN-Atlantic
6 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT

Jacksonville Jaguars (5-2)
at Pittsburgh Steelers (4-2)
AFN-Sports
6 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT

Minnesota Vikings (3-4)
at Green Bay Packers (2-4)
AFN-Sports2
6 p.m. Sunday CET
2 a.m. Monday JKT

Cleveland Browns (4-2)
at Seattle Seahawks (4-2)
AFN-Sports2
9 p.m. Sunday CET
5 a.m. Monday JKT

Kansas City Chiefs (6-1)
at Denver Broncos (2-5)
AFN-Atlantic
9:25 p.m. Sunday CET
5:25 a.m. Monday JKT

Cincinnati Bengals (3-3)
at San Francisco 49ers (5-2)
AFN-Sports
9:25 p.m. Sunday CET
5:25 a.m. Monday JKT

Jackson, Ravens out to dazzle regularly

By Noah Trister
Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — Lamar Jackson and the Baltimore Ravens showed the rest of the NFL how high their ceiling could be.

Now it's on to the next challenge for the star quarterback, who has a chance for a special season if last weekend's performance becomes the norm.

"You've got to say it: He's playing at an MVP level," Ravens linebacker Kyle Van Noy said Wednesday. "It starts at practice for him, and the way he holds himself to a high standard, and then everybody else wants to be at that standard as well."

Talk of Jackson winning a second MVP award isn't just football's usual knee-jerk reaction to whatever happened the previous week. The Baltimore quarterback is now fourth in the MVP race according to the odds at FanDuel, behind only Patrick Mahomes, Tua Tagovailoa and Jalen Hurts. Jackson is third in the NFL in passer rating, third in yards per attempt and second in completion percentage.

He's also 17th in yards rushing. He might not reach 1,000 yards on the ground like he did when winning MVP in 2019, but his running is still a major factor in turning negative plays into positive ones — and his scrambling creates opportunities for his receivers.

Nick Wass/AP

Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson led Baltimore to touchdowns on its first four possessions against the Lions last week.

"It makes defensive backs have to cover you two times basically," rookie wideout Zay Flowers said. "You've got two chances to get separation and get the ball."

Baltimore's 38-6 thrashing of NFC North-leading Detroit was its best performance.

Now Baltimore will try to build on that. It was just three games ago the Ravens played a frustrating, mistake-filled loss at Pittsburgh in which they managed just 10 points, so they have a ways to go before proving that the game against the Lions is their new normal.

"We knew we had a couple games where we were good, and then the next week it's like, 'Oh, what's going on with the offense?'" Jackson said. "Right now, we're just trying to chase the consistency. That's all."

Jackson has shown flashes of his MVP form in the 3½ seasons since he won the award, but they haven't lasted long enough. For example, two years ago he threw for 442 yards in a memorable overtime win over Indianapolis, but as the season wore on, the Ravens looked less impressive offensively, and eventually Jackson got hurt. He also missed the end of last season because of an injury.

Like any franchise quarterback, Jackson's health is crucial, but beyond that, he needs to show he can keep the offense rolling at a high level.

Even within games, that's been an issue, with the Ravens scoring 104 points in the first half so far and 67 in the second.

Last weekend, the Ravens scored touchdowns on their first four possessions, and they also reached the end zone on their first drive of the second half.

With a new offensive coordinator in Todd Monken and an impressive new receiver in Flowers, it's certainly possible that this season Baltimore's offense will improve as the season progresses.

NBA/MLB

All-Star Game back to East vs. West

By Michael Marot
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The NBA All-Star Game is going back to its roots, with the best of the East playing the best of the West.

Commissioner Adam Silver made the announcement Wednesday, revealing this season's All-Star Game on Feb. 18 in Indianapolis will pit the top vote-getters from the two conferences against one another. The decision means captains will no longer draft teams, though the players with the most votes in each conference will still serve as captains.

The reason: Silver wants the All-Star Game to look more like traditional basketball.

"It felt like it was time," Silver said. "I said earlier, keeping with this overall theme, it's back to basketball this season. We heard it from our fans, I think the players recognize it, too, that last year's All-Star Game was something no one was proud of, and I don't think it was anyone's fault in particular. I think, though, that we need to refocus on what this league is really about and that's about the best basketball in the world."

Another change — the game will be 48 minutes. Since 2020, the league added 24 points to the leading team's score after three quarters and played the fourth quarter with only a shot clock but no game clock. The first team to hit the target score won.

