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Predicting winners
in the battle for
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MARIAH AGUILAR-CERON/U.S. Army

A soldier conducts the Army Combat Fitness Test during the U.S. Army Pacific Best Squad Competition 2023 at Lightning Academy, Hawaii, on June 6. Competing amendments in defense bills pending in the House and Senate could lead to some significant changes to the Army's physical assessments.

Fitness test future in doubt

Bills could make physical assessment gender neutral or eliminate it

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Army could be forced to reimplement gender-neutral standards for at least some of its soldiers for its combat fitness test or scrap the current CrossFit-style physical assessment altogether under competing amendments in defense bills pending in the House and Senate.

The House and Senate Armed Services committees last week approved separate versions

of the fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, sending bills to the full chambers with different plans on how to manage the Army's long-running implementation of its fitness test. In October, after years of studies and delays, the Army officially implemented its six-event Army Combat Fitness Test, or ACFT, which was meant to simulate the physical demands of combat.

Service leaders have long touted the new fit-

ness test as a dramatic improvement over the decades-old Army Physical Fitness Test, but some lawmakers have spent years pushing back on the assessment over a variety of issues including its standards for men and women and the amount of equipment needed to train for and take the test.

The House Armed Services Committee's

SEE FITNESS ON PAGE 5

Electric vehicle tech could give troops quieter, cleaner power

BY DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Prototypes of a highly mobile piece of equipment that stores electricity is being developed to produce cleaner energy, reduce dependency on fossil fuel and improve troops' edge on the battlefield. And it is based on technology that is already in vehicles on the road.

"You've got all of these diesel generators [the military uses now] ... and the whole time they are guzzling diesel fuel," JD Johnson, vice president of business development, for the defense subsidiary of General Motors, said Wednesday at the Modern Day Marine 2023 convention in Washington.

GM Defense's proposed Electric Storage Unit is roughly the same size as the existing diesel generators that the military uses now, making them mobile. If deployed, the company officials said they would replace many of the old diesel generators, requiring only a few for recharging. A management system built into the new unit can turn the diesel generators

SEE ELECTRIC ON PAGE 5



DOUG G. WARE/Stars and Stripes

GM Defense's Electric Military Concept Vehicle is seen at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington on Wednesday.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Germany	\$3.953	\$4.471	\$4.792	\$4.183	Azores	..	..	\$4.681	..
Change in price	..	..	..	..	Change in price	..	..	..	..
Netherlands		\$4.615	\$4.887	\$4.590	Turkey	..	..	\$4.480	\$4.310*
Change in price	..	..	..	..	Change in price	..	..	..	..
U.K.	..	\$4.407	\$4.728	\$4.119					
Change in price	..	..	..	..					

Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective June 30.

PACIFIC GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Japan	..	\$4.459	..	\$3.849	South Korea	\$3.629	..	\$4.479	\$3.869
Change in price	..	No change	..	-1.0 cents	Change in price	-1.0 cents	..	-1.0 cents	-2.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.619	..	..	\$3.849	Guam	\$3.629**	\$4.149	\$4.469	..
Change in price	-1.0 cents	..	..	-1.0 cents	Change in price	-1.0 cents	No change	No change	..

*DieselEFD **Midgrade

Pacific prices for the week of June 30 - July 6

EXCHANGE RATES			
Military rates			
Euro costs (June 30)	\$1.06	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8991
British pound (June 30)	\$1.23	Thailand (Baht)	35.70
Japanese yen (June 30)	140.00	Turkey (NewLira)	26.0620
South Korean won (June 30)	1274.00		
Commercial rates			
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770		
Britain (Pound)	1.2599		
Canada (Dollar)	1.3276		
China (Yuan)	7.2531		
Denmark (Krone)	6.8510		
Egypt (Pound)	30.9023		
Euro	0.9200		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8369		
Hungary (Forint)	341.88		
Israel (Shekel)	3.6998		
Japan (Yen)	144.91		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3076		
Norway (Krone)	10.8219		
Philippines (Peso)	55.48		
Poland (Zloty)	4.09		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7507		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3568		
South Korea (Won)	1321.88		

(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 rate8.25

Interest Rates Discount rate5.75

Federal funds market rate5.08

3-month bill5.34

30-year bond3.81

WEATHER OUTLOOK



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

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MILITARY

Report says threat from Somalia cutback inflated

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The push to get U.S. troops back on the ground in Somalia in 2022 was based in part on an inflated threat assessment from U.S. Africa Command about the terrorist danger to the homeland, according to a new report that calls for an updated strategy in the country.

International Crisis Group, an independent multinational think tank, details the behind-the-scenes debate that led the White House to reverse former President Donald Trump's decision to yank all 700 U.S. troops out of the east African country during the last days of his administration.

The report, released last week by the peace-focused group, calls for more emphasis on nonmilitary means to try to end a long-running conflict that has involved U.S. military airstrikes and troop deployments geared toward building up Somalia's fledgling armed forces.

Retired Gen. Stephen Townsend, who led U.S. Africa Command at the time of the debate about troop deployments in Somalia, painted a dire picture of the security situation that resulted from Trump's withdrawal order.

He argued publicly and privately that the al-Shabab group had grown stronger since the AFRICOM mission was relegated to rotating forces in and out of the country, a situation he characterized as "commuting to work."

"In East Africa, al-Qaida's al-Shabab remains the greatest threat to U.S. persons and interests in the region as well as the homeland, while undermining peace, security and political progress in Somalia," Townsend told the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2022.

He went on to say that "if left unchecked, al-Shabab will soon expand beyond Somalia's borders and become an even greater threat to regional stability and American interests."

The Crisis Group report, which involved interviews with current and past U.S. government officials, added that the plan to get troops back on the ground went mostly unchallenged.

"Despite the sense among some U.S. officials that Townsend may have been inflating the threat, especially to the U.S. homeland, his position faced little if any dissent at the Defense Department," the report said. "Not even political appointees who otherwise supported scaling back the war on terror vigorously challenged his proposal."

The result was a return to the military status quo in Somalia, where there are now several hundred troops supporting the country's decadeslong struggle against Islamic militants.

AFRICOM did not immediately respond Thursday to a request for comment on the report's findings.

One possible explanation why the decision to deploy again faced

so little resistance is that it fit into the Pentagon's comfort zone: small numbers of troops at a relatively low cost who could help contain a threat from growing beyond the region.

Pentagon and State Department officials ultimately believed that the move to send back the troops was based on it being "the least bad option," the report said.

While some White House officials were skeptical, the stakes weren't high enough for serious bureaucratic resistance, the report said.

"There were doubtless several reasons for the diffidence. One was likely that the threat of a terrorist attack weighs heavily on senior leaders, who never want one to happen on their watch," the report said.

Such an outlook lends itself to a policy that leans on troop deployments "to mitigate even the slightest risk."

For the U.S., an overarching question is whether a small military footprint in Somalia will lead to the elimination of al-Shabab. The Crisis Group argues that the current approach is almost certain to disappoint in the long run, given the political complexities in Somalia and al-Shabab's proven resilience.

One factor likely influencing the U.S. approach is the war in Afghanistan, where a counterterrorism campaign expanded into a nation-



ZOE RUSSELL/U.S. Air Force

U.S. forces host a range day with the Somali Danab Brigade in Somalia in 2021. The push to get U.S. troops back into Somalia was based in part on an inflated threat assessment about the danger from al-Shabab militants, according to an International Crisis Group report.

building effort that ultimately failed.

While leery of investing more in nonmilitary activities, the U.S. has created a balance in Somalia that "right now is lopsidedly militaristic," the Crisis Group said.

The report urges the U.S. to emphasize political reconciliation efforts among Somalia's disparate groups and tribal factions.

Also, the U.S. should look for an opening to aid Somalia's government in settlement talks with the al-Shabab group, as military operations weaken the terrorist organi-

zation, it argues.

"A corollary to the broadly accepted analysis that al-Shabab cannot be defeated militarily is that, at some point, a settlement with the group may offer the best hope of stabilizing the country," the report said. "Although many officials in Washington recognize that dialogue could be in the cards, they tend to brush off the need for long-term planning toward this end."

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Poland gets OK for \$15B Patriot missile systems buy

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Poland's weapons-buying spree just keeps on going, with a multi-billion-dollar battle command system that will be used to support the country's Patriot missile defense program poised to become the latest major purchase.

On Wednesday, the U.S. State Department issued a statement announcing initial approval of the

\$15 billion deal.

The acquisition is part of the program's second phase and involves an Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System and a wide array of supporting equipment, including 48 Patriot M903 launch stations, hundreds of advanced missiles and assorted launchers and sensors.

"This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and

national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a NATO ally that is a force for political stability and economic progress in Europe," the State Department said in a statement.

In addition, the sale will improve coordination with the U.S. military, since American forces use the same air defense system, the statement said.

The sale, which requires formal congressional approval, comes after several other major weapons purchases by Poland, which over the past several years has become a major force in NATO.

Poland's push to upgrade its military has intensified over the past year in the wake of Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Earlier this week, Poland welcomed its first batch of Abrams

tanks, which arrived Tuesday. In upcoming months, nearly 400 Abrams tanks will be incorporated into the Polish army.

Apache attack helicopters, High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and F-35 fighter jets are other major weapons systems that Poland is adding to its arsenal.

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Smoking ordnance from Korean War found near Yongsan Garrison

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

Unexploded ordnance believed to date to the Korean War was recovered Tuesday by the South Korean military in Seoul about 1¼ miles from the U.S. Army's Yongsan Garrison.

A railway worker clearing soil for a zoning project discovered the ordnance at a construction site behind Yongsan Station around 1:30

p.m. Tuesday, a Yongsan Fire Station official told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday.

The worker spotted smoke billowing from the ground and the fire department was called to investigate, according to the fire station official. Firefighters doused the object with water and requested assistance from South Korean army explosive ordnance disposal technicians around 4 p.m. the

same day.

The technicians did not detonate the ordnance at the scene but collected it for further investigation, a South Korean army headquarters spokesman said by phone Thursday.

A preliminary investigation indicates the ordnance dates to the 1950-53 Korean War, the army spokesman said. Additional information, such as whether it was a

hand grenade or artillery shell, was not immediately available due to the rust and corrosion on the object, he added.

No injuries were reported, according to officials from the fire department and South Korean army. South Korean officials regularly speak to the media on the customary condition of anonymity.

The site is just over a mile from Yongsan Garrison, where about

113 Defense Department civilian employees and U.S. service members are stationed.

Yongsan's emergency services monitored the situation and "determined a heightened alert was not necessary," garrison spokesman Luciano Vera said by email Thursday.

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PACIFIC

Pentagon mulls microreactors for Guam

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. government is considering nuclear microreactors to power its Pacific-island fortress on Guam.

Legislation being considered by the Senate and due to be passed by year's end directs a briefing on military nuclear microreactors, according to an executive summary of the National Defense Authorization Act, greenlit on June 22 by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The executive summary doesn't specify who would be briefed but directs it to focus on "the potential for using modular microreactors to supplement power generation in Guam."

