

TRAVEL: Okinawa's Kouri Island loves you right back [Page 35](#)

HEALTH: Travel no treat with a CPAP [Page 40](#)

COLLEGE FOOTBALL: WRs ready to rule playoff [Back page](#)

EUROPE
& PACIFIC
WEEKEND
EDITION



BEST OF 2019
Breakout performers, plus standout films, music, podcasts, games and more
Weekend, Pages 19-42

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A bigger bang



U.S. Army

The Army test-fires a Patriot missile recently. The Army's Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System, known as IBCS, is designed to cover more ground with fewer Patriot fire units. It will also ease the burden on an overworked missile corps.

Army missile defense test a critical step forward for key program

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE, N.M. — A sudden flash of deep red and orange streaked across the bright blue sky as a Patriot missile slammed into a cruise missile above this remote stretch of desert, signaling a long-delayed, critical upgrade to the Army's air defense systems.

For hundreds of the Army's in-demand air defense soldiers, the successful test Dec. 12 of the Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System, known as IBCS, means relief could be on the way. The upgraded missile defense system — software that ties Army air and missile defense launchers with sensors across a battlefield to detect incoming threats — would require fewer Patriot fire units to protect a larger

swath of ground.

A smaller workload would be welcomed by the Patriot Missile corps — 15 battalions that have faced near-constant duty across the globe because their services are so in demand, said Army Col. Tony Behrens, the Army capability manager for the service's Air and Missile Defense Command at Fort Sill in Oklahoma.

SEE BIGGER ON PAGE 6



CYBERCOM mulls aggressive plan if Russia meddles with '20 election

By ELLEN NAKASHIMA
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Military cyber officials are developing information warfare tactics that could be deployed against senior Russian officials and oligarchs if Moscow tries to interfere in the 2020 U.S. elections through hacking election systems or sowing widespread discord, according to current and former U.S. officials.

One option being explored by U.S. Cyber Command would target senior leadership and Russian elites, although likely not President Vladimir Putin, which would be considered too provocative, said the current and former officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the issue's sensitivity. The idea would be to show that the target's sensitive, personal data could be hit if the interference did not stop, although officials declined to be more specific.

"When the Russians put implants into an electric grid, it means they're making a credible showing that they have the ability to hurt you if things escalate," said Bobby Chesney, a law professor at the University of Texas at Austin. "What may be contemplated here is an individualized version of that, not unlike individually targeted economic sanctions. It's sending credible signals to key decision-makers that they are vulnerable if they take certain adversarial actions."

Cyber Command and officials at the Pentagon declined to comment.

SEE ELECTION ON PAGE 5

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	Azores	Change in price
Germany	\$2.795	\$3.206	\$3.454	\$3.394	--	--
Change in price	+0.4 cents	-1.2 cents	-1.3 cents	-0.5 cents	--	--
Netherlands	--	\$3.874	\$4.084	\$4.097	--	--
Change in price	--	+1.8 cents	+1.7 cents	+5.6 cents	--	+72.2 cents
U.K.	--	\$3.116	\$3.364	\$3.214	--	--
Change in price	--	-1.2 cents	-1.3 cents	-0.5 cents	--	-1.3 cents

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	Guam	Change in price
Japan	--	--	--	\$3.099	\$2.619	\$2.999**	No change
Change in price	--	-1.0 cents	--	No change	No change	No change	-1.0 cents
Okinawa	\$2.589	--	--	\$3.099	\$2.999**	\$3.000	-1.0 cents
Change in price	No change	--	--	No change	No change	No change	-1.0 cents

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of Dec. 27-Jan. 2

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	Commercial rates
Euro costs (Dec. 27)	0.3761
Dollar buys (Dec. 27)	\$1.2990
British pound (Dec. 27)	1.3129
Japanese yen (Dec. 27)	6.9981
South Korean won (Dec. 27)	6.7369
Bahrain (Dinar)	1.3129
British pound	\$1.1091/0.9016
Canada (Dollar)	7.7882
China (Yuan)	296.82
Denmark (Krone)	3.4706
Egypt (Pound)	109.61
Euro	8.8952
Hong Kong (Dollar)	51.81
Hungary (Forint)	3.84
Israel (Shekel)	3.7502
Japan (Yen)	1.13542
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3027
Norway (Krone)	8.8952
Philippines (Peso)	51.81
Poland (Zloty)	3.84
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7502
Singapore (Dollar)	1.13542
South Korea (Won)	1,161.66

Switzerland (Franc).....0.9808
Thailand (Baht).....30.13
Turkey (Lira).....8.9376
(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	4.75
Discount rate	2.25
Federal funds market rate	1.55
3-month bill	1.54
30-year bond	2.33

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

American Roundup46
Classified48-49
Comics42, 50-51
Crossword42, 50-51
Faces43
Opinion44-45
Sports54-64
Weekend19-42

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PACIFIC

Okinawa base relocation cost, time to double

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's Defense Ministry now estimates that moving a U.S. Marine Corps base on Okinawa will require more than twice the time and costs estimated earlier, prompting the island's Gov. Denny Tamaki to renew demands Thursday that Japan's central government halt construction.

Tamaki was responding to a Defense Ministry estimate that the project will take longer and cost more because the seabed at the planned reclamation is "as soft as mayonnaise," according to experts, and needs reinforcing.

U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma is to be moved from densely populated Ginowan to the previously undeveloped Henoko area on Okinawa's eastern coast. Futenma's current base is to be closed and returned to Okinawa. Opponents of the relocation plan want the base moved entirely out of Okinawa.

"In order to achieve a closure and return of Futenma air station as soon as possible, the construction work like this should immediately stop," Tamaki told

reporters.

Delaying the relocation of the base adds to safety risks for the crowded Ginowan area, one of the main reasons for moving Futenma.

The Defense Ministry said moving the Futenma base to Henoko will cost \$8.5 billion and take 12 years, pushing its completion and the closure of Futenma into the 2030s. That adds more than a decade to the plan, which has already been delayed by more than 20 years because of local opposition and other reasons.

Under an earlier plan agreed to by Tokyo and Washington in 2013, construction was to cost about \$3.2 billion and take five years, with completion expected in about 2022.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga on Thursday defended the relocation plan as "the only solution, taking into consideration the role of the Futenma air station as deterrence under the Japan-U.S. alliance and a removal of its risks."

Most of the additional cost and time is required to stabilize and strengthen reclaimed land off the coast of Henoko that will be used for runways, the Defense Minis-



KOTI HARADA, KYODO NEWS/AP

Preliminary construction work is performed last year at Henoko in Nago city, Okinawa, where a U.S. Marine Corps base is to be relocated.

try said. It presented its new estimate Wednesday to a panel of Japanese experts.

The heavy U.S. military presence on Okinawa is a longstanding source of conflict between the island and Washington and Tokyo.

About half of the 50,000 American troops in Japan are stationed on Okinawa. The 30 U.S. installations on the island account for more than 70% of the area used by the U.S. military in Japan, leading Okinawa to protest that it

is shouldering more than its share of the burden.

Japan's central government began reclamation work in December 2018 despite repeated protests by Okinawans.

Tamaki says Tokyo's approach is high-handed and undemocratic. He has called for a three-way dialogue between Okinawa, Tokyo and Washington. He is expected to reject an application by the central government for a local government permit to carry

out additional land reinforcements. That would likely reignite tensions and further delay the relocation.

Opponents of the relocation plan also contend it should be scrapped for environmental reasons because the site is a habitat for certain corals and for dugongs, a marine mammal similar to a manatee that the International Union for Conservation of Nature says is critically endangered, just a step away from extinction.

Washington and its ally Tokyo reaffirmed their commitment to pursue the Henoko plan in 2017, saying it was the only way to end the use of Futenma. The plan was developed after the 1995 race of a schoolgirl for which three U.S. servicemen were convicted, reigniting simmering Okinawan opposition to the U.S. bases.

Tokyo and Washington have agreed the current 1,100-acre Futenma base will be returned to Japanese control after operations are moved to Henoko. The plan requires 5,900-foot runways built in a V configuration on reclaimed land in Henoko Bay near the U.S. military's Camp Schwab.

Japan to base Ospreys in Chiba

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND HANA KUSUMOTO

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A city in China prefecture has agreed to temporarily host Japan Ground Self-Defense Force V-22 Ospreys while negotiations for a more permanent home on the island of Kyushu continue, officials said this week.

The mayor of Kisarazu city, Yoshihumi Watanabe, on Wednesday announced a temporary five-year deal to host the U.S.-made helicopter-plane hybrids at Ground Self-Defense Force Camp Kisarazu, about 25 miles southeast of Tokyo, Watanabe said Wednesday in a statement posted on the city's website. Watanabe informed Japanese Defense Minister Taro Kono during a meeting that same day.

"We are in a position to basically cooperate with national defense policy as one local government as (the security environment surrounding our country becomes ever more severe)," Watanabe wrote in his statement. It was a "very difficult decision when thinking about the safety concerns residents have and the expected burden the residents living near the base will face from the deployment."

Kisarazu was chosen as an Osprey base because Japan sees the defense of its southern island chain, including Okinawa, Miyako and the Senkakus, as an "urgent issue," according to a Defense Ministry report in May. Plans were previously made to permanently base 17 Japanese



MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

Japan plans to temporarily base its tilt-rotor Ospreys — similar to this Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey — in Chiba prefecture until a permanent base can be found.

Ospreys farther south at Saga Airport, in Saga prefecture on the island of Kyushu.

However, talks between the prefecture and a local fishery cooperative stalled over using the airport for military purposes, a ministry spokeswoman said Thursday.

Ministry officials plan to continue to try and reach an agreement with the cooperative, she said.

In the meantime, the ministry in May asked Watanabe to accept the temporary deployment, Watanabe said. Area residents balked at the plan due to their concerns over the aircraft's safety record and that a temporary deployment could lead to a permanent one, Asahi Shimbun reported Wednesday.

Maintenance on U.S. military Ospreys is already performed at Camp Kisarazu by a Japanese contractor, officials have said

previously.

Watanabe said Wednesday his cooperation came with conditions, such as assurances that the Ospreys will be stationed in Kisarazu no longer than five years and that the ministry will take thorough safety measures. Kono agreed to those stipulations, Watanabe's statement said.

"The Ospreys ... will be utilized effectively for national defense and disaster response," the Defense Ministry spokeswoman said. "We will take all possible measures to operate them safely."

The only thing needed to facilitate the deployment is a temporary building to house the approximately 430 troops that will call the base home by March 2022, the report said.

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Report: US softens its demand for S. Korea to pay more for troops

By JHYVE LEE
Bloomberg News

SEOUL, South Korea — Days before a troop-funding deal was set to expire, the U.S. has dropped its demand that South Korea pay five times more to host its military personnel after receiving assurances Seoul would purchase more American weapons, a newspaper report said.

The Trump administration also likely eased up after South Korea indicated it would step up its presence in the Strait of Hormuz, helping U.S. efforts to protect oil flows in the region, South Korea's Chosun Ilbo newspaper reported Thursday, citing an unidentified diplomatic source. The increase now may be about 10% to 20% above the current level of nearly \$1 billion, it said.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry declined to comment.

Last month, U.S. negotiators walked out of a meeting on troop funding in Seoul after South Korea balked at the fivefold increase seen as exorbitant by many in the country. The breakdown at that time raised questions about one of the U.S.'s closest military alliances and a key piece of the Pentagon's strategy for countering North Korea and a rising China. The two sides resumed talks in December.

Even though the deal known as

the Special Measures Agreement technically expires at the end of this year, both sides are likely to agree to some sort of temporary extension as they negotiate, allowing for the continued operations of the about 28,500 U.S. military personnel positioned on the peninsula.

The talks with South Korea could affect other countries that host U.S. troops, as the Trump administration is seeking funding increases from other American allies.

President Donald Trump, arguing that South Korea is rich and should pay more for U.S. protection, has demanded Seoul contribute about \$5 billion for hosting U.S. troops. The price tag originated with the White House, according to people familiar with the matter, and administration officials justify it by saying it reflects the costs South Korea would incur if it takes operational control of combined U.S.-South Korean forces in the case of a conflict.

The request for more money has sat well in South Korea, where many in President Moon Jae-in's progressive camp and opposition conservatives have come out against the demands. Moon, facing a sagging support rate, may not want to make any major concessions that further dent his popularity ahead of an election for parliament next year.

WAR/MILITARY

Report: Army company leaders are overworked

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Army company-level leaders are overwhelmed by their workloads in part because they're reluctant to push back against excessive demands made on them by leadership, a new study suggests.

Company commanders and their senior enlisted leaders work on average 12.5 hours per day to complete tasks that range from ensuring unit combat readiness to cutting the grass on installations, said the report released this week by Rand Corp., a nonpartisan research group.

"There are so many different things that you have to track and do," one soldier told researchers who compiled the report on reducing time burdens for Army company leaders. "You are constantly playing Whack-a-Mole."

Work-life balance would improve for company leaders if on average they worked 12 hours

less per week, the study said.

But to make that happen, the relatively junior officers who are today's company commanders need to learn to "selectively disobey" unreasonable orders from their chain of command, something they appear reluctant to do, the report said.

"Rather than pushing back on higher command tasking, soldiers may resort to lying, misrepresenting the truth, or seemingly tasking themselves and their subordinates beyond the limits of productivity and effectiveness," the study said.

Army leaders must encourage legitimate, tactful disagreement when garrison tasks consume more time than companies have to complete them, the report said.

Selective disobedience would also require "senior leaders [to] take the time to engage with their company commanders to ensure only those who have proven to be responsible custodians of unit

time can respectfully decline a tasking," it said.

During focus groups, company leaders also said that the extra time they needed to execute seemingly simple tasks often went unacknowledged by higher command.

"Battalion and above have no visibility of what we are doing and what that takes," the report quoted one soldier as saying.

"Let's say a \$100,000 tent was broken. The leaders that grew up in Iraq and Afghanistan used to be able to just buy a new tent, and it would be here next week. Now we have to go through a process and it takes time," the report quoted the company commander as saying. "Senior leaders see taskings across the boards but don't see the build-up."

In 2018, the Army took some steps to ease the burden on soldiers by abolishing some online training requirements that were unrelated to combat, the report said.



GRANT LIGON/U.S. Army

A recently published Rand Corp. report says company-level leaders like Capt. Kevin Gibbons, above, commander of the Sabalauski Air Assault School, work an average of 12.5 hours a day.

But more measures are needed now that the Army is largely a garrisoned force after the peak war years of the past decade, the report said.

In addition to fostering an environment in which company leaders feel they can speak candidly about their time constraints and question unreasonable orders, the Army would help to ease the burden on them by providing them with more administrative

resources, the study said.

Shifting tasks such as maintenance and grass cutting to civilians would enable soldiers to focus on more important tasks, the study said.

"Soldiers don't think that they are soldiers anymore," one service member said in the report. "We are gardeners. It's crazy."

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Taliban attack Afghan military compound, killing 6 soldiers

By TAMEEM AKHGAR
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A powerful suicide car bombing targeted an Afghan army compound in the country's north Thursday morning, killing six Afghan soldiers, the Defense Ministry said. The Taliban quickly claimed responsibility for the attack.

Shortly after the bomber detonated his car laden with explosives outside the small military base in Balkh province, a group of insurgents stormed into the compound, setting off a shootout with Afghan forces.

The Defense Ministry said in a statement that three Afghan soldiers were also wounded in the explosion and the ensuing "terrorist attack." The provincial governor's spokesman, Munir Farhad, said fighting inside the compound continued for hours before the attackers were repelled.

The Taliban claimed they inflicted a far greater number of casualties and also that they captured the base and seized huge quantities of weapons and ammunition, according to a tweet by their spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid. The militants routinely exaggerate their claims.

The Afghan Ministry of Defense rejected the Taliban claim, saying the insurgents had not taken the base.

The Taliban have been active in Balkh in recent days. They targeted an army checkpoint in the province's district of Dawlat Abad on Tuesday, killing at least seven Afghan soldiers and wounding six other members of the security forces — three soldiers and three intelligence agents. At the time, the Taliban said they also captured four Afghan troops and seized weapons and ammunition from the checkpoint.

On Tuesday, the Taliban amb-

bushed a peace convoy in western Afghanistan and abducted 26 activists, members of a peace movement, a police spokesman said.

The insurgents staged the ambush in the district of Bala Buluk in Farah province on Tuesday. The Taliban forced the six-vehicle convoy to a halt, then got into the cars and drove them and the activists to an unknown location, said provincial police spokesman Mohibullah Mohib.

According to Mohib, police were trying to find and free the activists whose convoy was going village-to-village to rally for peace.

However, Bismillah Watandost, of the People's Peace Movement of Afghanistan, to which the activists belong, said that 27 of their members were abducted by the Taliban in the Farah assault. The different figures could not immediately be reconciled.

The Taliban, who have been

active in Farah, have not claimed responsibility for the abductions. However, Watandost also said that tribal elders in the province immediately launched an effort to negotiate with the Taliban to release the abducted activists. He added that phone lines were down in the region, making communication and getting information from the area difficult.

The Taliban now control or hold sway over practically half of Afghanistan but continue to stage near-daily attacks targeting Afghan and U.S. forces, as well as government officials — even as they hold peace talks with a U.S. envoy tasked with negotiating an end to the 18-year conflict, America's longest war. Scores of Afghan civilians are also killed in the crossfire or by roadside bombs planted by militants.

Also Thursday, a roadside bombing struck a police patrol in eastern Khost province, wound-

ing at least five policemen, said Talib Mangal, the provincial governor's spokesman.

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Tyndall air base to get \$2.4B in funds to help rebuild

By JACQUELINE BOSTICK
The (Panama City, Fla.) News-Herald

PANAMA CITY — With President Donald Trump signing into law the \$1.4 trillion federal spending bill Friday, Tyndall Air Force Base has secured all of the necessary funding to rebuild.

The \$2.4 billion appropriated to Tyndall for construction will be available over the next five years, which means more flexibility to

negotiate with contractors, according to Congressman Neal Dunn, R-Panama City.

"Military construction funding is allowed to be held for up to five years at a time, and if you appropriate the money on the front end, you can make a better contract with your contractors," said Dunn, who has been instrumental in introducing and supporting bills related to recovery from Hurricane Michael. "The

contractors now have the guarantee the money is there and they'll be on the job this year, next year, (and so on). It really saves a huge amount of money to do it that way."

Alongside the funding to rebuild, the base also secured additional funds for the procurement of 28 F-35s. Also, about \$240 million was appropriated to the Naval Surface Warfare Center located on the beach and \$70 mil-

lion to the Panama City station of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Dunn noted he had submitted the disaster tax relief bill back in November 2018 so that tax relief would be available as soon as possible following Hurricane Michael.

"I dropped that bill in 2018 and they just picked that up word for word (this year) and put it in this appropriations (package)," he said. "That's really outstanding."

MILITARY

Election: Officials discussing cyberoperations that expose adversaries' malign behavior

FROM FRONT PAGE

The military has long used psychological operations — dropping hundreds of thousands of leaflets in Iraq, for instance, to persuade Iraqi soldiers to surrender to the U.S.-led coalition during the Gulf War. But the internet, social media and smartphones have vastly extended the reach and precision of such tactics.

The development comes as numerous agencies within the Trump administration seek to ensure the U.S. is shielded against foreign efforts to disrupt the 2020 elections, even as President Donald Trump has cast doubt on or belittled his own intelligence community's finding of Russian interference in 2016.

The intelligence community last month issued a classified update — a “national intelligence estimate” — assessing that Russia’s main goal in the 2020 campaign continues to be to sow discord. “It’s always been about exacerbating fault lines in our society,” one senior U.S. official said.

In the past year, Congress and the Trump administration have eased restraints on the military’s use of cyberoperations to thwart foreign adversaries. The push is part of a move by military officials such as Gen. Paul Nakasone, who heads both CYBERCOM and the National Security Agency, the government’s powerful electronic surveillance arm, to weave cyberoffensive capabilities into military operations.

The 10-year-old command’s foray into influence operations reflects an evolution in thinking. “It’s a really big deal because we have not done a good job in the past of integrating traditional information warfare with cyberoperations,” Chesney said. “But as Russia has demonstrated, these two are increasingly inseparable in practice.”

While other military organizations, such as Joint Special Operations Command, also have cyber and information warfare capabilities, CYBERCOM is the first to turn such powers toward combating election interference.

“In 332 days, our nation is going to elect a president,” Nakasone told a defense forum this month. “We can’t let up. This is something we cannot be episodic about. The defense of our nation, the defense of our elections, is something that will be every single day for as long as I can see into the future.”

The options being considered build on an operation CYBERCOM undertook last fall in the run-up to the midterm elections. Beginning in October 2018, CY-

BERCOM used emails, pop-ups and texts to target Russian internet “trolls” who were seeding disinformation on U.S. social media platforms. The trolls worked for the Internet Research Agency, a private entity controlled by a Russian oligarch close to Putin.

CYBERCOM also messaged hackers working for Russian military intelligence, indicating their identities were known and could be publicized. Although the command did not sign its messages, the Americans know there would be no mistaking who had sent them, officials said at the time.

When the trolls persisted, CYBERCOM, beginning on Election Day and for at least two days afterward, knocked their servers offline. The Washington Post previously reported. The Americans also sent messages aimed at spreading confusion and discord among IRA operatives, including computer system administrators. Some personnel were so perturbed that they launched an internal investigation to root out the source of the messages, including leaking personnel information, according to U.S. officials.

The new options contemplate targeting key leaders in the security services and the military and potentially some oligarchs. The messaging would be accompanied by a limited cyberoperation that demonstrates the Americans’ access to a particular system or account and the capability to infiltrate a cost, said individuals familiar with the matter. The message would implicitly warn the target that if the election interference did not cease, there would be consequences.

The options do not envision any attempt to influence Russian society at large, which officials saw as having limited success given Putin’s control of the country, including much of the media.

Some see the new options as potentially effective at altering a key official’s decision-making calculus without being hugely escalatory because they do not seek to foment a popular uprising, which is Putin’s big fear, analysts note.

Another possibility involves disinformation aimed at exploiting rivalries within the Russian government and power elites. In 2016, National Security Council aides in the Obama administration developed cyber options against Russia similar to those being contemplated by CYBERCOM now, but “no one had an appetite for it,” a former senior official said.

“There is a night-and-day difference between 2016 and this,” said a second former U.S. official, who



ALEXANDER NEMENOV, POOL/AP

Military cyber officials are developing information warfare tactics that could be deployed against senior Russian officials, although likely not Russian President Vladimir Putin, and oligarchs if Moscow tries to interfere in the 2020 U.S. elections, according to current and former U.S. officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

said that CYBERCOM’s thinking several years ago was much more limited and conventional.

Any operation would be reviewed by other agencies, including the State Department and CIA, and require the defense secretary’s approval. It would be aligned with other potential U.S. efforts, such as sanctions or indictments, officials said.

Cyberoperations alone are usually not sufficient to transform an adversary’s behavior.

“It can serve a useful message of ‘We’re watching and be careful not to go further,’” said Michael Carpenter, a former senior defense policy official in the Obama administration. But generally, he

said, it is likely to be more effective when used with other tools such as sanctions — especially those also backed by allies.

CYBERCOM got a boost in August 2018 when Congress clarified that cyber actions that fall below the use of force — what practitioners call “the gray zone” — can be conducted as “traditional military activities” as distinct from covert action. That was a key change that meant that clandestine operations such as the IRA takedown last fall, for instance, would not get delayed by disputes about whether they were covert operations.

Also enhancing CYBERCOM’s flexibility was Trump’s signing

the following month of a national security presidential memorandum that revised the process by which cyberoperations are vetted and approved, leaving the final decision with the defense secretary even if other agencies object.

No single office within the Defense Department oversees cyberoperations, electronic warfare and psychological operations. So this month, Congress created a Senate-confirmed position of principal information operations adviser to coordinate strategy and policy in this area across the Pentagon and with other agencies.

Other former U.S. officials are wary of CYBERCOM’s move into information operations.

“I’m not a big fan of the Department of Defense doing messaging operations,” said Richard Stengel, a former undersecretary of state for public diplomacy in the Obama administration. “I’m even skeptical of the State Department doing messaging operations. ... I just don’t think that’s something we’re good at.”

Meanwhile, the Marine Corps has created a position of deputy commandant for information to build information warfare capability. Army Cyber Command has integrated cyberoperations, electronic warfare and information operations into its mission. The 16th Air Force cyber unit is doing the same.

Among the things that cyber officials are discussing are operations that expose adversaries’ malign behavior.

“Basically, it’s a war of strategic narrative,” said Sean McPate, a foreign policy expert and author of “The New Rules of War.” “We need to get into that domain.”

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“Basically, it’s a war of strategic narrative. We need to get into that domain.”

Sean McPate

foreign policy expert, author of “The New Rules of War”

MILITARY

Bigger: Army stresses value in system's ability to detect, track missiles earlier

FROM FRONT PAGE

"We believe that once we have this system in place and are able to start fielding it across the force, we will be able to reduce some of that stress on our force in the future — just by virtue of the way we will employ it in the future," Behrens told Stars and Stripes just moments after the test, dubbed Flight Test 5.

The system is the Army's primary focus in the air and missile defense sector and one of Army Futures Command's 31 top priority programs. The development is so critical that the Army reassigned one of its 15 Patriot battalions full time to the testing program.

The Dec. 12 launch was watched closely by Army senior leaders, including its vice chief of staff, Gen. Joseph Martin, who was there.

"When you talk about 31 signature programs — that's a lot of activity," Martin said after the test. "Lots of testing, lots of activity. When things like this (test) happen, they are critical, so that we can validate that which we think will happen and ... move forward with our development process." IBCS has been in development since 2004 and was once aimed to reach soldiers in the field by 2018, but setbacks have delayed the delivery. The new goal is for a single Patriot battalion to field the system in the third quarter of fiscal year 2022.

The IBCS test this month, with soldiers destroying two incoming cruise missiles, comes after the same system in August intercepted a cruise missile at a range well beyond what today's Patriot Missile systems can handle.

Those successes, Martin said, have energized the program and left the service hopeful it is on track to reach soldiers around the world.

"We are in the process of achieving significant momentum in our modernization program," Martin said. "And it's tests like this ... that maintain that momentum."

'Clear to engage'

One after another, highly technical battlefield sensors tracked the pair of incoming projectiles flying low and fast over the southern Mexican desert. Marine Corps TPS-59 Radar first picked up the incoming objects, then a pair of Air Force F-35 Lightning II stealth fighters flying high over the missile range tracked the potential targets.

A message to air defense soldiers commanding two Patriot Missile launchers on White Sands came over a loudspeaker: "Hostile."

Moments later: "Clear to engage in the kill zone," referring to the area where it was deemed safe to shoot down the incoming missiles.

Within minutes, the Army's Patriot and Sentinel radars picked up their targets.

"You are now free to engage," the direction came. The soldiers fired two Patriot Advanced Capability Commanders ... to positively identify the threat and determine



A Black Hawk crew chief looks out over White Sands.

Less than 10 minutes after the cruise missiles were fired and split off to attack two separate locations, both were destroyed in fiery collisions with the interceptors.

"Applause rang out in the viewing area.

"Today, two cruise missiles flew. Two Patriot Missiles hit them," Martin said minutes after the intercepts. "It's a huge victory for this program, and these guys" involved in it.

Northrup Grumman, the defense contracting giant building the IBCS program, was just as excited.

"Building on the success of the most recent flight test this past August, today's test demonstrates that IBCS is achieving unprecedented performance in defeating multiple missile threats," Dan Verwiel, the company's vice president and general manager for missile defense and protective systems, said in a statement.

Army officials declined to discuss how far or fast the interceptors flew or at what altitude the collisions occurred. What was most important, they said, was the system's ability to detect and track the cruise missiles much earlier than they would have been able to with current systems.

The Patriot Missile systems deployed today in Europe, the Middle East and Asia could not have accomplished what those linked to the IBCS system did at White Sands. The systems in use today cannot communicate with the non-Army sensors, and the Army radars they can communicate with must be in much closer proximity than IBCS would allow, said Army Col. Philip Rottenborn, project manager for the Army Integrated Air and Missile Defense development program.

What that means to future commanders in charge of air and missile defense is more time, Rottenborn said. The Army hopes it will also mean more options.

When IBCS is fully operational, several years down the road, it should allow sensors to connect with Patriot systems and other air defense assets, such as the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, or THAAD, which can intercept ballistic missiles.

"IBCS provides decision space," Rottenborn said. "It's significant — measured in seconds and minutes in decision space for commanders ... to positively identify the threat and determine



PHOTOS BY COREY DICKSTEIN/Stars and Stripes

Gen. Joseph Martin, left, Army vice chief of staff, meets with soldiers and Marines who participated in a Dec. 12 test at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., of an updated Patriot Missile system that allows sensors from across different services to track projectiles that can be eliminated by Patriot interceptors.

the best interceptor type and the best intercept point to defeat the threat."

For Behrens, a career air defense artillery officer who has served in Patriot battalions, that means he can decide more quickly how many interceptors he needs to launch. If an interceptor misses its target, it could also provide time to launch another missile. That means saving more lives and military assets.

"If I am protecting an air base out in the Central Command theater, I'm launching those interceptors for the protection of that air base — the F-35s that are parked there, or the other airframes, or the mission commando that's there, everyone that is participating in the fight," he said. "That's what we're protecting."

Long-term gain

With the success of Flight Test 5, the Army will move into operational testing and will commit an entire Patriot battalion to those efforts at least through the summer, Behrens said.

"The dedication of that battalion is not insignificant to the Army," he said. "They are extremely busy."

Removing that battalion — 3rd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery — could mean added stress in the short term for the other Patriot units, some of which have recently been surged into the Middle East.

Behrens said 65 percent of Patriot units are deployed, conducting real-time air defense operations or preparing to deploy.

For example, nearly 10 full battalions at all times are committed to air defense missions including one in Europe, three between Japan and South Korea, and five or more battalions in the Central Command area, which covers the Middle East and Afghanistan.

'IBCS provides decision space. It's significant — measured in seconds and minutes in decision space for commanders ... to positively identify the threat and determine the best interceptor type and the best intercept point to defeat the threat.'

Army Col. Philip Rottenborn
project manager, Army Integrated Air and Missile Defense development program

Since the summer, Defense Secretary Mark Esper has surged more Patriot units into the Middle East, largely into Saudi Arabia in the wake of Iranian hostilities, including a drone and cruise missile attack in September on critical Saudi oil infrastructure.

Pentagon officials have discussed sending more troops to the Middle East to curb future Iranian aggression, which could include even more air defense soldiers, according to several officials who spoke in recent weeks on condition of anonymity. Those officials did not directly identify Patriot units as those under consideration for deployment.

Behrens said the Army is convinced that removing an entire battalion from its Patriot rotation for IBCS testing will be worthwhile because the system is a difference-maker for air defenders.

If successful testing continues,

the Army will make a decision next summer on how to move forward. The plan is to field the initial IBCS capability — which ties together the Army Patriot and Sentinel radar systems — to two battalions each year over a seven-year period.

"This is probably ... the most significant change to how we're going to fight in air and missile defense since the birth of the Patriot Missile system itself, which is close to 40 years now," he said.

The system might have made a difference in those strikes on Saudi Arabia in September, Behrens said. Defense officials have said the strikes went undetected because they came from the north, while most Saudi and U.S. air defenses were facing south toward Yemen, where Iran-linked Houthis rebels have regularly fired missiles into the Kingdom.

With an operational IBCS system, it is possible that other sensors could have picked up the incoming drones and cruise missiles, Behrens said.

"You still have to have the sensors in the right place," he said. "You still have to plan that. But today we don't have the ability to put those sensors on that network. So, even if we had the sensors in the right places, we would not have been able to engage a target that came from that direction."

Martin downplayed that scenario, but he said he was encouraged by the test and the improvements the IBCS could bring air defense soldiers.

"This allows you to see — to address threats of many kinds," he said. "You saw cruise missiles today; there's ... all sorts of different threats out there. This system allows you to address threats in a much more agile and flexible and adaptive way."

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NATION

Trump: 'Carnage' in rebel stronghold in Syria

Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump is speaking out against the "carnage" involving thousands of civilians in a rebel stronghold in Syria.

In a tweet Thursday, Trump wrote: "Russia, Syria, and Iran are killing, or on their way to killing, thousands of innocent civilians in Idlib Province. Don't do it! Turkey is working hard to stop this carnage."

The tweet refers to an intense air and

ground bombardment by government forces in southern and eastern Idlib province, the last rebel-held bastion in the country.

Syrian government forces about a month ago launched a renewed effort to take the province, which is dominated by al-Qaida-linked militants and is also home to 3 million civilians. The United Nations has warned of the growing risk of a humanitarian catastrophe along the Turkish border.

A Syrian relief group said Wednesday that more than 200,000 men, women and

children fled their homes in buses, trucks and cars in recent weeks. Many have been heading toward the Turkish border for safety.

Before a ground offensive began a week ago, the U.N. reported that some 60,000 Idlib residents had already been displaced since the government's bombing campaign started late last month.

Videos posted online by activists and the opposition's Syrian Civil Defense, also known as White Helmets, showed long

lines of cars, trucks and buses heading north. People carried their valuables and loaded bags and mattresses on buses.

Trump also addressed the plight of civilians in Idlib in June, accusing Russia, Syria and Iran of "indiscriminately killing many innocent civilians" in a bombing campaign. "The World is watching this butchery," he tweeted then, imploring them to "STOP!" Several months later he announced he would withdraw U.S. troops from northeastern Syria.



MARY ALTAFER/AP

Mohammed Hafar helps his daughter, Jana, with luggage at JFK Airport in New York on Dec. 3. Before they were reunited, Jana had been forced by President Donald Trump's travel ban to stay in Syria.

Families fight US travel ban in court

By DEEPTI HAJELA
AND AMY TAXIN
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Mohammed Hafar paced around the airport terminal — first to the monitor to check flight arrivals, then to the gift shop and lastly to the doors where international passengers were exiting.

At last, out came Jana Hafar, his tall, slender, dark-haired teen daughter who had been forced by President Donald Trump's travel ban to stay behind in Syria for months while her father, his wife and 10-year-old son started rebuilding their lives in Bloomfield, N.J., with no clear idea of when the family would be together again.

"Every time I speak to her, she asks, 'When are they going to give me the visa?'" the elder Hafar said, recalling the days of uncertainty that took up the better part of this year. There was "nothing I could tell her because nobody knows when."

That she landed at Kennedy Airport on a recent December day was testament to her father's determination to keep his promise that they would be reunited and his willingness to go as far as suing the government in federal court. Advocates say the process for obtaining a travel ban waiver is still shrouded in unpredictability, which causes delays for thousands of American citizens waiting for loved ones.

The "system is messed up," said Curtis Morrison, the Los

Angeles-based attorney who has filed several federal lawsuits, including Hafar's, against the administration on behalf of dozens of plaintiffs from countries affected by the travel ban.

Many of those he has represented have received visas. But he said those cases represent only a fraction of the people in need and that the decision to grant those visas is unfair to thousands of other immigrants who cannot sue or do not know how to take their frustrations to court.

The third version of the administration's ban took effect in December 2017, keeping citizens of Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen and North Korea, and government representatives from Venezuela, from traveling or immigrating to the United States. The Supreme Court upheld the ban in June 2018, in part because of the promised waiver system that would allow people to come despite the ban if certain criteria were met.

The government says 28,100 immigrant visa applications were filed by people seeking waivers to move to the U.S. between December 2017 and Oct. 31. Of those, 11,325 have been deemed qualified for waivers and 16,775 have not.

It was unclear how many of those who have been deemed qualified have actually received visas and how quickly. At the beginning of 2019, waivers were being issued in a trickle, with only 2,673 granted for both immigrant and nonimmigrant visas

from December 2017 to January 2019, according to State Department figures.

In an emailed statement, the State Department said changes made in late June have "significantly" increased the number handed out monthly, and officials "believe this is representative of the new normal" and that "applicants who qualify for a waiver will likely be issued their visa much sooner than possible before the changes."

But while some applications for immigrant and nonimmigrant visas submitted in recent months are seeing faster processing and approval times, earlier cases are still languishing, with no transparency from the government, said Mahsa Khanbabai, an immigration lawyer in North Easton, Massachusetts.

Hafar, a Syria native and naturalized American citizen since 1996, had been living in Syria with his family when civil war started.

Farida Chchata, an immigrant rights attorney for the Council on American-Islamic Relations in California, worked with the family before they sued.

After filing the lawsuit in August, Jana's petition got moving in October, and she was soon given the go-ahead to come to the U.S.

"It's been difficult for me to be away from my whole family," she said. But she believed her father. "My dad wouldn't lie to me. He always tells me the truth."

Pa. dioceses pay \$84M to 564 clergy abuse victims

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM
Associated Press

Pennsylvania's Roman Catholic dioceses have paid nearly \$84 million to 564 victims of sexual abuse, a tally that's sure to grow substantially in the new year as compensation fund administrators work through a backlog of claims, according to an Associated Press review.