And it's no coincidence the changes are taking place in Indiana, where basketball is treated like royalty. The Pacers are hosting their first All-Star Game since 1985 — three years later than initially scheduled because the 2021 game was moved to Atlanta and played in a mostly empty arena during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"If there ever was a place to restore the NBA to something that seemed more classic, it was an All-Star Game at Indianapolis," Silver said. "Let's just make it a pure 48-minute basketball game, the team that scores the most points in 48 minutes."

Rick Bowmer/AP

Giannis Antetokounmpo holds up the winning team trophy after the All-Star game Feb. 19 in Salt Lake City. The All-Star Game is returning to its classic East vs. West format after six years of captains drafting teams.

The first 66 All-Star Games all featured East-West matchups. The last six have seen the leading vote-getters from each conference serving as captains and drafting teams.

LeBron James served as one captain all six years, with Giannis Antetokounmpo the other captain three times. Kevin Durant had the honor twice, with Stephen Curry doing it once. Some drafts were televised, with last year's taking place live in Salt Lake City less than an hour before the start of the game.

Not enough people watched. Ratings plummeted for last season's game, which wasn't competitive. Some of the top stars, including Curry, Durant, James and Antetokounmpo either missed the game entirely or played very briefly because of injuries.

The 2023 matchup was entertaining in other ways — Boston's Jayson Tatum scored an All-Star record 55 points. His 27 third-quarter points also were a record, but the lack of viewers and lack of buzz evidently forced the NBA into making this change.

"This last year was a travesty in terms of the effort, in terms of how it looked. It looked horrible," NBA Players Association President CJ McCollum of the New Orleans Pelicans said last week, after Silver revealed changes were likely. "So, figuring out how to make it more competitive … maybe it's incentives, maybe it's the type of game style that we're having, maybe it's the teams that are being put together, I'm not sure. We're working toward that. But we know it can't go on the way it has because it's obviously not working."

It wasn't just players who found it unsatisfactory.

Indiana coach Rick Carlisle, president of the NBA's coaching association, was also consulted about the changes. Shortly before the Pacers opened the season against Washington on Wednesday, he offered his support.

"It seems like pure East-West competition makes a lot of sense," Carlisle said. "Certainly not a surprising announcement, but nonetheless, I think a very good adjustment."

Carlisle even had a suggestion for making the game more competitive: "Is there any way to increase the money for winning? That's the obvious one."

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	1	0	1.000	—
Toronto	1	0	1.000	—
Philadelphia	0	0	.000	½
Brooklyn	0	1	.000	1
New York	0	1	.000	1

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Charlotte	1	0	1.000	—
Miami	1	0	1.000	—
Orlando	1	0	1.000	—
Atlanta	0	1	.000	1
Washington	0	1	.000	1

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	1	0	1.000	—
Cleveland	1	0	1.000	—
Milwaukee	0	0	.000	½
Detroit	0	1	.000	1
Chicago	0	1	.000	1

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Dallas	1	0	1.000	—
New Orleans	1	0	1.000	—
Memphis	0	1	.000	1
San Antonio	0	1	.000	1
Houston	0	1	.000	1

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	1	0	1.000	—
Oklahoma City	1	0	1.000	—
Minnesota	0	1	.000	1
Portland	0	1	.000	1
Utah	0	1	.000	1

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	1	0	1.000	—
Sacramento	1	0	1.000	—
L.A. Clippers	1	0	1.000	—
Golden State	0	1	.000	1
L.A. Lakers	0	1	.000	1

Wednesday's games

Indiana 143, Washington 120
Orlando 116, Houston 86
Charlotte 116, Atlanta 110
Boston 108, New York 104
Toronto 97, Minnesota 94
Miami 103, Detroit 102
Cleveland 114, Brooklyn 113
Oklahoma City 124, Chicago 104
New Orleans 111, Memphis 104
Sacramento 130, Utah 114
Dallas 126, San Antonio 119
L.A. Clippers 123, Portland 111

Thursday's games

Philadelphia at Milwaukee
Phoenix at L.A. Lakers

Friday's games

Denver at Memphis
Detroit at Charlotte
Miami at Boston
New York at Atlanta
Oklahoma City at Cleveland
Houston at San Antonio
Toronto at Chicago
Brooklyn at Dallas
L.A. Clippers at Utah
Golden State at Sacramento
Orlando at Portland

Baker confirms retirement after 26 years managing

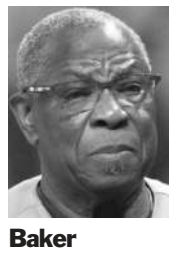
By Kristie Rieken
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Dusty Baker has retired as manager of the Houston Astros, ending an illustrious 26-year career as a big league skipper highlighted by a World Series win last season.