The island citadel is home to a burgeoning garrison of military personnel from every service branch.

Andersen Air Force Base has long been a linchpin of U.S. air power in the Indo-Pacific while Guam's harbor hosts attack submarines and port calls by aircraft carrier strike groups. Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, which opened in January but is still under construction, will accommodate thousands of Marines relocating from Okinawa.

Meanwhile, the Army, which operates a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, system on Guam, will expand its footprint under plans for 360-degree air and missile defense to combat potential Chinese or North Korean strikes.

The defense funding bill requires a report on the capacity of infrastructure, resources and personnel available on Guam to meet U.S. Indo-Pacific Command strategic objectives.

Guam's delegate to Congress, James



STACY LASETER/U.S. Navy

An aerial view of Naval Base Guam shows vessels moored at Apra Harbor in 2018.

Moylan, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, is unaware of discussions about potential nuclear power on Guam, according to his statement in The Guam Daily Post on Tuesday.

"This is the first we are reading of any discussions associated with nuclear reactors to supplement power on Guam," he wrote. "Since this was discovered in the Senate's version of the NDAA, no discussions or inquiries were made with our office."

The U.S. government is funding the construction of a prototype mobile nuclear microreactor as part of Project Pele, accord-

ing to a Defense Department statement on April 13, 2022.

The microreactor, assembled and initially operated at Idaho National Laboratory, aims to deliver 1-5 MW of electrical power for a minimum of three years of full power operation, according to the statement.

The Defense Department has contracted to build the \$300 million prototype by 2024, according to a World Nuclear News report on June 9, 2022.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Army operated small nuclear power plants in Wyoming, Antarctica, Greenland and in the Panama Canal Zone, according to a 2018 Army re-

port on potential future use of such plants.

The report analyzed the Navy and Air Force as potential users of mobile nuclear power plants on Guam. Other spots in the Indo-Pacific examined as potential locations for the microreactors included the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia and the Pacific atoll of Kwajalein.

Environmental assessment of as many as 20 sites for the Enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense System are underway across Guam.

Large amounts of electricity may be needed to power the new missile defense system on the 212-square-mile island, although its power requirements are uncertain, according to Leland Bettis, director of the Guam-based Pacific Center for Island Security.

The Missile Defense Agency hasn't specified which sites earmarked for missile defense are power sources and which are command and control facilities or where launchers might be, Bettis told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

"Nuclear power might be an option for supporting the power grid in Guam," he said, before bringing up concerns about it being used for military operations.

"If one of those reactors is used to power a forward operating base and it's targeted in a conflict, it could present an environmental problem," Bettis said.

Likewise, spreading missile defense sites across Guam could pose risks to the community in the event of conflict, he added.

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Former president: US agreement makes Philippines target for China

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte says the Chinese ambassador to Manila told him the country would be a target if America launched attacks on China from bases in the islands.

In comments reported Wednesday by the Manila Bulletin, Duterte said Chinese Ambassador Huang Xilian issued the warning to him during a recent meeting.

"I reminded [Huang] again that the Philippines does not have a quarrel with China," Duterte said, according to the Bulletin, "but his answer to me was, 'If you provide places where there can be an aggressive action to China, the Philippines would always be a target.'"

Duterte's time in office was marked by warm words for Beijing and criticism of the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement that gives U.S. forces the right to operate from bases in the islands.

The relationship between the allies has improved following the election of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. last year. In February, officials added four new sites to



SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

Then-Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte arrives at Mount Samat to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the fall of the Bataan Peninsula to Japanese forces during World War II, April 9, 2017.

five locations named in the original base-sharing pact.

However, Duterte claims there are 17 sites in the agreement, according to the Bulletin.

"In the interest of the public's right to know, there should be an open discussion," he said. "Americans should come clean and give

us a truthful narration or narrative or an explanation and identify the places where they have installed bases here in the Philippines."

The result of a U.S. attack on China would be retaliation with nuclear weapons against the Philippines, Duterte said, according

to the Bulletin.

"[Americans] who are farther away have 'anti-missile' missiles," he said. "You can shoot them down before they can enter your airspace. The problem is, here in the Philippines, what are the stakes for us? Nothing. It would not only be destructive. I believe that the Philippines would be a graveyard if war comes."

Stephen Dove, a press officer at the U.S. Embassy in Manila, in a Thursday email responding to questions about Duterte's comments, referred to earlier U.S. government statements, including an April 19 U.S. Embassy statement that said the U.S. and Philippines militaries worked closely together through a multi-year annual planning process to identify all nine EDCA locations, which were then approved by both governments.

It's unlikely that confrontation or heightened tension around Taiwan would leave the Philippines untouched, according to Ian Chong, an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore.

"Manila is already reporting ongoing harassment of Philippine

Coast Guard and civilian fishing vessels in waters it disputes with Beijing," he told Stars and Stripes in an email Thursday. "In that sense, the Philippines has already been under pressure for some years even beyond [Chinese] efforts to control Taiwan."

Duterte's comments aren't supported by the facts and won't have a major impact on the base-sharing agreement, according to Carlyle Thayer, an emeritus professor at the University of New South Wales.

"The United States will never unilaterally initiate an armed conflict with China, especially from the Philippines where no strategic nuclear forces are based to support such an action," he wrote in an email Thursday.

The former president's comments don't reflect public opinion in the islands, where most people are pro-American, according to Patricio Abinales, a Philippines expert at the University of Hawaii.

"He can shout his pro-China position all he wants but people will just say, 'he has always been pro-China' but he is not in power anymore," he said by email Thursday.

MILITARY

Electric: Vehicles aim to improve edge on battlefield

FROM PAGE 1

on and off only when they need recharging, thus reducing fuel consumption and carbon emissions.

The Defense Department is the single largest consumer of fossil fuels in the world and emits more greenhouse gas than two-thirds of all the nations on Earth, according to the Pentagon. The military in recent years has made moves away from using fossil fuels for its contribution to climate change, which Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has called an “existential threat” to national security. The Army released a plan last year to cut down on fossil fuel use, invest in renewable energy sources and become more resilient in difficult

weather conditions.

GM Defense and Cummins Power Generation were chosen this week to build electric storage prototypes as part of the Defense Innovation Unit’s program called Stable Tactical Expeditionary Electric Power, or STEEP. The main goal of the program is to develop a “modular, vehicle transportable system” that provides various forms of alternate energy storage and “management for tactical and mobile microgrids” in rugged and remote environments. The DIU — established by the Pentagon in 2015 to help the military make faster use of emerging technologies — expects the new technology to cut down on logistical challenges and fossil fuels as

the military’s main energy source.

If successful, STEEP will transition to a Marine Corps program, but Johnson said the Army also has interest in the GM’s energy storage technology.

The Army is already using one of the company’s other new developments — a nine-seat Infantry Squad Vehicle. A four-seat variant known as the ISV4, which is heavily based on the Chevrolet Colorado pickup truck, was on display at GM Defense’s booth at the convention.

Also on display Wednesday was GM’s Electric Military Concept Vehicle, a dual-motor, SUV-like truck that’s based on the GMC Hummer electric vehicle pickup. The company is also developing

the hybrid-powered Next Generation Light Tactical Wheeled Vehicle that’s based on the Chevrolet Silverado pickup.

The Electric Storage Unit and its military electric vehicles use the automaker’s Ultium flexible battery platform, which already powers several of the company’s commercial vehicles.

“We are trying to help the Marines and different U.S. military services to see the [electric] tactical grid,” said Sonia Taylor, GM Defense’s director of communications. “It’s an ecosystem we’re trying to help build, that you can have a more electric presence ... while also delivering significant tactical capabilities.”

According to the DIU, GM De-

fense and Cummins in the future will produce multiple prototypes for the military to evaluate and test. The Pentagon is expected to select the winner in 2026, according to the company.

“These commercial technologies will provide the [Pentagon] with new capabilities to more efficiently manage our tactical microgrids by optimizing our power management in remote environments,” said Jack Ryan, program manager for the Defense Innovation Unit. “This translates to reduced supply chain constraints, less down time for the warfighter, and increased energy availability in the field.”

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MAHSIMA ALKAMOONEH/U.S. Army

Soldiers participate in the sprint-drag-carry event of the Army Combat Fitness Test in 2021 at Camp Ripley, Minn.

Fitness: Bills still far from being law

FROM PAGE 1

draft of the 2024 NDAA — the annual must-pass law that sets Congress’ policy and spending priorities for the Pentagon — would impart “sex-neutral fitness standards” for soldiers in front-line combat specialties. Meanwhile, the Senate Armed Services Committee’s version of the bill would kill off the Army Combat Fitness Test, and slowly return the service to the 1980’s-era Army Physical Fitness Test, or APFT, which includes pushups, situps and a two-mile run.

The House bill was approved June 22 and the Senate bill was approved the following day. The bills remain far from becoming law. They must be passed by the full chambers and differences between the two measures must then be reconciled before they can be sent to President Joe Biden’s desk for his signature into law.

An Army spokesperson declined comment Wednesday on either version of the bill, citing the ongoing legislative process. A service official, however, wrote in an email that a return to the APFT would be undesirable and “a giant leap backward” for soldiers’ fitness. The official commented on condition of anonymity.

The Senate’s version would reimplement the APFT over three

years, according to an executive summary of the bill released by the Armed Services Committee last week. That would include a two-year pilot program of the old fitness test followed by a yearlong waiting period before it can be reimplemented as the standard Army fitness test. It would also require service leaders to brief Congress on the test.

The House’s approach would keep the ACFT in place, but it would impose one standard passing grade for men and women serving in close combat jobs, including in special forces, infantry, armor, cavalry, artillery and combat engineer specialties.

Army leaders recently had been working separately from Congress to reimplement gender-neutral standards for the most physically demanding career fields, according to the Army official. Initial versions of the test rolled out in 2019 eyed gender- and age-neutral standards, and the service initially proposed grading soldiers on a scale based on the physicality of their job.

But those plans were scrapped as lawmakers and some soldiers raised concerns over some female soldiers’ ability to pass the test, which is vital to progressing in a service member’s career. Studies showed less than 50% of female

soldiers were passing early versions of the ACFT. When the Army finally implemented the ACFT in October, it included separate grading scales for men and women.

Gen. James McConville, the Army chief of staff, told Congress last year that injury rates among soldiers had somewhat improved since they began training for and taking the ACFT ahead of its official implementation.

The Army began developing the ACFT in 2010 as an attempt to improve fitness and resiliency among its troops nearly a decade into the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Service officials at that time argued the decades old APFT placed too much weight on a soldier’s running ability and did not adequately gauge a service member’s ability to perform critical functions in combat, such as heaving heavy equipment or dragging a wounded trooper to safety.

After several studies, the final version implemented last year included six events — a dead lift, hand-release pushups, a plank, a medicine ball throw, a sprint-drag-carry event, and a two-mile run.

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NATO chief calls for talks to persuade Turkey to let Sweden join alliance

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday he has called a meeting of senior officials from Turkey, Sweden and Finland for July 6 to try to overcome Turkish objections to Sweden joining the military alliance.