Seven of the state's eight dioceses launched victim compensation funds in the wake of a landmark grand jury report on sexual abuse by Catholic clergy. The funds were open to claims for a limited time this year. They are independently administered, though each diocese set its own rules on eligibility.

To date, the average payout across all seven dioceses has exceeded \$148,000 — a fraction of what some adult victims of childhood abuse might have expected from a jury had they been permitted to take their claims to court. Under state law, victims of past abuse have until age 30 to sue.

"These are all time-barred claims, so it's not going to be the kind of numbers one sees in a courtroom," said Camille Biros, who helps administer compensation funds for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and dioceses in Pittsburgh, Allentown, Erie and Scranton.

Lawmakers recently agreed to begin the lengthy process of amending the state constitution to allow a two-year window for civil suits otherwise barred by the statute of limitations, but there's no guarantee that effort will bear fruit.

Together, Allentown and the four other dioceses that hired Biros and veteran claims administrator Kenneth Feinberg to run their funds have received more than 1,500 claims.

The dioceses agreed to pay victims after the grand jury concluded that more than 300 predator priests had molested more than 1,000 children since the 1940s — and that church leaders systematically covered it up.

Police find teen suspected in killing of college student

By MICHAEL R. SISAK
Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York City police say they have located a 14-year-old boy suspected of fatally stabbing a Barnard College freshman as she walked through a park near the school.

Chief of Detectives Rodney Harrison tweeted Thursday that the boy had been found but gave no other details.

He is one of three youths police believe were involved in the stabbing of Tessa Majors, 18, on Dec. 11 in Morningside Park in Manhattan.

Police tracked down the teen after taking the unusual step last Friday of releasing photographs of him, but not his name or any other identifying information.

A police spokesman declined to answer questions about where and how the teen was located, referring back to Harrison's tweet and saying "the investigation re-

mains active and ongoing."

Of the two other suspects, only one has been charged.

A 13-year-old boy arrested Dec. 13 and charged as a juvenile with felony murder told detectives he was at the park with the other youths but wasn't the one who stabbed Majors, police said.

Another juvenile suspect was questioned for several hours, also on Dec. 13, but police let him go, Harrison said. He has declined to say why that boy wasn't charged.

Majors was stabbed while walking in the park just before 7 p.m., two days before the start of final exams at Barnard, an all-women's school that is part of the Ivy League's Columbia University.

She staggered up a flight of stairs to street level and collapsed in a crosswalk.

Her death has troubled city and college leaders, both for its proximity to campus and its apparent randomness.

NATION

GOP senator 'disturbed' by McConnell remark

Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, a Republican from Alaska, said she was disturbed to hear Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell say there would be "total coordination" between the White House and the Senate over the upcoming presidential impeachment trial.

"And in fairness, when I heard that I was disturbed," Murkowski told KTUU Tuesday before saying there should be distance between the White House and the Senate in how the trial is conducted.

"To me, it means that we have to take that step back from being hand in glove with the defense,

and so I heard what leader McConnell had said; I happened to think that has further confused the process."



Murkowski

In a recent interview with Fox News' Sean Hannity, McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, described this planning with the White House. "We'll be working through this process, hopefully, in a fairly short period of time in total co-

'To me it means that we have to take that step back from being hand in glove with the defense.'

Sen. Lisa Murkowski
R-Alaska

ordination with the White House counsel's office and the people who are representing the president as well as the Senate," McConnell said. Murkowski was critical of the impeachment process conducted in the House of Representatives, describing it as rushed. Murkowski says the Senate is

now being asked to cure deficiencies in evidence to be presented at the trial, particularly when it comes to whether key witnesses should be brought forward to testify, including White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and former national security adviser John Bolton. "How we will deal with wit-

nesses remains to be seen," Murkowski said before saying the House should have gone to the courts if witnesses refused to appear before Congress.

Murkowski also spoke of her desire for a "full and fair process," potentially using the impeachment hearings of President Bill Clinton as a template.

Murkowski remained undecided about how she would vote when the trial takes place.

"For me to prejudice and say there's nothing there or on the other hand, he should be impeached yesterday, that's wrong; in my view, that's wrong."

Rust Belt region looks to become a hub for new electric vehicles

By JOHN SEEWER
Associated Press

The day Youngstown's steel mills began shutting down 40 years ago remains fresh in the minds of those who live in the blue-collar corner of Ohio. Community leaders don't want the recent closing of General Motors' massive assembly plant to leave that same lingering gloom.

The region is embarking on an ambitious plan to become a research and production hub for electric vehicles and carve out a new economy for itself by mixing its industrial past with emerging technology.

There are positive signs already. GM in early December announced it will form a joint venture and hire more than 1,100 people at a new plant that it says will be among the largest electric vehicle battery cell factories in the world.

And the Lordstown assembly plant that GM shut down in March has been sold to a newly formed company that intends to begin making electric trucks by late 2020.

But the Youngstown region, which for decades has been a symbol of the American Midwest's declining industrial might, faces plenty of competition from places like Detroit, Silicon Valley and China — all of which also are positioning to be centers for electric and autonomous vehicles.

While the electric transformation within the auto industry is just beginning to take shape, it's clear that fewer workers and factories will be needed to make cars that require fewer parts. Where those next clusters of electric vehicle manufacturing will sprout is yet to be determined.

U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan, a Democrat who represents the Youngstown area, thinks being involved with the development of electric vehicles early on is the best chance his hometown has had in decades

to restore what has been lost. "For a long time in our community, we were chasing smokestacks, chasing things that were on the decline," he said. "We're starting to move in a good direction."

Economic development leaders point out that the Youngstown area already is home to an electric battery testing lab and business incubators that are focused on energy and additive manufacturing through 3-D printing. Youngstown State University is breaking ground on an advanced manufacturing technology center and wants to play a part in training students to work in the electric vehicle industry.

'An opportunity like this really plays to our regional strengths.'

Mike Hripko
Youngstown State University
associate vice president

An opportunity like this really plays to our regional strengths," said Mike Hripko, the university's associate vice president for economic development and government relations.

For decades now, those in the Mahoning Valley have been counting on "the next big idea" with investors promising to build factories that would make blimps, commuter airplanes and a new version of the Studebaker. The closing of the GM plant that had been churning out cars for 50 years marked the loss of the biggest manufacturing anchor remaining in what once was Ohio's industrial core.

It will take more than a battery cell plant for the Youngstown region to become a hub for electric vehicles, said Brett Smith, di-



TONY DEJAK/AP

A 'Save Me' sign rests against the Lordstown Complex sign in Lordstown, Ohio, on March 6. The Rust Belt city sign of Youngstown, Ohio, which was stung by the loss of the massive General Motors Lordstown plant this year, wants to become a research and production hub for electric vehicles.



ANDREW RUSH, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE/AP

Hundreds of Chevrolet Cruze cars sit in a parking lot on Dec. 5, 2018, at General Motors' assembly plant in Lordstown.

rector of research at the Center for Automotive Research, an industry think tank in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Technology and research will be centered largely in South Korea, China, Detroit and California, he said. A big question is whether a role like Ohio that has had a big role in producing traditional engines and transmissions can stake a claim to a new way of making vehicles.

Both GM and Ford Motor Co. announced this year they are in-

vesting heavily in their Detroit-area factories, where they plan to build the next generation of electric and autonomous vehicles. Volkswagen is making Tennessee its North American base for electric vehicle production by expanding its plant in Chattanooga.

Where the manufacturing is centered will be determined by a number of factors, Smith said, including logistics, labor contracts, political influences, workforce training and how quickly car buyers embrace electric vehicles.

Fully electric vehicles currently make up only 1.5% of U.S. new vehicle sales, and LMC Automotive forecasts that will rise to only 7.5% by the end of the next decade.

"We're still in the early days of this," Smith said.

Uncertainty also surrounds what will happen with the former GM assembly plant. It was bought by Lordstown Motors Corp., a new company that wants to begin making electric trucks by late 2020 but also needs more investors before manufacturing can begin.

While the new owner plans to start out with just 400 workers, CEO Steve Burns said he has a much bigger vision that includes bringing in other like-minded companies and becoming a center for electric vehicle production.

There's also talk of potentially building a new generation of mail trucks for the U.S. Postal Service.

"It's a pretty lofty goal," Burns said. "But we didn't buy this plant not to fill it up and get to full production. We really want to put the area on the map."

NATION

Baltimore nears record homicide rate

BY REGINA GARCIA CANO

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Baltimore could wrap up 2019 with its highest per-capita homicide rate on record as killings of adults and minors alike for drugs, retribution, money or no clear reason continue to add up and city officials appear unable to stop the violence.

Police recorded 338 homicides as of Tuesday, following a week of relentless gunfire that saw eight people shot — three of them fatally — in one day and nine others — one fatally — another day. That total is up from 309 in 2018 and four shy of the 342 killings tallied in 2017 and 2015, the year when the city's homicide rate suddenly spiked.

With just over 600,000 residents, Baltimore's homicide rate would reach approximately 57 per 100,000 residents if the death toll reaches 342. That would eclipse the rate of 1993, when the city had a record 353 killings but was also much more populous.

By contrast, New York City, with more than 8 million residents, had 306 homicides through Dec. 15.

Police yellow tape and makeshift memorials with flowers, stuffed animals and balloons have become common in some neighborhoods of this deeply segregated city. Memorials can be found within blocks of each other at the same time.

"It's a major concern for me, not just as a hopeful man but as a citizen of Baltimore who grew up in inner city Baltimore," said Carmichael "Stokey" Cannady, a reformed drug dealer turned community activist who wants to be mayor. "I remember when a



JERRY JACKSON, THE BALTIMORE SUN/AP

Baltimore Police block off Penn Street at Lombard Street in Baltimore on Feb. 4 after a shooting at University of Maryland Medical Center Shock Trauma.

person had a conflict and would have a fight at best. Now these young kids, at the age of 13, 14 years old, are finding handguns in their possession and they use them as toys ... The whole system needs to be revamped."

This is the fifth year in a row this Mid-Atlantic community dubbed "Charm City" has reported more than 300 killings. Before 2015, that number had generally been on the decline, but the trend reversed after civil unrest followed the death in police custody

of a young black man, Freddie Gray.

Reasons for the upward trend vary and are subject to interpretation. Many accuse police of taking a hands-off approach to crime-fighting since six of their own were charged in connection with Gray's death. Others attribute it to the apparent free flow of illegal guns, the effects of a punishing opioid epidemic, social inequalities and a lack of decent jobs for many in disenfranchised neighborhoods. Some say po-

litical incompetence at City Hall also contributed.

Police Commissioner Michael Harrison, who was tapped this year to fix a dispirited department and regain residents' trust, unveiled a five-year crime-fighting plan in July that includes a goal of responding to calls within 10 minutes and prioritizing those threatening life or property.

The plan also contains recruitment strategies, community engagement efforts and accountability measures. But the depart-

ment lacks the personnel and resources to achieve all the goals, and Harrison has acknowledged that the city's deep-rooted "gun culture" also must be changed.

"People can expect that number to go down. We are building capacity, but we need to have some type of effect on the poverty, the housing, the education, the addiction, the skills, the jobs and the lack thereof, together at the same time," Harrison told The Associated Press.

"All of that has to be addressed while prosecuting people who commit crimes and preventing other people from committing those crimes. Otherwise, it continues and then you ask the question, 'When does it stop?' without fixing the reason it starts."

Last week, the U.S. Department of Justice and members of the state's congressional delegation announced additional resources to help Harrison and federal law enforcement in Maryland track guns, hire additional police officers and beef up task forces. Harrison, in a reversal, agreed to allow three surveillance airplanes to fly above the city for up to six months as part of a pilot program.

Law enforcement experts, however, warn it would be unfair to assume that law enforcement alone will reduce violent crime.

"Let's not assume simply that by putting more officers, this is going to lead to greater closure of cases or will be a deterrent," said Jeffrey Ian Ross, a criminologist at the University of Baltimore.

"It may help families, it may put behind bars some more bad guys, but it doesn't mean it necessarily leads to a decrease in crime and homicides."

Texas man charged with killing pregnant sister

BRITTANY SHAMMAS

The Washington Post

Texas police say a 19-year-old man admitted to strangling his pregnant older sister — and faking her suicide — out of embarrassment for their family.

Eduardo Arevalo is charged with capital murder in the death of his sister Viridiana, 23, who was about a month from her due date. Residents found the body of the soon-to-be mother in a neighborhood alley early Sunday, less than a mile from her family's home in a Dallas suburb called The Colony. Her brother's arrest came soon after.

"The only reason he gave for killing her was that she was an embarrassment to their family," Colony Sgt. Aaron Woodard said during a news conference. "And he stated that it would be better off that she wasn't here."

Viridiana had been excited about having a baby girl, her brother Diego Arevalo told local station KTVT-TV, noting that she "always wanted a little sister."



THE COLONY POLICE DEPARTMENT/AP

Eduardo Arevalo has been charged with capital murder in connection with the strangling death of his pregnant sister.

She disappeared from home on Dec. 16, with a family member claiming to police that she had "made some statements about

harming herself because of some personal issues."

She had reportedly struggled with mental health problems, and relatives found a suicide note.

Police, however, were skeptical. Evidence from cameras in the area where the body was found helped lead them to Eduardo Arevalo. They say he admitted the crime. "I murdered her ... I murdered her," he told detectives, according to a probable cause affidavit.

He claimed he needed to "protect his family and the unborn child from his mother," blaming the "ongoing conflict" his sister's mental health condition caused in the family, the affidavit said.

The brutal killing unfolded on the morning of Dec. 16, after the siblings got into an argument, according to the affidavit. Eduardo went into his room and tried to go to sleep, but thought to himself, "Maybe it's time to murder her," it said.

According to the affidavit, as Viridiana sat on a couch in the living room, Eduardo approached

from behind and put his arm around her neck, squeezing until she stopped breathing. He wrapped her head in duct tape, the affidavit said, "because he was afraid that she might come back to life."

Then, the affidavit said, he drove her body outside the city and into Fannin County, leaving it in a grassy field where he believed it "would not be discovered." And he wrote the supposed suicide note, Woodard said.

Six days later, during the early morning of Dec. 22, he allegedly retrieved his sister's body and drove it back to The Colony. He left her corpse in the alley, police said. On his way home, he stopped at Whataburger to get something to eat.

After Viridiana's body was found, investigators brought Eduardo in for an interview, believing that he might be involved in her death based on the evidence. He confessed while being questioned, police said, and provided details only the killer would know. He

was handcuffed and arrested at the end of the interview.

The family is devastated by the situation, Diego Arevalo told KTVT-TV, adding that "seeing my parents sad and emotional really breaks my heart." He said he didn't believe his brother was the killer, despite the alleged confession.

"I know my brother," he said. "He wouldn't do something like this."

As the family struggles to process the death of one sibling and arrest of the other, Eduardo Arevalo sits in the local jail. His bail is set at \$1,050,000, the Dallas Morning News reported. Police said additional charges could be filed against him.

Woodard told the Morning News that the case had been difficult for investigators.

"It's not what our officers and detectives wanted to be dealing with two days before Christmas," he said.

NATION

Slave cemetery poses questions for country club

More than 40 graves discovered under fairway of Tallahassee, Fla., golf course

By **BOBBY CAINA CALVAN**
Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — The rumors swirled for decades: A dark history long lay buried under the grassy knolls and manicured lawns of a country club in Florida's capital city.

Over the years, neat rows of rectangular depressions along the 7th fairway deepened in the grass, outlining what would be confirmed this month as sunken graves of the slaves who lived and died on a plantation that once sprawled with cotton near the Florida Capitol.

The discovery of 40 graves — with perhaps dozens more yet to be found — has spawned discussion about how to honor those who lie in rest at the golf course. And it has brought renewed attention to the many thousands of unmarked and forgotten slave cemeteries across the Deep South that forever could be lost to development or indifference.

"When I stand here on a cemetery for slaves, it makes me thoughtful and pensive," said Delaire Hollinger, the former president of the Tallahassee branch of the NAACP. His ancestors worked the fields of Leon County as slaves.

"They deserve much better than this," said Hollinger, 26, who is leading a push to memorialize the rest of the graves. "And they deserved much better than what occurred in that era."

Wooden markers that had identified the graves have long since

decayed. For years, golfers have unknowingly trod through the cemetery.

Leon County was the center of Florida's plantation economy during the antebellum days and had the state's highest concentration of slaves. Just before the Civil War, three of every four county inhabitants were human chattel owned by elite white families.

The Houstons of Tallahassee was one such family. From the early 1800s through the Civil War, the family operated a 500-acre plantation. In modern times it has been parceled out to developers who transformed fields into an expanse of strip malls and residential neighborhoods.

A huge swath of the property became the Capital City Country Club, now an 18-hole golf course in one of Tallahassee's most sought-after communities.

"It's fair to say that the golf course is one of the reasons why this burial ground has been preserved as well as it has for so long," said Jay Revelle, the country club's resident historian.

"A hundred years ago when the golf course was constructed, there was certainly no technology to decipher what was or wasn't here," he said during a recent visit to the country club.

There had long been talk among some Tallahassee old-timers about the long-gone plantation and its cemetery.

The stories piqued Hollinger's curiosity. He contacted city officials for help, who in turn reached



BOBBY CAINA CALVAN/AP

Delaire Hollinger visits the Capital City Country Club in Tallahassee, Fla., on Dec. 17. The discovery this month of graves at the golf course has spawned discussion about how to dignify those who lie there.

They deserve much better than this. And they deserved much better than what occurred in that era.

Delaire Hollinger
former president of the Tallahassee, Fla., branch of the NAACP

out to experts.

That's when Jeffrey Shanks, a National Park Service archaeologist, took up the cause.

Earlier this month, after weeks

of scanning 7,000 square meters of the golf course using ground-penetrating radar and two cadaver-sniffing dogs, Shanks issued his preliminary conclusion: The subsurface anomalies at the country club are indeed graves.

Shanks called the discovery a significant historical find because so many slave cemeteries are unaccounted for.

A Florida state task force two decades ago estimated that there could be as many as 1,500 unmarked and abandoned slave or black cemeteries across the state.

In Leon County, there are only a handful of known slave burial

sites — despite the scores of plantations that once existed in the area. Each would have had a cemetery for its enslaved.

"It's safe to say that there are thousands upon thousands of these graves in Leon County," said Jonathan Lammer, a historian who drafted a report on the Houston property. "And hundreds and hundreds of thousands, if not millions, across the Southeast that remain unknown today."

At the Capital City Country Club, there are no plans to exhumate or disturb any of the remains. How the site will be memorialized is still up for discussion.

Disney's 'Song of the South': The Jim Crow-era film that won't die

By **JAY REEVES**
Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Racially segregated movie theaters and whites-only water fountains disappeared decades ago after court rulings struck down the legal framework of Jim Crow America, but another element of the era just won't die: Walt Disney's 1946 movie "Song of the South."

With racist stereotypes and Old South tropes, the film isn't available to the millions of subscribers of the company's new Disney Plus streaming service, and it hasn't been released in theaters in decades. Yet the movie, still beloved by many, lives on.

"Song of the South" is easily viewed on the internet either in whole or in pieces, and numerous websites offer versions of the movie or memorabilia for sale. Animated characters and music from the movie are even featured in a ride at Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., minus the racist context.

The movie — a mix of live action, cartoons and music featuring an old black plantation laborer named Uncle Remus who enchants a white city boy with fables of talking animals — is like a zombie that keeps popping up seven decades after it was released. While many find it racist and offensive, others see it as endearing.



Brer Rabbit, a character from the movie 'Song of the South,' is on a sign near the Briar Patch gift shop at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

"Yay! Have been looking for a good copy for years, kids really enjoyed it! Thank you," a reviewer wrote recently on the online marketplace Etsy, where multiple versions of the movie are for sale.

Groups including the NAACP protested the film's initial release, and arts professor Sheril Antonio said the continuing problem with "Song of the South" is that some just don't see anything wrong with it.

"Most of the harm of all of this is not acknowledging our shared history, all the good and bad of it. The harm comes from ignoring it and not talking about it truth-

fully and fully," Antonio, a senior associate dean of arts at New York University, said in an interview conducted by email.

Released the year after World War II ended, "Song of the South" premiered in Atlanta, where the Civil War epic "Gone With the Wind" made its debut a few years earlier. Set in post-Civil War Georgia, the Disney film featured stories that white newspaper writer Joel Chandler Harris heard from one-time slaves and published starting in 1876, according to The Wren's Nest, Harris' one-time home and now a museum in Atlanta.

Actor James Baskett was presented an honorary Academy Award for his portrayal of Uncle Remus, but the movie was perhaps best known for its Oscar-winning song "Zip-A-Dee-Do-Doo-Dah." The tune is part of the soundtrack at Disney World's Splash Mountain ride, which also features Remus characters including Br'er Rabbit.

Yet while Disney Plus added a disclaimer to "Peter Pan," "Dumbo" and other vintage movies because they depict racist stereotypes, the company kept "Song of the South" locked away in its vault.

Disney last screened the movie in 1986, its 40th anniversary, despite years of complaints that it showed blacks as subservient to whites, and it never released "Song of the South" for home video sales in the United States. Foreign versions of the movie are

among the editions available for sale on the internet.

Jason Sperb, who wrote a book about the movie and its legacy, said "Song of the South" received a lukewarm reception when it first opened but was a "huge hit" financially when it was released in the 1970s and '80s.

"Disney had become more of a cultural institution by then. All the old films, whether successful or not upon its original release, were now being rebranded as 'classics,'" said Sperb, author of "Disney's Most Notorious Film: Race, Convergence, and the Hidden Histories of Song of the South."

The continuing fascination that some have with the movie is likely more about the fact that Disney made it than its actual contents, he said in an email interview.

"I think if anyone else in Hollywood had made that movie it would have been almost completely forgotten about by today except for only the most hardcore animation history buffs who would note in passing its role in helping to shape the possibilities of hybrid animation," said Sperb.

Christian Willis, who runs a "Song of the South" website, said he was enamored with the movie as a child. He hopes the movie is released to the public again.

"I think burying history is the wrong approach," he said.

NATION

Army vet quits job to fix cars free of charge

By CATHY FREE

Special To The Washington Post

Tamesha Rayes climbed behind the wheel of her 2011 Hyundai to drive her son to school one morning last spring, but her car wouldn't start.

A troubleshooter from her auto insurance company came out and told her she probably needed a new starter or alternator, which are both expensive to acquire and install. Her heart sank.

The single mom and Air Force National Guard veteran from Moore, Okla., wasn't working because she had returned to college to pursue her degree and become a middle school English teacher.

"I didn't have the money for an expensive car repair," said Rayes, 39, who used her car to drive her son to school and herself to her college classes.

Then a friend told Rayes about Hard Luck Automotive Services, a nonprofit car repair service started by Adam Ely and his wife, Toni Ely, in the Oklahoma City area.

After Rayes called Adam Ely, he drove to her house the next morning with his toolbox, tinkered around under the hood for a bit and confirmed the car needed a new starter.

"We'll find you a good deal on a new one," Rayes said he told her.

And then he told her this: He'd do the labor for no charge. The whole thing cost her \$200.

"I could hardly believe it," said Rayes.

When Ely then took her and her 9-year-old son, Tysen, out for ice cream, a new friendship was sealed.

"I can't say enough about what he did — he's a blessing," Rayes said. "Without him, I don't know what I would have done."

It's something that Adam Ely hears often since deciding to repair cars for no charge.

It started in the fall of 2017 when he noticed that a car driven by his daughter's friend was running poorly.

"I said, 'Hey, let's get your car fixed,' and she told me she'd like to, but it would cost \$400 that I didn't have," recalled Ely, 40. "I told her I'd fix it for free and it ended up costing her \$65 (for parts) instead of \$400."

That weekend, said Ely, he did some soul-searching and told his wife he'd like to help others whose cars were just a few miles away from a breakdown. She thought it was a great idea and wanted to help.

After putting a notice on Face-

book, they came up with the idea for Hard Luck Automotive. Toni Ely would focus on public relations and fundraising through T-shirt sales to pay for tools, gasoline and oil while her husband would handle the repairs.

A former Army paratrooper and helicopter mechanic, Adam Ely developed asthma, hearing loss and post-traumatic stress syndrome in Afghanistan, where he served for four years. Since 2007, he has received federal financial assistance, which supplemented the paychecks he earned as a civilian aircraft mechanic once he returned home.

'I can't say enough about what he did — he's a blessing. Without him, I don't know what I would have done.'

Tamesha

Rayes

Air Force

National Guard

veteran

"When I first started fixing cars for free, it was in my spare time when I wasn't working on aircraft," he said. "But it wasn't long before my days off were busier than my days on the job. It was obvious to me that people were in need of some help."

The Elys have always owned reliable cars, and they live in a cozy three-bedroom, two-bath log cabin on several acres, he said.

"We feel fortunate," Ely said. "Most families are just one car repair bill from catastrophe. If the engine or transmission blows up in your car, you're looking at a \$4,000 to \$5,000 repair."

"What we've done is take away the middleman. Bring me your car and let's see if we can fix it for cheap. I'll look into every option without charging you a dime."

After word got out about Hard Luck, a Napa Auto Parts store near the Elys' home in Choctaw offered discounts on parts to Hard Luck clients, said Toni Ely, 35.

Then, last June Mike Rowe, of



Photos by Adam Ely

Army veteran Adam Ely and his wife, Toni, shown in Choctaw, Okla., last year, run a nonprofit car repair service called Hard Luck Automotive Services.



Ely gets help from Tysen Rayes last spring while repairing Tysen's mother's car.

"Returning the Favor," featured Adam Ely on his Facebook page and paid to rent an auto garage for a year so that Ely wouldn't have to make house calls in his truck.

"People have been incredible — we've had tools donated and a welder offered to help as needed," said Ely, who now devotes 40 hours every week to diagnosing problems and repairing everything from alternators to valve trains for about 25 to 30 clients a week.

Several local teens who hope to become mechanics frequently stop by after high school to get some hands-on training, he said.

"I give them a safe environment with quality tools and somebody to show them the way. I'm thrilled that they want to be car mechanics — we're going to need them," he said.

One junior mechanic, in particular, has been inspired by the good he's witnessed at Hard Luck Automotive: Tamesha Rayes' son, Tysen.

On the day Rayes had her car

repaired, Ely allowed Tysen to be his assistant.

"Tysen was asking him all these questions, and Adam patiently took the time to explain everything and had my son hand him the tools he needed," recalled Rayes. "Tysen now tells me almost every day, 'I want to fix cars like Mr. Adam.'"

That's the ultimate compliment to Ely.

"That was soul food to me," he said. "This is the greatest paycheck I've never earned."

NATION

The secret life of seashells

A biologist yearns to discover the secrets of Watts Towers' shells

By DEBORAH NETBERN
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Thirteen miles from the coast, marine biologist Bruno Pernet was himself surrounded by concrete, asphalt and an assortment of roughly 10,000 seashells.

There were the iridescent shells of black abalone, the chalky shells of California Venus clams and the sun-bleached shells of Pismo clams.

No such specimens had seen the ocean for decades, and some had been on dry land for nearly a century. All of them adorn the Watts Towers, the folk-art monument that rises like a do-it-yourself cathedral above a neighborhood of modest one-story homes in South Los Angeles.

Pernet spends most of his professional time studying the larval stages of worms and snails that inhabit the Southern California coast. But over the past 10 years, he has channelled some of his scientific expertise into this national historic landmark in pursuit of an unlikely obsession.

His goal is to identify the species and provenance of all the shells on the 17 structures that make up the iconic sculpture. He calls it the Watts Towers Bivalve Inventory Project.

It is an audacious and time-consuming undertaking, but he believes it is scientifically worthwhile.

Though the shells were intended as decorative elements, collectively they create a physical record of the clams, snails, mussels, and other mollusks that inhabited the local shoreline over a 30-year period between the 1920s and 1950s, when the towers were being built.

"If this were a museum collection, all the shells would have labels," Pernet said. "Here, the labels were missing."

Pernet's friend and colleague, Christine Whitcraft, said the unusual quest is not as crazy as it might sound.

"Creativity and science are usually juxtaposed to each other," she said, "but I think good science is done with creative thinking."

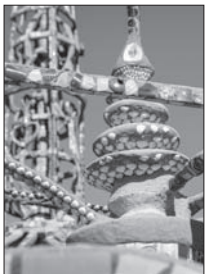
The Watts Towers were built by Sabato Rodia, an Italian immigrant who worked odd jobs and had no training in art, sculpture or architecture. He purchased a triangle-shaped property on East 107th Street in 1921 and began building the towers that year. It took him more than three decades to complete the project, working in his spare time.

Rodia created his sculpture out of structural steel, chicken wire and mud. He covered the towers as if they were monkey bars,



PHOTOS BY ALLEN J. SCHAREN/LOS ANGELES TIMES

Dr. Bruno Pernet, Invertebrate Biology professor at Cal State University Long Beach, studies the shells on the Watts Towers to learn what they can teach us about marine life in the area, especially with respect to invasive species at the Watts Towers on Nov. 14, 2018.



A view of shells embedded in the Watts Towers by Sabato 'Simon' Rodia over a period of 33 years from 1921 to 1954.

and decorated them with recycled materials, including glass bottles, broken tiles and shards of mirrors.

"The result is a stunning tour through one man's boundless creativity.

"When you walk inside, it's a very spiritual feeling," said Rosie Lee Hooks, executive director of the Watts Towers Arts Center Campus. "I've been here 20 years and I'm still finding surprises. It's just amazing that one person can do all that by themselves."

In 1954, Rodia declared his artwork finished, abruptly deeded the property to a neighbor, and moved to Northern California to be closer to family.

He died 10 years later.

Rodia, who stood less than 5 feet tall, never clearly articulated what drove him to create his magnum opus, which reaches a height of 99 1/2 feet. He told one interviewer: "I wanted to do something. I wanted to do something big."



Pernet, Invertebrate Biology professor at Cal State University Long Beach, studies the shells at the Watts Towers on Nov. 14, 2018.

To another, he said, "You gotta do something they never got 'em in the world."

There are no drawing board designs, no recipes for the cement mix he used. When discussing his work on the towers, he had a tendency to change his story depending on his audience and his mood.

"There's a lot of anecdotal information and history, but it's hard to know what to believe," said Mark Gilbert of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, who is currently managing a three-year restoration of the towers.

Pernet first visited Watts Towers in the spring of 2009. He was new to the city and a friend and fellow biologist had offered to show him around.

"I don't really remember what else we did," Pernet said. "Watts Towers sticks out in my mind because I spent such a long time thinking about it afterwards."

He was transfixed by the shells from the moment he stepped in-

side the sculpture's wavy walls. Having just completed a survey of clams in Alamitos Bay, he was primed to notice that the shells were frequently grouped by size, but not necessarily by species.

Pernet wanted to investigate further, but it would be three years before the California State University, Long Beach professor found the time.

"Identifying all the shells on a giant work of art is interesting, but it's not going to get you tenure," he said.

In 2012 he took a sabbatical to work at the University of Hawaii's Marine Lab in Honolulu, where he learned new techniques to study invertebrate embryos. He returned to the mainland a few weeks before he was due back on the Long Beach campus.

At last, he could turn his attention to his passion project.

He asked the Watts Towers conservation team for permission to wander freely among the towers weekdays between 9 a.m.

and 5 p.m. (Generally, the public may access the site only on a free guided tour.)

Then he sent a note to Paul Valentich-Scott, a curator at the Santa Barbara Museum of History and author of two comprehensive books on the bivalves of the western United States.

"I definitely need a clam expert to help me solidify my identifications, and you are the obvious person, for sure!" Pernet wrote.

Valentich-Scott was on board. "It was way out of left field, but I love new challenges," he said. "My feeling was, 'Why not?'"

Pernet began identifying shells in the various regions of the towers. When he was stumped, he sent photos to Valentich-Scott.

To organize his research, Pernet used a schematic map that broke Rodia's sculpture into nearly 100 discrete sections. He tackled a few sections a day, documenting all the species of shells he observed.

In some ways, it was similar to his more traditional fieldwork - identifying species in the coastal mudflats of Southern California, gauging their abundance, and keeping detailed notes of where each specimen was found. But cataloging creatures in a marine ecosystem is more straightforward than taking an inventory of Rodia's creation, Pernet said.

On a mud flat, he can create a simple square grid, label the sections and record the animal species found in each one. The towers, on the other hand, are rambling and unwieldy. Built free-form from Rodia's imagination, they don't lend themselves to easy categorizations or boundaries.

Pernet was able to identify many of the most common shells by sight, taking into consideration the size and shape of the shell, and what biologists call shell sculpture.

"There are all kinds of raised parts of a shell - some that run parallel to the edge, others that are perpendicular," he said. "We can use all of those things to identify it."

What they couldn't use was the interior of the shells, which were stuck in the cement.

"The outside only gives you part of the story," Valentich-Scott said. "There are a lot of structures inside a shell that help a ton with identification."

For example, there may be teeth along the top interior edge of a shell that hint at how the animal once attached itself. There may also be indications of the shape of the muscles it used to keep the shell closed.

Results of Pernet's project appeared this month in the Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies. The research paper also includes a link to a downloadable pictorial guide to the shells of the Watts Towers.

While the publication is nice, he said the real inspiration for the work was to satisfy his curiosity.

"It just seemed like a cool question to answer," he said.

NATION



J. PAT CARTER/AP

Above: Marvín Hernández, right, and Kelly Vera sit in the shade of a palm tree in Key Biscayne, Fla., in July 2015. Right: Brian Bahder, assistant professor of entomology at the University of Florida, points last month to a cabbage palm tree that died from a lethal bronzing disease in Davie, Fla.



WILFREDO LEE/AP

Hit by lethal bronzing disease

Florida's iconic palm trees threatened by invasive malady spread by treehoppers

By TERRY SPENCER
Associated Press

DAVIE, Fla. Florida's iconic palm trees are under attack from a fatal disease that turns them to dried crisps in months, with no chance for recovery once they become ill.

Spread by a rice-sized, plant-hopping insect, lethal bronzing has gone from a small infestation on Florida's Gulf Coast to a nearly statewide problem in just over a decade. Tens of thousands of palm trees have died from the bacterial disease, and the pace of its spread is increasing, adding to environmental woes of a state already struggling to save its other arboreal icon, citrus trees, from two other diseases.

Florida's official state tree — the tall, broad-leaved sabal palm — is especially susceptible, and Florida nurseries, businesses and homeowners are taking a financial hit as they scrap infected palms. Some preventive measures can be taken, but once infected, uprooting the tree is the only practical solution.

"Getting this disease under control is essential because it has the potential to drastically modify our landscape," said Brian Bahder, an entomologist who studies insect-borne plant diseases and is a leader in the state's battle against lethal bronzing.

If nothing is done, Bahder said, "I don't think all the palm trees will die, but the issue we will get will be a lot worse before it gets better."

Lethal bronzing, which experts say likely originated in Mexico, also is found in parts of Texas and throughout the Caribbean. Some worry it will migrate to California and Arizona, infecting date palms and damaging that fruit crop. The disease has already heavily damaged Jamaica's

coconut plantations, and Brazil is taking preventive measures to avoid invasion.

Coincidentally — but conveniently — lethal bronzing is attacking palms right outside Bahder's office at the University of Florida's agriculture research station near Fort Lauderdale. Some are dying, some are dead. This gives him a lab to test ideas and make presentations, so he is not removing infected trees as recommended.

"To understand the disease, I need to watch it spread and see what it is doing," said Bahder, an assistant professor with the university.

Lethal bronzing's first Florida appearance came near Tampa in 2006, but it's now found from the Keys in the south to Jacksonville in the north. The disease is transmitted solely by the haplaxius crudus, a tiny winged insect sometimes called the American palm cixiid or, generically, a tree-hopper. These specific treehoppers (there are other kinds) inject the bacteria through their saliva when feasting on the sap from a palm's leaves. Any palm cixiid that later feeds from the tree will pick up the infection and pass the bacteria to more palms.

Once inside a tree, the bacteria migrate to its base, multiplying until they clog the circulatory system — much like human

arteries getting blocked by fat and cholesterol. The blockage makes it impossible for the tree's cells to get sufficient nutrients and sugars, starving them. As an infected tree dies, its fronds and central spear leaf transform from green to a tell-tale shade of bronze as it succumbs in about six months. The disease doesn't infect humans or animals.

Genetic testing shows lethal bronzing likely originated in Mexico's Yucatan region — Bahder's hypothesis is that 2005's Hurricane Wilma, which tracked from the Yucatan to Florida, or a storm with a similar path carried infected treehoppers across the gulf to Tampa. Those insects infected area palms, which infected native treehoppers. The disease spread when winds blew infected bugs to new territories or they hitched rides on vehicles. Bahder said the palm cixiid is particularly attracted to white cars.