Baker broke the news in an interview with USA Today.

"I'm very grateful and thankful to (owner) Jim Crane and the Houston Astros for giving me this opportunity, and to win a championship," Baker told the newspaper. "I felt like they've been good for me, and I've been good for them.

"What I really appreciate is that Jim has been totally honest and transparent with me on all things."



Baker

Baker told the newspaper that he'd like to move into an advisory role in baseball, either with the Astros or a team closer to his Northern California home.

"I've still got a lot to offer; baseball has been my life," said Baker. "I have a lifetime of knowledge, much more than those who have never played the game."

The Astros had scheduled a news conference for Thursday morning that Baker, Crane and general manager Dana Brown were set to attend.

Baker stepped down after his fourth season with the Astros, who came one win shy of reaching the World Series for a third straight year with a loss to the Texas Rangers on Monday night.

The toothpick-chewer and epic storyteller, who seemed to know just about everybody, finished his career ranked ninth with 2,183 victories in 4,046 regular-season games. He was the 12th manager in major league history to reach 2,000 wins and the first Black man to accomplish the feat.

Ten of the other 11 managers who have accumulated at least 2,000 wins are in the Hall of Fame. Bruce Bochy (2,093), who is still managing the Rangers and isn't yet eligible, is the only exception.

"Dusty Baker is a legend in this sport," Houston shortstop Jeremy Peña said Monday night. "I've loved every single day that I've gotten to share with him on this ballclub. He's been great for me. He's shown so much confidence in me. He's been a great manager."

Baker began managing in 1993 after a 19-year playing career as an outfielder. He played with Hank Aaron in Atlanta and won a World Series with the Dodgers in 1981.

Baker managed San Francisco, the Chicago Cubs, Cincinnati and Washington before coming to Houston. He's the only manager in major league history to take five different teams to the postseason.

WORLD SERIES

Arizona Diamondbacks

Record: 84-78.

Playoff entry: Wild Card.

Manager: Torey Lovullo (seventh season).

Top hitters: OF Corbin Carroll (.285, 25 HRs, 76 RBIs, .868 OPS, 54/59 SBs, 116 runs), 2B Ketel Marte (.276, 25, 82, .844 OPS), 1B Christian Walker (.258, 33, 103, .830 OPS), LF Lourdes Gurriel Jr. (.261, 24, 82, .772 OPS).