The meeting is a last-ditch effort by Stoltenberg to deal with

one of the final obstacles to Sweden’s membership before a major summit the following week. Sweden’s membership would be a highly symbolic moment and another indication of how Russia’s war in Ukraine is driving countries to join the Western alliance.

However, Hungary also has not yet ratified Sweden’s bid, and Hungarian lawmakers said a long-

delayed parliamentary vote on ratifying Sweden’s NATO membership would not would not happen until the autumn legislative session. NATO requires the unanimous approval of all members to expand, so that almost certainly means the country will not get the green light in time for the July 11-12 summit in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius.

Sweden applied to join NATO last year after Russia invaded Ukraine amid widespread concern in Europe that President Vladimir Putin might broaden the war. It applied alongside Finland and they had hoped to join together, but Turkish objections to Sweden’s membership meant that Finland eventually joined on its own in April.

Stockholm has changed its anti-terror laws and lifted an arms embargo on Turkey to satisfy Ankara’s demands. But Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a statement posted on his social media account that he spoke with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz earlier Wednesday by phone and again raised his concerns over Sweden’s NATO membership.

EUROPE

Belarus rattled as leader welcomes Wagner fighters

Associated Press

As life in Russia returned to normal after an armed rebellion by a mercenary group, tensions were rising in and around its neighbor Belarus, where the exiled leader of the force and some of its fighters were settling in.

Moving to Belarus was part of the deal the Kremlin struck with Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of the Wagner private military company, to end last weekend's rebellion that rattled Russia's leadership.

Prigozhin and his fighters escaped prosecution and were offered refuge in Belarus by authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, who said his country could use their experience and expertise.

That doesn't sit well with the Belarusian opposition and guerrilla activists, who called Wagner fighters "a threat to the Belarusian people and (the country's) independence," and promised action.

"We're categorically against stationing Russian mercenaries in Belarus and are preparing a 'warm' welcome to Wagnerites in Belarus," said Aliaksandr Azarau, leader of the BYPOL guerrilla group of former military members, speaking in a telephone interview with The Associated Press from outside the country.

Neighboring Baltic countries also expressed concerns about how this would affect regional security. In a joint statement Wednesday, parliament speakers in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania urged the European Union to label Wagner a terrorist organization.

"The emergence of the Wagner mercenary group in Belarus could make the security situation on the eastern borders of NATO and the EU even more precari-

ous," the statement read.

Lukashenko said those Wagner fighters who don't want to come under the command of the Russian Defense Ministry — one of the options offered to them by Russian President Vladimir Putin — can stay in Belarus "for some time" at their own expense.

He said he had offered them "an abandoned military unit" to set up camp, and promised to "help with whatever we can."

"We're looking at it pragmatically — if their commanders come to us and help us, (we get their) experience," Lukashenko said.

He didn't specify the facility's location, but Azarau said construction of a site for Wagner mercenaries was underway in Osipovichi, a city 142 miles north of the border with Ukraine, with Belarusian soldiers involved.

Residents of the city of 30,000 told AP they were rattled by the developments.

"There's military equipment in the streets and Belarusian servicemen — all residents are discussing the arrival of Wagnerites and, frankly speaking, we're panicking and are not happy about being neighbors with them," Inga, a 43-year-old doctor in Osipovichi, said by phone.

"I have teenage daughters. ... How will we live next to thugs, pardoned murderers and rapists?" said the woman, who spoke on condition of that she not be fully identified out of safety concerns.

The Kremlin promised not to prosecute Prigozhin for the rebellion after reaching an agreement that he would halt the uprising and go to Belarus.

That came even though Putin vowed to punish those behind what he called treason and a "stab in the back."



GAVRIIL GRIGOROV, SPUTNIK/AP

The top Russian military commander in Ukraine, Gen. Sergei Surovikin, left, and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu attend a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in December.

Russian general possibly detained in aftermath of Wagner mutiny

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Gen. Sergei Surovikin, the deputy commander of the Russian group of forces fighting in Ukraine, is believed to have been detained days after mercenaries staged a revolt inside Russia, two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Thursday, citing U.S. and Ukrainian intelligence assessments.

The people spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

It's not clear whether Surovikin faces any charges or where he is being held, reflecting the opaque world of the Kremlin's politics and uncertainty after the revolt.

But his reported detention comes days after Wagner Group mercenaries took over the military headquarters in the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don and were heading toward Moscow in what appears to have been an aborted insurrection.

Wagner head Yevgeny Prigozhin has spoken positively of Surovikin while criticizing the coun-

try's military brass and suggested that he should be appointed the General Staff chief to replace Gen. Valery Gerasimov. The New York Times this week reported that U.S. officials believe Surovikin had advance knowledge of Prigozhin's plan to stage the revolt.

The White House and the Kremlin declined to comment.

Surovikin, who has longtime links to Prigozhin, hasn't been seen since the start of the rebellion when he posted a video urging an end to it.

A Russian military blogger, the Moscow Times, and the Financial Times reported that Surovikin, who is also the commander of the Russian air force, has been arrested.

There has been intense speculation that some top military officers may have colluded with Prigozhin and may now face punishment for the mutiny that briefly sent a virtually unchallenged march toward Moscow that Putin has labeled treason and a "stab in the back."

Surovikin has been linked to Prigozhin since when both were active in Syria, where Russia has

waged a military action since 2015 to shore up Syrian President Bashar Assad's government and to help him reclaim territory after a devastating civil war.

While Prigozhin had unleashed expletive-ridden insults at Shoigu and chief of the General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov before last week's mutiny in which he demanded their ouster, he has continually praised Surovikin and suggested naming him to replace Gerasimov.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to comment Thursday on whether Surovikin had been arrested.

Asked by the AP if the president still trusts Surovikin, he replied that Putin works with the defense minister and the chief of the General Staff and referred questions about officers to the Defense Ministry. He also referred all other questions about Surovikin and his status to the ministry.

Gerasimov's fate also is unclear after the abortive mutiny. While Shoigu showed up at several events attended by Putin, Gerasimov was mysteriously absent.

EU leaders to assess Putin's position in talks with chiefs at summit

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy took center stage at Thursday's European Union summit, underscoring the importance the 27 EU leaders attach to protecting their eastern flank from Russian aggression and beefing up Ukraine's defense capabilities.

Zelenskyy was set to address the gathering by video link and Stoltenberg attended an early

lunch at the spring summit for leaders. But the biggest seat at the table was reserved for something that's not officially on the agenda: the fallout from the stunning weekend mutiny in Russia and the impact it has on the rule of President Vladimir Putin.

"The mutiny we saw at the weekend demonstrates that there are cracks and divisions within the Russian system. At the same time, it is important to underline that these are internal Russian

matters," said Stoltenberg on arrival at the summit.

EU leaders agreed. "This showed deep cracks in Putin's system. This mutiny of last weekend will also have aftershocks that we will see," said EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

President Gitanas Nausėda of Lithuania, one of several EU nations bordering Russia, insisted it was all the more reason to take a robust posture toward Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Some colleagues sometimes say that a strong Putin is less dangerous than a weak Putin. I don't agree with that. We have to move forward and be decisive, because now is a crucial moment of history," he said.

Prime Minister Krisjanis Kariņš of Latvia, another nation bordering Russia, said that "we cannot control what is happening inside Russia, but we can control what we do on the outside."

Officials from several member

states and EU institutions said the chaos and instability created by the rebellion would not only force the EU to double down on its support for Ukraine with commitments for more ammunition but also to ensure fighting and violence does not spill over into the bloc itself.

"There is no room for hesitation," said Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas. "We must continue to increase the price of Russian aggression."

NATION



KIUCHIRO SATO/AP

The Chicago Board of Trade building is blanketed in haze from Canadian wildfires Wednesday in Chicago.

Forecasters: Much of US can expect a hot, smoky summer

Associated Press

The only break much of America can hope for anytime soon from eye-watering dangerous smoke from fire-struck Canada is brief bouts of shirt-soaking sweltering heat and humidity from a southern heat wave that has already proven deadly, forecasters say.

And then the smoke will likely come back to the Midwest and East.

That's because neither the 235 out-of-control Canadian wildfires nor the stuck weather pattern that's responsible for this mess of meteorological maladies are showing signs of relenting for the next week or longer, according to meteorologists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Prediction Center.

First, the stuck weather pattern made abnormally hot and dry conditions for Canada to burn at off-the-chart record levels. Then it created a setup where the only relief comes when low pressure systems roll through, which means areas on one side get smoky air from the north and the other gets sweltering air from the south.

Smoke or heat. "Pick your poison," said prediction center fore-

cast operations chief Greg Carbin. "The conditions are not going to be very favorable."

"As long as those fires keep burning up there, that's going to be a problem for us," Carbin said. "As long as there's something to burn, there will be smoke we have to deal with."

Take St. Louis. The city had two days of unhealthy air Tuesday and Wednesday, but for Thursday "they'll get an improvement of air quality with the very hot and humid heat," said weather prediction center meteorologist Bryan Jackson. The forecast is for temperatures that feel like 109 degrees — with 101 degree heat and stifling humidity.

On Wednesday, the low pressure system was parked over New England and because winds go counter-clockwise, areas to the west — such as Chicago and the Midwest — get smoky winds from the north, while areas east of the low pressure get southerly hot winds, Jackson said.

As that low pressure system moves on and another one travels over the central Great Plains and Lake Superior, the Midwest gets temporary relief, Jackson said. But

when low pressure moves on, the smoke comes back.

"We have this this carousel of air cruising around the Midwest, and every once in a while is bringing the smoke directly onto whatever city you live in," said University of Chicago atmospheric scientist Liz Moyer. "And while the fires are ongoing, you can expect to see these periodic bad air days and the only relief is either when the fires go out or when the weather pattern dies."

The stuck weather pattern is "awfully unusual," said NOAA's Carbin who had to look back in records to 1980 to see anything even remotely similar. "What gets me is the persistence of this."

Why is the weather pattern stuck? This seems to be happening more often — and some scientists suggest that human-caused climate change causes more situations where weather patterns stall. Moyer and Carbin said it's too soon to tell if that's the case.

But Carbin and Canadian fire scientist Mike Flannigan said there's a clear climate signal in the Canadian fires. And they said those fires aren't likely to die down anytime soon, with nothing in the forecast that looks likely to change.

Human remains likely found from Titan wreckage

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — Human remains have likely been recovered from the wreckage of the submersible that imploded during an underwater voyage to view the Titanic, the U.S. Coast Guard said Wednesday.

The news came hours after the announcement that debris from the Titan, collected from the seafloor more than 12,000 feet below the surface of the North Atlantic, had arrived in St. John's, Newfoundland. Twisted chunks of the submersible were unloaded at a Canadian Coast Guard pier.

Recovering and scrutinizing the wreckage is a key part of the investigation into why the Titan imploded last week, killing all five people on board. The multiday search and eventual recovery of debris from the 22-foot vessel captured the world's attention.

"There is still a substantial amount of work to be done to understand the factors that led to the catastrophic loss of the Titan and help ensure a similar tragedy does not occur again," Coast Guard Chief Capt. Jason Neubauer said in a statement released late Wednesday afternoon.