To check the spread, the state agriculture department regularly inspects palm nurseries and certifies those found free of the disease. If infected trees are discovered, they're destroyed and the nursery's remaining trees are quarantined for at least six weeks. Calls to about a dozen palm tree farms around the state weren't returned — Bahder said it is a problem

owners don't like to discuss publicly, fearing it will hurt business.

Eric Muecke, Tampa's urban forestry manager, said the city has had success containing the disease by keeping its palms healthy and surrounding it with more susceptible palm varieties with trees that don't attract the bacteria-spreading bugs.

"It's not like it marches through a tree population — you don't see one dead tree after another," Muecke said. "It hops around; it's pretty sporadic."

Brent Gaffney, a Gainesville landscaper, said Bahder's research is the state's best hope for containing the disease, but only if he gets enough funding. Studies are underway on whether massive doses of antibiotics can save trees in the infection's early stages.

After infected trees are removed, nearby palms need preventive antibiotic injections to halt the spread. Each injection costs \$50 and loses effectiveness after three months; that makes injections before the disease is present too costly for most homeowners, businesses and municipal governments, Bahder said. Only high-end resorts that use mature palms to enhance ambience might consider injecting trees without a nearby infection, he said.

Lethal bronzing is sometimes called "Texas Phoenix palm decline" because it appeared in that state in the late 1970s, killing trees in the Rio Grande Valley around Brownsville. That state's agriculture department said outbreaks today are infrequent and isolated. But Bahder said global warming is widening the threat.

"With increased human movement around the region and, especially, stronger weather patterns in regards to climate change, there are more possible routes for invasive insects," Bahder said.



WILFREDO LEE/AP

This plant-hopper insect, viewed through a microscope at a lab in Davie, Fla., is thought to transmit the lethal bronzing disease.

WORLD

Typhoon kills at least 20 at Christmas in Philippines



A resident checks his home, which was damaged by Typhoon Phanfone, in Omoc city, central Philippines, on Thursday.

batter the Philippines each year. The Southeast Asian nation is also located in the Pacific "Ring of Fire," where earthquakes and volcanic eruptions often occur, making the country of more than 100 million people one of the world's most disaster prone. Phanfone, a Laotian word for

By **JIM GOMEZ**
Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — A strong typhoon that barreled through the central Philippines left at least 20 people dead and forced thousands to flee their homes, devastating Christmas celebrations in the predominantly Catholic country.

Typhoon Phanfone stranded many people in sea ports and airports at the peak of holiday travel, set off landslides, flooded low-lying villages, destroyed houses, downed trees and electrical poles and knocked out power in entire provinces. One disaster response officer described the battered coastal town of Batad in Iloilo province as a "ghost town" on Christmas Day.

"You can't see anybody because there was a total blackout; you can't hear anything. The town looked like a ghost town,"

Cindy Ferrer, of the regional Office of the Civil Defense, said by phone.

The storm weakened slightly Thursday as it blew into the South China Sea with sustained winds of 74 miles per hour and gusts of 93 mph after lashing island after island with fierce winds and pounding rain on Christmas Day, the weather agency said.

Most of the 20 deaths reported by national police and local officials were due to drowning, falling trees and accidental electrocution. A father, his three children and another relative were among those missing in hard-hit Iloilo province after a swollen river inundated their shanty, officials said.

The typhoon slammed into Eastern Samar province on Christmas Eve and then plowed across the archipelago's central region on Christmas, slamming

into seven coastal towns and island provinces without losing power, government forecasters said.

Provincial officials, army troops, police and volunteers spent Christmas away from home to tend to thousands of displaced residents in town gymnasiums and schools turned into emergency shelters. Many more people spent Christmas Eve, traditionally a time for family reunions, in bus terminals.

More than 25,000 people were stranded in sea ports across the central region and outlying provinces after the coast guard prohibited ferries and cargo ships from venturing into dangerously choppy waters.

Dozens of international and domestic flights to and from the region were canceled, including to popular beach and surfing resorts.

About 20 typhoons and storms

Australia bracing for heat wave amid fires

Associated Press

PERTH, Australia — Firefighters battling wildfires in Australia's most populous state attempted to make headway Thursday amid favorable conditions before an "extreme heatwave" hits embattled areas on the weekend.

Thousands of firefighters in New South Wales took advantage of cooler weather and continued to strengthen containment lines. More than 70 fires were still burning across the state with areas in the south coast currently at the "watch and act" level issued by fire services.

About 12.35 million acres of land have burned nationwide over the past few months, with nine people killed and more than 950 homes destroyed. New South Wales has received the brunt of the damage, with around 850 homes razed in the state.

Authorities are bracing for conditions to deteriorate as high temperatures return. Sydney is forecast to hit 88 degrees on Sunday before reaching 95 degrees on Tuesday. The city's western suburbs could reach 106 on Sunday.

Bureau of Meteorology forecaster Rose Barr said a heatwave was currently building in southern parts of New South Wales before worsening on the weekend.

"Some areas are forecast to reach extreme heatwave conditions," she said.

Indonesia and Thailand mark anniversary of '04 tsunami

By **YAYAN ZAMZAMI and NINIEK KARMINI**
Associated Press

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia — Thousands of people knelt in prayer in Indonesia's Aceh province at ceremonies Thursday marking the 15th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami, one of modern history's worst natural disasters.

The massive Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami was triggered by a magnitude 9.1 earthquake off Sumatra island. The giant wall of water killed about 230,000 people in a dozen countries as far away as East Africa, Indonesia's Aceh province, which was closest to the earthquake, was hit first and hardest.

More than 170,000 people died in Indonesia alone, about three-quarters of the overall death toll.

"No words can describe our feelings when we tearfully saw thousands of corpses lying on this ground 15 years ago," acting Aceh Gov. Nova Iriansyah said at a ceremony in Sigli, a town in Pidie district. "And now, we can see how people in Aceh were able to overcome suffering and rise again, thanks to assistance from all Indonesians and from people all over the world."

Weeping survivors and others attended religious services and memorial ceremonies. Relatives of the dead and religious and community leaders presented flowers at mass graves of victims in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh. Shops and offices were closed, boats were not allowed to sail and flags were being flown at half staff throughout Aceh on Thursday and Friday.

Disaster-prone Indonesia, a vast archipelago of more than 17,000 islands that is home to 250 million people, lies along the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in



More than a week after her village of Ban Nam Khem was hit by a tsunami in Khao Lak in southern Thailand on Dec. 26, 2004, Nataya Pumsri tries to sort out what to do with the boat that landed on and destroyed her home.



NURNISANAN/AP

A woman pours water at a stone marking the mass grave for victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami on the 15th anniversary of the disaster in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, on Thursday.

the Pacific Basin.

Thursday's commemoration came four days after the anniversary of last year's Sunda

Strait tsunami, which followed the eruption and partial collapse of the Anak Krakatau volcano. That tsunami struck coastal regions of Banten on Indonesia's main island of Java and parts of southern Sumatra island, leaving more than 400 people dead and 14,000 injured.

In Thailand, hundreds of people attended a tsunami memorial ceremony at Ban Nam Khem, a small fishing village that lost about half of its population of 5,000 when the waves rolled in.

More than 8,000 people in Thailand died or went missing in the disaster, and the bodies of almost 400 victims remain unidentified and unclaimed.

Western visitors and local residents attended the service at the Ban Nam Khem Tsunami Memorial Park in Phang Nga province, where they viewed a photo display of victims. A Thai woman handed over an offering of food for Buddhist monks presiding over the proceedings.

WORLD

Notre Dame may be too fragile to save after blaze

By JEFFREY SCHAEFFER
AND ANGELA CHARLTON
Associated Press

PARIS — The rector of Notre Dame Cathedral says the Paris landmark is still so fragile that there's a "50% chance" the structure might not be saved because scaffolding installed before this year's fire is threatening the vaults of the Gothic monument.

Monsignor Patrick Chauvet said restoration work isn't likely to begin until 2021 — and described his "heartache" that Notre Dame couldn't hold Christmas services this year, for the first time since the French Revolution.

"Today it is not out of danger," he said. "It will be out of danger when we take out the remaining scaffolding."

"Today we can say that there is maybe a 50% chance that it will be saved. There is also 50%

chance of scaffolding falling onto the three vaults, so as you can see the building is still very fragile," he said.

The 12th-century cathedral was under renovation at the time of the accidental April fire, which destroyed its roof and collapsed its spire. With no more roof to keep the massive stone structure stable, the cathedral's surviving vaults are crucial to keep it standing, but they are vulnerable.

Some 50,000 tubes of scaffolding crisscrossed the back of the edifice at the time of the fire, and some were damaged. Removing them without causing further problems is one of the toughest parts of the cleanup effort.

"We need to remove completely the scaffolding in order to make the building safe, so in 2021 we will probably start the restoration of the cathedral," Chauvet said. "Once the scaffolding is removed



FRANCOIS MORI/AP

A family takes a photo in front of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on Tuesday.

we need to assess the state of the cathedral, the quantity of stones to be removed and replaced."

Chauvet estimated it would take another three years after that to make it safe enough for people to reenter the cathedral, but that the full restoration will take longer. President Emmanuel Macron has said he wants it rebuilt by 2024 when Paris hosts the Olympics, but experts have questioned whether that time frame is realistic.

Another reason it's still too dangerous to host religious services inside Notre Dame is that the fire released tons of toxic lead dust, and authorities are working to clean it up and assess related health risks.

Lawmaker aims to oust Israeli PM in Likud vote

By TIA GOLDENBERG
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel's governing Likud party was holding a primary vote on Thursday in the first serious internal challenge to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his more than a decade in power.

Veteran politician Gideon Saar hopes to unseat Netanyahu, arguing that he will be better placed to form a government in national elections in March after Netanyahu failed to do so in two repeat elections this year.

Despite the shadow of corruption indictments hanging over him, Netanyahu remains popular among Likud members and the fiercely loyal party — which has had only four leaders since its inception in the 1970s — has stood firmly behind the long-serving leader. He is expected to defeat Saar handily, and a win could strengthen his hand going into the next national vote.

"For years I have been working for you for the sake of our beloved country. Now I am asking for your support," Netanyahu wrote on Facebook. "A big victory for me in the primaries will ensure a huge victory in the Knesset elections."

Saar, who has garnered support from a handful of Likud backbenchers, had seen a bump in support in the lead-up to the vote and he could benefit from stormy weather that may keep turnout low. If he wins, he would become Likud's candidate for prime minister in the March polls.

"We can win today, to set forth on a new path that will allow us to form a strong and stable government, that will allow us to unite the people of Israel which is probably the most important thing right now," Saar told reporters.

Netanyahu has portrayed Saar as inexperienced while depicting himself as a security buff and master of international diplomacy. In what was seen as an embarrassment at a critical moment a day before the primary, Netanyahu was rushed off stage after a rocket was fired from Gaza, setting off an air raid siren, at a campaign rally in the southern city of Ashkelon on Wednesday.

A similar incident happened in September when Netanyahu was in the nearby city of Ashdod campaigning for the second general Israeli election of the year.

The polls close at 11 p.m. and results are expected early Friday.

Erdogan says parliament to support Libya deployment

Bloomberg

Turkey's government will ask parliament in early January to authorize the deployment of troops to Libya after the internationally recognized administration in Tripoli requested help, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

The legislative motion will be the government's "first act" after parliament returns from its recess on Jan. 7, Erdogan said Thursday in Ankara.

"We'll go where we're invited, and won't go where we aren't," he said, predicting the motion will be passed within two days. "Currently, as there's an invitation, we'll accept."

Turkey has said the troops would be sent to train fighters loyal to Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Al-Sarraj, and are meant as a deterrent and not as an active fighting force.

Libyan Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha told reporters in Tunisia on Thursday that the Tripoli-based government had the right to call on Turkey's assistance if the eastern commander attacking the capital, Khalifa Haftar, continues to receive foreign help.

Erdogan had signaled on Wednesday that the dispatch of Turkish troops to the North African nation was only a matter of time.

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NATION

Brewer aims for quality, depth

Company avoids the temptation to go big after initial success

By B.A. MORELLI

The (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) Gazette

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Fresh off the RAGBRAI bicycle ride, Big Grove Brewery began fielding messages from beer distributors in Oregon, Colorado, Washington and elsewhere who believed their customers would embrace the product.

Thousands of people from around Iowa and the country had just been exposed for the first time to a handful of Big Grove's brews during RAGBRAI. Big Grove signed a five-year agreement as the main beer sponsor of the statewide bicycle ride at the end of each July, meaning its beers were in virtually every official beer garden and many local bars and gas stations along the route.

But for now, Big Grove is saying no to anywhere not in Iowa.

"We are taking the philosophy of going deeper rather than wider," said Matt Swift, co-founder of Big Grove. "As far as our distribution goes, we want to make sure Iowa is completely saturated with beer before we take a leap to go to another state."

Earlier this year, Big Grove — which routinely packs its Solon and Iowa City locations — attempted to raise its profile and grow its brand by aligning with one of the state's signature tourism draws, according to the Cedar Rapids Gazette.

This comes at a key time when competition is increasing.

Microbreweries are opening in even the smallest of Iowa cities. Iowa has 114 native breweries and brew pubs, or four breweries per 100,000 people aged 21 and older, according to the Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division and the Brewers Association.

Native gallons of beers sold annually has climbed each of the past five years, and 42% over the five years to 683,858 gallons, according to the Alcoholic Beverages Division.

While overall sales in the \$27.6 billion craft beer industry are up about 7% nationally, the Brewers Association also reports signs of saturation.

The number of openings of brew pubs and microbreweries is declining, while the number of closures is increasing. However, openings still vastly outnumber closures — 1,046 openings and 213 closures, according to the association.

Big Grove Brewery, which opened in Solon in 2013 and added the significantly larger Iowa City location in 2017, was looking to set itself apart when it became the first Iowa brewery to sponsor RAGBRAI. Until this year the ride had turned to mass producers including Michelob Ultra and Goose Island, which is owned by Anheuser-Busch InBev.

"Having said, 'I know we are the small guys, but this is something that would really align with our brand, and if there's ever an opportunity, let's have a conversation,'" Swift said of early conversations with RAGBRAI Director TJ Juskievicz.

"Two or three weeks later, I got a phone call, and he said, 'Matt, there might be an opportunity. What do you think?' I said 'I'd love to align with an Iowa brand.'"

Biking and craft beer have long drawn similar crowds. Juskievicz said he thought his crowd, which can number well over 10,000 people a day, would appreciate the Iowa connection.

"It is great to work with an Iowa brewery like Big Grove," Juskievicz said. "Our riders really like to drink our local Iowa brews, so it made sense to partner with Big



PHOTOS BY JIM SLOSIAREK, THE (CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA) GAZETTE/PA

Andrew Gomez attaches filling heads to kegs as he fills the barrels with Easy Eddy Hazy India Pale Ale at Big Grove Brewery & Taproom in Iowa City, Iowa.

Grove."

RAGBRAI and Big Grove previously had partnered on events, including the first series of official RAGBRAI training rides around the state. Big Grove helped host a ride called Big Grove in June.

The first step for Big Grove was developing a new limited-release beer — an easy drinker called Tailwind Golden Ale — just for RAGBRAI, using the biking lingo for when a breeze is at your back. The can also served as a collectors' item for some as it featured the RAGBRAI route and logo.

Because they ordered a printed can, they had to take a truckload, or about 6,000 cases, which translates to about 140,000 16-ounce cans, said head brewer Andy Joynt.

Tailwind led the most, but RAGBRAI fans also chugged through cases of Easy Eddy, a Hazy India Pale Ale; Boomtown, a cream ale; and Big Grove IPA, a West Coast-style IPA.

On the front end, the financial investment in both the sponsorship and brewing such a large quantity of beer for markets loyal to light domestic beer and that had little familiarity with Big Grove, raised questions about how it would go over.

Or, more likely, how much beer would they have left over.

RAGBRAI this year toured through southern Iowa communities including Council Bluffs, Atlantic, Winterset, Indianola, Centerville, Fairfield, Burlington and Keokuk. But they believed the credibility of RAGBRAI would help persuade the participants to give them a try, Swift said.

"It was a commitment on our part, but it paid off," said Doug Goetsch, another co-founder.

Until last summer, Big Grove had some exposure outside Iowa City, but it was fairly limited. More than a year ago, they began canning their beers to be sold in stores, such as Hy-Vee — some of which also sell Big Grove apparel — and a number of bars carried their kegs.

Distribution was primarily focused in Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, the Quad Cities area and the Des Moines metro.

"We've never done anything on this scale," Swift said of the sponsorship. "Really, it's about long term. If you play the long game, what are the best brands in Iowa to be associated with."

"You have the Hawkeyes, RAGBRAI, the state fair.

"The cool thing about RAGBRAI is it goes everywhere — side to side. You're



Stacks of empty Big Grove Brewery IPA aluminum cans stand in the warehouse.



Wort bubbles in a brewing kettle as brewer Matt Burkey brews a batch of Arns Race American Strong Pale Ale.

going to hit a lot of places you never been before, and we always felt like Big Grove would translate to any part of Iowa."

Staff set out to determine how to use the sponsorship to maximize their exposure around the state.

They forged new partnerships — Golden Eagle Distributing of Mount Pleasant signed on to supply the southern part of Iowa, and Doll Distributing supplied the western part of the state.

Staff rode along on RAGBRAI in Big Grove jerseys, and others spent time in local bars to personally introduce bartenders and customers to the beers.

The gamble paid off on the ride and appears to be paying off since, as many of the relationships have continued and their market has expanded.

On the ride, Big Grove outdid what several unofficial surveys suggest is Iowa's favorite beer — Busch Light. In the beer tent in Atlantic, Big Grove sold 180 cases, compared with 120 cases of Busch Light, according to Goetsch.

When asked about plans for expansion, Goetsch and Swift are not making commitments. They noted they still have room in their Iowa City location, even as production volumes have grown from 600 barrels in the first year to more than 10,000 barrels this year.

Their focus is brewing quality, developing stories for each beer and marketing the beers.

WEEKEND



PODCASTS/20



BREAKOUTS/22-23



MOVIES/24-25



TELEVISION/27



MUSIC/36-37



GAMES/38-39

The best of 2019

Plus, some trends best left behind going into the new year/21

WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW – PODCASTS

**1. 'To Live and Die in LA,'
Tenderfoot TV & Cadence 13**

What makes this podcast from journalist Neil Strauss so riveting is how organically it all came together. Strauss was asked to help out in the search of a missing woman in L.A. named Adea Shabani because he worked in media and could maybe help call attention to the case. He quickly established a trust with people involved who agreed to speak with him and share information. Some parts of the podcast air in almost real time. He even received tips from listeners that altered the nature of the investigation. The podcast is No. 1 because of Strauss' authenticity. He's devoted to finding out what happened, even when it gets uncomfortable and frankly scary.

**2. '22 Hours: An American
Nightmare,' WTO/PodcastOne**

Journalists Megan Cloberty and Jack Moore do an excellent job at reconstructing the 2015 case of Savvas and Amy Savopoulos, their 10-year-old son and housekeeper who were taken hostage and then killed in their home. Another local station in Washington did their own podcast on the case as it was unfolding, but "22 Hours" didn't air until after a man named Daron Wint was convicted of the murders. "22 Hours" is superior and makes this list because it is carefully, respectfully and responsibly reported about a horrific crime and sets an example for how true crime should be handled. Cloberty and Moore should do more podcasts.

**4. 'Confronting: O.J. Simpson
with Kim Goldman,' GLASS/Wondery**

This podcast is an emotional roller coaster. Listening to Goldman, her father and friends remembering their son and brother Ron, who was killed with Nicole Brown Simpson in 1994, will make you cry. The reading of a letter Kim received from judge Lance Ito in response to a request for an interview will make you gasp, and taped portions of a phone call between O.J. Simpson's attorney and journalist Nancy Glass are incredulous.

**5. 'Gladiator: Aaron Hernandez
& Football Inc.,'
The Boston Globe/Wondery**

This podcast takes a fascinating look at the rise and fall of football star Aaron Hernandez, who was convicted of murder and took his own life in prison. It also brings up issues of head injuries in football and toxic masculinity.

**6. '1619,' The New York Times**

Nikole Hannah-Jones hosts this podcast on the beginning of slavery in America in 1619. It's not only important to listen to this piece of integral black history, but it's beautifully put together.

7. 'Believed,' NPR

This podcast reveals how Olympic gymnast doctor Larry Nassar was able to get away with sexual assault for more than 20 years. It also asks the question of why so often women aren't believed.

**3. 'Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend,'
Team Coco & Earwolf**

You could say that celebrity podcasts are the new celebrity perfume because everybody has one and that number seems to grow by the day. O'Brien's podcast is a standout because he has longer conversations that go beyond bits and talking points. Noteworthy episodes include a deep conversation with Howard Stern and a recent interview with Hillary and Chelsea Clinton. He helps humanize Chelsea in particular as she recalls being a kid in the White House, just trying to get her homework done with a State Dinner happening downstairs.

8. 'The Viall Files,' Nick Viall

If you're a "Bachelor" fan, you know Nick Viall. He's the guy who was rejected on "The Bachelorette" twice before he was given the titular role as ABC's Bachelor (but that resulting relationship didn't work out either). While his podcast does address the show — and a recent episode with former Bachelorette Kaitlyn Bristowe is a must-listen for fans — the podcast has helped Nick to become less of a caricature and more of a cool dude offering a guy's perspective. It's like he's got his own column in Cosmopolitan magazine, but in podcast form.

**9. 'Armchair Expert with
Dax Shepard,' Armchair Umbrella**

Dax Shepard's podcast has been out for more than a year, but the guy gives good chat. Some recent compelling interviews have been with Monica Lewinsky, Kate and Oliver Hudson, and Emilia Clarke. His shows are always entertaining.

**10. 'Office Ladies,' Earwolf**

This podcast from former cast members of "The Office," Jenna Fischer and Angela Kinsey, is a recent release and so fun. They're starting from the beginning and devoting each podcast to an episode of the series. It's very exciting to think they've essentially committed to 201 tapings. Fischer and Kinsey offer commentary and behind-the-scenes detail from the comedy. The real-life best friends also sometimes go on amusing tangents. They've already had Rainn Wilson on as a guest and they've got 194 weeks to get Steve Carell, John Krasinski, Mindy Kaling and BJ Novak. The odds look good.

Top 10 of 2019

BY ALICIA RANCILIO ■ Associated Press



WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW – POP CULTURE

Cancel these 2019 crazes

No need to brag about making pop-up shops, 'OK, Boomer' retort popular in past year

By LEANNE ITALIE
Associated Press

Either loudly sing your own praises or don't in the new year, but let's leave the humblebrag behind, along with a few other oversaturated, cloying or just plain silly cultural quirks that deserve a big goodbye.

Among them are pop-up shops, cancel culture and the ever-present "OK Boomer" retort on social media. With much ado about something, here's our annual Over It list of things that should remain in 2019.

Email receipts

Firstly, huge thanks for your out-of-office responses. But please stop asking for receipts. Learn to live with the suspense like the rest of us as to when we read or do not read your missives, either email, text or otherwise. The same goes for when we most likely do or perchance do not delete said missives at our convenience. Our inbox. Our rules. Keep your curiosity and aggressive email tactics to yourself.

Cancel the cancelers

There's nothing wrong with calling out bad behavior, a bad person or bad practices, especially the kind that are truly threatening and make people feel unsafe. There is something most definitely wrong with the mob mentality that swirls on social media unchecked. The cancel culture is often stoked by sheeplike with no interest in drilling down to truths. Mean for mean's sake is not cool. We say, think before you cancel.

Reviews and surveys

Everybody is looking for feedback of all kinds, all the time. Don't be so needy! Just send the toilet brush. Your survey doesn't just take "a minute." You have all the reviews you need. If we had something to say, we'd say it. We're putting the incessant requests for service and purchase reviews and surveys high on the annoying list alongside the onslaught of robo-calls.

Spousal gushing

It's your anniversary. It's your wife's birthday. We get it. You're married, or you have an otherwise significant other, and you want your social media world to know all about how you actually feel about the big day, the big event, so you post a pic, and your words go something like this: "To my angel spouse, the per-



Pop-ups

There's one for ketchup. There's one for ice cream. There's one for "Friends." There are tons with the sole mission of selling you merch, as opposed to selling you merch while also being mildly entertaining. The Business of Fashion notes that Amazon and other digital disruptors have contributed to traditional retailers closing thousands of stores. The prime but empty real estate is ever for grabs on short-term leases for ever-rotating tenants. Pop-ups are now a "strategy" on both ends, from commercial land barons to the sellers of goods, luxury to goofy. Some aren't mad about it. We're all popped out.

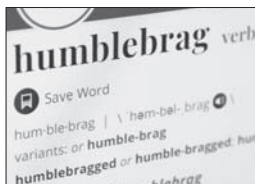


MEL EVANS/AP

A Halloween display of a three-headed dog with lights and smoke at the Spirit Halloween store, in Paramus, N.J. Spirit Halloween had more than 1,150 pop-up shops across the country in October.

Humble-bragathon

For the truly humble, we appreciate you. For the passive-aggressive, not so much. Merriam-Webster sums up the humblebrag nicely: "To make a seemingly modest, self-critical or casual statement or reference that is meant to draw attention to one's admirable or impressive qualities or achievement." Just own yourself. The dictionary titans say the term has been around since 2002. It was later popularized by the comedian, TV producer and writer Harris Wittels, who died in 2015.



JENNY KANE/AP

Actress Maggie Wheeler, who played Janice on the NBC sitcom "Friends," poses Sept. 5 in a replica of the Central Perk set, at the New York City Pop-Up experience.

BROOKE LEFFERTS/AP

Boomer backlash

Once upon a time in Memeland there was an older dude who trashed Millennials and Gen-Zers for Peter Pan syndrome. For that, younger folks have declared 2019 the year of "OK, Boomer," as in Baby Boomer. Not that the youths and their dislike of intransigence, intolerance and tech phobia among their elders is entirely wrong. It's just time to calm down a bit. The phrase "OK, Boomer" first surfaced on Reddit in 2009 and on 4chan in 2015. According to The Boston Globe, TikTok videos with the "OkBoomer" tag have been watched more than 44 million times.

Doubling-wristing

Wearing two timepieces has been around since the 18th-century dandy and his double pocket watches, intended to culturally elevate as opposed to making sure he was really, really on time. Later, Marlon Brando pulled off the two-wrist tango but, you know, he was Brando. Today's celebs who have caught on are Chris Pratt, Johnny Depp and Drake. These days, it's all about the digital add-on, plus a statement piece. Can you see our side eyes?

Influencer fatigue

Is it the end of the line for influencers? Greg Petro, writing for Forbes.com, declared in November: "Consumers, especially younger ones, are losing trust in paid influencers and looking instead to organic grassroots communities where their like-minded peers are sharing content and commentary about brands and products they actually love." Side note, exactly how many followers does one need to score an influencer gig? Asking for a friend.



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WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW – ENTERTAINERS



Megan Thee Stallion

Megan Thee Stallion's schedule has become so frenetic that she can spend days, or even longer, away from home in a different city every night. While the grueling schedule might wear down some, she's unbothered by it, and not because she's as strong as her name suggests.

"I won't complain because I remember I used to be at home wishing I was leaving and going to do shows," she said. "I'm just grateful for everything that happened this year, and the opportunities that a lot of people have given me."

The 24-year-old rapper from Houston burst onto the music scene this year with her album, "Fever," and instantly became a sensation. She racked up singles such as "Big Ole Freak," "Cash (expletive)" with DaBaby, and her first No. 1 on Billboard's Rhythmic Songs chart, "Hot Girl Summer." The song, featuring Nicki Minaj and Ty Dolla Sign, stemmed from a phrase Megan coined that became the hot phrase of the season.

Endorsements also blasted her way, including Coach, Puma and a management deal with the Jay-Z-founded Roc Nation. She also won an MTV Video Music Award, and just this month received the Powerhouse Award at Billboard's Women in Music Awards.

Currently enrolled at Houston's Texas Southern, a historically black college and university, Megan has married overt, unapologetic sex appeal with education, a combination rarely if ever seen in hip-hop.

Megan Thee Stallion also signed on to star in the new season of NBC's "Good Girls," and says she'd like to write her own horror film. But her focus is on her debut album, which she says will go beyond the sexual imagery she's known for.

"My album, the songs that I've been recording for it so far, have been way more soft than my usual music — a little soft in my opinion. It's been a little more vulnerable," she said. "I feel like that's what my fans want to know at this point, so I'm giving y'all a little more insight on why I am the way I am."

—Gary Gerard Hamilton

Breakthrough entertainers

The dictionary defines "breakthrough" as a "sudden advance," but the Associated Press' Breakthrough Entertainers of the Year spent lots of time preparing for their star-making moments.

Megan Thee Stallion spent years rapping while also attending college. "The Peanut Butter Falcon" star Zach Gottsagen dreamed of being an actor since age 3, and has been working toward that goal. And while "The Boys'" Jack Quaid, the son of Meg Ryan and Dennis Quaid, grew up right in Hollywood, he felt pressure to prove he actually had talent and wasn't riding on his parents' coattails.

Megan Thee Stallion, Gottsagen and Quaid join actors Florence Pugh, Kaitlyn Dever, Barbie Ferreira and Jonathan Majors on the AP's third annual list of entertainers who memorably broke through to the mainstream this year. Pugh has been seen throughout the year, from the thriller "Midsommar" to this month's "Little Women." Majors made his mark in the critically acclaimed "The Last Black Man in San Francisco." Ferreira's transition from modeling to acting paid off with her star-making turn in the gritty teen drama "Euphoria." Dever stood out not only for the witty flick "Booksmart" but for her role as a sex crime victim in the searing Netflix drama "Unbelievable."

While 2019 marked their breakout year, expect more to come from these talented performers. As Megan Thee Stallion says: I know I'm not where I want to be at yet, so I'm still trying to grind.

Kaitlyn Dever

Any actor can find it difficult to find a meaty role in Hollywood, whether it be in TV or film, comedy or drama. Actress Kaitlyn Dever shined in both genres and mediums this year.

Dever garnered hordes of fans after playing bright and goofy Amy in the female-driven film "Booksmart," about two tightly wound overachievers intent on one last crazy night before graduation. A few months later she won critical praise for her moving portrayal of a lonely rape victim in the Netflix series "Unbelievable," and garnered a Golden Globe nomination for best performance by an actress in a limited series or motion picture made for television.

Dever has been gratified by the success of both projects.

"It's been sort of crazy. The fact that people love something as much as you do is so, so good. Watching the love grow and grow for 'Booksmart' was something I'll remember forever," she said.

Some might not have even recognized her as the same actress in "Unbelievable," as the roles were so different in subject and tone.

"I love bouncing back and forth between drama and comedy. People used to ask me if I liked drama or comedy, which one I liked better, and I can never answer. I think they're actually very similar. I almost prepare for them the same way," Dever said. "I think you have to start with honesty with both."

Dever, 23, started acting at age 10 in small TV roles and has been steadily rising, with her first recurring role in the series "Justified" in 2011 and several supporting film roles before landing the lead in "Booksmart."

She's set to star in two upcoming anthology series, Hulu's "Monsterland" and FX's "Platform," and is "dying" to do a musical film. Though she's become one of the most in-demand actresses in Hollywood, Dever says her life hasn't changed much. "I don't want it to change."

"I'm the happiest when I am working and I feel so calm and content when I'm on set. It's so fulfilling, and I couldn't imagine doing anything else."

—Brooke Lefferts



AP photos

Zack Gottsagen

For Zack Gottsagen, being named as one of the AP's Breakthrough Entertainers of 2019 is a confirmation of his success.

"It means some people believe in me ... (and) a lot of people love my talent," he said.

Gottsagen's appeal is one of the reasons why "The Peanut Butter Falcon" has become one of the year's most successful independent films and was an unexpected summer hit. The movie, which marks his professional acting debut, follows a wrestling-obsessed fan with Down Syndrome named Zack who leaves his assisted-living facility for an adventure and ends up forging an unlikely friendship with a fisherman, played by Shia LaBeouf, also on the run.

"The Peanut Butter Falcon" was inspired by Gottsagen and written for him by Tyler Nilson and Michael Schwartz after the pair met Gottsagen at an acting camp for people with disabilities.

Gottsagen, 34, was determined to be an actor, and pleaded with Nilson and Schwartz to make his dream come true. He recalls growing up and watching Chris Burke, who also has Down Syndrome, star in the 1980s TV series "Life Goes On."

Watching someone on TV who looked like him encouraged Gottsagen. Burke's role was groundbreaking, and it's still a challenge for actors with disabilities to be cast in Hollywood projects. Gottsagen is now providing that inspiration for others, and has become a bona fide celebrity since the movie's release.

Gottsagen plans to continue acting and said he prefers to focus on drama because it shows "feelings ... most people would probably love to see that."

His dream, though, would be to star with John Travolta, or at least play Travolta's role in a reboot of his favorite film, "Grease."

Gottsagen calls Travolta a triple threat because he can "dance, act and sing." Gottsagen would love to follow in his footsteps, although he says he is likely more of a double threat.

"My mom has said I am not a regular singer," he said. "I'm more of a dancer and an actor, so that's the only two I am very good at."

So far, it's been more than enough.

—Marcela Isaza



WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW – ENTERTAINERS

Jack Quaid

If you're an actor, and your parents just happen to be Meg Ryan and Denzel Quaid, you might have to get used to movie makers assuming that you're an entitled jerk. Jack Quaid says that just means he has to work harder to prove them wrong.

Quaid, 27, is quick to point out that he's been a very lucky man before he'll get into the stereotypes about the sons and daughters of very famous people.

"I don't want to necessarily complain about growing up the way that I did because there was always food on the table, I got to live in a nice house," he said. "But there's a little bit of an attitude that I've gotten, especially as I was starting out. Like, I would walk into an audition room and people would just assume I would be a [jerk]."

Quaid earned widespread attention this year for the first time since he fell in love with acting at the age of 13 (in a middle school rendition of "A Midsummer Night's Dream").

Quaid stars in "The Boys," an irreverent, genre-busting superhero show that's among the most successful original series on Amazon Prime Video. It premiered in July, less than two weeks before the release of "Plus One," a romantic comedy starring Quaid and Maya Erskine that won the Narrative Audience Award at the Tribeca Film Festival.

To prepare for "Plus One,"



Quaid binge-watched rom-coms, including "When Harry Met Sally" for the first time.

"When your mom has one of the most iconic orgasm scenes of all time, you tend to not watch that," Quaid said, adding that he regretted missing out on it so long. "When I finished the movie, I was like, completely crying and emotional because I think she's so good in the movie. And I was just so upset that I hadn't seen it because of this one dumb thing."

What's next for Quaid? For one, he'll do anything to be in a Star Wars movie. "It'll be whatever in the movie — I'll be a droid. I'll be, like, a grain of sand on Tatooine. I don't care. That would be a huge, huge deal for me," he said. "I'm just really excited for the future and anything else that might come my way."

— Amanda Lee Myers

Barbie Ferreira

Barbie Ferreira has been hearing countless variations on the word "breakthrough" applied to her role in HBO's groundbreaking teen drama "Euphoria" since the series debuted this summer. She clearly isn't tired of them.

When Ferreira was asked when it meant to be named one of the AP's Breakthrough Entertainers of 2019, she explained that it, and all of the praise she's received since "Euphoria," has validated a dream she's had since age 10: To be a professional actor.

"It's been a lot of 'No's, a lot of rejection," Ferreira said. "But somehow, some way, it has happened. And I have a role on a TV show, and I have this opportunity and it just feels really surreal."

Although "Euphoria's" star is Zendaya, Ferreira has stood out of the daringly dark and often sexually graphic series by portraying Kat Hernandez, a teen working her way through sexuality and finding her place as a plus-size woman in a size-zero world.

While this is Ferreira's star-making acting role, she is no stranger to success: She was a fashion model in New York who received attention for embracing her fuller size. At 19, Time featured her in a profile and noted "her image inspires girls around the world."



She gave it all up and moved to Los Angeles to make her Hollywood dream come true.

Ferreira noted that she lucked out in two ways. It's rare that a relative novice lands a plum role on a major TV series. And it's an even longer shot that the series ends up an out-of-the-gate critical and audience hit.

Down the road, Ferreira would like to tell her own stories.

However, for now, she's savoring every moment, and every sweet word.

Today, "breakthrough" suits her just fine.

"It has been such a blessing and a privilege to do it that now, I'm like, 'The world is my oyster.' And this was my goal for so long that I've achieved it."

"Now I'm like, 'What else?'"

— Michael Cidoni Lennox

Florence Pugh

By the end of 2019 on big screens across the globe, actress Florence Pugh will have body-slammed a famous wrestler, in "Fighting with My Family," screamed her lungs out after getting caught up in a violent Swedish cult in "Midsommar," and tromped around New England in a Victorian hoop skirt with the three other March sisters in "Little Women."

Each performance has garnered more critical acclaim than the last, and cemented Pugh, 23, as an actress on the rise.

Despite having three major films come out in a 10-month period, Pugh insists not that much is different in her life.