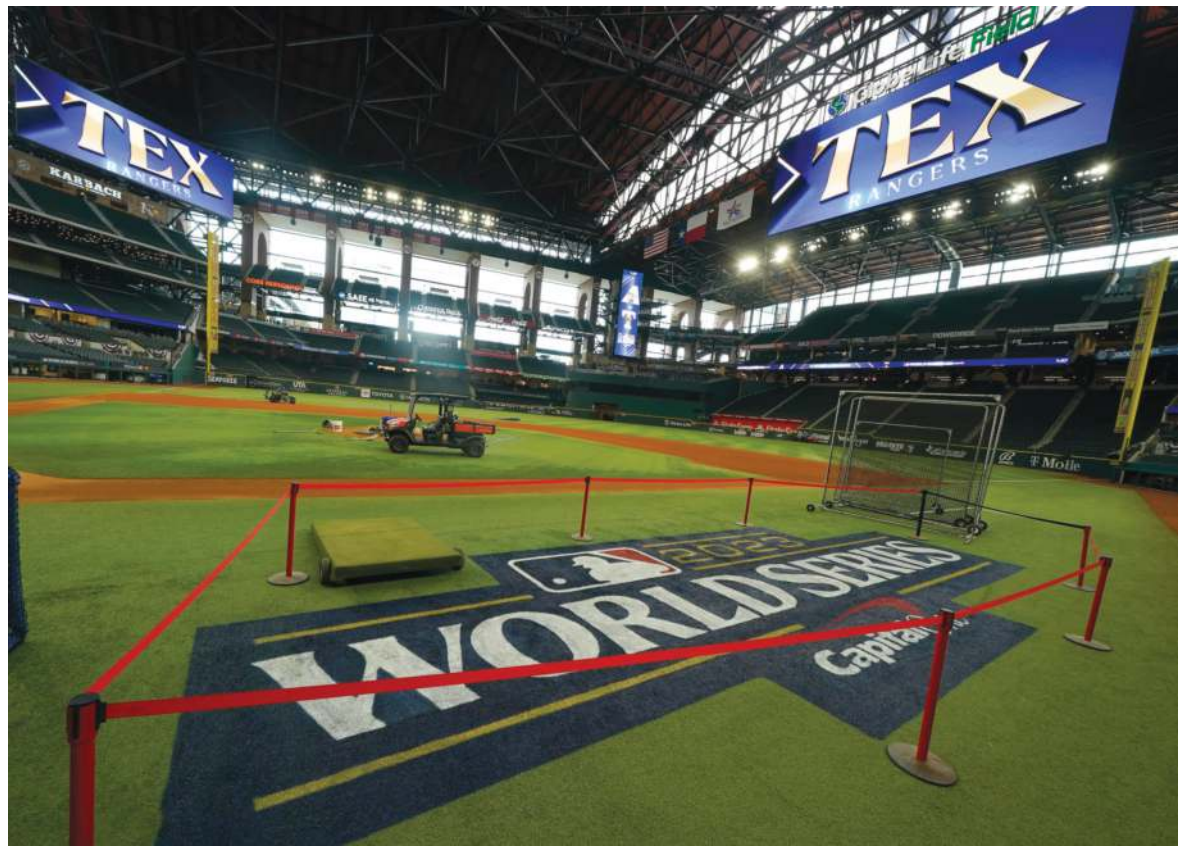
Lovullo

Projected rotation: RH Zac Gallen (17-9, 3.47 ERA, 220 Ks, 210 IP in 34 starts), RH Merrill Kelly (12-8, 3.29 in 30 starts), RH Brandon Pfaadt (3-9, 5.72, 22 HRs in 96 IP).

Key relievers: RH Paul Sewald (3-2, 3.12 ERA, 34/39 saves with Mariners and Diamondbacks), RH Kevin Ginkel (9-1, 2.48, 4 saves), RH Ryan Thompson (1-2, 3.82, 1 save with Rays and Diamondbacks), LH Andrew Saalfrank (0-0, 0.00 in 10 games), LH Joe Mantiply (2-2, 4.62), RH Miguel Castro (6-6, 4.31, 7 saves in NL-high 75 games).

Series story: Nine-game losing streak left young Diamondbacks 57-59 on Aug. 11, but they recovered. Despite totaling three runs while dropping last four regular-season games, Arizona squeezed into final playoff spot before taking off on 9-3 postseason roll to become second consecutive No. 6 seed to win National League pennant. ... Making first playoff appearance since Lovullo's debut season in 2017, the Diamondbacks swept division champion Brewers and Dodgers before overcoming 2-0 and 3-2 deficits against defending NL champion Phillies in NLCS. Arizona held Bryce Harper & Co. to three runs over final 18 innings to win Games 6 and 7 in Philadelphia, where Phillies had been 12-2 over past two postseasons — including 11-0 in NL playoff games. ... Impressive turnaround under GM Mike Hazen after Diamondbacks lost 110 games in 2021 and finished 74-88 last year. Only previous World Series berth came in 2001, when Arizona — in franchise's fourth season — edged New York Yankees in classic seven-game thriller. ... Marte was NLCS MVP after batting .387 with 12 hits, four doubles, a triple and three RBIs. His 19 hits in single postseason are a club record. He's hit safely in all 16 career postseason games, longest streak in NL history and second in major league annals to Derek Jeter's 17-game run for Yankees. ... Gallen is 2-2 with 5.24 ERA in four postseason outings after getting roughed up in NLCS. Kelly went 2-1 with 2.65 ERA in three playoff starts. Pfaadt, a rookie, has come on with 2.70 ERA and 22 strikeouts against three walks in 16⅔ innings. ... No-name relief corps has been an October revelation, and Diamondbacks figure to go with bullpen parade in Game 4 just like NLCS. Sewald is perfect in six postseason save chances. He and Ginkel have combined for 24 strikeouts in 17 scoreless innings. ... Diamondbacks split two games at Texas in early May and swept a pair at home from Rangers in August, including 11-inning victory on consecutive doubles by Geraldo Perdomo and Tommy Pham off Will Smith. Gallen whiffed 11 over six innings of one-run ball to win series finale that came during eight-game skid for Texas. ... Rangers hold 28-25 edge in regular-season matchups. ... Arizona bench coach Jeff Banister won AL West titles in first two seasons of tenure as Texas manager from 2015-18.