The "presumed human remains" will be brought to the United States, where medical professionals will conduct a formal analysis, Neubauer said. He added that the Coast Guard has convened an investigation of the implosion at the highest level. The Marine Board of Investigation will analyze and test evidence, including pieces of debris, at a port in the U.S. The board will share the evidence at a future public hearing whose date has not been determined, the Coast Guard said.

Neubauer said the evidence will provide "critical insights" into the cause of the implosion.

Debris from the Titan, which is believed to have imploded on June 18 as it made its descent, was locat-

ed about 12,500 feet underwater and roughly 1,600 feet from the Titanic on the ocean floor. The Coast Guard is leading the investigation, in conjunction with several other government agencies in the U.S. and Canada.

Authorities have not disclosed details of the debris recovery, which could have followed several approaches, according to Carl Hartsfield, who directs a lab at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution that designs and operates autonomous underwater vehicles and has been serving as a consultant to the Coast Guard.

"If the pieces are small, you can collect them together and put them in a basket or some kind of collection device," Hartsfield said Monday. Bigger pieces could be retrieved with a remote-operated vehicle, or ROV, such as the one brought to the wreckage site by the Canadian ship Horizon Arctic to search the ocean floor. For extremely big pieces, a heavy lift could be used to pull them up with a tow line, he said.

Representatives for Horizon Arctic did not respond to requests for comment. The ROV's owner, Pelagic Research Services, a company with offices in Massachusetts and New York, is "still on mission" and cannot comment on the investigation, company spokesperson Jeff Mahoney said Wednesday.

"They have been working around the clock now for 10 days, through the physical and mental challenges of this operation," Mahoney said.

Analyzing the recovered debris could reveal important clues about what happened to the Titan, and there could be electronic data recorded by the submersible's instruments, Hartsfield said.

"So the question is, is there any data available? And I really don't know the answer to that question," he said Monday.

Applications for jobless benefits dip after 3 weeks of elevated claims

Associated Press

Applications for unemployment benefits fell significantly last week after claims appeared to stabilize at modestly elevated levels in recent weeks.

U.S. applications for jobless claims fell by 26,000 to 239,000 for the week ending June 24, the Labor Department reported Thursday. Economists were expecting

the elevated claims numbers to continue above 260,000, where they had settled the past three weeks.

"We have no specific explanation for this sudden dip, after three straight weeks in a narrow range from 262K to 265K, but observations for individual weeks always have to be viewed with skepticism, especially when they move

against the established trend in claims and other data," said analysts with Contingent Macro Research in a note to clients Thursday.

The four-week moving average of claims, which evens out some of the weekly fluctuations, rose by 1,500 to 257,500.

Jobless claims applications are seen as representative of the num-

ber of layoffs in a given week.

Jobless claims in the previous three weeks had pushed closer to 300,000 after mostly being in the high 100,000 to low 200,000 range since the fall of 2021. Even so, that increase may not have been enough for Fed officials, who have said that the unemployment rate needs to rise well past 4% to bring inflation down.

Also Thursday, the government said the U.S. economy grew at a 2% annual pace from January through March, much higher than the previous estimate of 1.3%. That, combined with the still-strong labor market, likely means that Fed officials will go through with another rate hike or two before the end of the year as its battle against inflation continues.

NATION

High court annuls affirmative action in college entries

By MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday struck down affirmative action in college admissions, forcing institutions of higher education to look for new ways to achieve diverse student bodies.

The court’s conservative majority overturned admissions plans at Harvard and the University of North Carolina, the nation’s oldest private and public colleges, respectively.

Chief Justice John Roberts said that for too long universities have “concluded, wrongly, that the touchstone of an individual’s identity is not challenges bested, skills built, or lessons learned but the color of their skin. Our constitutional history does not tolerate that choice.”

Justice Clarence Thomas, the nation’s second Black justice who had long called for an end to affirmative action, wrote separately that the decision “sees the universities’ admissions policies for what they are: rudderless, race-based preferences designed to ensure a particular racial mix in their entering classes.”

Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote in dissent that the decision “rolls back decades of precedent and momentous progress.”

Both Thomas and Sotomayor took the unusual step of reading a summary of their opinions aloud in the courtroom.

In a separate dissent, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson — the court’s first Black female justice — called the decision “truly a tragedy for us all.”

The vote was 6-3 in the North Carolina case and 6-2 in the Harvard case. Jackson sat out the Harvard case because she had been a member of an advisory governing board there.

The Supreme Court had twice upheld race-conscious college admissions programs in the past 20 years, including as recently as 2016.

But that was before the three appointees of former President Donald Trump joined the court. At arguments in late October, all six conservative justices expressed doubts about the practice, which had been upheld under Supreme Court decisions reaching back to 1978.

Lower courts also had upheld the programs at both UNC and Harvard, rejecting claims that the schools discriminated against

white and Asian American applicants.

The college admissions disputes are among several high-profile cases focused on race in America, and were weighed by the conservative-dominated, but most diverse court ever. Among the nine justices are four women, two Black people and a Latina.

The justices earlier in June decided a voting rights case in favor of Black voters in Alabama and rejected a race-based challenge to a Native American child protection law.

The affirmative action cases were brought by conservative activist Edward Blum, who also was behind an earlier affirmative action challenge against the University of Texas as well as the case that led the court in 2013 to end use of a key provision of the landmark Voting Rights Act.

Blum formed Students for Fair Admissions, which filed the lawsuits against both schools in 2014.

The group argued that the Constitution forbids the use of race in college admissions and called for overturning earlier Supreme Court decisions that said otherwise.

Blum’s group also contended that colleges and universities can use other, race-neutral ways to assemble a diverse student body, including by focusing on socioeconomic status and eliminating the preference for children of alumni and major donors.

The schools said that they use race in a limited way, but that eliminating it as a factor altogether would make it much harder to achieve a student body that looks like America.

At the eight Ivy League universities, the number of nonwhite students increased by 55% from 2010 to 2021, according to federal data. That group, which includes, Native American, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander and biracial students, accounted for 35% of students on those campuses in 2021, up from 27% in 2010.

The end of affirmative action in higher education in California, Michigan, Washington state and elsewhere led to a steep drop in minority enrollment in the states’ leading public universities.

They are among nine states that already prohibit any consideration of race in admissions to their public colleges and universities. The others are: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nebraska, New Hampshire and Oklahoma.



CAROLYN KASTER/AP

Former mail carrier Gerald Groff sued the Postal Service for failing to accommodate his religious practice in a case that made it to the Supreme Court. In a unanimous decision Thursday, the court said workers who ask for accommodations like having the Sabbath off should get them.

Supreme Court OKs protections for workers eyeing religious requests

By JESSICA GRESKO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday used the case of a Christian mailman who didn’t want to work Sundays to solidify protections for workers who ask for religious accommodations.

In a unanimous decision the justices made clear that workers who ask for accommodations, such as taking the Sabbath off, should get them unless their employers show doing so would result in “substantial increased costs” to the business.

The court made clear that businesses must cite more than minor costs — so-called “de minimis” costs — to reject requests for religious accommodations at work. Unlike most cases before the court, both sides in the case had agreed businesses needed to show more.

The case before the court involved a mail carrier in rural Pennsylvania. The man was told that as part of his job he’d need to start delivering Amazon packages on Sundays. He declined, saying his Sundays are for church and family. U.S. Postal Service officials initially tried to get substitutes for the man’s shifts, but they couldn’t always accommodate him. When he didn’t show, that meant more work for others. Ultimately, the man quit and sued for religious discrimination.

As for the particular dispute in front of them, the justices sent the case back to a lower court for another look in light of their decision. The case involves Gerald Groff, a former employee of the U.S. Postal Service in Pennsylvania’s Amish Country. For years, Groff was a fill-in mail carrier who worked on days when other mail carriers were off.

WASHINGTON, Ariz. — More than 1,100 people have returned to their homes in northern Scottsdale, a Phoenix suburb, as firefighters declared a brush fire to be 30% contained.

The Arizona Department of Forestry lifted evacuation orders around 7 p.m. Wednesday. A state forestry spokesperson said one secondary structure has been destroyed, but no injuries have been reported.

Scottsdale officials said 1,145 people evacuated about 100

homes Tuesday evening when the fire broke out. Fueled by grass and brush, it grew to 3 square miles, fire officials said after crews finished digging a containment line.

Department of Forestry investigators believed the fire was human-caused but have not said whether the cause can be determined.

The fire was southwest of the Rio Verde Foothills community, where horse ranches mix with expensive homes, some still under construction. A mountain regional park and a conservation center

Whenever Groff was scheduled on a Sunday, another carrier had to work or his spot went unfilled. Officials said Groff’s absences created a tense environment and contributed to morale problems. It also meant other carriers had to deliver more Sunday mail than they otherwise would.

Groff resigned in 2019 rather than wait to be fired. He sued the Postal service for failing to accommodate his religious practice. Lower courts ruled against him previously. As a result of the court’s ruling, his case will get another look.

Groff said in a statement after the ruling that he was grateful the court heard his case. “I hope this decision allows others to be able to maintain their convictions without living in fear of losing their jobs because of what they believe,” he said.

that rescues and rehabilitates wildlife are also nearby.

Arizona officials applied for a federal grant for funding to aid the battle the blaze, known locally as the Diamond fire. The Federal Emergency Management Agency provides funding of up to 75% of the eligible costs of fighting a fire.

The fire comes as drifting smoke from wildfires across Canada is creating curtains of haze and raising air quality concerns this week throughout the Great Lakes region and in parts of the central and eastern United States.

Evacuees return to Phoenix suburb as firefighter say brushfire 30% contained

NATION

White House measure targets homelessness

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Tackling veteran homelessness is part of a White House announcement Thursday to spend \$3.1 billion to combat the overall crisis through community support grants.

The new measure is “the largest-ever, single-year investment ... to help communities address homelessness,” the Biden administration said in a statement.

About 33,000 veterans across the country lack access to permanent housing, down 11% since 2020 and down 55% since 2010, according to

the 2022 Point-in-Time Count released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The VA has been addressing the issue of homeless veterans for the past two years with a target of placing 38,000 veterans into permanent housing. The VA exceeded that goal by finding more than 40,000 veterans a place to live in 2022.

The \$3.1 billion will be provided to HUD’s Continuum of Care Program, which awards funds for community groups and local governments to help provide support to families facing the threat of

homelessness.

The money will not be solely earmarked for veterans, but the White House is encouraging officials with the Continuum of Care program to work with participants to “coordinate with local Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers to ensure these funds are effectively supporting veterans and their families.”

Other efforts in the new investment include \$11.5 million in legal services grants, a first of its kind, according to the White House, to help veterans obtain representation in landlord-tenant disputes, as

well as assist in other court proceedings such as child support, custody or estate planning.

“For veterans, legal support can be the difference between becoming homeless and having safe, stable housing,” VA Secretary Denis McDonough said in a statement. “With the award of these first-of-their-kind VA grants, more veterans will have the legal representation they deserve, which will increase their access to housing and employment.”