She does catch herself doing double-takes when she's working opposite top actors, like Meryl Streep in "Little Women." "Meryl was just as powerful as you can imagine she was ... and sharing a carriage with her wearing the fanciest Amy March clothing was a definite pinch-me moment," Pugh said.

Another pinch-me moment came when Pugh was playing a wrestler in "Fighting with My Family" and was about to film a



AP photos

big fight scene in front of a crowd of 20,000 people at the Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles.

"And Dwayne Johnson came out to go through the warm-up with me," she said. "And I remember being in the ring and him basically telling me that to throw a punch, you really need to reel back. And I remember just staring at him and then staring at all the seats around me, and I remember it going quiet and just kind of internally smiling and realizing that Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson was teaching me how to throw a punch whilst I

was waiting for 20,000 people to come in and watch me wrestle for the first time.

"Yeah, that's a good pinch," she said.

Pugh's next big film will be Marvel's standalone "Black Widow" movie with Scarlett Johansson, set for release in January. When the trailer dropped on Dec. 3, it was Pugh's name trending on Twitter, with comments like, "Literally who is doing it like Florence Pugh?" and "I don't know a better actress of this generation."

— Amanda Lee Myers

Jonathan Majors

How is a great actor made? For Jonathan Majors, the 30-year-old breakout star of "The Last Black Man in San Francisco," it started in drama school. It swelled with the discovery of August Wilson. It was provoked by teachers who pushed him to look deeper into himself and into everything around him. But it really began in the pews, listening to his mother, a Methodist pastor, preach.

"My mother's a wordsmith and she was the first person to call me a wordsmith," Majors says. "She was the first person to say, 'You have the gift of gab.' She ordained me a performer, a storyteller."

The education of Majors — where he came from, how he got here — is a point of interest because he so overwhelmingly burst on the scene in 2019, making him an easy choice for one of The Associated Press' Breakthrough Entertainers of the Year. Majors' tender and soulful performance as Montgomery Allen in "The Last Black Man in San Francisco" has not only drawn widespread acclaim but brought the eager attention of Spike Lee, Jordan Peele, J.J. Abrams and Jay-Z — all of whom have cast him in upcoming projects.

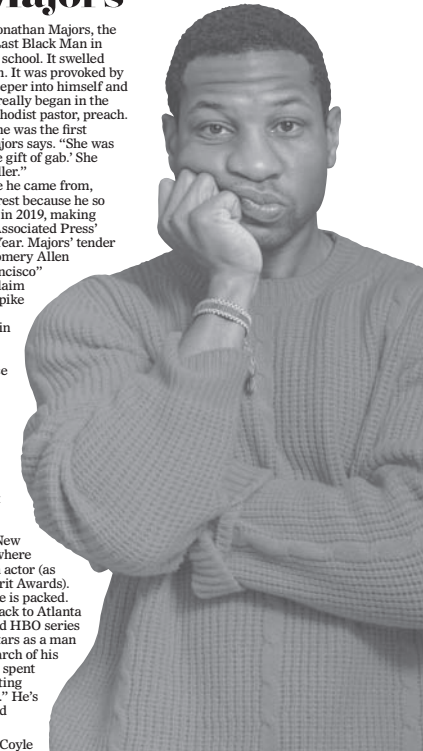
All of this just two years after his professional debut, three years since his last semester at the Yale School of Drama.

"You just keep your head down," Majors says. "I find if I do get frustrated or antsy it's because I allow ambition to get in. It's something to be wary of for myself. If you trust the seed that's been put in you, a tree just grows. I feel fortunate that as it stands now, the tree in me is to make art and to be an actor."

Majors spoke on a recent trip to New York for the IFF Gotham Awards, where he was a nominee for breakthrough actor (as he also is the Film Independent Spirit Awards). It had to be a brief stay; his schedule is packed.

The day after, Majors would fly back to Atlanta to shoot the Peele-Abrams-produced HBO series "Lovecraft Country," in which he stars as a man traveling the Jim Crow South in search of his missing father. Earlier this year, he spent four months in Southeast Asia shooting Lee's Vietnam drama "Da 5 Bloods." He's also set to star in the Jay-Z produced western "The Harder They Fall."

— Jake Coyle



WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW — MOVIES

10 BEST FILMS

Associated Press movie critics
Bahr, Coyle share their faves

Jake Coyle's picks



LUIS FILMS/TNS

Noémie Merlant and Adele Haenel are pictured in a scene from "Portrait of a Lady on Fire."

1. 'Portrait of a Lady on Fire'

In a year defined by mammoth masterworks, nothing took my breath away like Céline Sciamma's exquisite, soul-shattering romance. A female painter (Noémie Merlant) in 18th century France is sent to paint, on the sly, the portrait of a spirited noble woman (Adele Haenel) before her arranged marriage. The movie assembles itself as a series of stolen glances, as art and love mingle for a blissful but tragically unsustainable moment. The parting shot, a kind of portrait itself, is a devastation I won't soon recover from.



Netflix

Left to right: Robert De Niro, Joe Pesci and Lucy Gallina are pictured in a scene from "The Irishman."

2. 'Rolling Thunder Revue' & 'The Irishman'

A simply astonishing double feature from Martin Scorsese, one consumed with life, the other with death. Scorsese spoke urgently and eloquently about how movies should be more than they often are: a corporate-made product with little of the humanity that makes films worth debating, worth loving. But as well and as passionately as Scorsese argued for cinema, nothing made his case better than these two remarkable, colossal films.

3. 'Honeyland'

Directors Tamara Kotevska and Ljubomir Stefanov were initially commissioned just to make a video about nature conservation in Macedonia, about one of Europe's last wild-beekeepers. Instead, they spent three years and collected more than 400 hours of footage with Hatidze, a heroically indefatigably middle-aged woman who lives in an abandoned rural village in North Macedonia where she ekes out a meager living for herself and her bedridden mother by sustainably harvesting honey. The filmmakers whittled their footage down to a 85-minute fable of startling intimacy (the candle-lit scenes of Hatidze and her mother are among the most stirring you'll ever see) that reverberates with larger ecological allegory.



Ncowa/AP

Living in poverty, the Kim family fold pizza boxes in their basement to make money in "Parasite."

4. 'Parasite'

There's not a misplaced moment in Bong Joon Ho's social satire, a so perfectly and intricately engineered genre contraption that it's downright frightening.



Netflix

Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver in "Marriage Story"

5. 'Marriage Story'

Noah Baumbach, too, is working at the very top of his game, telling a delicately, even profoundly constructed tale of divorce — a subject not so easy to be clear-eyed about — with a miraculous steadiness and compassion. For a horror story — and with lawyers breathing fire and brimstone to go with it — it's remarkably funny, tender and true. A deeply humane masterpiece.



SONY PICTURES CLASSICS/AP

Antonio Banderas stars in "Pain and Glory."

6. 'Pain and Glory'

A master filmmaker looks back, rewarding us with one of his richest and most luminous films. Pedro Almodovar's warm spirit vibrates throughout this time-skipping drama of self-reflection. Almodovar has never felt so close at hand, and the film's final image is one of poetic summation.

7. 'Little Women'

Greta Gerwig's Louisa May Alcott adaptation is a feast of a movie. Every frame is alive. By remixing the book's timelines and expanding Jo's arc to encompass Alcott's too, Gerwig hasn't just made "Little Women" contemporary, she's made it sing.

8. 'Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood'

Quentin Tarantino has said he aims to retire after making 10 films; he's disinterested in becoming an old filmmaker or doing anything to dull the vibrancy of his earlier films. He should rethink that. His radiant and poignant 1960s Hollywood fable suggests that Tarantino, when he slows down and soaks up the California sun, can be even better as he grows older.



A24

Jonathan Majors and Jimmie Fails in "The Last Black Man in San Francisco"

9. 'The Last Black Man in San Francisco'

An almost-too-beautiful fable of displacement and gentrification that ultimately wins you over with the sincerity of its anguish and the soulful performances of Jimmie Fails, Jonathan Majors and Rob Morgan.

10. 'Atlantics'

Writer-director Mati Diop's feature debut is preternaturally assured. It's a ghost story, set in Senegal among grieving women after a boat of emigrating young men has disappeared into the sea. The film's mythic power is heightened by Diop's already fully-formed cinematic language.

Honorable mentions

"Dolemite Is My Name"; "Apollo 11"; "Booksmart"; "Knives Out"; "High Flying Bird"; "Amazing Grace"; "Uncut Gems"; "The Nightingale"; "1917"

WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW – MOVIES

Lindsey Bahr's picks

Leonardo DiCaprio is pictured in a scene from director Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood." The film also stars Brad Pitt.

SONY-COLUMBIA PICTURES/AP



1. 'Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood'

Quentin Tarantino's movie-business fairy tale, featuring all-time performances from two of our great living movie stars, and the shadow of one's spirit, is his most warm-hearted and tender and a complete joy to watch and watch again. It's hard to glean whether a film will stand the test of time, but "Once Upon a Time ..." has the makings of a modern classic.

2. 'Little Women'

For a story so rooted in its post-Civil War time, it's an astonishing feat that Greta Gerwig was able to make "Little Women," a book with no shortage of adaptations, into something that's downright modern. With an eye toward warm details and sharp dialogue, Gerwig, along with a terrific cast, makes the maturation of the March sisters more than just wistful nostalgia, but an urgent piece about the economics of being a woman and the worthiness of their stories.



A24/AP

Zhao Shuzhen, left, and Awkwafina are pictured in a scene from "The Farewell."

3. 'The Farewell'

In an industry that favors safe bets (and fewer and fewer of them at that), it's no wonder that a batch of smaller, intensely personal films stood out in 2019. But Lulu Wang's "The Farewell," a sensitive and wry account of the time her family decided to not tell her grandmother that she was dying of cancer, is at the top of the pack. Not only did we get to see Awkwafina in a different light and meet the phenomenal Chinese actress Zhao Shuzhen, but see ourselves and our own relationship with death and grief in the specificity of a different culture.



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

George MacKay is pictured in a scene from "1917," director Sam Mendes' World War I epic.

4. '1917'

The whole "one take" construct of Sam Mendes' sumptuous World War I epic "1917" is a neat trick, but that alone isn't exactly a reason to see it. In fact, "1917" works so well because you're so wrapped up in the story of this impossible, real-time mission across no man's land. Soldiers desperately race to stop an attack that the British have learned is doomed to fail. Immersed in their frantic sprint, you don't even notice the gears behind the engine.

5. 'Marriage Story'

The ugliness of the modern divorce industrial complex gets an achingly human face in Noah Baumbach's tragicomic "Marriage Story," which although it's about the dissolution of a marriage is one of the funniest and most alive perhaps because it is so real — not to mention the wonderful turns from Scarlett Johansson, Adam Driver and a crackling supporting cast.



Sony Pictures Classics

"Maiden" hops on board with an all-women crew during a yacht race around the globe.

6. 'Maiden'

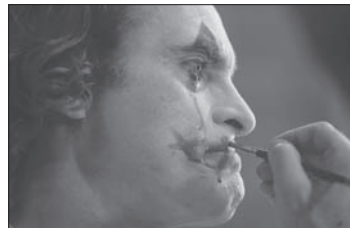
A hidden gem of a documentary, "Maiden" is an exhilarating and uplifting adventure film about the first all-female crew to compete in a round the world yacht race with harrowing archival footage and terrific present-day interviews with the women who raced and the men who doubted them.

7. 'Honey Boy'

I'd wager that the biggest sell of "Honey Boy" is also its biggest deterrent: That it's Shia LaBeouf's story. For those in the latter camp, I have one thing to say: See it anyway. This is a lyrical and immensely moving portrait of a child actor (Noah Jupe) and his complex relationship with his toxic father (LaBeouf) and a stunning fiction debut from director Alma Har'el.

8. 'Parasite'

Writer-director Bong Joon Ho keeps the audience guessing in this twisty, comedic and trenchant film about two families — one working class, one wealthy — whose stories become intertwined in a modernist palace. It's a film that should be seen knowing as little as possible, but also one that gets richer with every view.



WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

Joaquin Phoenix stars in "Joker," an origin story of the classic Batman villain.

9. 'Joker'

Was "Joker" an agent of chaos? Sure, but not in the way people suspected. It didn't incite violence; it was simply successful. And that's not a bad thing! It's a sneakily elegant film that dared to make something serious and adult out of a comic book character.

10. 'The Nightingale'

Jennifer Kent's harrowing film about a young Irish woman on a quest for revenge in 1825 Tasmania contains one of the most shocking depictions of violence I've ever seen — so disturbing that I found myself looking for the door — and yet her film, which wants the viewer to be challenged by its violence, hate and ultimately empathy, is one that not only provokes, but sticks.

Honorable mentions

"Pain and Glory;" "I Lost My Body;" "Jojo Rabbit," "Portrait of a Lady on Fire," "Luce," "Ad Astra"

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS



SONY PICTURES/AR

Clockwise from top left, Saoirse Ronan, Laura Dern, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh and Eliza Scanlan in Greta Gerwig's "Little Women."

Women first

New adaptation focuses on 'Little Women' as adults

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

There is a wild urgency to Greta Gerwig's "Little Women" that hardly seems possible for a film based on a 150-year-old book. Such is the magic of combining Louisa May Alcott's enduring story of those four sisters with Gerwig's deliciously feisty, evocative and clear-eyed storytelling that creates a new classic.

While no shortage of "Little Women" adaptations exist, Gerwig makes hers modern and sharp, while adhering to its traditional roots. In playing with the chronology and instilling depth and nuance where many films have chosen shortcuts, Gerwig has made the most fully realized interpretation of this well-worn material for one reason: She lets Amy, Beth, Jo and Meg grow up.

Others have, too, but it usually comes at the end of the film as more of a coda, which can't help but feel melancholy: It's the death of childhood, after all. Dreams are dashed, reality sets in, practicality trumps romantic fantasies and, most crushingly for many a "Little Women" fan, Amy ends up with Laurie.

Gerwig flips Alcott's narrative to allow her characters to be women first, instead of children. Jo (Saoirse Ronan) is introduced when she is on her own trying to be a writer and making compromises all over the place (with her rate; her name, which she declines to use on her stories; and what her characters do). Meg (Emma Watson) is living her life

with two kids, a husband and a yearning for finer things. Beth (Eliza Scanlan) is still at home. Amy (Florence Pugh) is in Paris with Aunt March (Meryl Streep), studying to paint and strategically plotting a future that involves a wealthy husband.

In their adult present, Gerwig finds thematically similar chapters in their past to flash back to. Don't worry, all the classics are there (Christmas morning, the dance, the ice skating and the hair dramas among them). These are always in warmer tones, while the present has a bluish starkness. This structure is a bold choice and one that those only passively or not at all familiar with "Little Women" may find disorienting at first. But using the past to reveal and illuminate things about the present makes for a richer experience overall.

For one, it untethers Jo from Laurie (Timothee Chalamet, so excellent in subtly yearning for an unrequited love). That perplexing love triangle suddenly makes more sense. In fact, the characters all get a little freedom from romance. Love is part of the story, and thank goodness Gerwig has cast actors like James Norton as John Brooke and Louis Garrel as Friedrich Baehr who make the case that Laurie isn't the only appealing choice in this world, but the quest for freedom (which only comes with money) is the real driving motivation for the March girls, who have never felt quite so alive as in these actors' hands.

Ronan plays Jo as feral and

difficult: She's not only crawling out of her own female skin, but also the time she has the misfortune of being alive in. The affection that you feel for her relationship with her sisters comes not from rose-colored mushiness but from the fact that this film authentically captures how siblings actually are. These March girls are wild: They fight and hit and laugh at one another's misfortunes with devilish delight, and you love them more for it.

Amy, too, gets some much-deserved respect. The long-misunderstood March brat is allowed to grow up and mature, and Pugh is just the actor to bridge the gap between naive child and woman making her own decisions.

This film also lifts up and makes wholly true supporting characters. Marmee (Laura Dern) gets to be the nurturing and wise mother who also admits her own shortcomings. Aunt March is elevated from stodgy caricature to a stately matriarch who may be tough but is never not astute. Even Mr. March (Bob Odenkirk) gets a personality and some humor to boot. Perhaps the most surprising, however, is Mr. Laurence (Chris Cooper), who may leave you wiping your eyes more than once.

It's an astonishing accomplishment for what is only Gerwig's second feature as a director. "Lady Bird" may have been autobiographical, but "Little Women" is an artist's statement.

"Little Women" is rated PG for thematic elements and brief smoking. Running time: 134 minutes.

'Spies in Disguise' upends genre in pleasing, kid-friendly way

By THOMAS FLOYD

Special to The Washington Post

To all appearances, the animated comedy "Spies in Disguise" is just another rollicking send-up of superspy thrillers. As befits a movie about clandestine activity, however, there's more than meets the eye here. Hidden beneath its parodistic action-comedy exterior is a message, one that doesn't set out to merely lampoon the genre but to playfully question almost everything about it.

"When we fight fire with fire, we all get burned," says Walter Beckett (voiced by the ever-endearing Tom Holland). Walter is a neurotic gadgets expert tasked with outfitting Lance Sterling (a sufficiently suave Will Smith), the star operative for a U.S. government spy agency known, aptly enough, as the Agency. Within its Washington headquarters, built deep beneath the Reflecting Pool, Walter aligns the other members of his tech team by working on contraptions that could only be called ... pacifist. Think adorably distracting glitter bombs, a lavender-scented



TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX/STX

Gadgets expert Walter Beckett (Tom Holland) and spy Lance Sterling (Will Smith) partner up to fight evil in "Spies in Disguise."

truth serum and a very serious take on silly string.

He's an eccentric version of MI6's Q, and first-time directors Troy Quaan and Nick Bruno clearly know their James Bond tropes. Lance checks most of these boxes, with his sleek suit, tricked-out luxury car, quippy persona and comically chiseled jawline. The slick opening credits sequence, set to the Mark

Ronson and Dodger jam "Freak of Nature," is straight out of the 007 playbook as well.

For a world-class spy, however, Bond always has been extraordinarily bad at going unnoticed, and the same could be said for the punch-happy Lance. When Killian (go-to movie bad guy Ben Mendelsohn), a villain with a robotic arm and a grudge, frames Lance for treason, the Agency

puts a no-nonsense internal affairs agent (Rashida Jones) and her amusing aides (Karen Gillan and DJ Khaled) on the spy's trail.

Lance subsequently turns to Walter, who has an appropriately insane solution — a serum that transforms our hero into that most inconspicuous of creatures: a pigeon. Who, who hastily downs the concoction without knowing its purpose, isn't particularly pleased with his new appearance, and the film revels in the absurdity of this human-to-avian body swap. "Spies in Disguise" then turns into a buddy movie as Walter and his now-feathered friend elude capture and thwart Killian's evil plan, which involves a drone-orchestrated assault that must have been dreamed up after a Marvel movie marathon.

The humor includes enough slapstick and gross-out gags to keep the kids entertained, but there are clever callbacks and meta-jokes for older audiences to chuckle at as well. Although an early "Kill Bill"-tinged sequence romanticizes the pleasures of a good, old-fashioned on-screen

scrap, the rest of the shrewd set pieces are about finding "a good way to stop the bad," as Walter puts it.

Screenwriters Brad Copeland and Lloyd Taylor, who loosely adapted "Spies in Disguise" from the 2009 short film "Pigeon Impossible," anchor the story around the refreshingly subversive theme of nonviolence, as the movie finds increasingly inventive ways to visualize Walter's whimsical approach to spycraft.

Before launching its globe-trotting adventure, "Spies in Disguise" finds grounding in a sweetly sentimental prologue in which a young Walter is shown tinkering with devices designed to protect his police officer mother (Rachel Brosnahan). Walter knows his ideas are peculiar, but his mom emphasizes the value of thinking outside the box. "What's wrong with weird?" she asks. "The world needs weird."

"Spies in Disguise" is also kind of a weird, and that's why it works. Here's hoping more movies take that intel to heart.

"Spies in Disguise" is rated PG for action, violence and rude humor. Running time: 103 minutes.

WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW – TELEVISION

10 best shows of 2019

By ALICIA RANCILIO ■ Associated Press

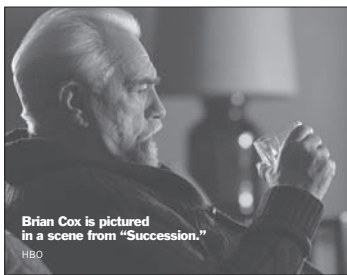
1. 'Surviving R. Kelly,' Lifetime

No other series made the kind of real-world impact that this one did. Allegations of sexual abuse against minors followed R. Kelly for years: The superstar was even acquitted of child pornography charges in 2008. But it wasn't until after the airing of Lifetime's six-part docuseries featuring testimonials by alleged abuse survivors that criminal investigations were kicked into high gear. He now faces criminal charges federal and state courts. Lifetime also announced last summer that it was planning a "Surviving Jeffrey Epstein" series.

2. 'Unbelievable,' Netflix

This series about a young woman who is accused of lying about rape allegations and two female detectives in another state trying to catch a serial rapist is the kind of eye-opening show that isn't just compelling television, but a lesson in treating sexual assault victims with compassion and humanity.

Kaitlyn Dever
Netflix



Brian Cox is pictured in a scene from "Succession."
HBO

3. 'Succession,' HBO

There was no sophomore slump for this HBO series about a wealthy family that owns a major media conglomerate. The show only upped the ante with compelling performances from its entire cast, playing characters that are ruthless and not even likable, yet somehow you root for (some of) them anyway. That final scene of Season Two was the perfect cliffhanger.



Phoebe Waller-Bridge
Amazon Prime

5. 'Schitt's Creek,' Pop TV

The series aired its fifth season in 2019 but "Schitt's Creek" has been a slow burn thanks to word of mouth and a run on Netflix. The comedy about a rich family that loses its fortune and moves into a rundown motel in a small town is funny and smart with rich, quirky characters.



Jennifer Aniston
APPLE TV+/AP

6. 'The Morning Show,' Apple Plus

Jennifer Aniston performs her best work in years as a longtime morning show anchor whose co-host (Steve Carell) is fired for sexual misconduct. Reese Witherspoon co-stars as the new co-host who makes Aniston question the status quo. Their scenes together, whether getting along or at each other's throats, are just fun. The show also has a great supporting cast including Mark Duplass, Billy Crudup and Gugu Mbatha-Raw.

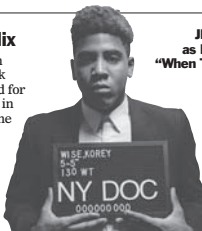


7. 'Chernobyl,' HBO

This series about the 1986 Soviet Union nuclear power plant disaster is grim but masterfully executed. An equally heartbreaking and horrifying scene where children marvel and play in radioactive dust falling like snow will stay with you.

8. 'When They See Us,' Netflix

Ava DuVernay did an excellent job with this four-part series about the five black and Latino teens wrongfully prosecuted for the rape of a white Central Park jogger in 1989. The interrogation scenes where the boys are confused and disoriented are especially hard to watch, but that's the point. It also made an Emmy winner out of Jharrel Jerome and a star out of Asante Blackk, also featured this year on "This Is Us."



Jharrel Jerome as Korey Wise in "When They See Us"
Netflix



Ben Platt
Netflix

9. 'The Politician,' Netflix

Ben Platt has already mastered Broadway, but he showed he could carry a series with "The Politician." Platt shows his range as a young man obsessed with becoming student body president (a necessary step to achieve his ultimate goal of becoming president of the United States). The supporting cast including Gwyneth Paltrow and Zoey Deutch, and the wardrobe and lush settings of the show make the entire experience a colorful ride.

10. 'FYRE: The Greatest Party That Never Happened,' Netflix

This documentary followed plans and hype for the kind of luxurious music festival in the Bahamas that Instagram was created for, except poor execution and over-promising turned it into a failure of epic proportions. Hulu also released its own film on the festival featuring an interview with its organizer, Billy McFarland, but the Netflix version is better.

Honorable mentions: "Euphoria" on HBO, "The Boys" on Amazon, "Shrill!" and "The Act" on Hulu, "Mandalorian" on Disney Plus.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Basking in the French Riviera's art scene

With its romantic coastline, inviting beaches and reliable sunshine, southern France's Riviera region has been a tourist destination since the 1860s. In the 1920s, aristocrats from London to Moscow flocked here to socialize, gamble and escape the dreary weather at home. But the area also attracted a Who's Who of 20th-century artists who were drawn by the Mediterranean's bohemian atmosphere, luminous light and contrasting colors of sea, sand, and sky.

The legacies of the many artists who worked in the south — including Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Henri Matisse, Marc Chagall, Georges Braque, Raoul Dufy, Fernand Leger and Pablo Picasso — are memorialized today in an intriguing collection of museums. And visiting them is easy, as none of them tend to be plagued by the long lines and crowds of major museums in Europe's big cities (leaving you plenty of time for the beach).

Here are some of my favorites:

Renoir Museum, Cagnes-sur-Mer

In 1907, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, whose Impressionist paintings straddled the last turn of the century, built a house and workshop for himself in Cagnes-sur-Mer (halfway between Nice and Antibes). By then an old man, Renoir would spend his last 12 years in this little village happily tending his fruit trees, painting in his studio and dabbling in sculpture. You can see his atelier, with his easel and palette still in place (as well as his wheelchair and cane), and some original paintings.

Matisse Museum, Nice

Henri Matisse, the master colorist, first

came to Nice in 1917, leaving behind financial struggles and a difficult marriage in Paris. He would remain in the Riviera, on and off, until his death in 1954. Though this museum's collection is slender, you can see typical examples of a range of his favorite motifs (flowers, fruit, female nudes) as well as his love of decorative patterns and joyful color.

Chagall Museum, Nice

Marc Chagall settled in the Riviera after World War II. His best-known paintings feature a magical-realist style that conjures up his native Russia, with fiddlers on roofs and horses in flight. Chagall had a hand in designing this delightful museum, which includes his Biblical Message cycle: 17 large luminous canvases on biblical themes, painted in bright reds, blues, and greens that manage to combine aspects of his Russian-Jewish heritage with the Christian story.

Rick Steves



Picasso Museum, Antibes

Pablo Picasso, the pioneer of Cubism, summured on the Riviera nearly every year from 1919 until he died in 1973. He had hunkered down in Paris for most of World War II, but in 1946 he returned to Antibes, on the coast, where he spent a productive part of a year working in the town's landmark Chateau Grimaldi. Forced to improvise his materials after the shortages of the war years, but elated by the newfound peace (and an amazing girlfriend), Picasso produced an new vol-



Rick Steves

Nice's Chagall Museum was built during the artist's lifetime for his biblical paintings.

ume of celebratory, colorful artworks. The compact museum housed in the Grimaldi offers a manageable look at the paintings and sketches Picasso made there.

Picasso Museum, Vallauris

After his sabbatical in Antibes, Picasso moved on to Vallauris, a typical Riviera village midway between Antibes and Cannes. The little town was home to several active art potteries, and Picasso became so enamored by the ceramics he saw that he resolved to take up clay as a medium. He ended up staying in Vallauris until 1955, and the museum there is a good place to become acquainted with his playful approach to ceramic art.

Maeght Foundation, St-Paul-de-Vence

This inviting, private museum, situated just above the inland town of St-Paul-de-Vence, offers an excellent introduction

to modern Mediterranean art. Today it gathers under one roof the work of many famous modern artists (Joan Miró, Alexander Calder, Leger, Braque, Chagall). The lovely setting, with a verdant sculpture garden, is a bonus.

Chapel of the Rosary, Vence

Matisse convalesced from cancer surgery in 1941 with the help of a Dominican nun, and years later, in 1949, he repaid the favor by designing this tiny chapel in the hills above Nice. Yellow, green, and blue stained-glass windows filter the sunlight, creating a cheery dance across the walls — expressing Matisse's irrepressible love of life. It's a space of light and calm that only a master could have created.

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Pre-New Year's fun

Kids at home on their winter vacations and clamoring for something to do? The possibilities in this in-between time of the year aren't quite as limited as you might see at first glance. From outings on the cheap to indulgent splurges, these activities can turn any day around.

Visit a water park: Soak in the Jacuzzi as the kids run wild on the slides at one of Europe's best all-season water parks. Joining such behemoths as Tropical Islands outside Berlin and Thera Erding near Munich, Germany's newest offering on the year-round bathing front is Rulantica, a Nordic-themed water world. Located next to Europa-Park in Rust, the complex offers 17 water slides, a gigantic wave pool, a lazy river and other attractions. Tickets are available for either daytime or evening visits. Day tickets for adults cost 38.50 euros, children pay 35.50 euros, and ages three and under enter free. Online: tinyurl.com/wq553p

See pro skiers up close: The last stop of the women's FIS Ski World Cup tour in 2019 takes place in Lienz, Austria. The Ladies' Giant Slalom takes place Dec. 28, followed the next day by the Ladies' Slalom. Spectators can see the finish line from the base area of the Schlossberg Mountain or view the races from



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

various vantage points with a ski lift ticket.

The Four Hills Tournament, now in its 68th year, is a men's jumping competition featuring two stops in Germany and two in Austria. While tickets for the opening competition in Oberstdorf are sold out, tickets for Garmisch-Partenkirchen on Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 were available as of this writing. Standing room ticket prices go for 28 euros adults, ages 7-15 pay 23 euros, and ages six and under enter free.

Spectators will be right in the middle of the action in Garmisch-Partenkirchen on Dec. 29 at the annual Biathlon. Garmisch's pedestrian zone serves as the course for this race. Junior racers set off at 4:30 p.m., the main race starts at 6 p.m., and an awards ceremony takes place

in front of the Spielbank at 7:30 p.m. Online: skiclub-garmisch.de/partner

Watch a road race: On the last day of the year, Trier, Germany, stages a run inspired by a much older and larger race held in Sao Paulo, Brazil. To the sounds of samba drums, some of Germany's top runners take on this course no matter the weather, with races for club and hobby runners to follow. The main event is a 10 km sprint. Elite women runners start at 3 p.m. and men at 3:30 p.m. For those up to a last-minute challenge, registration is possible starting at 10 a.m. on the day in the sports hall of the Max-Planck-Gymnasium on Sichelstr. Online: silvesterlauf.de

Go to the circus: Should acrobats, trapeze artists, acrobats and trained animals be your family's kind of thing, options include Stuttgart's Weltwihnachts-circus, billed as the world's biggest Christmas circus, at the Cannstatter Wasen through Jan. 6. In Wiesbaden, the Christmas circus at Gibber Kerb offers performances through Jan. 5. A Christmas circus also runs through Jan. 5 in Landau. Those close to Nuremberg have until Jan. 11 to catch the Flic Flac X-Mas Show at the Volksfestplatz Dutzendstr.

Go ice skating: While many of Germany's larger cities have covered ice skating rinks, there's



ISTOCK

Lace up those skates and get out to one of Germany's many open-air winter ice skating rinks.

something undeniably special about open-air skating against a beautiful backdrop. Heidelberg's rink on the Karlsplatz offers castle views and is open through Jan. 1. Cologne's rink in the middle of the Heumarkt is one of the country's biggest, and it's open through Jan. 5. In Stuttgart, visitors can take to the rink in front of the castle through Jan. 6. Wiesbaden residents have until Jan. 12 to enjoy the rink on the Warner Dam, behind the Hessen State Theater. Iconic ice rinks in some of Europe's greatest cities include that in front of City Hall in Vienna or Somerset House in London. Opening for the first time ever in Paris

is a rink on the rooftop of the Galleries Lafayette department store. Skaters can enjoy views of the city's rooftops and the Eiffel Tower through Dec. 31. Entry is free.

New Year's Day events

While much ado is made about how to celebrate New Year's Eve on Dec. 31, it's less obvious what to do on Jan. 1. These two cities quickly clean up their acts and offer entertainment on the first day of the year:

London's New Year's Day parade is the continent's most spectacular offering. Some 8,000 performers from both local boroughs and around the world take part. Dancers, acrobats, cheerleaders, samba drummers and marching bands are accompanied by historic vehicles, balloons and tons of flying confetti. The parade gets underway from noon on Piccadilly and ends on Parliament Street. Viewing is free. Online: lnydp.com

Rome's Festa di Roma promises 24 hours of fun at a free event staged at the Circo Massimo and Lungotevere Aventino. The theme of this year's festivities is the splendor of planet earth. Concerts, installations, street acts and other forms of entertainment will represent five ecosystems, from the deep sea to the jungle. Festivities kick off on the evening of Dec. 31. Online: lafastidroma.it

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Red beet carpaccio with wasabi and roasted scallops is a delicious starter at Hotel Monika's restaurant in Buettelborn, Germany.

Fuel for the long haul

Former truck stop hides hearty, sophisticated flair

By MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes

Those of you who commute from Wiesbaden to the Daggar Complex in Darmstadt every day have noticed the fuel station soon after leaving the autobahn at Buettelborn. What you might not have seen is the fueling station of a different kind behind it.

The restaurant in Hotel Monika has been serving travelers and locals for decades. If its outside reminds you of a truck stop, that's because that's what it was. For years, truckers would pull over for the hearty German food served inside.

The buildings were expanded over time to become a full-fledged hotel, and the restaurant modernized and enlarged. Although the same family still runs the place, the cuisine served at the Monika has been raised a culinary notch or two. It's still German food, but with sophisticated twists.

The menu offers starters, main courses of fish, fowl and meat, plus seasonal selections—goose, this time of year—and homemade desserts. The beverage menu, including an extensive wine list, seemingly weighs more than a plate of food.

For starters, I tried the red beet carpaccio with wasabi and roasted scallops. The dressing on the beets was light and tangy, the scallops cooked to perfection for my taste—crispy top and bottom, and juicy in the middle. Only the wasabi could have been spicier.

My dining companion tried the goose consommé with pumpkin and chestnut ravioli from the seasonal menu.

For the main course, she ordered a classic German game dish, Hirschragout (venison stew), with chanterelles and homemade spaetzle. The meat was a little dry, but the sauce with the chanterelles was hearty and delicious, and the spaetzle was a picture of perfection.

I tried the roasted pike-perch fillet with ceps



AFTER HOURS
GERMANY

HOTEL MONIKA

Location: Im Mehleise 1-5, 64572 Buettelborn. Just off autobahn A67 between Wiesbaden and Darmstadt at the Buettelborn exit.

Hours: Noon to 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday; 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays. Closed on Saturday.

Prices: Upper reaches of moderate. Starters \$7.80 to \$12.50; entrees \$19 to \$31.50; desserts \$9.50 to \$10.

English menu: Yes
Information: The website, in German, is hotelmonika.de/restaurant-und-bar/restaurant. A site in English is under construction. Reservations are recommended.

—Michael Abrams

risotto in a Riesling wine sauce. Also delicious. Like the scallops, the skin was roasted crisp while the fish itself was moist. The risotto was creamy, and the mushrooms kept their texture. For my taste buds, a perfect dish.

Among the other choices on the menu were veal schnitzel with fries, stuffed breast of guinea-fowl with champagne sauerkraut, or salmon and scallops with two styles of cauliflower and green asparagus, for example.

One thing missing here are vegetarian choices. The only thing on the menu is ceps risotto with braised tomatoes and grated cheese.

While my companion passed on dessert, I tried what they call "Our Little One," a small jar of homemade chocolate sherbet with crumble and topped with a honey pastry. It was a perfect way to end a perfect meal.

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Quince a la France

By BEN WIMS
Los Angeles Times

In October, I flew to Paris to visit a friend living there. We were there to do research in Normandy for her next book and spent days driving around the French countryside—eating moules-frites in Etretat, cobbling together dinner from a French grocery store while staying in a remote 17th century chateau in La Pommeraye—and, of course, drinking lots and lots of cidre.

On one of our last stops at Michel Huard, a calvados producer in Saint-Germain-des-Grois, we were invited for lunch into the matriarch's home, where she ended the meal of roast veal and potatoes with the region's classic, simple tarte au pomme. She explained the tart was simply puff pastry with chopped plain apples tossed on top, baked then sprinkled with a dusting of granulated sugar. As I reached for a fork to eat the tart, Madame Guillouet-Huard beckoned me to instead pick it up with my hands. "Like pizza!," she said. It was heavenly, and the crisp pastry held up the apples as rigid as a plank. It tasted more of apples than the other two apple tarts I had that day (a mini one for breakfast, a soggy one that night at dinner), and I went back for a second piece.

During a translation error, I thought I heard her say she also makes the tart with quince, and my eyes lit up. I couldn't speak French, and she couldn't speak English, so my friend had to

translate my excitement. But upon clarification, it was wrong; madame insisted on apples. Still, I couldn't shake the thought of rosy pink, perfume-like quince sitting on that pastry, warm from the oven. After we left their home, stuffed with apples and veal, we drove for hours through drizzily gray mist and beautifully broken-down country estates, and I could think only about making that tart with quince.