Associated Press



JULIO CORTEZ/AP

The ground crew gets the field ready at Globe Life Field ahead of Game 1 of the World Series on Friday.

Battle: Rangers, Diamondbacks lost 100 games just two years ago

FROM PAGE 48

year just makes it all the more special."

Both prior all-wild card matchups went seven games. The Los Angeles Angels beat the San Francisco Giants in 2002, and Bruce Bochy's Giants defeated the Kansas City Royals in 2014 for their third title in five years.

Texas and the Diamondbacks are both two years removed from last-place finishes and 100-loss seasons. Arizona is a No. 6 seed and Texas a No. 5.

"Sometimes, one of the last hurdles to get over is that winning feeling, attitude, when you've been losing for a few seasons," Bochy said.

Bochy, 68 and in his 26th year as a big league manager, joined the Rangers last October. He is going for his fourth title, which would tie Walter Alston and Joe Torre for fourth-most behind Joe McCarthy and Casey Stengel (seven each) and Connie Mack (five). All prior managers with three or more are in the Hall of Fame.

"I don't think about me. I'm riding their backs, trust me," Bochy said. "It's unreal that I'm here, to be honest. Sitting at the house for three years, and think here I am going to a World Series. Yeah, that's special. But it's more about them and trying to find a way to get a ring for those guys."

Texas started play as the expansion Washington Senators from 1961-71 and has played 10,028 games without a title (9,964 regular-season games, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, plus 64 in the postseason). That's the second-longest drought behind Cleveland, which last won in 1948.

World Series

x-if necessary
(Best-of-seven)
Arizona vs. Texas

Friday: Arizona (Gallen 17-9) at Texas (Eovaldi 12-5), **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m. Saturday CET; 9 a.m. Sunday JKT**

Saturday: at Texas, **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m. Sunday CET; 9 a.m. Sunday JKT**

Monday, Oct. 30: at Arizona, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Tuesday CET; 9 a.m. Tuesday JKT**

Tuesday, Oct. 31: at Arizona, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Wednesday CET; 9 a.m. Wednesday JKT**

x-Wednesday, Nov. 1: at Arizona, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Thursday CET; 9 a.m. Thursday JKT**

x-Friday, Nov. 3: at Texas, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Saturday CET; 9 a.m. Saturday JKT**

x-Saturday, Nov. 4: at Texas, **AFN-Sports, 1 a.m. Sunday CET; 9 a.m. Sunday JKT**

After losing in the World Series in 2010 and '11, the Rangers are among six teams without a title, joined by Colorado, Milwaukee, San Diego, Seattle and Tampa Bay.

Arizona's only title came on Luis Gonzalez's ninth-inning single off Yankees closer Mariano Rivera in Game 7 in 2001.

Texas headed into the playoffs with the sixth-highest payroll at $228 million. Arizona was 20th at $127 million.

Both teams rallied and earned their World Series berths on the road. It was the first time road teams won Games 6 and 7 in both leagues since the LCS expanded to a best-of-seven format in 1985.

Without Jacob deGrom following a season-ending elbow injury, the Rangers acquired Max Scherzer and Jordan Montgomery to join a rotation that included Nathan Eovaldi and Andrew Heaney. Adolis García has seven homers and 20 RBIs in the playoffs, leading an offense also powered by 2020 World Series MVP Corey Seager, Marcus Semien, Mitch Garver and Josh Jung.

Arizona's rotation is led by Zac Gallen, Merrill Kelly and Brandon Pfaadt, and its offense sparked by Carroll, Christian Walker, Ketel Marte, Lourdes Gurriel Jr. and Gabriel Moreno. Lovullo, 58, is in his seventh season as Diamondbacks manager and in the playoffs for the first time since his 2017 team was swept by the Dodgers in the Division Series.

Texas is 8-0 on the road in the postseason but has home-field advantage because it won 90 games to Arizona's 84 — which could be the second-fewest for a World Series champion in a non-shortened season behind the St. Louis Cardinals' 83 in 2006. The Diamondbacks split two games at Texas in May and swept a pair at home in August, including an 11-inning win on consecutive doubles by Geraldo Perdomo and Tommy Pham off Will Smith. The Rangers hold a 28-25 edge in regular-season matchups.