The Department of Labor Veterans’ Employment and Training Service is being awarded more

than \$58 million to help connect homeless veterans with job opportunities. The money will go toward veterans learning occupational skills and participating in on-the-job training in fields such as manufacturing, construction, information technology and cybersecurity.

There also will be a new series of “boot camps” conducted by HUD and the VA to help VA medical centers and public housing agencies find veterans a place to live more quickly.

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Amtrak train derails after hitting truck on tracks in California

Associated Press

MOORPARK, Calif. — An Amtrak train carrying nearly 200 passengers struck a county water truck and derailed on Wednesday in Southern California, critically injuring the truck’s driver, authorities said.

Three of the train’s seven cars went off the tracks following the collision in Moorpark, said Ventura County Fire Department Captain Brian McGrath. The derailed train cars remained upright on tracks adjacent to an orchard and bare sections of land.

Fourteen people on the train were taken to hospitals with minor injuries, while the truck driver was taken to a trauma center with a head injury, McGrath said.

Parts of the demolished Ventura County Public Works truck were scattered all around the derailed train cars. McGrath initially said the truck’s driver was believed to have gotten out of the vehicle before the crash, but later clarified that the circumstances

leading up to the wreck weren’t known.

“No one’s talked to him, so the whole situation is still being investigated,” he said.

Mindy Faver was seated facing the rear of the train after a trip with her mother, Shari Peterson, returning from visiting family in Oregon.

“All of a sudden: Smack!” Faver said, describing the impact. Then Faver saw what she later found out was the water truck’s tank tumbling past her window.

Most of the passengers were able to get off the train cars on their own or with the aid of first responders, McGrath said. TV news helicopters showed numerous people, many carrying luggage, milling about in a field as firefighters worked the scene.

“It could have been a lot worse,” Faver told the Ventura County Star.

The train was on its way to Los Angeles from Seattle when “it struck a water truck obstructing



DEAN MUSGROVE, THE ORANGE COUNTY (CALIF.) REGISTER/AP

A destroyed truck lies next to a derailed Amtrak train in Moorpark, Calif., on Wednesday.

the tracks” at 11:15 a.m., Amtrak said in a statement.

“There were approximately 198 passengers and 13 crew onboard who were evacuated from the train, with no reports of serious in-

juries,” the statement said. “Amtrak is working with customers to make alternate travel arrangements. Amtrak, in coordination with local authorities, is conducting a full investigation.”

Crews were able to quickly douse a small fire, McGrath said.

Moorpark is a city of some 35,000 people located about 50 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles.

Two federal judges block portions of transgender youth care bans

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Federal judges in Kentucky and Tennessee temporarily blocked portions of bans on gender-affirming care for transgender youth Wednesday, handing down the rulings shortly before the statutes were set to go into effect.

The ruling is similar to roadblocks that federal courts have thrown up against Republican-dominant states in their pursuit to prevent young people from receiving transgender health care.

In both Kentucky and Tennessee, the judges blocked portions of the law that would have banned

transgender youth from accessing puberty blockers and hormone therapy. In the Tennessee case, the judge stopped short of also blocking the ban on gender-affirming surgeries for youth.

Meanwhile, the Kentucky case didn’t address surgeries, but U.S. District Judge David Hale, an Obama administration appointee, did side with seven transgender minors and their parents, who sued the state officials responsible for enforcing the provisions banning the use of puberty blockers and hormones. The plaintiffs contend the ban would violate their constitutional rights and interfere with

parental rights to seek established medical treatment for their children.

The ruling blocked the “most egregious parts of Kentucky’s anti-trans law,” said Chris Hartman, executive director of the Fairness Campaign, a Kentucky-based LGBTQ+ advocacy group.

Hartman added that transgender children and their families were “living in fear” of the approaching date for the restrictions.

Kentucky’s Republican Attorney General Daniel Cameron called Hale’s decision “misguided,” saying it “tramples the right” of state lawmakers to make public

policy. The state’s legal chief promised that his office will continue doing “everything in our power” to defend the measure. The provisions dealing with puberty blockers and hormone therapy were supposed to go into effect Thursday.

In Tennessee, U.S. District Judge Eli Richardson, a Trump administration appointee, stressed that his ruling lined up with federal decisions blocking similar bans across the country but added that courts must “tread carefully” when preventing a law from being enforced.

“If Tennessee wishes to regulate

access to certain medical procedures, it must do so in a manner that does not infringe on the rights conferred by the United States Constitution, which is of course supreme to all other laws of the land,” Richardson wrote.

The law, scheduled to go into effect on July 1, would have banned Tennessee health care providers from providing hormone treatments or surgeries for transgender youth where the purpose is to allow the child to express a gender identity “inconsistent with the immutable characteristics of the reproductive system that define the minor as male or female.”

NATION

Biden ‘open’ to medical use of psychedelics

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden’s youngest brother said in a radio interview Wednesday that the president has been “very open-minded” in conversations the two have had about the benefits of psychedelics as a form of medical treatment.

Frank Biden made the comments during a call into The Michael Smerconish Program on SiriusXM. The host had just interviewed a Wall Street Journal reporter who recently wrote about powerful Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and employees who believe the use of psychedelics and similar substances can help lead to business breakthroughs.

“He is very open-minded,” Frank Biden said when asked by Smerconish about conversations he’s had with the president on the topic. “Put it that way. I don’t want to speak, I’m talking brother-to-brother. Brother-to-brother,” the younger Biden said. “The question is, is the world, is the U.S. ready for this? My opinion is that we are on the cusp of a consciousness that needs to be brought about to solve a lot of the problems in and around addiction, but as importantly, to make us aware of the fact that we’re all one people and we’ve got to come together.”

Frank Biden added that he had “done a great deal of research” on the issue “because I’m a recovering alcoholic for many, many years.”

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

Some researchers believe psilocybin, the compound in psychedelic mushrooms, changes the way the brain organizes itself and can help users overcome things like depression, alcoholism and post-traumatic stress disorder. A drug that’s related to the anesthetic ketamine

was cleared by the FDA to help people with hard-to-treat depression.

But medical experts caution that more research is needed on the drugs’ efficacy and the extent of the risks of psychedelics, which can cause hallucinations.

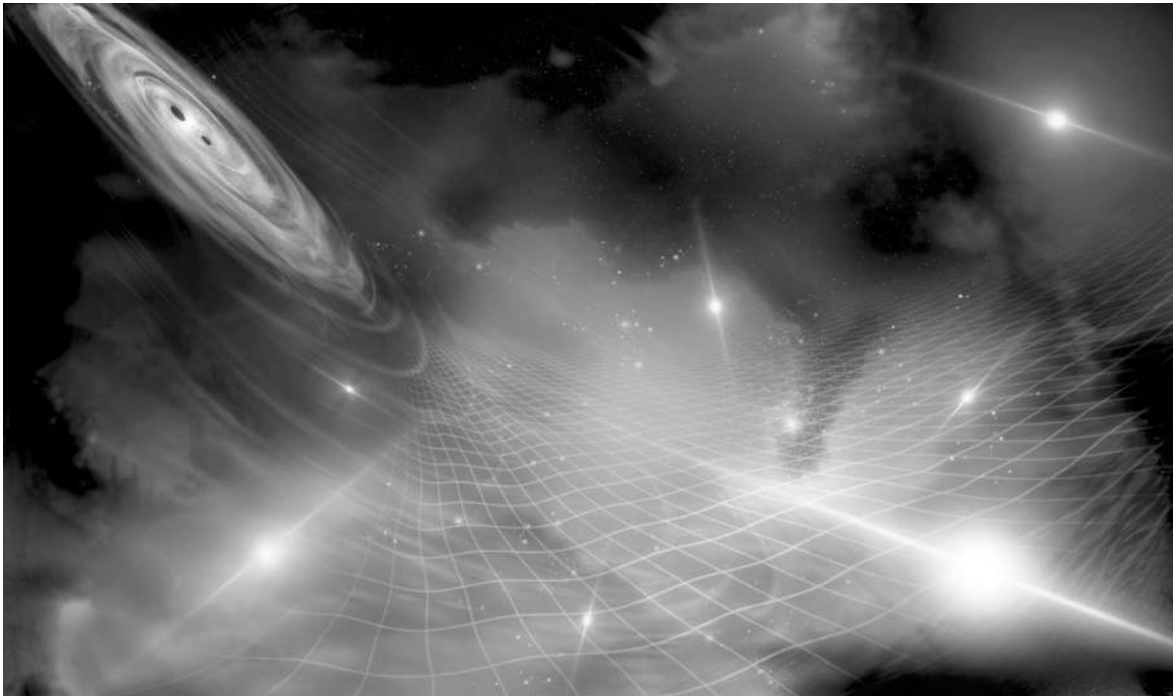
The American Psychiatric Association has not endorsed the use of psychedelics in treatment, noting the Food and Drug Administration has yet to offer a final determination. The FDA designated psilocybin as a “breakthrough therapy” in 2018, a label that’s designed to speed the development and review of drugs to treat a serious condition. MDMA, also known as ecstasy, also has that designation for PTSD treatment.

The FDA last week released draft guidance for researchers designing clinical trials testing psychedelic drugs as potential treatments for a variety of medical conditions. The Biden administration has also provided to the National Institutes of Health and other agencies funding for dozens of projects studying psychedelic drugs with potential benefit for mental and behavioral health.

Earlier this year, Oregon became the first state in the nation to legalize the adult use of psilocybin. Colorado’s voters last year voted to decriminalize psilocybin.

Republican strongholds, including Utah and Missouri, have or are considering commissioning studies into the drugs, partly inspired by veterans’ who have used psilocybin to help with PTSD.

Former Texas Republican Gov. Rick Perry spoke at a conference last week in Colorado about helping get a bill passed in the Texas Legislature in 2021 to fund a study of psilocybin for veterans. He doesn’t support recreational use.



AUORE SIMONNET, NANOGrav COLLABORATION/AP

This illustration provided by researchers depicts gravitational waves stretching and squeezing space-time in the universe.

Scientists ‘hear’ gravitational waves rippling through universe

By MADDIE BURAKOFF
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Scientists have observed for the first time the faint ripples caused by the motion of black holes that are gently stretching and squeezing everything in the universe.

They reported Wednesday that they were able to “hear” what are called low-frequency gravitational waves — changes in the fabric of the universe that are created by huge objects moving around and colliding in space.

“It’s really the first time that we have evidence of just this large-scale motion of everything in the universe,” said Maura McLaughlin, co-director of NANOGrav, the research collaboration that published the results in The Astrophysical Journal Letters.

Einstein predicted that when really heavy objects move through spacetime — the fabric of our universe — they create ripples that spread through that fabric. Scientists sometimes liken these ripples to the background music of the universe.

In 2015, scientists used an experiment called LIGO to detect

gravitational waves for the first time and showed Einstein was right. But so far, those methods have only been able to catch waves at high frequencies, explained NANOGrav member Chiara Mingarelli, an astrophysicist at Yale University.

Those quick “chirps” come from specific moments when relatively small black holes and dead stars crash into each other, Mingarelli said.