Unlike the apples for Madame Guillouet-Huard's tarte au pomme, which require only a quick chop, you'll have to poach the quince beforehand, but this should be seen as a boon and not a deterrent. Poaching the quince is the best way to cook them, allowing you to steep them in a light broth made of water, wine and sugar suffused with winter spices like vanilla bean, cinnamon, star anise and fresh bay leaves. You'll cook them for an hour and a half, but don't worry; once they're going, they take care of themselves, and you, in turn, are blessed with a house filled with their divine scent and the sight of their blush-pink flesh. Once they're poached, the spirit of that Normandise tarte au pomme comes back into focus as you use the water on the top of your puff pastry and bake it until the bottom is crisp and crunchy.

While the tart bakes, I reduce the poaching liquid to a thick, ruby-red syrup that I then brush over the fruit once it's done. The glaze keeps the fruit from drying out and intensifies the quince's heady flavor.

FRENCH-STYLE QUINCE TART

Total time: 3½ hours.

Serves 8 to 10.

Ingredients:

4 quince (about 2 pounds),

washed and dried

3 cups water

1 cup pinot grigio, sauvignon

blanc or rose wine

1 cup granulated sugar

1 vanilla bean, halved (don't

scrape the seeds)

1 fresh bay leaf

1 thin slice fresh ginger

½ stick cinnamon

1 star anise pod

1 sheet (8 to 10 ounces) puff

pastry, preferably *Dufour*

All-purpose flour, for rolling

Turbinado sugar, such as

Sugar in the Raw, for sprinkling

Directions:

1. At least 2 hours and up to 2 days before you plan to bake the tart, cook the quince: Peel each quince, cut into quarters then slice out and discard the cores. Cut each quarter into four smaller wedges, then transfer all the wedges to a medium saucepan. Pour in the wine, sugar, vanilla bean, bay leaf, ginger, cinnamon, star anise and 3 cups water and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar.

2. Cut out a round of parchment paper the same diameter as the inside of the pan and place over the fruit. Once the mixture begins boiling, reduce the heat to medium-low to maintain a bare

simmer and cook, stirring the quince occasionally, until soft and rosy pink, about 90 minutes.

3. Discard the parchment paper, then gently lift the quince wedges out of the syrup with a slotted spoon or spider and transfer to a double-thick layer of paper toweling to drain. Reserve the syrup in the pan.

4. Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Unfold the sheet of puff pastry and roll it with a rolling pin on a lightly-floured surface until 12 inches square and 1½-inch thick, using the 12-inch-diameter circle from the parchment and transfer it to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Arrange the quince wedges evenly over the pastry, leaving a 1-inch border all around. Bake, rotating the pan front to back halfway through, until the quince is golden brown on the bottom and crisp (it will look pale in and around the fruit wedges), about 1 hour. Remove the tart from the oven and let cool.

5. While the tart cooks, bring the saucepan of reserved quince poaching liquid to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook until reduced to ½ cup. Remove the pan from the heat and, while the syrup is still hot, use a pastry brush to brush it evenly over just the fruit in the tart. Sprinkle the fruit lightly with turbinado sugar to help reduce the tart's room temperature. Serve.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

Positively medieval

Rothenburg retains its sense of history in modern times

By IMMANUEL JOHNSON

Stars and Stripes

Rothenburg may be a quiet town today, but enclosed in its medieval walls is a wealth of sometimes tumultuous history.

About a three-minute walk from the city center is the Rothenburg Museum, also known as the Imperial City Museum.

Housed in a former monastery building, the museum includes Germany's oldest preserved monastery kitchen, dating from the 13th century, a Judaica collection reflecting a bygone time when 10% of the town's population was Jewish, and one of the largest collections of old weapons in Europe, including everything from knights' armor to muskets.

Right in the center of town is St. James's Church. Considered the most important church in Rothenburg, it was completed in 1485 after more than a century of construction. The church's

narrow stained-glass windows, its main altar depicting the 12 apostles, and the wooden altar showing the Last Supper are among the features that draw not just pilgrims but also crowds from around the world.

The town's Christmas market was set up right in front of St. James's church when I visited in December. Stands offered a seemingly never-ending supply of Gluehwein, as well as crepes, Christmas ornaments and Nativity scenes available for purchase. There was also a carousel for younger visitors.

Another museum, the Medieval Crime and Justice Museum, has a display of old instruments of torture and a pillory out front that's perfect for selfies.

If pillories aren't your thing, head to the Ploeinlein — literally "small square by a fountain" — and take a selfie in front of the crooked house, which is said to be the most popular place to take souvenir pictures in Rothenburg.

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PHOTOS BY IMMANUEL JOHNSON/Stars and Stripes

St. James's Church in Rothenburg is considered to be the most significant church in town. The Christmas market, complete with a carousel, is right in front of the church.



The main altar depicting the 12 apostles can be seen inside St. James's Church. The church was built over a 100-year period during the 14th and 15th centuries.



Rothenburg's Imperial City Museum houses Germany's oldest preserved monastery kitchen, shown, dating from the 13th century.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Rothenburg is just over a scenic two-hour drive away from the Grafenwoehr and Vilsack area.

TIMES

Hours: April to October, 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; November to March, 1 p.m.-4 p.m.

COSTS

St. James's Church: Open January to March and November — 10 a.m.-noon and 2-4 p.m.;

April to October — 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; December — 10 a.m.-4:45 p.m. Daily tours of the church are available.

Rothenburg Museum: Admission is 6 euros for adults, 5 euros for groups with a minimum of 10 people, students, handicapped and retirees; 4 euros for youths 6-18 years old. You have to pay 5 euros to get a permit to take pictures inside the museum.

INFORMATION

Online: rothenburg-tourismus.de/e

— Immanuel Johnson

Germany experiencing decline in air travel due to 'flight shame'

Mounting concern about carbon emissions may be altering travel habits in Europe's largest economy as figures from German airports show a steady decline in passengers taking domestic flights.

The number of people flying between German cities fell 12% in November from a year earlier, according to the ADV industry group, marking a fourth straight monthly drop and mirroring a pattern emerging in Sweden, where teenage activist Greta Thunberg has spearheaded a campaign against air transport. Rail firm Deutsche Bahn AG has meanwhile reported record passenger numbers.

The data adds to signs that climate change is fostering a sense of so-called flying shame — flygskam in Swedish — that's causing some people to avoid one of the most polluting forms of travel. The phenomenon may be more advanced in Germany after the country's suffered a series of extreme weather events that saw it buffeted by thunderstorms and the Rhine River running dry.

"To me, this is evidence of heightened awareness of climate change turning to consumer action," said Stefan Gressling, professor of transport economics at Linnaeus University business school, Sweden, who analyzed the data and found that a slowing economy, strikes and airline failures didn't fully explain the slump.

The ADV numbers show that flights from Germany to other European countries have also declined to a lesser degree.

The tally for intercontinental journeys, where surface transport isn't practical and which are often less discretionary than shorter ones, involving family visits and key business events, is still increasing.

The German trends replicate those seen in Sweden, where airport operator Sverigeflyg AB reported in April that passenger numbers had dropped for seven consecutive months.

ADV has suggested that other issues might be at play in the slump, including strikes at Deutsche Lufthansa AG and the cancellation of routes between Berlin and three other cities. Gressling said that explanation doesn't stack up given that air passenger numbers have declined across the country.

Neither is the economy likely to have been a major factor, with household spending up 1.8% in the third quarter and consumer confidence rated "exceptionally high."

The German Union plans to impose a jet-fuel levy as part of its new Green Deal. Carriers including Ryanair Holdings Plc oppose the move and say nations could more effectively lower carbon emissions by investing in sustainable fuels and electric planes and simplifying air traffic control networks.

Alexandre de Juniac, head of the International Air Transport Association, last month urged carriers to better communicate what they're doing to reduce emissions, warning: "We expect anti-flying sentiment to grow and spread."

— Bloomberg

Germany DIRECTORY

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Wine for France,
Black Tea for England,
Manuka for New Zealand ...

What is the origin
of Red Ginseng
representing Korea?

The Pope,
the Queen of England,
French President ...

What did Korea give to
these heads of state as a gift
with 120 years of heritage?



Claiming a 76.9 percent
share of the market, (Korea Food and Drug Administration,
domestic sales in 2018)
loved for over 1,000 years ...

Which Red Ginseng brand
do Koreans love the most?

KOREA GINSENG CORP



Origin of Korean Red Ginseng, which represents health functional foods of Korea

Each country has its own foods for taking care of health. Like wine with France, Black Tea with England, and Manuka with New Zealand, Korean Red Ginseng has been associated with Korea. Korean Red Ginseng and its components may help prevent several types of harmful viruses. This supports the claim that Korean Red Ginseng boosts the immune system and illustrates why it has been a popular herbal remedy for more than 2,000 years.

6 Efficacies of Korean Red Ginseng



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Heritage of KGC, the professional of Korean Red Ginseng with 120 years of history

KGC(Korea Ginseng Corporation) was established in 1899, and has taken the lead in preserving the tradition of Korean ginseng for the past 120 years. KGC now runs four regional headquarters in the US, China, Japan, and Taiwan, and operates overseas branches in over 40 countries with more than 2,000 employees. Expanding our reputation as a ginseng specialist, KGC now aims to gain recognition as a global general health & wellness brand.

1899
2019
120th ANNIVERSARY

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CheongKwanJang is the Korean Red Ginseng brand created by know-hows and passion of KGC. It has been the national gift from Korea's president to other national leaders visiting Korea. This gift was also given to the leaders who participated in the 2019 ASEAN-Republic of Korea Commemorative Summit which took place in November 2019. We are extremely proud of our heritage and it is our mission to keep this tradition alive by introducing to consumers worldwide. A 76.9 percent share of the Korean Red Ginseng market!(source: Korea Food and Drug Administration, domestic sales in 2018) This figure just makes it obvious for CheongKwanJang to be the most beloved Korean Red Ginseng brand. Now it's your turn to share this loved one for an active & energetic lifestyle all year long. It's your turn to share our tradition for an active & energetic lifestyle all year long.



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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Plane-tary privilege

Power (and responsibility) are given to passengers in the window seats

BY NATALIE B. COMPTON
The Washington Post



ILLUSTRATION BY NOGA AMI-RAV/Stars and Stripes

When it comes to the best seat on a flight, travelers are split between the aisle and window for obvious reasons (window: the views and avoidance of drink-cart knee-bonking; aisle: more breathing room, convenience for lavatory trips and exiting the plane).

No matter what seat you're picking, we can agree that flying is a modern marvel. You're 30,000 feet in the air, soaring through the clouds at high speed to get to destinations near and far.

Window-seat-seekers often see the romance in that scientifically supported magic, seeing this perch as a coveted treasure. It brings the chance to see the Earth's majesty from a rapidly changing vantage point. You soar like a bird over the landscape of our diverse planet, its flora and fauna and fast-casual chains and freeways below. Mountain ranges rise and fall as your plane hums along its invisible path.

Frequent flyers may not feel as moved by the experience, preferring to sit here not for the scene but for its nook-like comfort. You can hole up, sleep relatively undisturbed and deal with the rest of life upon landing. These folks keep the shade shut, opting to catch up on emails, TV shows or shut-eye without a glare beaming into devices over their eyes.

No matter what camp you fall in, here are the unofficial rules for both breeds of window-seat passenger.



You are the ruler of the shade

The window shade breeds contempt and conflict among plane passengers. Some could never imagine shutting the thing, blocking the window's best feature: the ability to see outside. Others prefer to keep it down, opting for better sleep and better views of entertainment systems. Both parties have a point.

Because you selected — and perhaps even paid extra — to sit at the window, you have the final say in whether the shade stays up or down (excluding times flight attendants instruct you otherwise). That being said, just because you're the boss doesn't mean other people will respect your authority. Flying is generally a communal activity, and unless you're one of the incredibly lucky souls to get a row to yourself, neighbors may ask you to adjust from your own shade preference.

Some questions to keep in mind before you make that decision: Is the person asking you to change its status a child? A parent with a child who's trying to sleep? A person who has never flown before? An anxious flyer? Also consider your route. Are you flying into a new time zone, especially overseas? Controlling the window shade may have an effect on fellow passengers' internal clocks, as well as yours. Ultimately it's up to you, the occupant of the window seat, to decide whether you'll be a benevolent or omnipotent ruler.



Time bathroom breaks with the middle seat or aisle

Per the rule above, the way to be the most considerate window-seat passenger is to follow your neighbors' lead. Watch for the opportune time to make a break for the lavatory: when the middle is exiting, too. That's your queue to get up, capitalizing on everyone having to rise anyway.



Limit trips out of your seat

Our human bodies are not always easy to control. There's nothing unethical about frequently needing to use the restroom on a flight, or wanting to stand up and stretch. But if you're a person who fits either of these travel styles, don't book a window seat.

Sometimes requests to exit your row have nothing to do with bodily functions. If you pack your carry-on bag strategically so you have everything you need within reach when you're locked-in by the window, you can avoid making everyone stand while you grab your headphones/neck pillow/melatonin/beef jerky packed in the overhead compartment.

Particularly given the tiny nature of seats in economy, it's a hassle to squeak in and out of airplane rows these days. Don't plague your rowmates with a barrage of requests to leave your seat.



Lean into the window

This rule is ordained with the middle-seat passenger in mind. While you're tucked deep, deep into the row as the window-seat holder, you're also often blessed by a little alcove between your armrest and the window. Take advantage of those extra inches by leaning into that nook when possible. You'll alleviate some of your squished neighbor's misery in the process.



Overcome claustrophobia

If you're claustrophobic, this position is not for you. The window is for people who don't mind huddling up in a confined space for long periods, people who understand that with great power (controlling the shade) comes great responsibility (not getting up unless everyone's getting up).

The view from the window may be comforting if you're claustrophobic, but once you look ahead or to your side to see how you're crammed like a sardine, you could lose that sense of relief. Opt instead for the aisle, or, if your phobia is stemming from a general fear of flying, turn to apps that help nervous flyers.

Next week, the aisle seat is up for grabs.



WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific



Heart Rock is a popular spot for couples to visit on Kouri Island, Okinawa.

Affection for a heart of stone

Okinawa's Kouri Island popular with lovers and families alike

By **AYA ICHIHASHI**
Stars and Stripes

Kouri Island is one of the most beautiful island destinations in Okinawa.

About a 1½-hour drive from Camp Foster and Kadena Air Base, the island is connected by Kouri Bridge to the main island of Okinawa.

Recently my family visited from the main islands of Japan, and I thought they would enjoy a delicious lunch and Kouri's breathtaking turquoise ocean.

The bridge also links Yagaji Island with Kouri, and the downside view from the Yagaji side is absolutely amazing. I always want to mount a GoPro camera on my forehead to record the view while I am driving. Photo ops and restrooms are available in a parking area near some restaurants before the bridge crossing.

Kouri Island gained popularity after a Japan Airlines commercial featured the popular Japanese boy band Arashi at the Heart Rock in 2014. Many fans started to visit the tiny island and eventually people around the world found it, too.

What is the Heart Rock? It is two rocks standing just offshore from Teenu Beach. By viewing them from a certain angle, the two rocks overlap into one heart-shaped rock.

When word of this little trick spread, the island got quite popular with couples who swear their love in front of the heart-shaped rock.

Parking costs 100 yen to 500 yen depending on where you park. The trail down to the beach is a tad bumpy, so I recommend wearing something comfortable. I've visited here numerous times before the place got packed with tourists. It is bittersweet sometimes to see the drastic changes.



Kouri Beach, a popular swimming spot, has shallow water suitable for families with small children.

Kouri Ocean Tower is a new addition to the island's attractions. An amazing view from the tower overlooks Kouri Bridge. The tower also has a shell museum. Admission for adults is 800 yen and 300 yen for children 7-12.

Passing by the tower, I saw the familiar pink logo for Kouri Shrimp, which opened in 2014 in a small truck at a public parking lot near Kouri Bridge.

I was stunned by the garlic shrimp; it was almost as good as the Hawaiian garlic shrimp from Oahu's North Shore. I went back again and again with my kids, but sadly, Kouri Island got too popular, and so did the garlic shrimp. It became almost impossible to find a parking space, and eventually I stopped going. But this time I gave it a shot as Kouri Shrimp has opened a new shop on the island.

The new location is a modern, two-story wooden lodge. I could recognize it only because the owners still serve shrimp from the truck, and the familiar pink shrimp logo is visible outside.

We ordered the original garlic shrimp plate for 1,100 yen (\$10) and spicy garlic shrimp 1,320 yen (\$12).

I was a little skeptical about the quality of the food since the place has gotten so popular, but it tasted exactly as I remembered. My family devoured the shrimp in no time. Everyone must eat the garlic shrimp or suffer for the rest of the ride. Mmm, garlic.

You cannot consider your meal complete without a delicious dessert. We stopped by my favorite smoothie truck, Parlor Rosso, to get the best smoothie on the island. I picked an acerola smoothie for 900 yen. Acerola is a tropical, cherry-like fruit.

Parlor Rosso's main shop is in Motobu, but on the weekends its smoothie truck is at the parking lot by Kouri Bridge. The owner grows acerola, mango and passion fruit at another property, Yoha Mango Farm. The Keitt mango smoothie, 900 yen, is indescribably yummy.

The smoothies come with no additives, nor are they watered down. It's almost like drinking a puree. Rosso's mango smoothie tastes even better than eating a mango, and they're delicious.

Every little moment on Kouri Island will underscore how lucky you are to be on Okinawa.

ichihashi.aya@stripes.com
Twitter: @AyaIchihashi



Kouri Shrimp has been preparing delicious seafood out of a small truck since 2014. The delicious, decadent spicy garlic shrimp, below, is a must-try for seafood lovers.



Parlor Rosso serves the best smoothies on Kouri Island.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Northbound on the Okinawa Expressway, take exit 10 and continue north on Route 58. Take a right at Yofuke/Blue Seal intersection, then into a tunnel on the left. After two tunnels, make a right at the light to head north. Stay on Route 58 to Makiya/Family Mart intersection, then turn left. Stay on Route 110 passing through Ojima Island and Yagaji Island, then turn onto Route 247.

TIMES

Open year-round.

COSTS

Toll is 830 yen from Kitanakagusuku (Exit No. 3) IC to Kyoda (Exit No. 10) IC.

FOOD

Kouri Shrimp is your best choice for lunch and don't forget to try a Parlor Rosso smoothie on weekends.

INFORMATION

Kouri Shrimp, shrimp-wagon.com; Parlor Rosso, yoha.shop-pro.jp/?mode=f5

— Aya Ichihashi

WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW – MUSIC

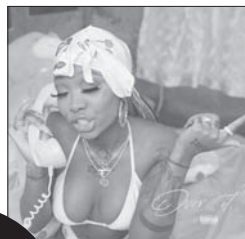
Top 10 albums

The top 10 albums of the year, as chosen by Associated Press Music Editor Mesfin Fekadu:



Ari Lennox, 'Shea Butter Baby'

A message to the Grammy Awards, in the words of pop music philosopher Mariah Carey: "Them chickens is ash and I'm lotion." Them is the Grammys, and the lotion is Ari Lennox's "Shea Butter Baby," a product that's clearly too expensive for the super-dry Recording Academy. A nomination — or eight — isn't necessary for any real music fan to realize how outstanding, soulful and poignant Lennox's debut album is. Every song on the 12-track set is a winner, with Lennox's voice and tone changing throughout the album, showing her skill, versatility and power. "Shea Butter Baby" feels as good as soaking in a warm bath, with the right candle — scent not too strong, but not too weak — illuminating in the background. It's hard not to play "BMO," which echoes Erykah Badu, fewer than 20 times a day; the title track with J. Cole is classic-sounding; and "Static" beautifully closes the album. Lennox's "Shea Butter Baby" is the best album of the year, no matter if awards shows think differently.



Summer Walker, 'Over It'

Summer Walker's debut album is perfect, as she spits matter-of-fact lyrics over some beats that borrow from classic '90s R&B hits including Usher, Destiny's Child and 702. But even when she's not sampling a song, Walker can hold her own, delivering a flawless album that's easy to obsess over.



Anitta, 'Kisses'

This Brazilian singer's first trilingual album — featuring songs in Portuguese, Spanish and English — is adventurous, from its drop-it-like-it's-hot opening number "Atencion" to the sweet sound of the closing track, "Voce Mentiu," which would make you want to slow dance with your lover. In between are tunes that range from reggaeton trap ("Banana") to groovy R&B ("Poquito") to addictive pop ("Get to Know Me"). And while the album is jam-packed with all-star male guests, including Snoop Dogg, Caetano Veloso, Swae Lee, Alesso, Prince Royce, Chris Marshall and more — leading lady Anitta is the true star of the show. You Anitta more Anitta in your life.



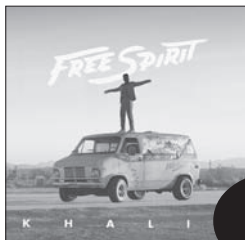
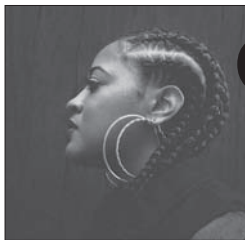
Buku Abi, "Don't Call Me"

Buku Abi's debut EP is an R&B masterpiece, as the singer explores life as a 21-year-old woman navigating in the world of love, dating, sexual freedom, situationships and more over beats produced by her sister Jaah Kelly. Her album echoes SZA and other women brilliantly leading the pack in alternative R&B, and it's proof that there's more to come from the daughter of embattled singer R. Kelly.

WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW – MUSIC

Rapsody, 'Eve'

2019 was a great year for female rap, as Megan Thee Stallion, City Girls, Kash Doll, Saweetie and more reached new heights at a time that vets in the game like Missy Elliott, Lil Kim, Trina and Yo-Yo put out new music. And then there's Rapsody. Her epic "Eve" album not only is the best female rap album of the year, it's simply the best rap album of the year. Her smart and skilled rhymes flow throughout the well-produced album, as each song is named after an iconic woman, from Nina Simone to Oprah Winfrey and Michelle Obama. After this album, someone needs to make a song called "Rapsody."

**Khalid, 'Free Spirit'**

Select any song on Khalid's sophomore album and you'll hear a hit.

Pink Sweat\$, 'Volume 2'

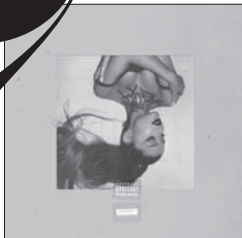
The Philadelphia-born musician, who has crafted songs for country duo Florida Georgia Line and rapper-singer Tierra Whack, is delightful on "Volume 2," a set of acoustic, guitar-friendly R&B tracks that must be replayed over and over again.

**Yola, 'Walking Through Fire'**

Yola's immense voice is so strong and soothing that it can't do anything but put a smile on your face. Paired with production from Black Keys' Dan Auerbach, this English singer is a powerhouse on her country-soul debut, "Walking Through Fire." And that's just it — the album is pure fire.

Ariana Grande, 'Thank U, Next'

It's probably not possible for Ariana Grande to make a bad album. All of her releases, including her fifth release, "Thank U, Next," are a perfect blend of radio-ready pop and R&B, and the songs are anchored by Grande's booming voice and relatable lyrics. Thank you, Ariana, but when's that next album coming out?

**James Blake, 'Assume Form'**

After years of being the go-to guy for help on your album, with big-names like Beyonce, Kendrick Lamar and Travis Scott requesting his services, James Blake calls in the favor on "Assume Form," and it was a smart move. Blake was already an amazing musician before this album, but opening his studio door to hip-hop producer Metro Boomin, co-producer Dominic Maker and engineer Nathan Boddy only maximized his downbeat electronic sound, with songs like "Mile High," "Can't Believe the Way We Flow," "Barefoot In the Park" with Rosalia and "Into the Red" sounding both contemporary and classic.

Top 10 songs

The top 10 songs of the year, as chosen by Associated Press Music Editor Mesfin Fekadu.

1. Jhene Aiko, 'Triggered (freestyle)'

Jhene Aiko brilliantly captures so many emotions in one song on "Triggered (freestyle)," as she rapidly spits out lyrics in a raw way that range from "I HATE YOU SO MUCH RIGHT NOW?" to "Sup, you up?" She's a ball of emotions, but she's direct and honest, and those lyrics are piercing and appealing, and make for a great song — rather, the song of the year. She's trying to move on, but she needs closure. She's saying I hate what you did, but I can't still be with anyone else intimately yet. She's angry. And bitter. And hurt. And healing. Overall, she's human. And she's a beast of a songwriter.

2. Sam Smith and Normani, 'Dancing With a Stranger'

Sam Smith's recent songs have been dance-flavored bops, and we need more of it.

3. H.E.R., 'Make It Rain – Live at Austin City Limits'

H.E.R. is one of the best live performers of our time, and her rendition of Foy Vance's "Make It Rain" is heavenly. Her magical guitar playing mixed with her powerful voice — and the voices of her groundbreaking background singers — make this track one of the best of the year.

4. Lewis Capaldi, 'Someone You Loved'

The award for the song most likely to make you cry goes to breakthrough singer Lewis Capaldi, who bares it all on "Someone You Loved," a song we loved all year long.

5. Daddy Yankee and Snow, 'Con Calma'

Though the contemporary Latin music world has been dominated by young and emerging acts, Daddy Yankee has continued to shine brightly, and he's even outshone most of his counterparts. Long after blazing the charts with "Gasolina," he's still putting out hits, and this year it was with the anthemic "Con Calma." And we're talking about the original version featuring rapper Snow, not the gentrified one with Katy Perry.

6. Kehlani feat. Ty Dolla \$ign, 'Nights Like This'

Kehlani and Ty Dolla \$ign are the prom king and queen of R&B thanks to this hella addictive track.

7. Chris Brown feat. Gunna, 'Heat'

Chris Brown's "Indigo" album has 32 tracks, but "Heat" is the hottest.

8. City Girls, 'Act Up'

Wake up. Brush teeth. Wash face and body. Listen to "Act Up." Leave the house feeling untouchable.

9. Rosalia and Ozuna, 'Yo x Ti, Tu x Mi'

Rosalia. Can. Do. No. Wrong.

10. Normani, 'Motivation'

I probably account for 70 million of the 72 million views Normani's fun, striking and eye-popping "Motivation" has on YouTube. The song and video is just the beginning for this future icon.

WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW – VIDEO GAMES

10
BEST
of 2019

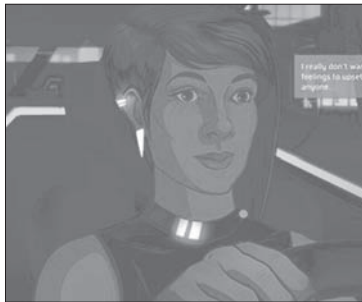
BY CHRISTOPHER BYRD
Special to *The Washington Post*

As the gaming industry revs up for the next console cycle — set to begin late next year when Sony and Microsoft kick off the ninth console generation — economic tallies show the industry to be in good shape. According to an industry report published by Newzoo, consumers will spend more than \$152 billion on games this year, an increase of more than 9% over last year.

Although this year didn't see the emergence of any industry-shaking trends, there were plenty of games released in 2019 to cater to a wide variety of tastes, from all-ages titles such as "Luigi's Mansion 3" to games such as "Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice," targeted at challenge-hungry players. In assembling this year's Top 10 list, I leaned toward the titles that surprised me with their forward-thinking aesthetics, challenges to convention or sheer ability to dazzle.

'Death Stranding' (PlayStation 4)

The word "divisive" probably popped into the head of every reviewer who played "Death Stranding" before it launched. It was (and is) easy to wonder who will get behind a AAA game about a delivery man who plies his trade across an arduous landscape overrun with ghostly entities. If the idea of making deliveries back and forth sounds a bit grindy, well, it is. But "Death Stranding" rewards commitment. Here is a game with an aggressively imaginative storyline, memorable characters (O'Mama!), an innovative take on co-op and a raft of interesting gameplay systems. Don't be surprised if, in the years to come, the merits of this game are debated vigorously.



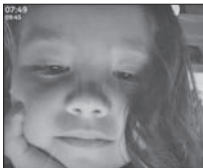
Fellow Traveler

'Neo Cab' (Mac, PC, Nintendo Switch)

This socially-conscious visual novel imagines what the future of the gig economy might look like in a world where tech firms hold more sway over how we live and work. "Neo Cab" tells the story of Lina, a woman struggling to make ends meet as one of the last human cabdrivers in a city dominated by driverless cars. Though Lina has deep misgivings about the tech industry, she wears a Peelgrid bracelet, which monitors the fluctuations in her body and displays her emotional state to the world via different colors. Because certain conversational options are linked to Lina's emotional state, "Neo Cab" encourages artful manipulation. This one's for anyone revolted by the exploitative nature of hustle culture.

'Telling Lies' (iOS, PC)

Pushing the boundaries of what video games can be, Sam Barlow's latest live-action game turns players into voyeurs and asks them to comb through a trove of video messages related to an undercover law enforcement operation that went sideways. This unusually intimate game offers a snapshot of our era, where the boundaries between work and home life have grown increasingly tenuous and privacy is an illusion. (If you play this and read Edward Snowden's biography, "Permanent Record," you will be chilled.) Excellent performances by Alexandra Shipp, Logan Marshall-Green and Kerry Bishe show why awards for best acting in a video game deserve increasing visibility.

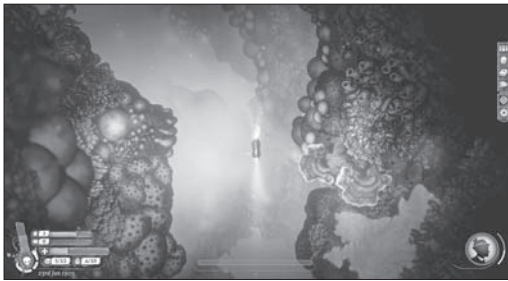


Annapurna Interactive

'Disco Elysium' (PC)

You're a wreck, but what kind of wreck are you? That's one of the things you'll have to decide if you step into the shoes of the bloated, disheveled, amnesiac cop at the center of this peculiar RPG. In "Disco Elysium," the demands of your body for comfort and stimulation are pronounced — literally. As you progress through the game, you'll have an ongoing conversation with various aspects of your body, including various centers of cognition (e.g. logic, perception, empathy). As you plumb your character's psychology and physiology, you'll investigate a knotty murder mystery that thrusts you into a world of clashing political ideologies. "Disco Elysium" proves that you don't need spells, swords or bullets to anchor a compelling 40+ hour RPG.

WEEKEND: YEAR IN REVIEW – VIDEO GAMES



Failbetter Games

'Sunless Skies' (Mac, PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One)

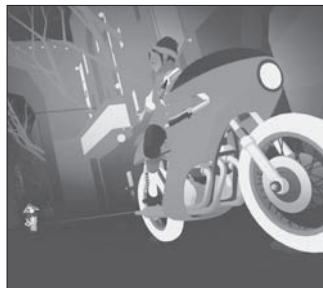
If you relish the cadence of a well-turned sentence and delight in the trappings of steampunk genre, then this text-heavy RPG about the ill-fated travels of space-faring adventures should be just the ticket. "Sunless Skies" projects a world where the British used locomotives to travel the stars and establish trading outposts. The game offers a wealth of fantastical tales that will take players to an artist colony built on a gigantic orchard and beyond. Expect the worst. You will be tricked. You will be cheated. You will be treated to abominable sights. You will die many times. No matter — "Sunless Skies" is hard to let go.

'Observation' (PC, PlayStation 4)

There are a number of video games that revolve around space station disaster plotlines, but "Observation" brings something different to the table. Rather than casting players in the familiar role of a distressed astronaut, this sci-fi game with an analog look asks players to assume the responsibilities of a ship's A.I. computer to help said astronaut. This setup undercuts the usual identification with an avatar, which is such an important component of so much video game design. Instead, it emphasizes difference — how dissimilar a player is to a machine. Moving through and outside the spaceship in the Connection Sphere, a small floating extension of the ship's A.I., may remind movie buffs of those mesmerizing shots in films like "2001: A Space Odyssey" and "Gravity."

'Outer Wilds' (Mac, PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One)

All too often, sci-fi games hew to overly familiar templates, making feelings of genuine wonder hard to come by. The space exploration game "Outer Wilds" eludes this fate by cultivating an aura of mystery. Embark on a mission to discover the fate of a vanished civilization whose remaining traces seem genuinely strange. "Outer Wilds" is very much a game of the Internet era. Some of its puzzles might seem too opaque if there weren't guides a click away.



Simogo/Annapurna Interactive

'Gears 5' is the rare action game that you won't tire of playing.

Xbox Game Studios

**'Gears 5' (Xbox One, PC)**

When Microsoft purchased the rights to the "Gears of War" franchise from Epic Games in 2016, many wondered if the series, which popularized covered shooters, would stagnate. "Gears 5" should lay to rest those concerns for the time being. A well-paced campaign, which varies the tempo from firefight to firefight, coupled with some best-in-class visuals on the Xbox One X, make this a perfect treat for itchy trigger fingers.

'Sayonara Wild Hearts' (iOS, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4)

Sail into the night on a skateboard, motorcycle or car in this hybrid racing and rhythm game. "Sayonara Wild Hearts" tells the story of a brokenhearted girl who becomes drafted to set things right in another universe. Backed by an amazing soundtrack, this dreamy, stylish, bite-sized game is meant to be played over and over.

'A Plague Tale: Innocence' (PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One)

Set during the time of the Black Death in a southern French province, "A Plague Tale: Innocence" tells the story of a sister and brother on the run from a renegade faction of the Church. The young stars of the game are sympathetic figures. They don't hopscootch from one perilous situation to another. Rather, they take the time to process their circumstances. Featuring some of the best use of HDR lighting of any recent game, "A Plague Tale" is visually sumptuous and boasts one of the more memorable final boss fights in recent memory.

Focus Home Interactive

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Rest (un)easy

The challenges of holiday travel with a sleep disorder

By SCOTT LAIRD
TravelPulse

Traveling during the holidays can be stressful, and it can be even more stressful for travelers who have a sleep disorder. It's estimated that between 50 million and 70 million Americans are living with sleep disorders. Sleep disorders interfere with natural sleep patterns (called circadian rhythms) and can include insomnia, sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, narcolepsy and somnambulism, or sleepwalking.

A recent study of 1,000 travelers found that 53% of people with a sleep disorder planned to travel this holiday season, yet 22% of those say they try to avoid overnight trips because of their sleep disorder. Concerns about overnight trips ranged from traveling with assistive devices for sleep disorders, such as CPAP (Continuous Positive Airways Pressure) machines, to oversleeping and being tired or keeping others awake.

One traveler who uses a CPAP machine to sleep restfully noted, "I had a (hotel room attendant) leave a note asking that I not use drugs while I was staying at the hotel. The note was left next to my CPAP, with an arrow pointing to my CPAP machine."

Others who travel with CPAPs noted the difficulty of traveling with them. One in 10 survey respondents who self-identified as having a sleep disorder reported that they had missed a flight because their CPAP or other assistive device was held up at the security checkpoint.

There were also some puzzling inconsistencies in respondents' holiday lodging plans: 47.2% of travelers with a sleep disorder said

they would avoid staying at a friend or family member's house due to their sleep disorder, but for the upcoming holiday, travelers with sleep disorders reported they were just as likely to stay with family (65.5% of travelers with sleep disorders

vs. 65.6% of travelers without sleep disorders), more likely to stay with friends (10.4% vs. 8.2%) and slightly less likely to stay in a hotel (17.8% vs. 19.9%).

Fear of missing planned activities and transportation was another major concern among survey respondents, with 71.3% of respondents with sleep disorders citing staying up too late and being tired the next day as a top challenge.

Some reported that they had previously overslept and missed planned events. One traveler with insomnia noted, "I ended up missing my flight and having to stay an extra night, and then missed it again. This was all because I couldn't sleep most of the night, and when I finally did sleep, I overslept."

Here are a few tips for travelers with sleep disorders who are anticipating travel during the holiday season:

- **Identify your CPAP:** U.S. law requires air carriers to transport CPAP machines and other assistive devices outside of the normal carry-on limits for passengers. If you're told you have too many carry-on bags and your CPAP is the excess, simply identify it as a CPAP, and it won't count toward the limit.

- **Travel with an extension cord:** Most hotels will provide extension cords or power strips, but when staying elsewhere, outlets may not always be convenient. A power strip can be a convenience when traveling with a CPAP.

- **Two words: Melatonin gummies:** Melatonin is the natural hormone that regulates the sleep-wake cycle, and melatonin supplements can be used as a sleep aid. Melatonin is available in gummy or pill form over the counter in the United States and Canada.

A woman wears a CPAP mask for treating sleep apnea, a type of sleep disorder characterized by pauses in breathing or instances of shallow or infrequent breathing during sleep.

ROBERTO MACHADO NOA, LIGHTROCKET - GETTY IMAGES/TNS

Do sheet masks for your face live up to the hype?