There are some common ties: Lovullo's staff includes bench coach Jeff Banister, the Rangers' manager from 2015-18.

Scherzer was drafted by the Diamondbacks and spent his first two seasons with Arizona in 2008-09 before he was dealt to Detroit.

Texas Rangers

Record: 90-72.

Playoff entry: Wild Card.

Manager: Bruce Bochy (first season).

Top hitters: SS Corey Seager (.327, 33 HRs, 96 RBIs, 1.013 OPS in 119 games), RF Adolis García (.245, 39, 107, .836 OPS), 2B Marcus Semien (.276, 29, 100, .826 OPS in 162 games, led AL with 122 runs and 185 hits), 3B Josh Jung (.266, 23, 70, .781 OPS in 122 games).

Bochy

Projected rotation: RH Nathan Eovaldi (12-5, 3.63 ERA in 25 starts), LH Jordan Montgomery (10-11, 3.20 in 32 starts with Cardinals and Rangers), RH Max Scherzer (13-6, 3.77 in 27 starts with Mets and Rangers), LH Andrew Heaney (10-6, 4.15).

Key relievers: RH José Leclerc (0-2, 2.68 ERA, 4 saves), RH Josh Sborz (6-7, 5.50), LH Aroldis Chapman (6-5, 3.09, 6 saves, 103 Ks in 58 1/3 IP with Royals and Rangers), LH Cody Bradford (4-3, 5.30 in 20 games, 8 starts), RH Dane Dunning (12-7, 3.70 in 35 games, 26 starts), LH Will Smith (2-7, 4.40, 22 saves).

Series story: In first playoff appearance since 2016, streaky but resilient Rangers won franchise's third American League pennant to reach World Series for first time since consecutive trips in 2010 and 2011. Quite a turnaround under Bochy and GM Chris Young after Rangers lost 102 games in 2021 and went 68-94 last year for sixth straight losing season. ... One of six major league teams without a World Series title — Colorado, Milwaukee, San Diego, Seattle and Tampa Bay are the others. ... Texas led AL West most of the year but squandered division crown to rival Houston with loss at Seattle on final day of regular season. That left Rangers with No. 5 seed in AL playoffs and sent them across country to open playoffs at Tampa Bay, part of two-week trip that took them to four cities — two on each coast. But they swept Rays and AL East champion Orioles, two winningest teams in AL this season, while starting playoffs with seven straight wins — six on road. Then they dropped all three home games to Astros in AL Championship Series before rebounding in Houston, totaling 20 runs in Games 6 and 7. ... Texas joined 1996 New York Yankees as only clubs to win first eight road games in a postseason. Which, of course, earned Rangers home-field advantage in all-wild card World Series because they had better regular-season record than Arizona. ... The 68-year-old Bochy, who came out of retirement to manage Rangers, is looking for fourth championship after leading San Francisco to World Series titles in 2010, 2012 and 2014. He is first skipper to win LCS with three different teams, after guiding Padres and Giants to NL pennants. ... García, the ALCS MVP, homered in final four games and set record for RBIs in a postseason series with 15. He hit seven homers in playoffs, and his 20 RBIs were most in postseason history prior to World Series. ... Eovaldi is 4-0 with 2.42 ERA in four starts this postseason. Montgomery is 3-0 with 2.16 ERA, including Game 7 victory in relief against Astros. ... Scherzer was drafted by Diamondbacks and spent first two seasons with Arizona from 2008-09. ... Two times Texas was one strike from winning 2011 World Series before Cardinals rallied twice to win Game 6. St. Louis then took Game 7 for the title.

Associated Press

WORLD SERIES

Rangers focus on playing better at home

By Stephen Hawkins
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — The Texas Rangers have played only four home games over the past month, and lost all three in the AL Championship Series.

Yet, there they were back at Globe Life Field on Wednesday getting ready to host Game 1 of the World Series against the Arizona Diamondbacks.

So is it really home-field advantage for a team that's already matched a postseason record by winning its first eight road games?

"We love playing here," All-Star catcher Jonah Heim said before the Rangers worked out. "Throughout the whole year, we've played pretty good at home."

Except against the Houston Astros, which is why the Rangers went into these playoffs as a wild-card team that didn't have home-field advantage until now.

Game 1 is Friday night in the retractable-roof stadium that hosted MLB's neutral-site World Series in 2020, the first year the ballpark opened.