In the latest research, scientists were searching for waves at much lower frequencies. These slow ripples can take years or even decades to cycle up and down, and probably come from some of the biggest objects in our universe.

Galaxies across the universe are constantly colliding and merging together. As this happens, scientists believe the enormous black holes at the centers of these galaxies also come together and get locked into a dance before they finally collapse into each other, explained Szabolcs Marka, an astrophysicist at Columbia University who was not involved with the research.

The black holes send off gravi-

tational waves as they circle around in these pairings, known as binaries.

“Supermassive black hole binaries, slowly and calmly orbiting each other, are the tenors and bass of the cosmic opera,” Marka said.

No instruments on Earth could capture the ripples from these giants. So “we had to build a detector that was roughly the size of the galaxy,” said NANOGrav researcher Michael Lam of the SETI Institute.

The results released this week included 15 years of data from NANOGrav, which has been using telescopes across North America to search for the waves. Other teams of gravitational wave hunters around the world also published studies, including in Europe, India, China and Australia.

The background noise they found is “louder” than some scientists expected, Mingarelli said. This could mean that there are more, or bigger, black hole mergers happening out in space than we thought — or point to other sources of gravitational waves that could challenge our understanding of the universe.

CDC says older Americans can get RSV vaccine this fall

Associated Press

Americans 60 and older can get a new RSV vaccine but should discuss it with their doctor first, U.S. health officials recommended Thursday.

The newly approved vaccines are expected to be ready in the fall, a time when flu shots and updated COVID-19 shots also will be available. Those eligible for the RSV vaccine should talk with their doctor to see if it is right for them,

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

The CDC said adults with chronic heart or lung disease, weakened immune systems and those living in long-term care facilities are at higher risk for the respiratory infection.

RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus, is a common cause of cold-like symptoms but it can be dangerous for infants and the elderly. A surge last year filled hospitals

with wheezing children. There’s no vaccine yet for kids, but one for pregnant women to prevent illness in infants may be coming too, pending approval from the Food and Drug Administration.

On Thursday, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the outgoing CDC director, signed off on a recommendation made last week by an advisory panel of outside experts for a single dose of the vaccines made by Pfizer and GSK. The FDA ap-

proved the shots last month for adults 60 and older.

The CDC panel initially considered a stronger recommendation that everyone 65 and older get the shot. But they weakened their endorsement after several members had questions about how well it works in the feeblest of patients, whether boosters will be needed and be effective, and the cost.

Drugmaker GSK told the panel that its RSV vaccine would be be-

tween \$200 and \$295. Pfizer has not disclosed a price. The vaccines may hold up over multiple seasons and it’s not yet clear whether boosters will be recommended.

Others wanted a stronger endorsement for those 65 and older. That would have meant more people getting the vaccination, said Robert Blancato, executive director of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs, after the panel’s vote.

WORLD

French cop charged in shooting that sparked violence

Associated Press

NANTERRE, France — A police officer in a Paris suburb was handed a preliminary charge of voluntary homicide Thursday after the deadly shooting of a 17-year-old that triggered two nights of riots, as the French government vowed to restore order and crack down on rioting that has spread to other cities.

The legal action came as police forces were quadrupled to quell the violence that has spread beyond the suburbs, bus and tram service was being curtailed, and one town announced a curfew through the weekend.

Nanterre prosecutor Pascal Prache said his initial investigation led him to conclude “the conditions for the legal use of the weapon were not met” in the shooting.

The teen, identified only by his first name, Nahel, was killed during a traffic stop in Nanterre on Tuesday. The shooting captured on video shocked the country and stirred up long-simmering tensions between police and young people in housing projects and dis-

advantaged neighborhoods.

Ministers fanned out to areas scarred by the sudden flare-up of rioting, appealing for calm but also warning that the violence that injured scores of police and damaged nearly 100 public buildings wouldn’t be allowed to continue.

After a morning crisis meeting, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said police forces would be expanded from 9,000 officers to 40,000. In the Paris region alone, the number of officers deployed would more than double to 5,000.

“The professionals of disorder must go home,” Darmanin said. While there’s no need yet to declare a state of emergency — a measure taken to quell weeks of rioting in 2005 — he added: “The state’s response will be extremely firm.”

Bus and rail services were shutting down at 9 p.m. to safeguard transportation workers and passengers, a decision sure to impact untold thousands of travelers in the French capital and its suburbs.

“Our transports are not targets for thugs and vandals!” Valerie Pecresse, head of the Paris region

tweeted.

The town of Clamart, home to 54,000 people in the French capital’s southwest suburbs, said it was taking the extraordinary step of putting an overnight curfew in place from 9 p.m. until 6 a.m. through to Monday.

It cited “the risk of new public order disturbances” for the decision, after two nights of urban unrest.

“Clamart is a safe and calm town, we are determined that it stay that way,” it said.

Despite a beefed-up police presence Wednesday night, violence resumed after dusk with protesters shooting fireworks and hurling stones at police in Nanterre, who fired repeated volleys of tear gas.



MICHEL EULER/AP

Demonstrators hold a poster reading “Police kills, Justice for Nahel,” who died during a police traffic stop, in front of a truck carrying Nahel’s mother Thursday in Nanterre, outside Paris.

UK appeals court: Plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda is unlawful

Associated Press

LONDON — A British court ruled Thursday that a U.K. government plan to send asylum-seekers on a one-way trip to Rwanda is unlawful, delivering a blow to the Conservative administration’s pledge to stop migrants making risky journeys across the English Channel.

In a split two-to-one ruling, three Court of Appeal judges said Rwanda could not be considered a “safe third country” where migrants from any country could be sent.

But the judges said that a policy of deporting asylum seekers to another country deemed as safe was not in itself illegal, and the government said it would challenge the ruling at the U.K. Supreme Court. It has until July 6 to lodge an appeal.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said that “while I respect the court I fundamentally disagree with their conclusions.”

Sunak has pledged to “stop the boats” — a reference to the overcrowded dinghies and other small craft that make the journey from northern France carrying migrants who hope to live in the U.K. More than 45,000 people arrived in Britain across the Channel in 2022, and several died in the attempt.

The U.K. and Rwandan governments agreed more than a year ago

that some migrants who arrive in the U.K. as stowaways or in small boats would be sent to Rwanda, where their asylum claims would be processed. Those granted asylum would stay in the East African country rather than return to Britain.

The U.K. government argues that the policy will smash the business model of criminal gangs that ferry migrants on hazardous journeys across one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes.

Human rights groups say it is immoral and inhumane to send people more than 4,000 miles to a country they don’t want to live in, and argue that most Channel migrants are desperate people who have no authorized way to come to the U.K. They also cite Rwanda’s poor human rights record.

Yasmine Ahmed, U.K. director of Human Rights Watch, said the verdict was “some rare good news in an otherwise bleak landscape for human rights in the U.K.”

She urged Home Secretary Suella Braverman, the minister in charge of immigration, to “abandon this unworkable and unethical fever dream of a policy and focus her efforts on fixing our broken and neglected migration system.”

Britain has already paid Rwanda \$170 million under the deal, but no one has yet been deported there.



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WEEKEND



One last adventure
for Indiana Jones
Movie review, Page 16

AP ILLUSTRATION
BY PETER HAMLIN

From bangers to ballads, many tunes are in the running
for the annual and unofficial honor of song of the summer

Music, Page 28

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

Due DoorDash driver diligence

Company co-founder occasionally gets behind the wheel to find glitches in app, empathize with other employees

BY DEE-ANN DURBIN
AND TERRY CHEA
Associated Press

On a recent afternoon in San Francisco, a DoorDash driver was circling the neighborhood — first in his car, then on foot — trying to find the restaurant where he needed to pick up two orders. Finally, he Googled the location and realized DoorDash’s app sent him to the wrong address. It’s an error he vowed to fix, and he probably will. Because that worker is Andy Fang, DoorDash’s chief technology officer and one of the company’s three co-founders.

“If it happens with one restaurant, it might actually be happening with a lot of other restaurants as well,” Fang said after he retrieved the orders and settled back into his car. “If we can see why that happened, maybe we can fix other issues too.”

Fang is one of a growing number of executives who occasionally do the hourly work that makes their companies hum. Starbucks’ new CEO, Laxman Narasimhan, is a trained barista and puts in a half-day of work at a store each month. Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi and Lyft CEO David Risher occasionally shuttle passengers. Air New Zealand CEO Greg Foran has been spotted serving drinks and snacks on flights.

Amazon recently re-launched a program called the Associate Experience Week, which encourages employees to shadow operations workers for a week to gain a better understanding of their job.

The program is mandatory for some managers. A1 Garage Door Service, which operates in 16 states, also encourages job-shadowing and requires all employees to learn skills outside their immediate responsibilities. A1 CEO Tommy Mello says the policy promotes empathy and collaboration.

But few companies have a program as robust as WeDash, which requires thousands of salaried DoorDash employees in the U.S., Canada and Australia to complete at least four deliveries per year. Employees are strongly encouraged to make deliveries monthly. They can use work time to complete those shifts, and they keep any money they make.

“We just want to make sure that people who are working here, who are supporting our audiences, are understanding what people are going through,” Fang told The Associated Press.

When they started DoorDash a decade ago, while they were still students at Stanford, Fang and the company’s other two co-founders — CEO Tony Xu and Chief Product Officer Stanley Tang — made all the deliveries themselves.

“We had to. There was nobody else to do them,” Fang said. “But what we quickly found out was that by doing these deliveries ourselves, we learned a ton of insights into what it actually took to get these deliveries fulfilled.”

The company started WeDash in 2015 to make sure every employee was getting those insights. Fang said there are some exceptions; if an employee can’t drive, for



TERRY CHEA/AP

Andy Fang, DoorDash’s co-founder and chief technology officer, picks up and delivers food orders to customers in downtown San Francisco on June 15.

example, they might visit merchants or work in the call center.

DoorDash has grown exponentially since then. In 2022, more than 6 million DoorDash drivers — all independent contractors — fulfilled 1.7 billion orders worldwide. DoorDash has expanded beyond restaurant delivery into convenience stores, groceries, pet stores and pharmacies.

Fang, who makes deliveries for at least an hour each month — sometimes with Xu and Tang in tow — says he has made real changes to DoorDash’s app based on his experiences. When he was on the East Coast recently, he set a time to make deliveries when he returned to California. But when he got home, he realized the time he had set was off by three hours because the app assumed he was still on the East Coast. He got that bug fixed.

Another new feature, introduced this week, arose from employee feedback in WeDash. The feature, Dash Along the Way, lets drivers specify where they want to start making deliveries and then assigns them orders that they can complete en route.

Fang also experiences drivers’ other frustrations. The wrong address in the DoorDash app cost him time delivering

orders from Bonchon, a Korean fried chicken chain. On the afternoon he drove with an AP video journalist, Fang only made \$15.50 for 51 minutes of work. That’s a little lower than the \$17.97 that San Francisco DoorDash drivers typically make in an hour, according to Indeed.