By ELIZABETH KIEFER
Special to The Washington Post

With cold weather and holiday-party makeup wreaking havoc on complexions, revelers might find themselves reaching for sheet masks to soothe their skin and provide a bit of relaxation. The face-shaped, serum-soaked sheets — which typically come one to a pouch and promise hydration, exfoliation or detoxi-

fication, among other benefits — have exploded in popularity, linked to a rising interest in Korean beauty products and appearances on Instagram.

Skin-care face mask sales have nearly doubled in volume over the past five years, reaching \$205 million in sales in 2019.

Once the purview of high-end and luxury lines and Asian markets, these products now regularly turn up in the check-

out aisles of Old Navy and Walmart.

"It used to be more unique," says Larissa Jensen, a beauty industry analyst at market research firm NPD Group. "Now you can buy them anywhere."

"The ingredients that are in a sheet mask are often very similar to those in a cleanser, toner, serum or moisturizer," says dermatologist Arash Akhavan, founder of the Dermatology and Laser Group in Manhattan.

As with those products, a sheet mask can have an obvious effect on the appearance of your skin.

For example, a mask containing hyaluronic acid, which draws in moisture, is anti-inflammatory and can diminish the look of fine lines and leave your visage with a glow.

The effects, however, are ephemeral. "Your skin is hydrated so it appears better, but that's a short-lived improve-

ment that will fade with time as your skin goes back to its more natural hydration state," Akhavan says.

The bottom line is that sheet masks can provide a temporary boost. "A mask periodically, if you find it relaxing or you're preparing for an event where you want to look super hydrated and plump? Go for it," Akhavan says. "But it's not a necessary step in anyone's routine."

WEEKEND: FAMILY



More than words

Tips for making resolutions you will keep

By **BARTON GOLDSMITH**
Tribune News Service

The New Year's resolution really only works for gyms. They get lots of sign-ups, but more than half the people who make those costly commitments do not follow through on them. Personally, I like to be inspired, not directed, and forcing myself into a smelly gym is not my thing. Here are some other ideas about making changes that may work a little better for you too.

Believe in fresh starts

Most people either have that attitude or would like to have it. Make it a reality for yourself by adopting a fresh-start mindset. Everything is new again, and you get a psychic do-over on Jan. 1.

See your resolutions as a growth process

Making a list of the changes you want to see in your life is a good way to start off the new year and knowing that you don't have to do them all at once also helps.

Let go of past resentments

I do this every year. For most of us, everyday living can sometimes trigger bad memories. And even if you're in the habit of regularly letting go of negative emotions, an annual purge won't hurt.

Prepare for the year ahead

It may be a good time to do some financial planning, like creating a budget or getting your taxes going. Squaring away as much of your financial burden as you can at the start of the year will make the rest easier.

Choose a healthy lifestyle

This isn't a one-time thing, but rather an ongoing choice and attitude toward life. Joining a gym won't help you if you eat junk food. It's all about balance and making decisions that you just know are good for you.

Forgive yourself first

You may not see it, but you've probably been too hard on yourself this past year, and it would be good to let

yourself off the hook. None of us is perfect. We all make mistakes, and yours was likely not even that profound, so stop giving yourself grief. Let it go.

Apologize if you need to

Is there anyone to whom you owe an apology? If so, why not get it over with and use the holiday spirit as a motivational tool? Admitting you were wrong can be hard, but living with the regret or guilt is harder. All it takes is a simple "I'm sorry."

Be true to yourself

Usually we make resolutions for other people, but it's wise to make a promise to be better to yourself as well. This doesn't mean to be indulgent, but to be psychically kinder to yourself.

Keep your cool

This is going to be a very interesting political year, and everyone is going to have an opinion. I strongly urge you to choose to participate, but to also keep any toxicity away from your relationships.

Keep your promises

A resolution is a promise you've made to yourself, and that's a good thing. Keeping promises you've made to those who count on you is even better. We all slip up sometimes. When that happens, it's important to remember that we're only human, and then have the courage to own up.

This is a new year, with new joys and challenges. Be open to the good, don't hold on to the bad, and try to be a little bit nicer than anyone else. That alone can make for a good year.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Glowing up in 2020

I find that the optimal time for one to muster motivation for self-improvement is right after one has polished off an entire pint of ice cream.

"Okay, that's it!" I recently bellowed to my college-aged daughters after tossing an empty carton into the kitchen trash can. "I'm dead serious this time — In 2020, I am finally going to become my best self!" I wasn't exactly sure what that entailed, but the pint of ice cream had triggered an all-too-familiar level of personal disgust that I had experienced many times before. The midslide of rocky road sloshing in my stomach had brought me to rock bottom, and I was ready for something new. Not a new ice cream flavor, but a new path. A new way of doing things. A new attitude.

A new and improved me.

"I don't care if I'm fifty-three years old!" I ranted, dropping my spoon into the sink with a clank. "I'm finally going to learn portion control, for criminy's sake. And ... and also ... I'm going to stop staying up so late, I'm not gonna bite my nails anymore, I'm going to take my vitamins, I'm going to stay organized," I counted dramatically on each of my sticky fingers. "I'm not going to make excuses, and I'm gonna do things right, once and for all!"

"Glow up, Mom," my daughter Anna said from her seat at the kitchen island, nonchalantly smirking at her sister. She and Lilly were accustomed to my hormonal mood swings. They stared blankly at the countertop television as if I made such dramatic proclamations every day.

"Wait. What do you mean 'glow up'?" I asked, stopping in front of Anna. She craned her neck to see her show around me, and responded without looking, "You know, Mom — you do you, be confident, don't let anyone get you down."

"Hmm," I thought for a minute. "I like that ... Yeah, that's exactly what I'm going to do. I'm going to glow up in 2020!"

Mildly amused, my daughters egged me on with woots and fist pumps, their eyes only temporarily deviating from their reruns.

"Giddyup, Big Mamma!"

"Go on wit ya bad self!"

"Pop off, sis!"

"No cap!"

I had no idea what Anna and Lilly were shouting at me, but apparently, they were offering modern colloquial phrases of support and encouragement. And I knew I would need all the help I could get.

Despite the fact that self-discipline had never been my strong suit, that afternoon in the kitchen with my daughters, I felt a true sense of determination to change. As a middle-aged woman, I knew I would need to buck the "old dog" stereotype. Could I learn new tricks at my age?

I reminded myself that I had spent 23 years as a Navy wife and mother of three — I had tackled challenges before. Deployments, loneliness, career challenges, managing the household alone, trying to make new friends, 11 moves, financial worries, military retirement, feelings of isolation, longing for the comfort of military culture. Memories of our military life seemed to woot and fist pump at me, just as my daughters had.

My determination to succeed at self-improvement seemed more real than ever before. But I was still facing at least a week of seasonal festivities, houseguests, chaos and clutter. I knew I would need to put some safeguards in place to minimize the risk that my motivation would wither and die like our Christmas tree.

First, I Googled the term to make sure my girls weren't punking me. To them, nothing was more hilariously than to hear their middle-aged mother misuse modern phrases. To my relief, the pop culture blogs confirmed that "glow up" was generally defined as "a personal transformation" that includes "increased self confidence" and "a positive change in one's lifestyle."

Perfect. Next, I made a call to the base gym to book personal training sessions, listed my 2020 goals in a new organizational calendar and painted my nails.

"Glow up, Big Mamma," I told myself, confident that in 2020, I would do whatever I set my mind to.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

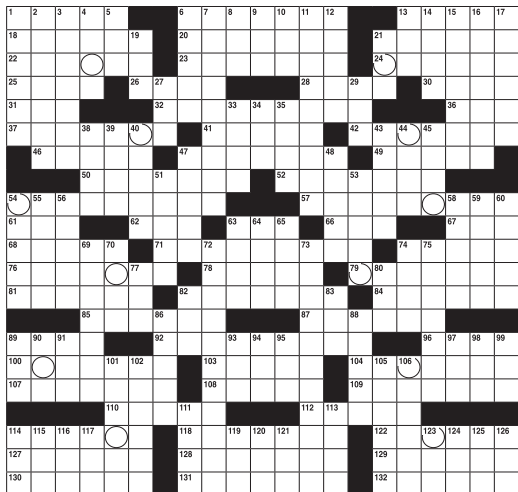
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

DOING A DOUBLE TAKE

BY CHRISTINA IVERSON AND JEFF CHEN / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Christina Iverson of Ames, Iowa, is a stay-at-home mom with an almost-2-year-old and a child on the way. She started solving puzzles only in the summer of 2018. She found it was an easily interrupted activity when her baby was constantly waking up in the evenings. Also, "Crosswords met my need for something more intellectually stimulating than reading 'Goodnight Moon.' Soon she made it a goal to have a puzzle published in The Times. Her collaborator, Jeff Chen, is a writer and professional crossword constructor in Seattle. They met through Jeff's daily column on the website XWord Info. — W.S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Sandwich with an apostrophe in its name
 - 6 Last-minute eBay bidders
 - 13 _____ Speaker
 - 18 Family written about by Margaret Mitchell
 - 20 Laureate
 - 21 California city whose name translates to "the table"
 - 22 Concise and to the point
 - 23 Improvement
 - 24 Desirous
 - 25 Word with coin or ring
 - 26 Enclosure for a slush pile, for short
 - 28 Salsa and guacamole
 - 30 Foie of the Jedi
 - 31 Boor
 - 32 This puzzle's subjects, by another name
 - 36 Beats by _____ (audio brand)
 - 37 For now
 - 41 One of 24
 - 42 Group running a celeb's social media accounts, say
 - 46 "My _____"
 - 47 Fragrant item in a fireplace
 - 49 Doorway
 - 50 What violence might lead to
 - 52 Political figure on whom Snowball is based in "Animal Farm"
- DOWN**
- 54 Hitting close to home?
 - 57 Pattern on a barber pole
 - 61 Shade
 - 62 Word before rip or slip
 - 63 F.D.R.'s last veep
 - 66 Boatload
 - 67 Youngest animal in the Hundred Acre Wood
 - 68 Daily cable show that has covered Hollywood since 1991
 - 71 Part of a parade float on New Year's Day
 - 74 Send over the moon
 - 76 Dates imposed
 - 78 Aier of "Arrow" and "iZombie"
 - 79 Party notifications sent with a click
 - 81 Members of an monastère
 - 82 "Well, golly!"
 - 84 Maximally mannered
 - 85 "None for me, thanks"
 - 87 Brain, slangily
 - 89 Cry just before the birthday guest arrives
 - 91 At a surprise party
 - 92 Juniors, to their fathers
 - 96 Tingling, in a way
 - 100 Toodles, as hair
 - 103 Muscat native
 - 104 Bog growths
 - 107 Bit of off-road equipment
 - 108 Where Orange County is, in brief
 - 109 Something with many variables to consider
 - 110 Chow down on, biblically
 - 112 Judea and Sheba, in the Bible
 - 114 Warehouse stacks
 - 118 Relating to theft on the high seas
 - 122 Some South Africans
 - 127 French schoolteacher
 - 128 Chord known as "the devil in music" on account of its unsettling sound
 - 129 Title role played by Hilary Swank in a 2009 biopic
 - 130 "Aias" _____
 - 131 Good thing to find on a boat
 - 132 Agreeable response to a parental order



- 1 Can opener
- 2 Company that introduced Eich A Sketch
- 3 Takes the plate in place of
- 4 World of Warcraft enemies
- 5 "Boo-____!"
- 6 "Quiet, you!"
- 7 Admiration before Christmas morning
- 8 Dutch banking giant
- 9 "____ supesuper" ("Spanish 'Of course'")
- 10 Presidential time
- 11 Contributors to "the front page of the internet"
- 12 Welcome, as a guest
- 13 _____ tai
- 14 Tsp. or tbps.
- 15 George W. Bush's nickname for himself, with "the"
- 16 Where to set your butts down
- 17 Pandemonium
- 19 _____ admin
- 21 Retro-cool music purchases
- 27 Producer of bills
- 29 When repeated, "Cheer!"
- 33 The Jets, but not the Giants
- 34 Lead-in to long
- 35 Drink with a straw
- 38 Hatcher of "Lois & Clark"
- 39 Lawman at the O.K. Corral
- 40 In the slightest
- 43 What amber comes from
- 44 Cleaning up the mess, for short?
- 45 Texter's "ciao"
- 48 "____ nut!"

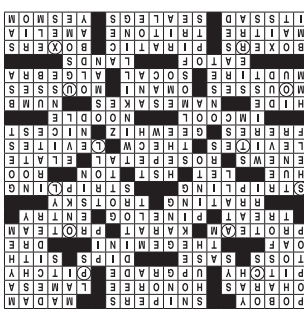
- 70 Florist's cutting
- 72 Weather phenomenon whose double lights were said to represent this puzzle's subjects
- 73 Baseball double-play, in slang ... or a hint to understanding the 12 Across answers that have circles
- 74 Like a "mwa-ha-ha" laugh
- 75 Freedom
- 77 Abbr. on a keyboard key
- 80 Derrière
- 82 India's smallest state
- 83 Orange Sesame Street monster
- 86 It's a start
- 88 Founder of the Ottoman Empire
- 89 "That's odd. ..."
- 90 Chis inits.
- 91 Wet firecracker, e.g.
- 93 Game akin to goth
- 94 _____ fly
- 95 Finish of three U.S. state names
- 97 Flash-drive port
- 98 The big cau
- 99 Org. that began welcoming girls in 2019
- 101 California's _____ National Forest
- 102 Wiped
- 105 Seasoning in a yellow-and-blue tin
- 106 Disgusting, quaintly
- 111 Picks, with "for"
- 113 Near-impossibilities on par's-holes
- 114 Fig. watched by some dieteters
- 115 Bit in a feedback
- 116 Some fraternity-row letters
- 117 G.R.E. administrator
- 119 Coastal inlet
- 120 "The pond?" Abbr.
- 121 Here's the kicker!
- 123 Marks out
- 124 Its seeds whir! to the ground
- 125 Hit 2011 animated movie
- 126 Pusher of green eggs and ham

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

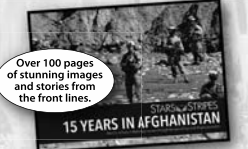
RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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FACES

humble
TO A FAULTJAY L. CLEMMEN
Los Angeles TimesBy GLENN WHIPP
Los Angeles Times

When other people were out celebrating the New Year at the end of 2018, Robert Pattinson was staring at an empty calendar, thinking, “God. Nothing. My career is over. I need to quit. I need to start finding work in other industries.” Music? Maybe. Japanese toilet spokesperson? Why not? His public love for them has made many converts.

Within months though, Pattinson had landed two huge roles, first in Christopher Nolan’s 2020 globe-trotting action-thriller “Tenet” and then the lead role in Matt Reeves’ “The Batman,” set for 2021. His professional anxieties eased, Pattinson soon found another thing to worry about.

“I immediately thought, ‘Oh God, does that mean I’m going to get a really bad disease?’” Pattinson says, laughing. “I just had a really weird feeling about it. I’m always scared of blowing all my luck, and getting both those jobs, one right after the other.”

His modest comments bring to mind Willem Dafoe recently saying of Pattinson, with no small amount of exasperation: How do I deal with this charming self-deprecation?

Dafoe’s question was less an inquiry and more of an act of surrender to Pattinson. For most of November, they had been going around together, doing countless interviews in support of their movie “The Lighthouse,” Robert Eggers’ claustrophobic chamber piece about a couple of lighthouse keepers trying to keep madness at bay while at a remote island station.

At these events, Dafoe typically drives the conversation, much as his character does in the movie. He’ll talk about craft, preparation, rhythms of language, the sense of discovery that makes acting come alive.

Then Pattinson will puncture the whole thing with an offhand observation about feeling like he’s lumbering old capable of delivering only one emotion at a time, squeezing it out the way a large, flightless bird might produce an egg under the hard duress of labor.

And Dafoe will just throw up his hands because if you’ve seen any of Pattinson’s work — primarily in this recent, remarkable run of indie movies made with the likes of David Cronenberg, Claire Denis, the Safdie brothers and David Michod — you know that

he possesses actual, discernible gifts. On screen, Pattinson can convey self-mockery, vulnerability, intensity and insanity. In “The Lighthouse,” he often veers between these emotions in the same scene.

But ask Pattinson about any of this and he will cover his face with his hands and begin to massage those exquisite angular features that pop with such beauty in the dramatic, black and white photography of “The Lighthouse” and just laugh. Pattinson finds just about everything about life ridiculous, but any discussion of acting will steer him toward hysterics.

“I’ve always been fascinated by someone who tells me, ‘I like your choices in that scene,’ because I don’t even know what the options are,” Pattinson says, giggling. “I feel

‘I didn’t know you could go after the people you wanted to work with. And that’s what I’ve done the last eight movies.’

Robert Pattinson

tossing a coin, relying entirely on luck.”

And, yes, this is ridiculous, and Pattinson, 33, knows that full well. But in recalling his transition from playing the vampire romantic Edward Cullen in the “Twilight” franchise to making art house movies, Pattinson can peg the pivotal moment.

“It’s when David Cronenberg” called me for “Cosmopolis,”” Pattinson says, referring to the 2012 movie in which he played a Wall Street titan. Before that, all his auditions were for mainstream movies. “I didn’t know you could go after the people you wanted to work with. And that’s what I’ve done the last eight movies.”

That includes “The Batman.” Pattinson read about Reeves making a noir “Batman” movie and thought, “I haven’t done a big thing for ages. This is the one I want.” (His agents were shocked.) He badgered Reeves, met with him and producer Dylan Clark a number of times and finally secured an audi-

Surrender to the charm, self-deprecation
of the next Batman, Robert Pattinson

A24/TNS

Pattinson, right, stars with Willem Dafoe in the drama “The Lighthouse.”

tion. He spent three weeks preparing for his audition scene only to have all his work cast aside once he put on the Batsuit.

“The lesson I always learn is don’t ever bother preparing for anything because it’s pointless,” Pattinson says. “Every time I’ve heavily prepared a scene, I go in and they’ll say something like, ‘Oh, by the way, it’s zero gravity.’ Or: ‘It’s raining.’” And I’m like, “But I really wanted to play it this minute! I’ve been thinking about it every waking minute!”

Pattinson finds all this extremely amusing, and it’s impossible not to get caught up in his casual, good-natured and clear-eyed view of acting and stardom. Two years ago for a magazine cover profile, he was asked to do a video in which he’d interview his hair. He was furious. Now he’d probably do it. But at the time, it seemed too obvious.

“And I never want to do something for an audience... ever,” Pattinson says. “I think it’s literally disgusting.” He bursts out laughing at the force of his disdain.

“It’s just so disrespectful of people. I made this for you,” he continues, on a roll. “You don’t know me. How can you know what I want?” And it also indiscriminately audiences into thinking that they somehow are special because someone said, “I made it for you.” They didn’t make it for you. They made it for your money.

“Everybody should be making (things) for themselves. If no one likes it, you just have to do it more. And put it out more places. And eventually someone will like it. It has to work eventually.”

Spacey posts
bizarre video on
Christmas Eve

New York Daily News

Ho ho holy moly, that was uncomfortable.

Disgraced actor Kevin Spacey, seldom heard from since his #MeToo scandal blew up in 2017, posted a bizarre and disturbing video to YouTube on Christmas Eve in which he appears to channel his malevolent “House of Cards” role, murderous politician Frank Underwood — who was killed off in the wake of the allegations against the actor.

“You didn’t really think I was going to miss the opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas, did you? It’s been a pretty good year,” Spacey says to the viewer, breaking the fourth wall as his character did on the Netflix series. “And I’m grateful to have my health back. And in light of that, I’ve made some changes in my life, and I’d like to invite you to join me. As we walk into 2020, I want to cast my vote for ... more good in this world.”

Spacey, 60, added that he’s “dead serious.”

“It’s not that hard, trust me. The next time someone does something you don’t like, you can go on the attack. But you can also hold your fire and do the unexpected. You can ... kill them with kindness.”

Spacey was also with an onslaught of sexual assault allegations in 2017 in the wake of those leveled against then-movie mogul Harvey Weinstein.

The actor continues to maintain his innocence and he no longer faces criminal charges, as two of the cases were dropped in July, and an accuser from a third case died.

Since the allegations came to light, Spacey has only ever posted on Twitter three times, including Tuesday’s video.

‘Colors of the Mountain’
author Da Chen dies

Da Chen, the brilliant storyteller who drew from the hardships he suffered as a persecuted child growing up in the midst of China’s cultural revolution to create the critically acclaimed memoir “Colors of the Mountain,” has died at age 57.

Chen died of lung cancer on Dec. 17, his wife, Dr. Sun-Ling Chen, told The Associated Press on Tuesday from the family’s home in Temecula, Calif.

His most recent book, “Girl Under a Red Moon,” was published just three months ago.

Chen’s breakthrough came in 1999 with the critically acclaimed “Colors of the Mountain,” in which he recounted the abuses he and his family suffered.

A New York Times best seller, it has been published in seven languages and, like his other books, taught at schools and universities.

From The Associated Press

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OPINION

Proper implementation crucial for Space Force

By JAMES STAVRIDIS

Bloomberg Opinion

With the recent passage of this year's big defense bill, Congress authorized the creation of a sixth branch of the armed forces — the United States Space Force. The move reflects the growing militarization of space as the other branches have grown increasingly reliant on operations there. Despite criticism from spending hawks and late-night comics, Space Force is an idea whose time has come. But the public has questions: What will it look like? What will its mission be?

It's worth pointing out that the U.S. hasn't created a new branch of the military since the Air Force in 1947. While not without controversy at the time, that move simply recognized the reality at the time that air operations were going to become increasingly large and complex. That necessitated a cadre of true experts who would "grow up" thinking, planning, procuring equipment and actively conducting operations in that domain — alongside the Navy at sea and the Army ashore.

That is the essential rationale for the U.S. Space Force — given the complexity and scale of operations in space, that domain requires a dedicated mission force. Unlike Russia and China, which have had dedicated space forces, the U.S. has relied largely on the Air Force to run space operations, with supporting efforts from the Army and Navy. In many cases, that puts space forces at a disadvantage in a fighter-and-bomber-dominated Air Force. The basic mission of the Space Force will be to train, equip and organize to conduct military operations in space. That means running the extensive constellation of U.S. military satellites (currently managed by the services separately depending on function); operating the military's

launch facilities such as the Air Force's bases at Vandenberg in California and elsewhere; executing financial planning and programming to purchase satellites and ground support equipment; and, above all, training a specialized cadre of space officers and enlisted men and women.

It will start small with a few hundred specialists, probably reporting to a chief of space operations (a title resembling that of the head of the Navy, the chief of naval operations). Over time it will probably grow to 10,000 to 15,000 trainers, operators and leaders whose job will be to deliver capability in space to the 10 U.S. combatant commanders — the jobs I held at four-star level both for Latin America and Europe/NATO. During my seven-plus years in command, I would have relished being able to call a fellow four-star in charge of space to levy my needs for greater surveillance, communication and targeting. My successors will be able to do so.

With that, I have three pieces of advice for the new chief of space operations, whoever it is.

First, study the history. Both the creation of the Air Force in 1947 and the development of the Marine Corps offer powerful lessons. Learn how the first year and the initial decade of operations unfolded for the Air Force, studying the record to see how to avoid the pitfalls that have befallen. Those pitfalls include whether the services will resist giving up resources, whether the Joint Chiefs of Staff will pay heed to the "new" member, and what role Congress must take in giving initial lift to the new service. Likewise, the history of the Marine Corps, which remained a tiny adjunct to the U.S. until World War I and World War II created a narrative of largescale land operations — is instructive.

Second, build solid relationships, with both your boss — presumably the secretary of the Air Force — and the other

members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As the new kid on the block, you will require a good sense of humility, empathy and good humor to fit in the elite company of the other service chiefs. Likewise, building rapport with the other combatant commanders — who are the end users of the Space Force in conducting operations — will be crucial. Working closely with the U.S. Special Operations Command — which has both "train, equip and organize" and operational responsibilities — will be particularly helpful.

Third, push for a long tenure at the upper levels of the Space Force. One of the reasons the Navy's high-tech nuclear programs have succeeded is that the chief of naval reactors has always served a minimum of eight years in that essential job. To get the Space Force launched — pardon the pun — will require more than the typical four-year service chief tenure. Likewise, the other senior leaders of the Space Force should be in place for a longer tenure than is typical while it really gets off the ground.

On a lighter note, let's also remember that the ranks should be naval in character — after all, the Starship Enterprise was led by Captain James Kirk, not a Colonel Kirk — and that he always piloted the ship from the "bridge," not the "command post."

But whether we end up with an admiral or a general as the chief of space operations, it seems clear that space, this vital fourth domain of combat, requires a focused and dedicated branch of the armed forces to master it for the nation. The voyages of the Starship Enterprise may be a century and more away, but the voyages of the U.S. Space Force are about to begin.

Bloomberg Opinion columnist James Stavridis is a retired U.S. Navy admiral and former supreme allied commander of NATO and dean emeritus of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

How will Saudi prince employ situational awareness?

By BOBBY GHOSH

Bloomberg Opinion

Is Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman a reformer or a reactionary? The answer, maddening to those who love him as much as to those who loathe him, is that Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler might just be both those things. In a year when he was under especially close international scrutiny, thanks to the grotesque late-2018 murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, the prince — arguably the Middle East's most important figure — gave free rein to both sides of his public persona, presiding over both reform and repression. It did nothing to alter the impression of MBS, as he is commonly known, as a man who wants to have his cake as well as eat it.

The duality was on display in his interview with PBS' "Frontline," when he both acknowledged and averted responsibility for Khashoggi's killing. It had happened "under my watch," he allowed, but then sought to deflect blame by saying he couldn't know what all 3 million government officials were doing on any given time. A secretive Saudi investigation, followed by opaque court proceedings, led to sentences being handed down this week — but nobody was persuaded that justice had been done. For the record, the United Nations rapporteur on human rights has just murdered Mohammed "has a responsibility in relationship to the killing" and the CIA believes he gave the order.

There was an air of equivocation, too, in MBS' program of social reforms, where two steps forward in some areas — such as the relaxation of guardianship laws for women and regulations requiring gender-

specific entrances to restaurants — were accompanied by a step back in others. The arrest of intellectuals in late November echoed last year's shocking detention of women's rights activists, just weeks before the prince lifted a ban on women driving.

So Saudis can revel in such previously proscribed enjoyments as rock concerts, but actually asking for freedoms remains a precarious proposition.

In the country's other major story of the year, the prince was on the receiving end of mixed messages. The initial public offering of Saudi Aramco was the marquee project of MBS' Vision 2030 plan, and he invested a great deal of personal prestige in achieving a \$2 trillion valuation on the kingdom's cash cow. Although he had been persuaded by a battery of international bankers that this target was attainable, foreign investors mustered only lukewarm enthusiasm. In the end, Aramco had to shrink the size of its offering, even as it leaned on its asking for freest markets to get close to the intended target.

If there was one area in which MBS demonstrated a change in behavior, it was in the realm of foreign policy, and even there, it was as much about what he didn't do as what he did — the virtue of omission more than of commission. Saudi Arabia has not reprise its 2018 diplomatic contretemps with Canada, or its 2017 row with Germany.

Both of those spots were the product of Saudi overreaction to mild criticism. This year, MBS reacted with reassuring caution to a far greater provocation: Iran's attack on Saudi oil installations, which cut the kingdom's oil exports in half. It might be that MBS was held back from an aggressive re-

talation by uncertainty over whether the U.S. his main ally, would join another war in the Middle East — or the certainty that the Islamic Republic would.

Cold political reality may also explain efforts to end one of MBS' earlier follies, the Saudi-led war against Houthi rebels in the Yemeni desert. That assault has yielded nothing but embarrassment for the prince. At year's end, there was hope that the blockade on Qatar, another of the prince's missteps, might be walked back.

Realism is a sign of maturity; the region as a whole will benefit from more of it. In 2020, MBS' biggest foreign policy challenge in the new year will be to reckon with a belligerent Iran. His spine may be stiffened by the deployment of more U.S. military personnel to "assure and enhance the defense of Saudi Arabia," but he must know that President Donald Trump will have little appetite for a new war in an election year. A diplomatic breakthrough with Tehran is hard to imagine, but Riyadh might settle for a tense stand-off, so long as there are no more attacks on its oil installations or shipping.

At home, it is time for the prince to go back to the economic basics of his Vision 2030 plan: to make the kingdom less reliant on oil revenue and wean its people away from government employment and generous subsidies. Next year's budget is, typical of MBS' year, a mixed bag: the promise of spending cuts and a widening deficit.

Which MBS will we get in 2020? Chances are, both.

Bobby Ghosh is a columnist and member of the Bloomberg Opinion editorial board. He writes on foreign affairs, with a special focus on the Middle East and the wider Islamic world.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by the Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

NDAAs cost too much, didn't address military quagmires

The Orange County (Calif.) Register

Amid the theatrics of impeachment and opposition to impeachment, both parties took the time over the past two weeks to do what they always do: spend more, grow government, keep perpetual wars on autopilot and infringe on liberty.

Over the past two decades, the United States has spent or obligated as much as a trillion American taxpayer dollars on a foreign policy costly both in terms of dollars but, more importantly, lives. Most Americans, including most veterans, recognize that the costs have not been worth what we've gotten in return.

With the nearly \$740 billion National Defense Authorization Act, Congress had the opportunity to scale back the many conflicts the United States is involved in, or at least put hard limits on existing or future conflicts. Unfortunately, what was approved by the House and Senate did nothing of the sort.

A proposal to end the unauthorized U.S. support for the brutal Saudi-led war in Yemen was removed from the NDAAs amid White House pressure. Proposals to require Congress to finally reexamine the outdated 2001 and 2002 military force authorization bills have been treated as little more than black checks to the executive branch to wage limitless war were refused by the House. Likewise a proposal to make clear that any American war with Iran would require congressional authorization was also vetoed from making it to the final NDAAs.

Not a percent of them, the NDAAs marked yet another unjustified ballooning of military spending. Over the past six years, so-called defense spending has grown by \$120 billion.

On Dec. 11, the House overwhelmingly approved the NDAAs, 377-48, despite the many problems.

But, alas, the bipartisan consensus produced yet another big spending defense bill that pleased the president.

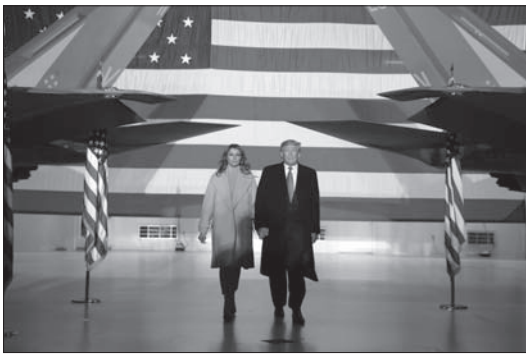
"Wow! All of our priorities have made it into the final NDAAs: Pay Raise for our Troops, Rebuilding our Military, Paid Parental Leave, and the Space Force and Space Force!" President Donald Trump tweeted. "Congress don't delay this anymore! I will sign this historic defense legislation immediately!" (And he did, on Dec. 20.)

Setting aside the merits of any particular provision the president cited, it's worth remembering that it comes to many of the biggest problems at hand, both parties are all too willing to continue indebting the nation while logging the other way as unnecessary wars drag on.

Senate doesn't have to wait for Pelosi to act to hold a trial

The Wall Street Journal

Speaker Nancy Pelosi continues to withhold the House articles of impeachment from the Senate, further trivializing a serious constitutional power and process. Senate Republicans seem content to play a waiting game, but they should take their own duties more seriously-



ANDREW HARNIK/AP

President Donald Trump arrives with first lady Melania Trump to sign the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 at Joint Base Andrews, Md., on Dec. 20.

ly and hold a trial.

One emerging dodge seems to be that President Donald Trump isn't formally impeached until the articles are transmitted to the Senate. This is absurd. The House voted on two articles and passed them with a majority. The House broadcast this fact to the country along with more-sorrowful-than-anger claims that they are doing their solemn constitutional duty.

There's nothing in the Constitution that says impeachment requires a formal transmittal of the articles to the Senate, or that the House must appoint impeachment managers. The parchment merely says the House has sole power over impeachment, and the Senate the sole power to try an impeachment. The act of impeachment is the vote.

The Founders also defined impeachment as consisting of two parts — the House vote followed by a Senate trial. They are two stages of the same process. The Founders gave the first impeachment step to the House knowing it would often be governed by populist and partisan passions. They gave the Senate control over the trial as a check on the House. They knew the Senate would represent the different interests of varied states. And with staggered elections every six years, two thirds of the Senate wouldn't face immediate re-election after a trial and vote.

This means the current Senate has a responsibility to fulfill its part of the Constitution's impeachment duty as a check on the partisan excesses of the Pelosi House. By making a fiasco of withholding the articles until she hears the Senate's specific plans for a trial, Pelosi is trying to dictate to the Senate how to hold a trial. But the Constitution reserves this power for the Senate. If she never sends the articles and there is no trial, she will have effectively trampled off executive power and Senate prerogatives by maligning a president without the chance for acquittal at trial.

She will be turning impeachment into the equivalent of a censure resolution wrapped in the claim of impeachment. This sets an awful precedent, making impeachment more likely because a president is unlikely to be removed, but also less potent if a president does deserve to be removed from office for real abuses. If impeachment without trial becomes common, genuinely dangerous presidents will cite that history as a partisan shield.

Current House rules say a trial isn't triggered until the House appoints impeachment managers who deliver the articles to the Senate. But those rules were written when senators never anticipated the House would treat impeachment in such a cavalier fashion.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., could tell Pelosi to nominate

managers by a certain date or he will appoint lawyers to make the case for the House. Or he could announce the start of the trial by a certain date, and proceed without the House managers if they fail to show up. The president's lawyers could make their case, and then the Senate could vote.

For Senate Republicans, their constitutional duty here is also the best politics. Don't join Nancy Pelosi in defining impeachment down. Honor the Constitution by holding a trial.

Key red states have practical reasons to welcome refugees

The Washington Post

Few places in the United States need fresh blood more than North Dakota, whose infinitesimal unemployment rate

it has more than three jobs available for every in-state applicant — reflects the state's oil boom. That didn't stop local officials in Burlleigh County, which includes the state capital of Bismarck, from calling for a ban on refugee resettlements.

North Dakota, which is nearly 90% white, is among the least diverse states, so it might be tempting to conclude that most of Burlleigh's 95,000 residents want to keep it that way. In fact, angry opposition killed the proposal to ban refugees in the county, where just a couple of dozen resettlements are expected in the coming year — not exactly an overwhelming burden.

That may surprise President Donald Trump, who, pandering to his nativist base, issued an executive order this past fall allowing states and localities to veto refugee resettlements. He did so having already slashed the ceiling on refugee admissions in the current fiscal year to 18,000, a 40-year low.

President Ronald Reagan cited the United States' embrace of refugees as evidence the nation cherished freedom. Trump has called them a "Trojan horse," a stealthy conveyance for internal attacks on an unsuspecting nation — despite the fact that few terrorist incidents here have involved refugees, who were legal immigrants heavily vetted by U.S. officials before their arrival.

The heartening news is that in many places, including conservative strongholds, Reagan's view of refugees has more appeal than Trump's. That includes Nebraska and Utah, where Republican governors have said they will welcome refugees. In Utah, the Republican governor, Gary Herbert, as well as Republican congressmen and local officials, have a clear message concerning refugees: Bring 'em on. "We empathize deeply with individuals and groups who have been forced from their home and welcome loving them a new home and a new

life," said Herbert.

In Colorado, a state whose congressional delegation is almost evenly split between Democrats and Republicans, Democratic Gov. Jared Polis said the state will gladly accept refugees turned away by other states or local jurisdictions.

Just four years ago, following a wave of terrorist attacks in Europe, 31 governors, all but one of them Republicans, said they opposed resettling Syrian refugees in their states. Now, the political ground may be shifting. No governor has yet publicly accepted Trump's invitation to bar the door to refugees. Whether some do in coming months may be a barometer of the president's success in turning the United States into a fearful, trembling nation, wary of newcomers — in effect, the opposite of the principles on which America was founded.

Future uncertain, but Notre Dame Cathedral endures

The New York Times

There will be no Christmas at Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral, the headlines read, the first such lapse in two centuries.

In ordinary terms, that was not really news. Yawning hollows in the roof still from the Gothic nave's wintering might mean that during the great fire, and not even workers are allowed in the middle because of the damaged roof beams precariously dangling above. The head of the task force charged with repairing the cathedral has promised that a religious service will be held on April 16, 2024, a day after the 800th anniversary of the cathedral, which would fulfill a pledge by President Emmanuel Macron to repair Notre Dame within five years. But that's optimistic — debates still swirl over how to rebuild the roof and spire that burned and collapsed.

But there was Christmas for the faithful of Notre Dame. The cathedral, the oldest cathedral here being using the nearby church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, a landmark only a couple of centuries younger than Notre Dame that once ministered to the royalty of the nearby Louvre Palace, and all the services of Christmas were celebrated on the plaza in front of the cathedral. Notre Dame's has been constructed there and the cathedral's lead 14th-century "Virgin of Paris" sculpture, untouched by the inferno, has been temporarily placed in Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois.