Texas and Arizona both had to win Games 6 and 7 of their respective League Championship Series on the road to get to the World Series. That had never happened in both LCS matchups since those series expanded to a best-of-seven format in 1985. But it set up the third World Series matching wild-card teams.

Tony Gutierrez/AP

Despite a raucous atmosphere over the first home playoff games at Globe Life Field, the Texas Rangers have won just one game there this postseason, winning their other eight games on the road.

"We've both played in tough environments. It's kind of been the theme all postseason of the road teams have been playing really well," Texas second baseman Marcus Semien said. "That's just how it's gone this year for whatever reason. But the focus now for us is playing well at home."

Take away the Rangers' 1-9 record at home this season against Houston, including those ALCS games last week, and they are 50-25 against everybody else they've hosted. They won their only other playoff game at Globe Life Field, completing a three-game sweep of Baltimore in the Division Series.

Arizona, which clinched the NL pennant Tuesday night in Philadelphia, split its quick two-game set at Texas in early May.

When the Rangers played their regular-season home finale Sept. 24, they had seven road games left and controlled their own playoff destiny. But they went 3-4 on that final trip, losing 1-0 at Seattle on the final day of the season to squander the division crown to Houston.

"It was tough. It was rough for us," rookie third baseman Josh Jung said of that last trip before the playoffs. "I don't know what switched or what turned on. But it was just this mentality that we were kind of playing hero ball in Seattle.

"Where you see it this postseason, it's just pass the baton to the next guy. Have the best at-bat you can, the next guy's going to do it. We're not worried about being the hero."

Texas was 50-31 at Globe Life Field during the regular season, with only Tampa Bay, the Dodgers and Atlanta winning more home games.

"Once we saw what the NLCS matchup was, we knew if we win our pennant we get home field, and here we are," Semien said. "It's great for the fans. It's great for us. We've learned throughout the losses in the (ALCS) that maybe we need to keep our emotions a little calmer in the big moments. Because the fans expect a lot out of us, and the home crowds throughout the playoffs expect the home players to do big things."

D-backs' Hazen, Lovullo managed bad years on, off field

By David Brandt
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Some have said the Arizona Diamondbacks are ahead of schedule, advancing to the World Series with a young roster that was supposed to need a few more years of seasoning before hitting the sport's biggest stage.

Manager Torey Lovullo and general manager Mike Hazen have a different perspective.

The two friends and colleagues have navigated a difficult five years — both personally and professionally — that have made the D-backs' improbable run to the Fall Classic even sweeter.

"Trust me when I say there were some real hardships," Lovullo said on Tuesday night after the D-backs beat the Phillies 4-2 in Game 7 of the NLCS. "There were some very dark days in my career. We lost 110 games two years ago."

The Diamondbacks had a 52-110 record just two seasons ago, sinking to the cellar of the NL West in ugly fashion. A couple of rough seasons during a rebuild is common in baseball in these days, but Arizona's nadir felt even worse in the sense that the franchise wasn't even trying to tank.

They were just terrible.

Arizona occupies a middle space in today's baseball economy — it's not really a small-market team, but it doesn't spend like the Mets, Yankees or Dodgers. There isn't much room for error when doling out sizable contracts.

Ross D. Franklin/AP

Arizona Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo, right, talks with Diamondbacks general manager Mike Hazen. The two friends have navigated a difficult five years, which makes this year's run even sweeter.

Prior to the 2020 season, they gave an $85 million, five-year deal to veteran lefty Madison Bumgarner that didn't pan out. Smaller contracts in 2021 for veteran relievers like Joakim Soria and Tyler Clippard were essentially a sunk cost, too. Some of the team's younger players like Ketel Marte and Christian Walker regressed.

Arizona's president, CEO and general partner Derrick Hall admitted that earlier in his career, he might have made a change. But Hall said he "had a hunch" that his patience would be rewarded if he stuck with Hazen and Lovullo.

"We have always had great confidence in both," Hall said. "Mike has had a plan and we believed he deserved the time to see it play out. And Torey keeps getting better and better. He is a players' manager and those guys love playing for him."

There was also personal tragedy mixed into those tough seasons. Nicole Hazen — the GM's wife — was diagnosed with glioblastoma in 2020 and fought the brain cancer for more than two years. She was 45 when she died.

Mike Hazen took a partial leave of absence during the 2021 season, spending more time at home to care for his wife and the couple's four sons. Before Game 3 of this year's NL Division Series, Charlie (17), John (16), Teddy (15) and Sam (13) all threw out the ceremonial first pitch in honor of their mom.