It’s also vastly lower than what Fang pulls in as CEO. His annual compensation in 2022 totaled \$2.79 million and Forbes pegged his net worth that same year at \$1.1 billion, illustrating the widening salary gap between those at the top of a company and those at the bottom.

Fang said he knows there are limits to how much he can understand the day-to-day work of the company’s drivers, which is why he also seeks feedback from a council of drivers and from other employees.

Denise Rousseau, a professor of organizational behavior at Carnegie Mellon University, said there is a lot of value in asking workers to do other jobs within their company. Having senior leaders participate, as DoorDash does, sends an even stronger message.

“If you spend your own time on it, that’s not cheap talk anymore,” she said. “You are trying to convey, ‘This is the focus of our business and we care.’”

Smartish now offers even bigger Cable Wrangler

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Smartish is true to its word that bigger is better with the recent launch of the Smartish Bigger Cable Wrangler.

If you’re unfamiliar with the Cable Wrangler, it’s one of the simplest and most practical accessories you can have on your desk, nightstand or wherever most of your charging is done. The Smartish fan-favorite accessory magnetically keeps charging cables together, so they are tidy and within reach where you need them.

The new Bigger Cable Wrangler (\$39.99) is approximately 5-by-3-by-1.125 inches, weighs 9.1 ounces and works like its little brother but can hold even more cables.

Cables easily attach on and pull off of the magnets under its attractive fabric base. If your



SMARTISH/TNS

The Smartish Bigger Cable Wrangler can hold even more cables than its little brother.

cables aren’t magnetic, no problem: Use the four included magnetic collars, which snap onto any cable.

You have a choice of four colors, which Smartish gave fun names: No. 2 Pencil Gray, Light-



EXCITRUS/TNS

The Excitrus NitroCharge 120 Pro has ports for USB-C1, USB-C2, USB-A and magnetic wireless charging.

ly Toasted Beige, I’m Blushing and Teal Me More.

Online: smartish.com

The Excitrus NitroCharge 120 Pro charges four devices simultaneously from its powerful and

portable 25,600 mAh rechargeable battery. It offers 120 watts of output and ports for USB-C1, USB-C2, USB-A and magnetic wireless charging.

Smartphones, laptops, tablets, wireless earbuds, gaming units and even a portable electronic USB charging toothbrush can be renewed. I successfully tested it with a tablet, toothbrush, smartphone and earbuds on a recent weekend getaway. Never were any of my devices without power while charging with the Excitrus NitroCharge 120 Pro.

Some highlights: The USB-C1 is ideal for laptops with its 100-watt power delivery and fast charging. The USB-C2 has 45-watt power delivery fast charging, the USB-A has an 18-watt quick charge and the Qi wireless charging for compatible phones is rated at 15 watts. Magnetic wireless charging will work with

compatible MagSafe iPhones.

A display on the side of the battery shows the remaining power in a percentage and indicators for fast charging, wireless charging and Bluetooth devices.

The exterior of the 7.7-by-3.3-by-1-inch, 17-ounce battery has a premium fabric covering over an ergonomic design, which features rounded corners. The soil-resistant coating on the body of the NitroCharge 120 Pro is water repellent and can withstand tiny drops, but water is never a good idea around charging devices.

It is rated for up to 108 hours of power to a smartphone, 23 hours to a tablet and 22 hours to a USB-C charging laptop. The times can vary, depending on the specific device. A USB-C to USB-C cable is included.

Online: myexcitrus.com; \$129.99

WEEKEND: MOVIES



Q&A

JOEL C. RYAN, INVISION/AP

From left, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, director James Mangold and Harrison Ford pose for photographers at the photo call for the film “Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny” at the 76th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, on May 19.

Stepping into Spielberg’s ‘very big shoes’

‘Dial of Destiny’ director Mangold discusses paying homage to his hero, putting his own spin on ‘Indiana Jones’

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

When the lights came up after a screening on the Walt Disney lot of “Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny,”

Steven Spielberg was incredulous.

“Damn!” he said. “I thought I was the only one who knew how to make one of these!”

“Dial of Destiny,” which premiered in May at the Cannes Film Festival, is the first Indiana Jones film without Spielberg behind the camera. After years of development, Spielberg and Lucasfilm decided to pass the reins to James Mangold, the “Ford vs. Ferrari” filmmaker, who was 18 years old when he saw “Raiders of the Lost Ark” in a Hudson Valley theater on opening day in 1981.

“When I got over my initial hesitation of just: holy s—, this is a big challenge to step into these very big shoes that Steven Spielberg is leaving, the opportunity, on a very selfish level, to collaborate and learn and have the tools and the resources to play on this level was hard to resist,” Mangold said.

Mangold was being tasked with not only restoring the luster of one of the most beloved film series after a disappointing fourth film in 2008’s “Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skull,” but giving Harrison Ford a poignant send-off in his last performance as the character.

While no one is saying “Dial of Destiny” matches “Raiders of the Lost Ark,” the consensus in Cannes was that it betters “Crystal Skull” by a wide margin. Man-

gold certainly has Ford’s endorsement.

“He more than filled the shoes,” Ford told reporters. “He made, for me, a beautiful movie.”

Before “Dial of Destiny” opens in theaters this weekend, Mangold spoke about the challenges of capturing the “Indiana Jones” tradition and carrying it forward. After a 1940s-set opening with a de-aged Ford, “Dial of Destiny” moves to the ’60s and finds an aged Jones weary and on the cusp of retirement. The space race has made him a relic of a bygone era.

And the notion of who Indiana — an Errol Flynn-like hero forged in the moral clarity of World War II — would be in a more complicated time, without the spryness of youth, factored heavily into Mangold’s thinking on “Dial of Destiny.” Remarks have been lightly edited for clarity and brevity.

Associated Press: How did you respond when this opportunity arose?

Mangold: When Harrison and Kathy (Kennedy) and Steven came to me about this — you’re talking about just heroes of my life. George Lucas. John Williams, too. The idea of being invited to not only play in an all-star game with that kind of team, but also take the mound and be the pitcher, is beyond. So you flash forward to this moment where I’m kind of stepping into the director’s chair, and it’s a chance for me to both try and carry forward what I feel like I’ve been learning all my life from Steven’s work. And at the same time carrying my own voice, but wanting very much to work within the same kind of golden-age vernacular that he’s operating

in. It’s pressure because you can’t be playing at a higher level with a headier crowd of luminaries around you. You either have to rise to the occasion, or not.

Were you surprised the job was even open? During the film’s long development, it was long assumed that Spielberg would direct.

I don’t think directing an Indiana Jones film is a job. It is a lifetime commitment. There’s too many luminaries and too much involved. When they came to me they were very laser focused on me stepping in. The idea for me was that I wanted to write a script that I could get behind. I wanted to really retool the existing script pretty aggressively, almost entirely. But when they first came to me? It was a complete shock. I was numb. But I’m also not new at this. There’s a kid in me that’s tickled and flattered — the romantic in me. And then there’s the rational person who’s survived these movies up to this and knows how to make a picture like this.

You’ve described wanting to make “Dial of Destiny” about “a hero at sunset.” How did age relate to your intentions for the film?

When they approached me, I immediately found myself faced with making an Indiana Jones with a hero in his late 70s. There’s no way around the fact that the audience is going to be confronted with Harrison’s age. They’re going to see a man they’ve grown up with in his late 70s. To me, it’s not about what I’m doing, it’s about what I’m not doing. I’m not going to be in denial that this is going to be a huge factor in the audience’s mind.

So even though you begin with a de-aged Indiana, you wanted to embrace who Ford, 80, is today.

The movie becomes about the very thing that is undeniable. What is it like to be a hero, to be a kind of swashbuckling, mischievous, demanding, fearless, but also fearful? What I thought about, even in relation to some of the struggles they had with “Crystal Skull,” was that it’s very challenging to carry a kind of golden-age character forward past the dividing line after modernism arrived. The optimism and clarity of purpose with which characters operated in the ’30s or ’40s is not the same environment that they’re operating in in the ’50s, ’60s and ’70s. The arrival of modernism has brought realpolitik and a kind of lack of clarity about who are enemies and who our heroes are. It’s brought a kind of cynicism into the world about easy heroes. Science has replace mysticism, and we’re landing on the moon where nuclear weapons are all around us.

Was it moving to shoot Ford’s last scene as Indiana?

We shot his last shot and everyone applauded and we all drank champagne. And it is very moving. But you’ve been through almost a year of making this movie together. To do a good job making a movie like this, you can never sink completely into that way of thinking. Because if you did, you’d be lost in kind of the symbolism of each moment. Indiana Jones is a part of Harrison, so in a way, I don’t think he’s ever saying goodbye to the character because he carries this character. It’s very close to who he is.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW



Lucasfilm Ltd. photos

“Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny” opens with a sequence featuring a digitally de-aged Harrison Ford in the title role.

A swashbuckling send-off for Indy

Harrison Ford embarks on one final adventure as hero Indiana Jones in ‘The Dial of Destiny’

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

Goodbyes don’t tend to mean much in the Hollywood franchise system. Death isn’t a reliable end for characters or, lately, even actors. Technology, nostalgia and the often-inflated value of brands and intellectual property have created a nightmarish cycle of resurrection and regurgitation, curdling what we love most.

Yet when someone like Harrison Ford says he’s hanging up Indiana Jones’ fedora, for better or worse, you believe him. “Indiana Jones” producer Frank Marshall has also said that they won’t recast the character, which seems more dubious and, though well-intentioned, something he won’t be able to guarantee. All it takes is a new executive demanding a reboot.

Not that it would ever really work, though. Any self-respecting movie fan knows the truth: The magic of Indiana Jones belongs wholly to Harrison Ford. Apparently, he doesn’t even necessarily need Steven Spielberg behind the camera, though, to be fair, the foundation was well-laid for a veteran like James Mangold to step in. But there is no Indy — none that we care about, anyway — without Ford.

In this way, it’s hard not to go into “Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny” without a sense of melancholy — not exactly the ideal state of mind for what should be, and mostly is, a fun summer blockbuster. But it certainly adds a poignancy to the whole endeavor whether the film

merits it or not.

If only it didn’t start with that pesky de-aging technology (the best it’s ever looked, but it remains unsettling), giving us a 45-year-old Indiana Jones doing some of the wildest stunts we’ve ever seen our beloved archaeology professor attempt — atop a speeding train to boot. This sequence is ostensibly there to introduce the film’s MacGuffin, Archimedes Antikythera, a real celestial calculation machine with extraordinary predictive capabilities that in the film is bestowed with some otherworldly powers.

But we know the real reason: It’s there to let us gaze at that familiar face and to go on one last adventure with the Indy we grew up with, before being thrust back to reality with a nearly 80-year-old Ford (he’s 81 in July) playing a 70-something Indy.

This isn’t inherently sad, but Dr. Jones is certainly reintroduced in the most unglamorous way possible: Sleeping on a reclining chair in a sad New York apartment, a glass of something alcoholic in his hand and threadbare boxer shorts on his person. He’s depression personified, retiring from the university where the kids barely pay attention to him anyway (long gone are the “I love you” eyelids), estranged from Karen Allen’s Marion and watching the world go space crazy around him.