Still, even if there is no surprise, and no gap in religious observance, it is terribly sad for anyone who has ever been to Paris in winter to think that this year — and next year, and the year after that and for God knows how many more years — there will be no children gazing spellbound at the large, detailed crèche, no candles flickering in the light of the chandelier of the great organ for the "Messe de la Nativité," no crowd of awe-struck tourists looking forward to recounting how they celebrated Christmas at one of Europe's most familiar and wonderful landmarks.

It is a reminder of how great an emptiness the fire left in the heart of Paris and far beyond. But there is a thread of hope that is more than a masterpiece of medieval architecture, more even than a symbol of one of the great cities of the world. Like many of the earth's great cultural landmarks, it has a life of its own; it is a living character in art, literature, music and legend, and a place where a tired passer-by can drop in for some rest and quiet thought. It carries a message that every visitor can interpret in his or her own way.

There is nothing symbolic or spiritual, however, about the turbulent aftermath of the fire that broke out among the oak beams of the choir in Paris on April 15. An estimated more than \$1 billion has been raised or pledged, controversy rages over how to restore the roof. Proposals range from a faithful reproduction of the old roof and spire to a glass roof, a "spire" of light and even a rooftop swimming pool.

But when Paris is more than a battleground of past and present.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Crop duster drops holy water on town

LA ABBEVILLE — A Roman Catholic church in Louisiana decided to disperse some blessings to a local town via crop dusters.

According to a Facebook post from the Diocese of Lafayette on Sunday, members of St. Anne Church in Cow Island called upon crop duster pilots to help spread their blessing to the community.

The Rev. Matthew Barzare and parishioners of the church loaded 100 gallons of holy water into the planes, and the pilots sprayed the water onto the town and nearby farms, KATC-TV reported.

Parishioners also bought water from their homes to the airstrip to be blessed by Barzare.

Woman accused of faking cancer for money

IA NORTHWOOD — An Iowa woman was accused of lying about a cancer diagnosis so she could collect donations.

Jennifer Hope Mikesell, of Northwood, is charged with ongoing criminal conduct, fraudulent practices and forgery.

The Worth County Sheriff's Office said Mikesell, 43, had told people she was diagnosed with cancer and was receiving cancer treatments at Mayo Clinic Health System in Rochester, Minn. Iowa court records said Mayo had no record of Mikesell being diagnosed or treated there.

Mikesell received multiple donations of money, food and other supplies, as well as a bedroom makeover from My Happy Haven, the court records said.

Officials seize \$800K in fake merchandise

NC FAYETTEVILLE — Officials in North Carolina said they've seized \$800,000 in counterfeit merchandise at shopping centers and flea markets.

The Raleigh News & Observer reported that the sham goods included fake UGG boots, fake Louis Vuitton handbags and fake North Face Jackets.

The North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State said the sweep was conducted in the Fayetteville area. And it warned that Christmas shoppers should be wary of bogus goods.

Officials: City hall hit by bedbug infestation

AZ TUCSON — Officials said Tucson City Hall had been bugged for several months — with bedbugs that is.

The Arizona Daily Star reported officials said it took nearly three months to remove the small insects from the Arizona municipal building.

Officials believe the bedbugs were brought in accidentally from an outside source.

Tucson spokesman Andy Squire said that after the three-month removal, the city had to hire a Phoenix company earlier this month to bring in a specially trained dog to sniff out the remaining bugs.



MALCOLM DENEMARK, FLORIDA TODAY/AP

Surf's up for fundraisers

George Trosset Jr. and George Trosset, who started surfing in Santa and Christmas costumes 10 years ago behind their house on Christmas Eve, high-five each other during the 10th annual Surfing Santas event in Cocoa Beach, Fla., on Tuesday. Almost 10,000 spectators turned out for the event, which raised \$40,000 for two local nonprofits — Grind for Life, which helps with financial assistance for cancer patients, and the Florida Surf Museum.

Police: Thieves stole from rehabbed homes

MO ST. LOUIS — Two suspects now in custody are accused of stealing more than 800 items from St. Louis homes that were under rehabilitation.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that detectives believe the thieves monitored the rehabbed homes, waited until dark, and took hundreds of items that included stained glass windows, lawn mowers, generators and many other items.

Police said around 150 to 200 stolen items have been returned to their owners.

Thousands flock to giant holiday display at farm

GA STATESBORO — Roy Thompson's farm in southeast Georgia lights up after dark like a Christmas wonderland — not just the house, but the fields and even surrounding woods.

He said more than 45,000 carloads of people came to see the massive display during the holidays last year. This year, the family plans to welcome visitors through Sunday.

Tours are free, though the Thompsons encourage visitors to donate canned food, children's

THE CENSUS

10K

The number of trash bins with the word county misspelled in an Alabama town. The city of Prichard's new residential garbage cans say the town is located in "Mobile County," but they were supposed to say it's located in "Mobile County." The mistake isn't just in fine print; it's printed in large letters on two sides of the big, gray cans. The city doesn't plan to replace the bins, and that's fine with some people. "It doesn't really matter as long as they pick it up," said longtime resident Murlean Henderson.

toys, pet food and money to help area families facing hardships.

City mulls ending ban on throwing snowballs

WI WAUSAU — For decades, those who participated in snowball fights in one Wisconsin city risked getting in trouble with the law. But that may be about to change.

A 1962 ban on throwing projectiles in Wausau lumps snowballs into the same category as rocks and other items that can cause serious harm.

City Council President Lisa Rasmussen said that recent negative national attention over the rarely used ordinance has raised questions about whether it could be time to take snowballs off the naughty list.

The City Council will consider decriminalizing snowball fights at a meeting next month.

Nonprofit repairs, gives away nearly 50 bikes

MI LANSING — A Lansing nonprofit distributed nearly 50 bicycles to children after a dozen volunteers spent several weeks cleaning and repairing them.

The Lansing Bike Co-op staged the giveaway, offering the 49 used bikes to anyone on a first-come, first-served basis, the Lansing State Journal reported. There were no rules or requirements.

Every bike came with a red, green or blue helmet.

Thief sends money for stolen receptacle

KS TOPEKA — A Kansas County has an extra \$75 in its coffers thanks to a former thief with a guilty

conscience.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported that someone anonymously sent the money to Shawnee County along with a letter dated Dec. 18.

The letter states that the sender is in a 12-step program and working to make financial amends. It states that many years ago the writer stole a receptacle meant for cigarette ashes that was in front of the courthouse.

Influx of seagulls brings beach sounds to city

IN TERRE HAUTE — Unusually large flocks of seagulls descended on a western Indiana city, bringing the sounds of the beach to a local reservoir where the birds began gathering in late November.

Peter Scott, a retired Indiana State University ecology professor who directs an annual Christmas Bird Count around Terre Haute, estimated that between 400 and 1,000 of the birds have congregated at the lake.

He said ring-billed gulls aren't uncommon in Indiana but they prefer to winter around larger bodies of water.

Scott said the birds are most likely feeding on small fish in the lake.

From wire reports

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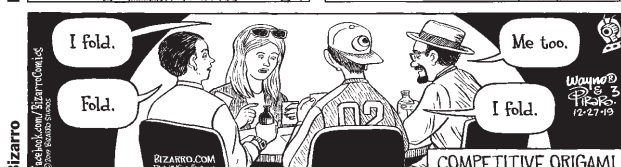
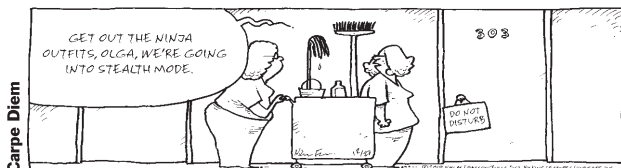
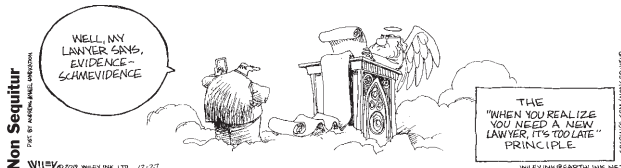
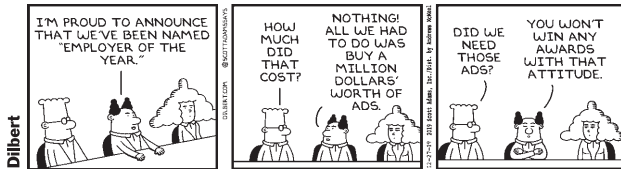
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- ACROSS**
- 1 "Unh-unh"
 - 4 Sharif of "Funny Girl"
 - 8 Duffer
 - 12 — Dhabi
 - 13 Sushi wrapper
 - 14 Cruising
 - 15 Curry powder spice
 - 17 Dark blue
 - 18 Canada's capital
 - 19 Barbie's companion
 - 21 Lass
 - 22 Euphoric
 - 26 Like April weather
 - 29 Cash dispenser
 - 30 Tic-tac-toe loser
 - 31 Gymnast Korbut
 - 32 Carefree
 - 33 Sulk
 - 34 Ring decision
 - 35 Pod veggie
 - 36 Head lights?
 - 37 Milk container
 - 39 Poetic dusk
 - 40 Haw preceder
 - 41 Spectrum creators
 - 45 Flag Day month
 - 48 Glancing rebound
 - 50 Latin love
 - 51 PC picture
 - 52 Dos Passos trilogy
- DOWN**
- 1 Peacekeeping org.
 - 2 Border on
 - 3 In pain
 - 4 Type of street
 - 5 Aesopian ending
 - 6 "Entourage" role
 - 7 Unstable, as a chair
 - 8 Woman of letters?
 - 9 Red — beet
 - 10 Gun the engine
 - 11 "Rah!"
 - 16 — Carta
 - 20 Shade tree
 - 23 Implement
 - 24 Big fair, for short
 - 25 Accomplishes
 - 26 Campus mil. group
 - 27 — Seltzer
 - 28 Mr. Stravinsky
 - 29 Motorist's org.
 - 32 Not brand-name
 - 33 Frenzied
 - 35 "The Bells" author
 - 36 Marsh birds
 - 38 "Ta-da!"
 - 39 Orlando attraction
 - 42 Close
 - 43 Arizona city
 - 44 Male deer
 - 45 Honey holder
 - 46 Ms. Thurman
 - 47 Yule quaff
 - 49 Post-op area

Answer to Previous Puzzle

P	L	U	G	R	A	P	S	F	B	I	
D	O	L	E	I	M	A	M	A	R	M	
F	U	N	N	B	O	N	E	C	A	P	
S	T	A	R	E	S	A	B	E	T	S	
			E	T	S	C	R	U	B		
A	R	F	S	P	H	I	B	O	M	B	
T	A	I	H	A	T	O	O	O			
M	E	L	T	A	M	Y	A	K	I	N	
			M	A	S	T	A	L			
R	A	B	B	I	P	R	I	D	E	S	
A	B	U	F	I	R	S	T	B	O	R	N
R	E	F	T	R	E	S	I	N	G	A	
A	L	F	S	E	P	T	S	T	O	P	

12-27

CRYPTOQUIP

KT PA GOFKZJ XJUL LC YCZJR

UDPU DJ KL CYHKCGLVE

RPERZJPOKAX, K LGFFCLJ

UDPU'L ZJTJZJJ ZJHJZKJ.

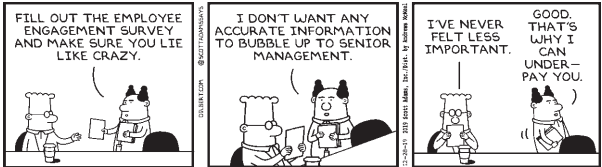
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: VERY POWERFUL SOLAR RAYS THAT CAUSE PEOPLE TO WANT TO FIGHT EACH OTHER: ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals U

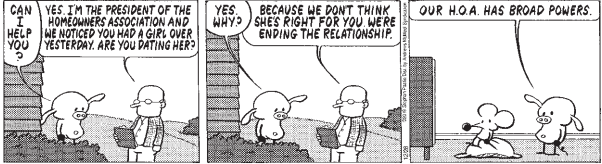
Frazz



Dilbert



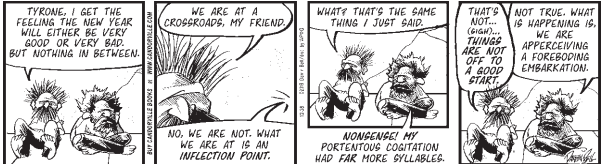
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



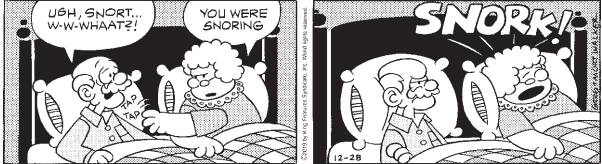
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11
12								13				
14								15				
16						17	18				19	
			20	21				22	23			
24	25	26		27				28		29	30	31
32			33					34				
35						36				37		
			38	39		40				41		
42	43			44	45				46	47	48	49
50			51					52	53			
54								55				
56								57				

- ACROSS**
- 1 Group of plotters
 - 6 Cager Kobe
 - 12 Claim
 - 13 Actress Sobieski
 - 14 Mingle
 - 15 Conforms
 - 16 Apple tablet
 - 17 "Mamma Mia" group
 - 19 DDE
 - 20 Logical
 - 22 Madrid Mrs.
 - 24 Genetic stuff
 - 27 Clothing store section
 - 29 Sleeping
 - 32 Stand-up comic who starred in an NBC sitcom
 - 35 "Ditto"
 - 36 New news
 - 37 Preschooler
 - 38 La-la lead-in
 - 40 Slanted type (Abbr.)
 - 42 Chi follower
 - 44 Sparkling Italian wine
 - 46 Lotion additive
 - 50 Noble
 - 52 Really lose it
 - 54 Votes in
 - 55 Frenzied
- DOWN**
- 56 Stop
 - 57 Grove units
 - 25 Museum-funding org.
 - 26 Tall cupboards
 - 28 "Don't move!"
 - 30 "Xanadu" band
 - 31 Banned pesticide
 - 33 Old Olds
 - 34 Code-breaking gp.
 - 39 Ceases
 - 41 Jousting weapon
 - 42 Begged
 - 43 Only
 - 45 Method (Abbr.)
 - 47 Mandolin's kin
 - 48 Elevator name
 - 49 Computer key
 - 51 601, to Nero
 - 53 Not 'neath

Answer to Previous Puzzle

N	A	H	O	M	A	R	V	A	R	Y	A	R	Y
A	B	U	N	O	R	I	A	S	E	A			
T	U	R	M	E	R	I	C	N	A	V	A		
O	T	T	A	W	A	K	E	N					
				G	A	L	E	L	A	T	E	D	
R	A	I	N	Y	A	T	M	O	X	O			
O	L	G	A	G	A	Y	M	O	P	E			
T	K	O	P	E	A	H	A	L	O	S			
C	A	R	T	O	N	E	E	N					
			H	E	E	P	R	I	S	M			
J	U	N	E	R	I	C	O	C	H	E			
A	M	O	R	I	C	O	N	U	S	A			
R	A	G	E	C	U	T	S	T	A	G			

12-28

CRYPTOQUIP

T A Q E O A Y Y - I V X O V
 G W L I A J G W Y Y S Y W E A Q O K X K W L
 C A Z A M J A C J X W Z W B X P L
 F J W Y F W V S X Q J : T A V F M A
 Q X C B W V .

Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF AN UMPIRE GETS SO BORED THAT HE IS OBVIOUSLY DAYDREAMING, I SUSPOSE THAT'S REFEREE REVERIE.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: O equals W

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home.

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NHL

Blues cruise into holiday break

St. Louis atop conference with six-game streak

By DAN GREENSPAN
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Christmas marked a turning point for the St. Louis Blues last season as they went from last place at the holiday to winning the Stanley Cup.

Heading into the three-day break this year, the Blues are on top of the Western Conference and look more than ready to defend their title.

Brayden Schenn scored twice in St. Louis' four-goal first period and the Blues won their sixth straight game, 4-1 over the Los Angeles Kings on Monday night.

"It's crazy what a little bit of winning and confidence can do to a hockey team, and you know, obviously we're feeling it as a group right now," Schenn said after the Blues improved to 55-20-11 in the regular season since last Christmas. "We believe in one another coming to the rink."

Vince Dunn had a goal and an assist, and Jaden Schwartz scored on the power play for the Blues. Jordan Binnington made 29 saves in his first start since Dec. 16 against Colorado. Alex Pietrangolo and David Perron each had two assists.

Alex Iafallo had a power-play goal and Jonathan Quick made 24 saves, but the Kings lost their third in a row.

Kings coach Todd McLellan was wary about the last game before time off, and his concerns were justified when the Blues scored four times in the first 12:21.



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

The Blues' Alex Pietrangolo, left, passes to Brayden Schenn, center, who scored past Kings goaltender Jonathan Quick during the first of Monday's game in Los Angeles. Schenn had two goals.

Schenn opened the scoring at 4:51 and wrapped the flurry by getting a power-play goal that gave St. Louis a 4-0 lead with his 17th of the season. Schenn has the same number of goals in 38 games this year as he had in 72 games last season.

"I've started getting some puck luck, which has been huge," said Schenn, who has three goals and two assists in his past three games. "Every player definitely needs that, and just try and shoot the puck at the right time and it's been going in."

Schwartz tipped in Pietrangolo's shot on the power play for a 2-0 lead at 5:43, and Dunn made it 3-0 at 11:22.

Everything seems to be clicking for the Blues, who have won eight straight games against Western Conference opponents. The power play is 5-for-12 in the past four games after needing just 33 seconds to convert two chances against the Kings.

But Schenn insists the lessons from last season's turnaround will keep this Blues team focused on the next game, not the bigger picture.

"I mean, we're obviously not going to get too far ahead of ourselves by any means," he said. "It's very hard to repeat as we've seen, but we feel — just kind of what we've been through last year — we don't try and get too

high or low just 'cause it can eat away at you."

Iafallo got the Kings on the board when he redirected Drew Doughty's shot from the blue line with 1:07 left in the opening period.

Los Angeles controlled long stretches of play in the second and third, but St. Louis was able to protect its lead and win for the 10th time in 13 games.

"I still think we could have come out of the game better had we just been responsible," McLellan said. "Lack of a good start and lack of responsibility in two faceoff situations, and chase it all night against the Stanley Cup champs. That's what you get."

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division		GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	38	22	7	9	3	53	130	109
Toronto	38	20	14	4	4	44	133	122
Montreal	38	17	14	5	4	42	121	117
Florida	36	18	13	5	5	41	127	121
Buffalo	38	17	14	5	4	41	115	117
Tampa Bay	35	18	13	4	4	40	124	111
Ottawa	38	16	18	4	4	36	106	123
Detroit	38	9	26	3	21	33	150	150

Metropolitan Division		GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	35	23	9	3	3	57	137	111
N.Y. Islanders	35	23	9	3	3	49	105	91
Philadelphia	37	21	11	4	1	47	121	106
Pittsburgh	36	21	11	4	4	46	120	96
Carolina	37	22	13	2	2	46	124	102
Nashville	37	17	14	4	4	40	98	106
N.Y. Rangers	36	17	15	4	3	38	114	118
New Jersey	36	12	19	5	29	91	128	

Western Conference

Central Division		GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
St. Louis	38	24	8	6	6	54	118	99
Colorado	37	23	11	3	7	49	134	103
Winnipeg	37	21	11	2	4	44	113	107
Dallas	38	20	14	4	4	44	100	97
Nashville	38	18	12	4	4	42	125	119
Minnesota	38	18	15	5	4	41	118	126
Chicago	38	18	17	6	3	36	105	128

Pacific Division

Arizona	29	20	4	4	46	112	99
Vegas	40	20	14	6	46	122	118
Edmonton	40	20	16	4	44	117	124
Calgary	39	19	15	5	43	104	116
Vancouver	39	19	15	4	42	124	115
Anaheim	37	18	14	2	34	84	44
San Jose	38	16	20	2	34	101	133
Los Angeles	39	15	20	3	34	99	144

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

No games scheduled.

Wednesday's games

No games scheduled.

Thursday's games

No games scheduled.

Friday's games

Boston at Carolina
Carolina at N.Y. Rangers
Toronto at New Jersey
Columbus at Washington
Minnesota at Colorado
Pittsburgh at Nashville
St. Louis at Winnipeg
Anaheim at Calgary
Calgary at Edmonton
Vegas at Anaheim
Los Angeles at San Jose

Saturday's games

Washington at Carolina
Colorado at Dallas
Detroit at Florida
Nashville at Pittsburgh
Montreal at Tampa Bay
New York at Toronto
Los Angeles at Vancouver
Arling at Philadelphia
Philadelphia at San Jose

Scoring leaders

Through Wednesday

Player	GP	G	A	Pts
Connor McDavid, EDM	40	21	41	62
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	40	22	39	61
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	38	19	34	56
David Pastrnak, BOS	38	26	26	54
Alex Iafallo, TOR	37	24	27	51
John Carlson, WSH	38	13	35	48
Jonathan Huberdeau, FLA	36	14	34	48



JEFF MCINTOSH, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

The Calgary Flames' Akin Aliu, a Nigerian-born Canadian, made a public accusation that former Flames coach Bill Peters directed racial slurs at him. The accusation led to Peters' resignation.

Journeyman Aliu sparks reckoning

By JOHN WAWROW
Associated Press

VAUGHAN, Ontario — There was no breaking point or seminal moment that prompted Akin Aliu to post two tweets less than a minute apart that rocked the NHL in a matter of hours.

Aliu was scrolling through the timeline on his phone when he saw a report of how just-fired Toronto Maple Leafs coach Mike Babcock had mistreated Mitch Marner, his prized rookie forward.

"It was a spur of the moment kind of thing," Aliu explained during an interview at a Toronto-area gym where the 30-year-old works out to stay in shape in case a team gives him one more shot at playing.

The tweets went viral and soon the text messages were piling up for Aliu. "I was like, 'Woah, like this is for real,'" he said.

The posts sent Nov. 25 were thunder claps heard around hockey, alleging coach Bill Peters had directed racist slurs at him when the two were in the minors a decade ago and then tried to make sure he'd be demoted.

It was an extraordinary public accusation in perhaps the most private of professional sports in North America. The allegations proved true and prompted Peters' resignation as coach of the Calgary Flames. Over the past month, other claims have cropped up and the NHL has swiftly moved to strengthen its personal conduct policies regarding racism and bullying.

Suddenly, Aliu was no longer just a long-forgotten defenseman who's played for 21 teams in six countries over the past 10 years. He was an agent of change coming hard on the heels of two incidents that hover, still, over the first half of the NHL season.

Long-time Canadian broadcaster Don Cherry was let go last month after calling immigrants "you people" during his Hockey Night in Canada segment. Then came

Babcock's firing and word he had embarrassed Marner by revealing a list he asked the player to write that ranked Leafs players by work ethic.

With hockey already buzzing, Aliu kicked things up a notch by accusing Peters, a Babcock protégé, of openly using the 'N' word in questioning Aliu's choice of music in a locker room all those years ago. It was later revealed Peters had kicked and punched his own players during his four years as coach in Carolina.

Aliu's allegations also led to Chicago Blackhawks assistant Marc Crawford being suspended for physically and verbally abusing his players at past stops as a head coach.

Aliu's timing turned out to be perfect in sparking a much-needed discussion.

"It seems different," said Anson Carter, a former player and broadcaster. "It really does because it has the NHL's attention." "Is it going to change overnight? No," added Carter, who is black. "Are we going to totally, completely eliminate it 100%? No. It exists in society. We would be ignorant to think that there wouldn't be some instances that might pop up."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Irish focused on Iowa State

Cyclones offense has Notre Dame's attention

By JOHN FINERAN
Associated Press

BSOUTH BEND, Ind. — Brian Kelly need not worry that No. 14 Notre Dame isn't focused on Iowa State, its opponent Saturday in the Camping World Bowl.

After a week of final exams, his Fighting Irish (10-2) aren't taking Matt Campbell's Cyclones (7-5) lightly.

"I think there are a lot of people who don't know how good they are," offensive tackle Liam Eichenberg said Saturday after the sixth practice in a hectic week for the Irish, who ended the season on a five-game winning streak. "They lost to (No. 8) Baylor by two points and (No. 4) Oklahoma by one point."

The Cyclones, who also had a one-point loss to No. 19 Iowa in September, finished in a four-way tie for third place in the high-scoring and competitive Big 12 after a 27-17 loss at Kansas State Nov. 30. They outscored their opposition 409-304, including 139-74 in the fourth quarter.

"One of the things in their DNA and the way they are coached is they play extremely hard for four quarters," Kelly said. "They are a team that, argumentatively, could have been an 11-win team this year. Their 3-5-3 (defense) is a challenge and they have an outstanding quarterback."

The Cyclones' Brock Purdy, a 6-foot-1, 210-pound elusive sophomore, has thrown for 3,760 yards and 27 touchdowns with just nine interceptions and he's rushed for 265 yards and eight more scores.

"Their quarterback can escape the pocket and he sets up deep," defensive end Khalid Kareem said. "His mobility is similar to the quarterback from Virginia [Bryce Perkins]."

The elusive Perkins threw for 334 yards and two touchdowns but was intercepted twice and sacked eight times by the Irish, including 2½ by Kareem, in Notre Dame's 35-20 victory Sept. 28.

"(Purdy) is a special player — he's really good and you can tell he's a leader," middle linebacker Drew White said. "They have receivers who can make big plays. They are really electric."

Wide receivers Deshaun Jones (72 receptions, 832 yards, 2 touchdowns), Tarique Milton (33-689-3) and La'Michael Pirtway (51-622-6), tight end Charlie Kolar (48-675-7) and running back Breece Hall (1,100 yards rushing and passing) have Notre Dame's attention.

"They match up with the top teams we've played this year," Kelly said.

'(Purdy) is a special player — he's really good and you can tell he's a leader. They have receivers who can make big plays. They are really electric.'

Drew White
Notre Dame linebacker

The Irish will counter with a defense that finished the regular season allowing just 325.8 yards (22nd nationally) and 18.7 points (17th) with a turnover margin of 1.25 (third) thanks to 17 fumble recoveries and nine interceptions.

Offensively, quarterback Ian Book threw for 2,787 yards and 33 touchdowns with just six interceptions and was the second-leading rusher (316 yards, four TDs) on a team that managed just 46 and 47 yards rushing in losses at Georgia (23-17 Sept. 21) and Michigan (45-14 Oct. 26).

"It's one of the reasons why Kelly moved on from offensive coordinator Chip Long earlier this month and has directed quarterback coach Tom Rees, running back coach Lance Taylor and offensive line coach Jeff Quinn to get more balance into the Irish attack that averaged 4294 yards (47th) and 37.1 points (14th) per game.

"We ran the ball at times effectively, at other times we weren't effective," Kelly said. "We want to be moving forward, more effective and that requires complete collaboration and everybody on the same page. Then again, this was an offense that was pretty darn good, too."

Book, who could return next season, wants to finish this season on a high note.

"The season is not over," he said. "We should be proud. It's a good bowl game and we want to go there, and we want to win. That's what it's all about."



Camping World Bowl
No. 14 Notre Dame (10-2)
vs. Iowa State (7-5)

AFN-Sports2
6 p.m. Saturday CET
2 a.m. Sunday JKT



Al. Golts/AP

Michigan State's Kenny Willekes, left, warms up with teammates before the game against Maryland. Willekes began his career as a walk-on and holds a school record with 49½ tackles for loss.

Michigan State's Willekes finishing up remarkable run

By NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press

Almost a year to the day after breaking his leg, Kenny Willekes is ready for his Michigan State swan song.

As usual, he's trying to think of himself as an underdog. "Always," he said. "That's the way you've got to play, that's the mentality I play with. I play with a chip on my shoulder regardless. I still feel like I got a lot to prove."

Willekes already holds a school record with 49½ tackles for loss in his career, and the senior defensive end has nine sacks this season. But the honor that best exemplifies his path at Michigan State may be the one he received earlier this month. Willekes was the 2019 winner of the Burslow Trophy, which goes to the nation's most outstanding player who began his career as a walk-on.

Brandon Burslow was a walk-on who eventually became a standout at Arkansas. He died in a car accident 11 days after being drafted by the Indianapolis Colts in 1999. The award bearing his name has gone to players such as Baker Mayfield and Hunter Renfrow.

"It's pretty cool. Everyone loves the underdog. Everyone loves the underdog story," Willekes said. "There's a lot of people that truly are the underdog, and they're working to get noticed, so the fact that they brought that trophy in to acknowledge some of those un-



PinStripe Bowl
Michigan State (6-6)
vs. Wake Forest (8-4)
AFN-Sports
9:20 p.m. Friday CET
5:20 a.m. Saturday JKT

derdogs and show other walk-ons that there's a way to do it — it can be done, and here's an example of it."

Michigan State faces Wake Forest in the PinStripe Bowl on Friday. For Willekes, it's a chance to finish his college career on a positive note — and another opportunity to move on from his difficult experience last year, when Willekes broke his leg in a 7-6 loss to Oregon in the Redbox Bowl.

After that injury, Willekes returned to Michigan State for his senior season. He remained a force on the defensive line. With one game to go, it would have been hard to blame him if he'd decided to sit out this bowl — especially after what happened last year. Instead, he's playing.

"Obviously something that crossed my mind," he said. "A lot of people actually told me I shouldn't play in it, but I want to play in it. I want to play one last

game with my teammates."

Willekes redshirted in 2015, and he hardly played the following season, but coach Mark Dantonio eventually saw the potential.

"Kenny is relentless. I started thinking he could be a player for us in the spring of 2017 when he finally got opportunities," Dantonio said. "He's a smart player, a tough player."

Willekes earned a scholarship that spring and had seven sacks in the 2017 season. Then he added 8½ more sacks in 2018. He was a first-team selection to the AP's All-Big Ten team in 2018, and although the injury was a sour way to finish that year, he was able to recover in time for this season.

The broken leg was just another obstacle for him to overcome, and although the Spartans have had their setbacks this season, Willekes moved up to fourth on the school's career list with 24½ sacks. He's only a half-sack behind Julian Peterson for third place, and if he has a really big game this week, perhaps second-place Shilique Calhoun is within reach at 27.

Not bad for a player who — a few years ago, at least — very much looked the part of an underdog.

"I've seen how far he came," senior defensive tackle Raquwan Williams said. "I was here when he couldn't run straight, so it's kind of crazy that he's turned into the player that he is. I just feel very fortunate for him — and very happy for him."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Open: Game-breaking receivers power explosive offenses

FROM BACK PAGE

teams relying more on lightning fast, shifty pass catchers with sticky hands.

"There's no doubt things have changed," he said.

It was only four years ago LSU was a run-heavy team with Leonard Fournette leading the charge. His 22 touchdowns were more than the 13 the Tigers passed for that 2015 season.

Now, Heisman Trophy winning quarterback Joe Burrow has LSU in Air Raid mode with his school-record 48 TD passes.

Tigers coach Ed Orgeron acknowledged his defense has had to adjust sometimes to their fast-paced attack.

"But we're not going to slow down," he said.

None of the four teams in the CFP are expected to slow down, not with the pieces in place to blow opponents out.

LSU's Chase won the Biletnikoff award as the game's top receiver. His 18 touchdowns tied the Southeastern Conference's single season mark — one it seems likely he'll obliterate with more games left.

"Ja'Marr is a special talent," Orgeron said. "Not only is he fast, but he's very strong.

"He loves to win the one-on-one matchup," Orgeron continued. "He's physical. He works hard. He catches everything. He's got big hands, a route runner. I think he's a phenomenal player."

Chase said his route-running has improved considerably this season, particularly because he has gotten better at creating separation early when defensive backs try to disrupt his pass pattern.

"Executing coming off the line most of the time has been a big difference from last year to this year," Chase said. "It's more about footwork and hand-eye coordination."

All the talented receivers in the CFP have shown great hand-eye coordination.

Perhaps the most talked-about play in Clemson's 62-17 destruction of Virginia in the Atlantic Coast Conference title game was Higgins' highlight-reel sideline grab — reaching out of bounds while keeping his toes

Ohio State wide receiver K.J. Hill



AP photos

Above: LSU wide receiver Justin Jefferson (2) outruns the Georgia defense during the SEC championship game earlier this month in Atlanta. Right: Oklahoma wide receiver CeeDee Lamb celebrates a 30-23 overtime win against Baylor during the Big 12 Championship.

inbounds to complete the catch.

"Every time I see that I say, 'Man, I really caught that. It's crazy,'" Higgins said with a smile.

Typically, Higgins or Ross (he had three TD catches in Clemson's 44-16 blowout of Alabama to win the national title a year ago) has created enough space to catch passes from quarterback Trevor Lawrence. Ross said teams can't put extra defenders on him, given Clemson's deep, talented group of playmakers.

Oklahoma's Lamb also has been a nightmare for defenders, even with his frustration at times when he feels he is not getting the ball when he's open.

Oklahoma coach Lincoln Riley said it's Lamb's competitiveness that stands out.

Lamb is "so invested in this team and sometimes he wants it so much you've got to take a deep breath and go on to the next one," Riley said.

At Ohio State, Hill has already surpassed David Boston's career mark with 195 catches. A reception against Clemson will give him another Buckeyes' record with a catch in 49 straight games. Second-year Buckeyes coach



Ryan Day wasn't at Ohio State for all of Hill's five seasons, but appreciates what he has seen firsthand, saying Hill has consistently excelled.

"He's been clutch," Day said, "very, very productive."

"He's not alone, and that could make for an entertaining College Football Playoff.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Simmons, Young lead defenses in Fiesta clash

By PETE IACOBELLI
Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — There is little doubt the nation's best defensive player will take the field at the Fiesta Bowl when No. 2 Ohio State faces No. 3 Clemson for a trip to the national championship game.

The only debate for some is which sideline he's on.

Buckeyes defensive end Chase Young and Clemson linebacker Isaiah Simmons have won plenty of awards and shown the skills that will make them high NFL draft choices, perhaps as soon as this spring. The two juniors are key cogs for the nation's top two overall defenses, with Clemson leading the way.

Young led Ohio State (13-0, No. 2 CFP) and the nation with 16.5 sacks this season on the way to winning the Hendricks and Bednarik awards. The 6-5, 265-pounder from Maryland was a finalist for the Heisman Trophy.

Young had four sacks in Ohio State's first of two wins over Wis-

‘What he brings to the table is unmatched. I feel like he’s changing the style of sports today.’

K'Von Wallace

Clemson safety on linebacker Isaiah Simmons

consin, then had three in a critical victory against Penn State after missing the previous two games due to suspension.

Young has done all this despite opponents using extra bodies to get in his way.

“Teams put a lot more focus on chipping Chase, putting a guard on Chase, doubling Chase,” said Buckeyes freshman defensive end Zach Harrison.

It hasn't really worked, as Young had 21 tackles for loss and six forced fumbles despite missing those two November games.

“When a play has to be made, we make it, get off the field for the offense,” Young said. “I think that's the best thing we can do.”

Clemson's Simmons has a simi-

lar style for the Tigers (13-0, No. 3 CFP), although no offense is ever sure if he will line up in the secondary or closer to the line of scrimmage.

“What he brings to the table is unmatched,” Tigers safety K'Von Wallace said. “I feel like he's changing the style of sports today.”

Simmons, the 6-foot-4, 230-pounder from Kansas, describes himself as a Swiss Army knife, able to fit and excel wherever Tigers defensive coordinator Brent Venables needs him.

He leads Clemson with 93 tackles, but his versatility and coverage skills show up elsewhere on the stat sheet: He also tops the team with seven sacks and seven passes broken up this season.

His play won him the Butkus award along with the Atlantic Coast Conference defensive player of the year.

Venables said Simmons was a skinny prospect who never stopped moving and developed himself through hard work and studying the game.

“I've said it once, I've said it 100 times, he plays so hard,” Venables said. “His endurance is like nothing I've ever been around. That's his best attribute.”

He has a knack, Venables added, for knowing the right gap to go through when he's called on to rush the passer. And he is lightning fast.

Simmons got his first taste of starting last season in the Tigers' undefeated run to the national title.

With the front four of last year's defense off to the NFL, Simmons was called to take a larger leadership role this year. He considered the NFL last winter before deciding he had more to learn before leaving Clemson.

Simmons and Young are found in many mock drafts for the upcoming NFL draft. First, though, the Dec. 28 showdown in the playoff semifinals.

Simmons said he does not see the game as his chance to prove he's every bit the star as Young, just the next opportunity for the Tigers to keep their landmark run going.

Young “is a great player, a very dominant player who affects the game,” Simmons said. “But I just go out there and play my game. I don't really worry about things like that.”

AP Sports Writer Mitch Stacy contributed to this report.



GERALD HERBERT/AP

LSU running back Tyrion Davis-Price, right, celebrates his touchdown run against Texas A&M on Nov. 30. Davis-Price might be called on more often in the Peach Bowl if Tigers leading rusher Clyde Edwards-Helaire cannot play.