Lovullo, who is close with Hazen's family, exchanged hugs with the boys on the field after the first pitches.

When the D-backs clinched a spot in the playoffs on Sept. 30, Mike Hazen admitted the emotions were still raw.

"It has been long. A lot of stuff has happened," Hazen said. "There is somebody for me that is not here that was here six years ago that was a huge Diamondbacks fan. Was a huge Merrill Kelly fan. He was her favorite player."

Kelly pitched a gem in Game 6 during the recently-finished NLCS, providing a gutsy road win that set the stage for the team's Game 7 triumph. His emergence is one of many shrewd moves Hazen made over the years that slowly started to pan out. The veteran right-hander was pitching in South Korea before the D-backs brought him back to MLB in 2019.

Hazen's made several moves since that ugly 2021 season — particularly in the past 12 months — that have been vital. He traded rising star Daulton Varsho to the Blue Jays in exchange for catcher Gabriel Moreno and outfielder Lourdes Gurriel Jr., who both immediately became important pieces.

And maybe most importantly, Hazen had the foresight to sign rookie Corbin Carroll to an $111 million, eight-year deal during spring training, cementing the 23-year-old as the team's main building block. Carroll rewarded the franchise's confidence with a brilliant year and is the favorite to win the NL Rookie of the Year award after finishing with 30 doubles, 25 homers, 10 triples and 54 stolen bases.

Two years after nothing went right, everything has gone right.

"I won't speak for other people, but I thought it would take a little more time," Carroll said. "So to be able to do it in this first year just makes it all the more special."

SPORTS

Ready to air it out?

Bears may let sudden starter Bagent test his arm strength ›› NFL, Page 44

WORLD SERIES

Battle of the long shots

DAVID J. PHILLIP, ABOVE, AND MATT SLOCUM, RIGHT/AP

Above: The Rangers' Adolis Garcia had a record-setting performance in the AL Championship Series, driving in 15 runs and being named MVP of the series. Right: The Diamondbacks' Ketel Marte was voted MVP of the NL Championship Series, batting .387 with 12 hits, four doubles, a triple and a stolen base.

Diamondbacks-Rangers is a Fall Classic few saw coming

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

Tell the truth: How many people picked Arizona and Texas to meet in the World Series?

Rangers-Diamondbacks in the Series had 1,750-to-1 odds when wagering opened last fall.

But in an era when 12 teams make the playoffs, sustained excellence over the six-month regular season has become a boarding pass, not the journey, leading to a long shot Series that opens Friday night at Globe Life Field.

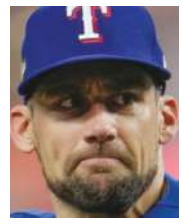
"Once you get into the big dance, anything can happen," Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo said before Tuesday night's 4-2 win at Philadelphia advanced Arizona to its first World Series since 2001. "Throw it all out the window. The teams that get in deserve to be in."

All the glamour teams are watching at home: the Los Angeles Dodgers and Atlanta Braves stumbled in the Division Series, defending champion Houston was ousted by Texas, and the New York Yankees didn't even make it to the postseason.

Instead, Major League Baseball has its third all-wild card meeting, a Grand Canyon vs. Lone Star finale of second-place teams played in air-conditioned ballparks under retractable roofs — potentially the first all-indoor Fall Classic.

"I thought it would take a little more time," Diamondbacks rookie outfielder Corbin Carroll said. "So to be able to do it in this first

SEE BATTLE ON PAGE 46



Eovaldi

Gallen

Game 1 starting pitchers

Nathan Eovaldi will start Game 1 of the World Series for the Texas Rangers on Friday night against Zac Gallen and the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Eovaldi, a Texas native who signed with the Rangers last offseason, will make his first career World Series start. The right-hander is 4-0 with a 2.42 ERA in four starts this postseason, including the AL Wild Card Series and AL Division Series clinchers, and the must-win Game 6 of the AL Championship Series at Houston on Sunday night.

The Diamondbacks, who traveled to Texas a day after clinching the NL pennant in Philadelphia, will start Gallen, an All-Star right-hander who is 2-2 with a 5.24 ERA in his first postseason. The 28-year-old started Arizona's openers in the NLDS and NLCS after winning 17 games during the regular season.

Stephen Hawkins, Associated Press

Six drivers competing for final two spots ›› NASCAR, Page 42

027664 520705