No. 1 LSU could be missing top rusher against Oklahoma

By CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Top-ranked LSU's leading rusher Clyde Edwards-Helaire is off crutches but still might miss Saturday's Peach Bowl playoff semifinal against No. 4 Oklahoma.

The Sooners, meanwhile, will be missing starting defensive end Ronnie Perkins and two backups due to suspensions.

Edwards-Helaire suffered a hamstring injury in practice last week. He was only an observer for LSU's first practice in Atlanta on Monday, and he was a no-show at media day on Thursday.

He leads the undefeated Tigers (13-0) with 1,290 yards rushing and 16 touchdowns.

LSU coach Ed Orgeron says Edwards-Helaire is “a little bit better” and he described the running back's status as day to day.

Orgeron said Edwards-Helaire missed Thursday's event because he was receiving treatment. The coach said Edwards-Helaire “may try something” in Thursday's practice. Orgeron made a similarly optimistic statement about Tuesday's session, but Edwards-Helaire was unable to join the practice.

Based on Orgeron's comments, it would be a surprise if Edwards-Helaire plays. The coach spoke of the junior first-team All-SEC player in the past tense when comparing his running backs, including freshman backups Tyrion Davis-Price and John Emery.

“I think all three of those guys do different things,” Orgeron said. “With Clyde, he did everything well. He blocked well. He ran inside, he ran outside and caught the football. We'll have to adjust if Clyde doesn't play to ro-

tate those guys and do what they do best.”

Quarterback Joe Burrow was second on the team with 289 yards rushing. Davis-Price ran for 270 yards with six touchdowns and could be the leader of a running back committee if Edwards-Helaire can't play.

Center Lloyd Cushenberry III said he's confident LSU's coaches will “get those guys right. I know Clyde is going to be in their ear, trying to get them prepared, and whoever gets carries, it's on us up front to do our job so they can make plays. ... We've got to take care of those guys and get the job done.”

The Sooners (12-1) will also be limited. Coach Lincoln Riley confirmed three Oklahoma players, including Perkins, will be suspended for the game. Perkins leads the team with six sacks.

“We're not a one-man show up front,” Riley said. “I'm confident in the guys that we have and the pressure we've been able to force this year, and hopefully we can do it again.”

Running back Rhamondre Stevenson and wide receiver Trequan Bridges, who are backups, also will miss the game.

Stevenson had a touchdown run in Oklahoma's 30-23 overtime win over Baylor in the Big 12 championship game.

Riley said he wouldn't detail “dirty laundry” about the cause of the suspensions. He said the three players traveled with the team and will join practices in Atlanta.

“I wanted those guys here,” Riley said. “They're able to practice and able to help this team win in a different way right now. ... They give us great preparation on both sides of the ball.”



SEAN RAYFORD/AP

Clemson linebacker Isaiah Simmons was selected to The Associated Press All-America team on Monday.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

PLAYOFF MATCHUPS



Peach Bowl
No. 1 LSU (13-0)
vs. No. 4 Oklahoma (12-1)
AFN-Sports
10 p.m. Saturday CET
6 a.m. Sunday JKT

When LSU has the ball: Coaches like to talk about being aggressive offensively. That's how Heisman Trophy winner Joe Burrow and the Tigers play.

"Whether it's by tempo or by play design, they maintain their aggressiveness from play one until the last play of the game," Mississippi State coach Joe Moorhead said.

The Tigers often have five receivers on the field, relying on their front five to pass protect and Burrow's decision-making and mobility to avoid pressure. LSU's top three wide receivers (All-American Ja'Marr Chase, Justin Jefferson and Terrace Marshall Jr.) each have at least 10 touchdown catches.

Versatile running back Clyde Edwards-Helaire (50 catches and 1,290 yards rushing) is used frequently in the passing game as more than just an outlet for Burrow.

"Even when you include the tight end (Thaddeus Moss), all their guys can win the one-on-one matchups," Moorhead said.

Edwards-Helaire is nursing a hamstring injury and might not play. His versatility would be missed, though probably not as much as Oklahoma will miss defensive end Ronnie Perkins.

Perkins, who leads the Sooners in sacks with six, is reportedly suspended for the playoff.

"The key to their defense is really to get pressure with their front, the line movement and the twists and all the things they do," Baylor coach Matt Rhule said of the Sooners. "I think the loss of (Perkins) is really a big deal."

When Oklahoma has the ball: If fans expect a fast-paced Big 12 offense, the Sooners might surprise them.

"They are not a high-flying tempo offense. They are pro-style, substitute personnel groupings, call two plays, getting into the right play at the line. As a result they can limit possessions," Rhule said.

Oklahoma's offenses under coach Lincoln Riley have always been balanced and among the best in the country on the ground. With Heisman runner-up Jalen Hurts, the quarterback is now the Sooners' primary ball carrier. The powerful senior ran for 1,255 yards behind a huge offensive line. Kennedy Brooks is the top tailback. Injuries and suspensions have depleted the depth behind him. Expect a lot of Hurts and Brooks, setting up play-action passes to All-America receiver CeeDee Lamb.

The Sooners don't have much chance of holding down LSU's offense without getting a bunch of turnovers. Slowing the game might be OU's best bet.

But LSU's defense is healthier than it's been all season and their big bodies up front (Glen Logan, Tyler Shelvin and Rashard Lawrence all weigh over 300 pounds) are hard to move.

"They play the odd stack (three-down linemen), really kind of stuff up your interior gaps," Moorhead said.

Pick: LSU 45-24
Ralph Russo, Associated Press



MIKE STEWART, ABOVE, AND PAUL SANCTA, BELOW/AP

Above: Heisman Trophy winner Joe Burrow can choose from five targets when LSU takes to the air.
Below: Ohio State defensive end Chase Young had 16.5 sacks this season in only 11 games.



Fiesta Bowl
No. 2 Ohio State (13-0)
vs. No. 3 Clemson (13-0)
AFN-Sports
2 a.m. Sunday CET
10 a.m. Sunday JKT

When Ohio State has the ball: QB Justin Fields (40 touchdown passes and one interception) was a Heisman finalist, but J.K. Dobbins might be the Buckeyes' offensive MVP.

"He is the catalyst," Cincinnati coach Luke Fickell said of Dobbins.

Dobbins is tough inside and out and ran for 1,829 and 20 touchdowns. He is also effective as a receiver with 17 catches for 200 yards and two scores.

Dobbins will be attacking a Clemson defense that has been overhauled by coordinator Brent Venables this year. The Tigers don't dominate with their front four as they did last year. The back end of the defense is where the stars are, especially versatile All-American Isaiah Simmons. He is listed as a linebacker but shows up all over the field.

"They've evolved to kind of a three-safety defense," Wake Forest coach Dave Clawson said. "They blitz a lot more. They pressure a lot more."

And they rely on cornerbacks A.J. Terrell and Derion Kendrick to win on the outside against receivers.

The Buckeyes will be the first team this season that can really challenge Clemson up front behind All-America guard Wyatt Davis and third-team All-America guard Jonah Jackson.

Venables is not afraid to commit extra defenders to stop the run. That's where Fields' running ability can come in. A sore knee kept the 6-3, 225-pound Fields (10 touchdown runs) under wraps in the Big Ten championship game against Wisconsin.

"I think there's still a little bit more in the arsenal," Fickell said.

When Clemson has the ball: The Tigers are making their fifth straight playoff appearance and have won two national titles in the last three years.

Still, this is the best offense Clemson has gone from solid to elite along the line, led by second-team All-America guard John Simpson and sophomore left tackle Jackson Carman.

"If you ever try to lighten the box, now you're dealing with a great offensive line and Travis Etienne (1,500 yards rushing and 8.24 per carry)," Clawson said.

That line, especially Carman, will be tested by college football's best pass rusher. Heisman finalist Chase Young had 16.5 sacks in 11 games.

Extra attention on Young means defensive linemen Davon Hamilton and Jason Cornell have to be handled one-on-one. The Buckeyes' challenge will be to get enough pressure to fluster Trevor Lawrence.

Lawrence has pinpoint accuracy and big targets in Tee Higgins and Justyn Ross, both 6-4. The Buckeyes are used to cornerbacks Jeff Okudah, an All-American, and Damon Arnette locking down outside receivers. That might be too much to expect against Clemson, which has confidence in Lawrence to work the middle of the field.

Pick: Clemson 42-35
Ralph Russo, Associated Press

NBA

Delicate BALANCE

Coaches must weigh push for team progress against patience for development

By **JANIE McCAULEY**
Associated Press

Billy Donovan challenges Oklahoma City's young players to slow down, consider their strengths, focus first on defense and always consider whether the best decision is to shoot or pass.

Then, just be patient and teach the rest of the game's nuances over time.

It can be a painful process for NBA coaches — and a costly one.

Many coaches are striking the delicate balance between pushing inexperienced players enough for the players and team to succeed while realizing that the learning curve in the league can be a long one.

The pace of the NBA can be daunting for newcomers. There is typically little time for extensive practices, so players must make strides on the fly and are thrown into the fire to learn as they go.

"The more you play, the more the game slows down and you understand situations."

"I think a young player needs to learn to be reliable. That's the first thing."

Billy Donovan

Thunder coach

Like I know what I'm capable of but I also know paying attention to their coverage, what they're going to do," Thunder guard Chris Paul said. "I always say this, 'At the end of the day, it's a game.' It's a game, so you just figure it out."

And if they don't, both might be out of a job.

When it comes to player development, there's no simple, one-size-fits-all definition. Perhaps it might be a player fine-tuning one element of his game, maybe becoming a more consistent three-point threat. Whatever it is, for coaches much of developing a player's game comes through constant communication.

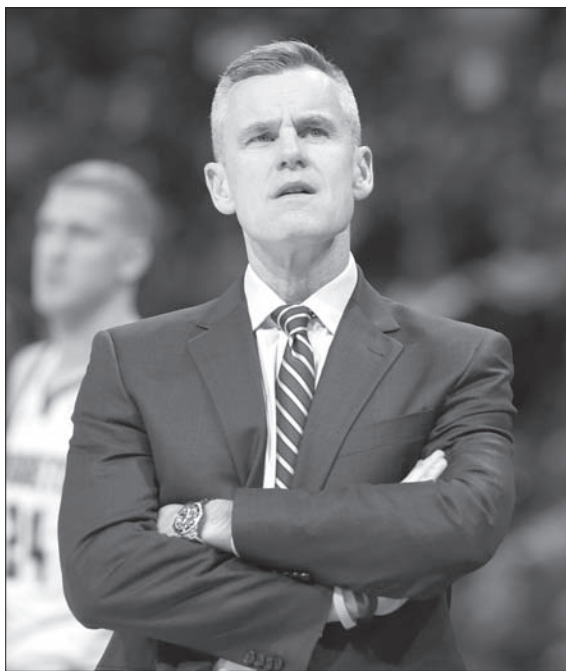
Donovan starts with a question: "Does he know who he is as a player?" That helps Oklahoma City's staff consider a player's status in the rotation.

"I think a young player needs to learn to be reliable," said Donovan, the Thunder's fifth-year coach. "That's the first thing. Generally you're talking about defense.

"I think so many times with a lot of young players they want to come for development and they just want to focus on their offense. They're going to be on offense way, way more than they're going to be handling and shooting. Sometimes understanding in your development: 'When do I shoot? When do I pass? When do I drive?'"

In Boston, coach Brad Stevens relies heavily on the team's sports science statistics to determine what a player's body best needs on any given day during the grind of an NBA season. It is how the Celtics strive to keep players on one of the youngest teams in the league fresh while still finding ways to teach and develop during the small pockets of time they have — home or on the road.

"We have what we call a Player Enhancement Program so our PEP program goes and it's based on how much you played the night before, what your needs are and how hard you can go from a physical standpoint," Stevens said. "I guess the term that nobody wants to



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Like many coaches around the NBA, the Oklahoma City Thunder's Billy Donovan wants to strike a balance between pushing inexperienced players enough for the organization to have success while realizing that the learning curve in the league is often a long one.

hear, load management, but part of load management is what you do on off days, and that's a big part of it.

"These guys have been great with it here at Golden State with as much as they've played not only throughout the season but then in the postseason, too. Those long years can be really tough."

It has been far tougher for the Warriors (6-24) this season. They have struggled while relying on so many inexperienced players because of injuries to stars Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson, as well as Kevin Durant's departure in free agency.

Hours before tipoff on any given game day fans arriving early might see a variety of Warriors coaching faces on the floor guiding the long list of young Golden State players.

Coach Steve Kerr has placed an even greater emphasis on development, noting, "given the number of young players we've added positions to the staff and we've really re-evaluated everything we've done."

In Portland, Terry Stotts has a different approach, noting it's a comfort thing for each individual coach. He prefers a smaller staff — five coaches total — with everyone handling multiple roles that include player development. The Trail Blazers also have two or three video staff members who assist on the floor.

"Every team's going to do it their own way. We have a good track record of developing young players," Stotts said. "We have a relatively small staff. Personally, I like having all our assistants be involved with player development. I don't want to separate assistant coaches from developing the relationships with the players, the young players and as they grow. When you look at some of the players who have come through here and have gone on to sign with other teams, I think the

relationship that they've been able to build with our assistants, rather than necessarily having player development coaches, has been important both ways."

The Warriors' greater commitment to player development stemmed from starting the season with a roster featuring nine players age 23 or younger.

"With so many players under 25, and all of the roster movement and injuries, it just made sense to focus on developing our youth," assistant coach and player development director Chris DeMarco said. "It was a collaborative decision from ownership, management, the performance team and coach Kerr in prioritizing the growth of our young players."

New Golden State center Willie Cauley-Stein has appreciated a hands-on approach from coaches, especially in his case after missing all of training camp and the preseason with a foot injury.

"I'm learning (at) the highest level, and that's why I'm here, and that's why I wanted to come here," Cauley-Stein said. "To elevate, you've got to be around people that's elevated. ... Each and every day that we're in here I can say that we get better. That's really what you want, especially as a young dude, to see your progress and to have somebody show you your progress each game and even each practice."

It comes back to that necessary constant: Trust and communication between coaching staffs and players.

"It's not trying to put a player in a box, it's not trying to put a player and tell him what he can and can't do but there's certain things that he has to be able to do to get on the floor," Donovan said, "so you're really talking about the things that they can do to be able to get on the floor."

And things everybody hopes win — at least eventually — translate into wins.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	21	7	.750	—
Philadelphia	23	10	.697	½
Brooklyn	21	10	.677	1
Brooklyn	16	13	.552	5½
New York	9	24	.226	15½

Southeast Division

Miami	22	8	.733	—
Orlando	13	17	.433	9
Charlotte	13	20	.394	10½
Washington	9	20	.310	12½
Atlanta	6	25	.194	16½

Central Division

Milwaukee	5	24	.172	—
Indiana	21	10	.677	5½
Chicago	15	17	.467	10
Detroit	11	20	.355	15½
Cleveland	9	21	.300	17

Western Conference

Southwest Division

Southwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	21	10	.677	—
Dallas	10	10	.500	1
San Antonio	17	17	.500	1
Memphis	11	20	.355	10
New Orleans	9	23	.281	12½

Northwest Division

Denver	21	9	.700	—
Oklahoma City	18	12	.600	3
Oklahoma City	15	17	.467	5½
Portland	14	17	.452	7½
Minnesota	10	19	.345	10½

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	24	7	.774	—
L.A. Clippers	23	10	.697	2
Sacramento	12	18	.400	11½
Phoenix	11	19	.365	13½
Golden State	8	24	.250	16½

Wednesday's games

- Boston 118, Toronto 102
- Philadelphia 121, Milwaukee 109
- Golden State 116, Houston 104
- L.A. Clippers 111, L.A. Lakers 106
- New Orleans 112, Denver 90

Thursday's games

- Washington at Detroit
- New York at Brooklyn
- Memphis at Oklahoma City
- San Antonio at Dallas
- Minnesota at Sacramento
- Portland at Utah

Friday's games

- Cleveland at Boston
- Oklahoma City at Charlotte
- Philadelphia at Orlando
- Milwaukee at Atlanta
- Indiana at Miami
- Phoenix at Golden State

Saturday's games

- Memphis at Denver
- Indiana at New Orleans
- Toronto at Boston
- Atlanta at Chicago
- Brooklyn at Houston
- Cleveland at Minnesota
- New York at Washington
- Philadelphia at Miami
- Dallas at Golden State
- Detroit at San Antonio
- Orlando at Milwaukee
- Phoenix at Sacramento
- L.A. Lakers at Portland
- Utah at L.A. Clippers

Sunday's games

- Oklahoma City at Toronto
- Charlotte at Memphis
- Golden State at New Orleans
- Sacramento at Denver
- Dallas at L.A. Lakers

Calendar

Jan. 10 — All contracts guaranteed for 2020-21 season.
Feb. 6 — Trade deadline (3 p.m. EST)
Feb. 14-16 — All-Star weekend, Chicago.

April 15 — Regular season ends.

Leaders

Player	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Harden, HOU	31	343	337	1182
Drummond, DET	20	337	465	1611
Capela, HOU	27	208	280	388
Robertson, TOR	26	297	400	1429
Whiteside, POR	28	104	274	378
Sabonis, IND	21	98	293	391
Antokumpo, MIL	23	98	293	391
Antokumpo, MIL	22	114	461	1626

Player	STL	AVG
Simmons, PHI	31	67
Drummond, DET	32	65
Dunn, CHI	32	65
VanVleet, TOR	26	52
Drummond, DET	29	57
Harden, HOU	31	59

Player	BLK	STL	AVG
Whiteside, POR	28	77	2.75
Davis, LAL	28	77	2.66
Isaac, ORL	28	77	2.57
Turner, IND	23	53	2.3
Porzingis, DAL	28	60	2.14

NFL

Texans DE Watt practices, could return for playoffs

By KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

HOUSTON — J.J. Watt returned to practice with the Houston Texans on Tuesday, clearing the way for the star defensive end to play in the team's playoff game in two weeks.

Watt has been out since Oct. 27 after tearing a pectoral muscle, an injury that required surgery.

"I feel really good," Watt said. "We've worked extremely hard at rehab. We've had a very smooth process and everything's been going extremely well. So I'm really, really excited to be back in the field with everybody and to get back out there helping my team and playing for this city."

The Texans will have 21 days from Tuesday to take him off the injured reserve and add him to the active roster. If they plan to play him in their first playoff game during the weekend of Jan. 4-5, they'll have to activate him by 4 p.m. ET the day before the game.

Watt has been working out with the team's trainers and medical staff away for a while and said he's felt good during those workouts. He said he's been wearing a harness during those workouts and that he'll continue to wear that to protect himself during team practices. The harness keeps his arm from being pulled too far backward, but it will not restrict him from moving his arm forward or raising it up.

Watt said that he began thinking he might be able to return for the postseason not long after he was injured.

"When I got hurt I just assumed I was done," he said. "I didn't even know there was a possibility. And

then literally a couple days after the surgery I was feeling so good that I asked — 'is it remotely possible?' We left the ... door open for a possibility."

Players on injured reserve must miss eight games before returning and Watt has only missed seven so far, meaning he could not play in Houston's regular-season finale against Tennessee on Sunday.

This is the third time in four seasons that the three-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year has had a major injury. He missed the last 13 games of 2016 with a back injury that required surgery and played just five games in 2017 before breaking his leg. He played all 16 games last season and was a first-team All-Pro.

Watt said that recovering from his most recent injury was much easier than his rehabilitation from his leg and back injuries.

"(Those were) two massive, massive things that really affected movement," he said. "But the nice thing about this surgery was this whole time I've been able to run, I've been able to work out my legs, do agility drills, position drills. So that has been a huge help both mentally and physically for this recovery."

While Watt said he expects to play in Houston's first playoff game, he was careful to point out that it's unlikely that he'll participate in as many snaps as he has throughout his career.

"I'm sure it's not going to be an every play type of thing, just for the first one back," he said. "I don't think that would be the best situation. But we'll see how it feels over the next two weeks and get a gauge for it before we go into that game. I'm sure we'll have a good plan."

Six teams still battling for important first-round bye

By ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

Six teams are still fighting for three important spots to ease their path to the Super Bowl.

While 10 teams have clinched playoff spots entering Week 17, only the Baltimore Ravens (13-2) have earned a first-round bye. The Ravens secured the AFC's No. 1 seed for the first time in franchise history.

New England (12-3) and Kansas City (11-4) are battling for the No. 2 spot.

In the NFC, the top two seeds are still up for grabs. San Francisco (12-3), Green Bay (12-3), New Orleans (12-3) and Seattle (11-4) each has a chance to clinch home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

No team has reached the Super Bowl without a first-round bye since the 2012 Ravens. Eighteen

of the last 25 Super Bowl champions have been either a No. 1 or No. 2 seed.

The 2010 Packers were the last wild-card team to advance to the Super Bowl.

Of the last 25 years, 39 of 50 teams that played in the Super Bowl were either a No. 1 or a No. 2 seed.

Here's a look inside more numbers entering the final week of the regular season:

Running Ravens: Lamar Jackson and Mark Ingram have the Ravens on the verge of breaking the league's season rushing record. The Ravens have 3,073 yards rushing. The 1978 Patriots had 3,165.

Jackson (1,206) and Ingram (1,018) are the seventh teammates with 1,000-yard seasons and first since Carolina's Jonathan Stewart and DeAngelo Williams in 2009.



TONY AVELAR/AP

49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo has a 20-5 record as a starter, but he has yet to play in Seattle. The Seahawks have one of the loudest stadiums and are especially hard on young quarterbacks.

Garoppolo faces Seattle crowd noise for first time

CenturyLink is one of noisiest places for opponents

By GRANT COHN
Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Sunday's game against the Seahawks in Seattle will be the biggest test of Jimmy Garoppolo's career.

Granted, he hasn't had many tests yet — he has started only 25 games. And he has passed most of the tests opponents have presented him — his record is 20-5.

But Garoppolo hasn't started a game at Seattle's CenturyLink Field, one of the loudest, gloomiest, most difficult places for opponents to play in the NFL, particularly for inexperienced quarterbacks. Since 2010, QBs with 25 or fewer career starts have won just six of 28 games in Seattle.

If the 49ers lose on Sunday, they'll be a wild-card team and start their quest for the Super Bowl on the road. But if they win Sunday, they will earn the No. 1 seed in the NFC and a first-round bye.

There's plenty at stake for Garoppolo and the 49ers in Seattle.

"They've had as good of a 10-year run defensively as probably anyone in the history of football," 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan said of the Seahawks. "Then you add in the elements of their stadium, where you can't hear. When you can't use cadence and you're going up against a very skilled team with a pass rush, it's extremely hard."

Cadence is a quarterback's snap count. Garoppolo won't be able to verbally communicate on the field in Seattle, so the receivers will have to use a silent count, which the Seahawks' pass rushers can listen and anticipate. Advantage: Seattle.

Garoppolo missed the 49ers' game at Seattle last season with a torn ACL. His backup, Nick Mullens, threw for 414 yards — the most a quarterback with 25 or fewer career starts has ever recorded against the Seahawks in Seattle. Although Mullens handled the noise well, the 49ers lost 43-16.

How will Garoppolo fare?

"I can tell Jimmy it will be exactly like New Orleans was," Shanahan said. "I've been in New Orleans a bunch, but it was different last time we were there. It was as loud as I've been anywhere. So last time in New Orleans was tied with how Seattle is. I thought Garoppolo handled himself well there, and expect him to do the same in Seattle."

Garoppolo passed for 349 yards and four touchdowns at New Orleans on Dec. 8, and the 49ers beat the Saints 48-46. That was perhaps the best game of Garoppolo's career, and it showed him what to expect Sunday in Seattle.

"It's going to be a 60-minute game," Garoppolo said. "You have to have your mind ready for that. When you get to these big games, two good football teams, it's always going to go up until the last whistle, and we've had multiple experiences this year like that."

The 49ers kept it close earlier this season at home against the Seahawks before losing in overtime. Garoppolo played poorly: His quarterback rating was 66.2, he fumbled twice and the Seahawks recovered both times.

Garoppolo played that game without his top target, tight end George Kittle, and wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders missed most of that game with broken ribs. Sanders and Kittle will play Sunday in Seattle, giving Garoppolo more weapons against the hostile crowd.

"There's a chance they're going to be fricken' flying off the top of the roof," Seahawks coach Pete Carroll said of the home crowd. "And there's a really good chance it's going to be as loud as it ever gets and as exciting as it ever gets."

NFL

WEEK 17 TELEVISED GAMES

MARQUEE MATCHUP

San Francisco 49ers (12-3) at Seattle Seahawks (11-4)

AFN-Sports, 2:20 a.m. Monday CET; 10:20 a.m. Monday JKT



Chicago Bears (7-8) at Minnesota Vikings (10-5)

AFN Sports2

7 p.m. Sunday CET

3 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Vikings lead 16-6-2.

Last meeting: Bears beat Vikings 16-6, Sept. 29, 2019.
Notes: Bears have won past three meetings, and head coach Matt Nagy is 3-0 against the Vikings. ... Vikings are plus-13 in takeaways-giveaways category. Bears are minus-2. Minnesota has already clinched a playoff berth. ... Bears quarterback Mitchell Trubisky has won his past three starts against the Vikings. ... Rookie running back David Montgomery had 57 rushing yards last week in 26-3 loss to the Chiefs. ... Wide receiver Allen Robinson led team with six catches and 53 receiving yards in Week 16. ... Vikings wide receiver Stefon Diggs had seven catches for 108 yards in Week 4 meeting. ... Tight end Kyle Rudolph is tied for second among NFC tight ends with six TD catches this season. ... Defensive end Danielle Hunter is the only player with 14 or more sacks in each of the past two seasons.



Tennessee Titans (8-7) at Houston Texans (10-5)

AFN-Atlantic

10:25 p.m. Sunday CET

6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Titans lead 18-17.

Last meeting: Texans beat Titans 24-21, Dec. 15, 2019.
Notes: Titans trying to earn second playoff berth in three seasons and first in coach Mike Vrabel's second year. ... Titans have one playoff berth since 2008 season. ... Third straight season Titans have had chance at playoff berth by winning regular-season finale. They beat Jaguars in 2017 but lost to Indianapolis in 2015. ... Victory would ensure fourth straight winning season for Titans, longest streak since 1987-1993 when franchise was in Houston. ... A victory would give Texans consecutive 11-win seasons for first time in franchise history. ... Texans are AFC South champions for fourth time in five seasons. ... QB Deshaun Watson has 12 touchdowns and four interceptions in four career games against Titans.

SERIES RECORD: Seahawks lead 25-16.
LAST MEETING: Seahawks beat 49ers 21-16 in overtime, Nov. 11, 2019.
49ERS OFFENSE: OVERALL (6), RUSH (2), PASS (14).
49ERS DEFENSE: OVERALL (2), RUSH (17), PASS (1).
SEAHAWKS OFFENSE: OVERALL (7), RUSH (3), PASS (11).
SEAHAWKS DEFENSE: OVERALL (26), RUSH (24), PASS (27).
STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES: This one decides the NFC West title. Both teams have already made the playoffs, but playoff seedings and byes are still undetermined. ... Seahawks have won 10 of past 11 meetings. ... Seahawks coach Pete Carroll is 14-6 against 49ers while 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan is just 1-4 against Seahawks. ... 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo needs 307

passing yards to become third franchise quarterback with 4,000 passing yards in a single season. ... Tight end George Kittle had five catches for 79 yards and a TD last week in 34-31 victory over Rams. ... Defensive lineman Nick Bosa leads rookies with 16 tackles for loss and ranks second with three sacks. ... Linebacker Fred Warner had 11 tackles and returned an interception 46 yards for a TD in Week 16. ... Seahawks are plus-12 in takeaways/giveaways category this season. ... Rookie running back Travis Homer had a career-high six catches last week in a 27-13 loss to Cardinals. ... Linebacker Bobby Wagner had 13 tackles and a sack last week. ... Defensive end Jadeveon Clowney had a sack, a forced fumble and a 10-yard fumble return for a touchdown in last meeting.



San Francisco 49ers wide receiver Deebo Samuel

TONY AVALAR/AP



Pittsburgh Steelers (8-7) at Baltimore Ravens (13-2)

AFN-Sports

10:25 p.m. Sunday CET

6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Steelers lead 28-23.

Last meeting: Ravens beat Steelers 26-23, OT, Oct. 6, 2019.
Notes: Ravens have clinched No. 1 seed in AFC, will rest several starters, including QB Lamar Jackson, RB Mark Ingram, G Marshal Yanda and DT Brandon Williams. ... Baltimore has won 11 straight, longest run in franchise history. ... Steelers have dropped two in row following 7-1 stretch that vaulted them into playoff position. They can still reach postseason but need help. Easiest combination is win over Ravens coupled with Tennessee loss to Houston. Pittsburgh trying to become 15th team since 1970 to make playoffs after a 1-4 start. ... Steelers have won 11 straight regular-season finales. Their last Week 17 loss came in 2007 vs. Ravens. ... Ravens lead NFL in points per game (33.5), yards rushing (204.9 average) and No. 2 in yards per game (414.5). ... Ravens can set franchise mark for regular-season wins.



Philadelphia Eagles (8-7) at New York Giants (4-11)

AFN-Sports2

10:25 p.m. Sunday CET

6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Eagles lead 86-85-2.

Last meeting: Eagles beat Giants 23-17, OT, Dec. 9, 2019.
Notes: Eagles won three straight and can clinch NFC East with win. ... They have beaten Giants six straight and 10 of 11 meetings. ... QB Carson Wentz has thrown TD in 18 consecutive regular-season games, longest active NFL streak. ... Rookie Miles Sanders has 150-plus yards from scrimmage and TD in last two. ... After losing franchise record with nine straight losses, New York has won two in a row. ... Offense had 552 yards last weekend, franchise road best. ... QB Daniel Jones threw career-best five TDs. He has 23 TD passes, franchise record for rookie. ... RB Saquon Barkley had career-best 189 yards rushing and franchise-record 279 total yards from scrimmage last weekend.

EXPANDED STANDINGS

American Conference

	East										
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div
y-New England	12	3	0	.800	396	198	6-1-0	6-2-0	7-4-0	4-0-0	5-0-0
x-Buffalo	10	5	0	.667	308	246	4-3-0	6-2-0	7-4-0	3-1-0	3-2-0
N.Y. Jets	6	9	0	.400	263	353	3-5-0	1-6-0	3-8-0	3-1-0	1-4-0
Miami	4	11	0	.267	279	470	3-5-0	1-6-0	3-8-0	1-3-0	1-4-0
South											
y-Houston	10	5	0	.667	364	350	5-2-0	5-3-0	8-3-0	2-2-0	4-1-0
Cleveland	8	7	0	.533	367	317	4-4-0	4-3-0	6-5-0	2-2-0	2-3-0
Indianapolis	7	8	0	.467	341	335	5-3-0	2-5-0	5-6-0	2-2-0	3-2-0
Jacksonville	5	10	0	.333	262	377	2-5-0	3-5-0	5-6-0	0-4-0	1-4-0
North											
y-Baltimore	13	2	0	.867	503	272	6-1-0	7-1-0	9-2-0	4-0-0	4-1-0
Pittsburgh	8	7	0	.533	279	275	5-3-0	3-4-0	6-5-0	2-2-0	3-2-0
Cincinnati	6	9	0	.400	312	360	4-4-0	2-5-0	6-5-0	0-4-0	3-2-0
Cincinnati	1	14	0	.067	246	397	1-6-0	0-8-0	1-10-0	0-4-0	0-5-0
West											
y-Kansas City	11	4	0	.733	420	287	4-3-0	7-1-0	8-3-0	3-1-0	5-0-0
Oakland	7	8	0	.467	298	403	5-3-0	2-5-0	5-6-0	2-2-0	3-2-0
Denver	6	9	0	.400	266	301	4-3-0	2-6-0	5-6-0	1-3-0	2-3-0
L.A. Chargers	5	10	0	.333	316	314	2-6-0	3-4-0	3-8-0	2-2-0	0-5-0

x-clinched playoff spot; y-clinched division

National Conference

	East										
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div
Philadelphia	8	7	0	.533	351	337	5-3-0	3-4-0	2-2-0	6-5-0	4-1-0
Dallas	7	8	0	.467	387	305	4-3-0	3-5-0	1-3-0	6-5-0	4-1-0
N.Y. Giants	4	11	0	.267	324	417	2-5-0	2-6-0	1-3-0	3-8-0	2-3-0
Washington	3	12	0	.200	250	388	1-7-0	2-5-0	1-3-0	2-9-0	0-5-0
South											
y-New Orleans	12	3	0	.800	416	331	6-2-0	6-1-0	4-0-0	8-3-0	4-1-0
Tampa Bay	7	8	0	.467	436	421	2-5-0	5-3-0	2-2-0	5-6-0	2-3-0
Atlanta	6	9	0	.400	353	377	3-5-0	3-4-0	1-3-0	5-6-0	3-2-0
Carolina	5	10	0	.333	330	428	2-5-0	3-5-0	3-1-0	2-9-0	1-4-0
North											
y-Green Bay	12	3	0	.800	353	293	7-1-0	5-2-0	3-1-0	9-2-0	5-0-0
x-Minnesota	10	5	0	.667	388	282	6-1-0	4-4-0	3-1-0	7-4-0	2-3-0
Chicago	7	8	0	.467	259	279	4-4-0	3-4-0	1-3-0	6-5-0	3-2-0
Detroit	3	11	1	.233	321	400	2-5-0	1-6-1	1-3-0	2-8-1	0-5-0
West											
x-San Francisco	12	3	0	.800	453	289	6-2-0	6-1-0	3-1-0	9-2-0	4-1-0
x-Seattle	11	4	0	.733	384	372	4-3-0	7-1-0	3-1-0	8-3-0	3-2-0
L.A. Rams	8	7	0	.533	363	340	4-3-0	4-4-0	2-2-0	6-5-0	2-3-0
Arizona	5	9	1	.367	337	411	2-5-1	3-4-0	2-2-0	3-7-1	1-4-0

ALSO ON AFN

New York Jets (6-9) at Buffalo Bills (10-5), AFN-Atlantic, 7 p.m. Sunday CET; 3 a.m. Monday JKT
 Green Bay Packers (12-3) at Detroit Lions (3-11), AFN-Sports, 7 p.m. Sunday CET; 3 a.m. Monday JKT

■ Check myafn.net for the most up-to-date TV listings.

REST OF THE SCHEDULE

Atlanta (6-9) at Tampa Bay (7-8)
 Miami (4-11) at New England (12-3)
 Cleveland (6-9) at Cincinnati (1-14)
 L.A. Chargers (10) at Kansas City (11-4)
 Washington (3-12) at Carolina (6-9)
 Oakland (7-8) at Denver (6-9)
 Washington (3-12) at Dallas (7-8)
 Indianapolis (7-8) at Jacksonville (5-10)
 Arizona (5-9-1) at L.A. Rams (8-7)

SPORTS



Beast boost

Lynch's arrival provides spark, energy for Seahawks » **Page 61**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

Wide open

Postseason matchups will showcase dynamic group of pass catchers

BY PETE IACOBELLI
Associated Press

A flick of the wrist, a slight shift of the shoulder and they're off. Talented receivers are a big part of this year's College Football Playoff. Never before have there been four teams in the CFP so prolific at scoring points. And it's in large part due to a growing — think 6-foot or taller — list of game-breaking receivers keen on quick cuts, one-handed grabs and the ability to catch almost any pass thrown their way.

"Not always sure how we do it," said Clemson's top receiver Tee Higgins.

Neither is anyone else who has seen the impressive weekly grabs by Higgins and the other receivers in the CFP who have become must-see TV:

- No. 1 LSU has a pair of 1,000-yard receivers in Ja'Marr Chase and Justin Jefferson, who have combined for 32 touchdowns this season.

- No. 2 Ohio State features K.J. Hill and Chris Olave. The duo has 21 touchdown catches between them.

- Third-ranked Clemson pairs Higgins with Justyn Ross, a combination that has helped the defending national champions win their past 28 games.

- And Oklahoma showcases CeeDee Lamb. All Lamb has done is average nearly 21 yards a catch and haul in 14 touchdown receptions.

It's the first time the four CFP participants enter the national semifinals averaging more than 43 points a game — which gives offense-crazed fans the promise of two potentially explosive showdowns when LSU faces Oklahoma in the Peach Bowl and Ohio State takes on Clemson in the Fiesta Bowl on Saturday.

CBS Sports analyst Gary Danielson has seen the evolution of the game go from big, physical bruisers getting 35 carries a contest to

SEE OPEN ON PAGE 57

LSU's Ja'Marr Chase won this season's Biletnikoff Award as college football's top receiver. His 18 touchdowns tied the SEC's single-season mark.

JOHN BAZEMORE/AP



Blues enter holiday break in far different position from last year » **NHL, Page 55**

Coaches seek to balance team success with player development » **NBA, Page 60**