We’ll have to see him work back up to his adventuresome self. No training montages required, thankfully, just a plane ticket, his classic uniform (still fits!) and his old improvisational



Later, the film thrusts the audience back to reality, showing Ford playing a 70-something Indy. He finds that his classic uniform still fits and he still has his old improvisational spirit.

spirit. The cumbersome plot (script is credited to Jez Butterworth, John-Henry Butterworth, David Koepp and Mangold) strains to justify and give meaning to the search for the Antikythera: The FBI is on the hunt for it, as is Nazi scientist Jürgen Voller (Mads Mikkelsen) for whom the war hasn’t ended, and the daughter (Phoebe Waller-Bridge) of Indy’s late partner Basil (Toby Jones) who was driven mad by the gadget. It’s a bit much, as are many of the elaborate and strangely murky-looking action sequences from the train in 1944 to a deep-sea diving sequence with killer eels. The movie hits its action high notes when it sticks to the tactile classics, like a brilliantly executed rickshaw chase in Tangier.

Waller-Bridge’s Helena is an enormously enjoyable character, too — a brilliant archaeologist herself who chose a more glamorous, dangerous and decidedly black market kind of existence, selling stolen antiquities to the world’s wealthiest and working her way out of debt. She’s introduced as a wild card, and a lot of the tension is derived from whether Indy should trust her. It’s a very good non-romantic pairing of sharp-witted old souls a generation apart. But you’d think in an almost two-and-a-half-hour film there might have been more time for one of our returning favorites, like John Rhys-Davies’ Sallah (he does get a few good moments).

I’m not sure anyone had an especially burning need to know what Indiana Jones was up to lately, but at least it gives everyone a chance to end on a higher note than “Kingdom of the Crystal Skull.” Or maybe Ford just



Mads Mikkelsen, left, plays Nazi scientist Jürgen Voller and Phoebe Waller-Bridge, right, is the daughter of Indy’s late partner, Basil, in “Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny.”



In the film, Mikkelsen is after the Archimedes Antikythera, a real celestial calculation machine with extraordinary predictive capabilities that in the film is bestowed with some otherworldly powers.

needed some closure on one of his iconic characters so that everyone will stop asking him about them.

“Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny” might not be “Raiders” or “The Last Crusade,” but it’s

solid, swashbuckling summer fare and a dignified send-off to one of cinema’s most flawless castings.

“Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny” is rated PG-13 for language, action, sequences of violence and smoking. Running time: 144 minutes.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

High school angst for sea monsters

‘Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken’ a charming and funny coming-of-age tale

BY KRISTEN PAGE-KIRBY
The Washington Post

The animated coming-of-age story “Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken” is a solid diversion, a good-enough escape if the kids are still making you crazy during summer break and you’ve already seen “Elemental.” It’s just charming enough, just exciting enough and just funny enough to not be a flop, but DreamWorks — the studio that has shown it can challenge Pixar when it comes to pushing the animation envelope — has chosen to play it safe here, rather than try to win the summer family film sweepstakes.

“Gillman” tells the story of the titular Ruby (voice of Lana Condor), a teenager who lives with her family in a bustling seaside town. She, as well as her mom, dad and brother, are all secretly krakens, or sea monsters, an identity they’ve kept hidden from the world. Ruby is aware that her family is different to some extent, and she obeys the family’s two major rules: (1) Never go in the water, and (2) if someone asks why she’s blue, tell them she’s Canadian. (They live at the shore because they need the damp air. One shudders to think what a summer in Wichita would do to them.)

Ruby’s life is pretty good — she has a nice group of friends, a loving family and a knack for math that has led her to tutor



Universal Pictures and DreamWorks Animation

Ruby (voice of Lana Condor), left, and Grandmamah (Jane Fonda) in “Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken.” When Ruby finally goes in the ocean, she learns she’s heir to her grandmother’s throne, which is under threat from evil mermaids.

Connor (Jaboukie Young-White), a classmate who is also the object of her crush. One day, she inadvertently ends up in the ocean and discovers that she is, in fact, a giant, mythical sea creature. Not only that, but she’s heir to the throne that her grandmother (Jane Fonda) currently occupies, which is under threat from the evil mermaids, who have managed to rehabilitate their reputation as ship-sinking, sailor-seducing songstresses by being both pret-

ty and extremely marketable. Maybe this is why we never see little girls dressed up as giant cephalopods at Halloween. Tentacles don’t sell the way seashell bras do.

There’s much to like about Ruby, just as there’s much to like about “Ruby Gillman.” The voice acting is excellent all around, including Condor; Toni Collette as Ruby’s mom, a high-powered real estate agent; and Liza Koshy as Ruby’s overly dramatic, hysterically funny friend Mar-

got. Ruby’s physicality subtly re-creates the way teenage girls can contort their bodies in an attempt to hide their perceived physical “flaws,” and there are scenes of the ocean that perfectly encapsulate Ruby’s mixed feelings about it: both fear and attraction. Then there’s the final battle: a spoiled-in-the-trailer showdown between Ruby and her mermaid rival, Chelsea (Annie Murphy). It’s something to see: a neon-lit, swooping depiction of controlled chaos. The female-centric soundtrack is also a winner.

Even the film’s weakest element — the screenplay, by Pam Brady, Elliott DiGuiseppi, Brian Brown and co-director Kirk DeMico — isn’t that bad. The “twist” is an easy one to spot, and the straightforward plot briskly marches to a conclusion that’s easily predicted. Characters’ motivations are sometimes hazy, and there’s a lack of emotional depth, but “Ruby Gillman” isn’t a movie that’s punching above its weight class. It’s here to tell a story, which it does simply and well, and that’s it.

You want brilliance? Go see “Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse” again.

On the whole, “Ruby Gillman” is not all that dissimilar from last year’s “Turning Red” in that it’s a story of a girl coming to terms with her familial and personal history, told through an engaging, endearing, shape-shifting protagonist. While it breaks no new ground and doesn’t soar to great heights, it’s a perfectly fine way to pass the time. And sometimes that’s just what you need.

“Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken” is rated PG for some action, rude humor and mature thematic elements. Running time: 90 minutes. Now playing in select AAFES theaters.

‘Nimona’ an animated fantasy adventure with riot-grrrl energy

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

A powerful, shape-shifting teenage girl and a disgraced knight-in-training suspected of killing a beloved queen are at the heart of “Nimona,” a vibrant and irreverent animated adventure set in a futuristic fantasy kingdom.

It is a familiar story — a society governed by ancient rules and a crippling fear of outsiders — even by recent Netflix animation standards (see “The Sea Beast”). But “Nimona” is wrapped in new, exciting packaging with a wildly fun soundtrack featuring the likes of Metric, Dope Saint Jude and Judas Priest, LGBTQ+ themes that aren’t clumsily subtle and charismatic lead voice actors in Chloë Grace Moretz and Riz Ahmed. There’s also a supporting character named Ambrosius Goldenloin. He has blonde, swooped hair and is voiced by Eugene Lee Yang of The Try Guys.

The fraught saga of getting

“Nimona” to audiences could be its own epic movie. ND Stevenson’s popular graphic novel first went into development in 2015 at Blue Sky Studios and was inherited by Disney in 2019 as part of the Fox acquisition. Despite seismic shifts and leadership changes, work continued. Then in 2021, when the film was reported to be 75% complete, Disney announced that Blue Sky Studios was shuttering and “Nimona” was to be shelved. In addition to the economic hardships of the pandemic, Business Insider reported that Disney leadership took issue with a same-gender kiss. Then Anna Purna and Netflix stepped in, with new directors (Nick Bruno, Troy Quane), and got “Nimona” to the finish line.

Moretz is the voice of Nimona, a chaos-loving radical who sees a fellow outsider’s horrifying fall from grace and thinks “I need to collaborate with this guy.” The outsider in question is Ballister Boldheart (Ahmed), a kid from

the streets who dreamt of being a knight, a position traditionally reserved for members of a certain class or descendants of an ancient, revered warrior named Gloreth, who 1,000 years ago saved the kingdom from a monster. Despite the odds, and prejudices, he rose through the ranks and almost made it.

On the “Night to Knight Knights,” a big, televised event with futuristic Super Bowl half-time show-meets-“Blade Runner”/“Hunger Games” production levels, the public still isn’t convinced about Ballister — they sneer that he doesn’t deserve it and won’t keep them safe. The only people on his side are his boyfriend, the aforementioned Ambrosius Goldenloin, and the queen. But things go south quickly at the ceremony: The sword he’s given kills his most public champion, the queen, in front of everyone, and no one gives him the benefit of the doubt. He’s a queen killer, and that’s that.

Ballister is reluctant to team



NETFLIX/AP

Knight wannabe Ballister Boldheart, voiced by Riz Ahmed, left, teams up with radical Nimona, voiced by Chloë Grace Moretz, in “Nimona.”

up with Nimona — he wants to prove his innocence and she doesn’t seem like the best way back into society. But she also has some very useful skills, namely being able to morph into anyone and anything — an adult, a child, a rhinoceros — and single-handedly defeat a dozen men without much strain. Plus, she’s a lot more fun than the small-minded bros and icy leaders

back at the Institute.

Moretz, it should be noted, is an excellent voice actor who brings real life and punk energy to Nimona. And there are some real twists and turns on the way to the resolution that would be best to just experience yourself.

“Nimona” is rated PG for violence/action, rude humor, thematic elements and some language. Running time: 101 minutes. Now streaming on Netflix.

WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT



Netflix

“Cobra Kai,” which features Xolo Maridueña as Miguel Diaz, above right, is among the shows whose return is delayed by the Writers Guild of America strike, which started May 1. The hit Netflix show was in the middle of filming its sixth and final season. Co-creator Jon Hurwitz says, “These aren’t fun times, but it’s unfortunately necessary.”

Kicking Hollywood in the teeth

Writers Guild of America strike delays or pauses production on a number of the biggest movies and TV shows

BY HERB SCRIBNER
AND NIHA MASIH
The Washington Post

It’s not only television anymore. Major film projects are delaying or pausing production amid the Hollywood writers strike.

Thousands of members of the Writers Guild of America walked off sets on May 1, demanding better pay, benefits and protections from artificial intelligence technology before they return. And things could get even messier: A union representing nearly all TV, film and radio actors in the country is weighing whether to join the writers on strike when its contract with studios expires at the end of June. The uncertainty has already thrown the entertainment industry into disarray, and more and more big productions are being put on ice. Here is an updated list of the biggest movies and shows affected by the strike:

‘Avatar’ and ‘Star Wars’ sequels

Disney has reportedly pushed back the release dates for several films in its “Avatar” and “Star Wars” franchises amid the WGA strike.

James Cameron’s “Avatar 3” will move to a 2025 release date, with “Avatar 4” coming in 2029 and “Avatar 5” in 2031, per the Hollywood Reporter. A pair of untitled “Star Wars” films will also be pushed back for a 2026 release.

Disney didn’t respond to a request for comment about whether the delays are because of the strike.

Marvel superhero projects

Disney also announced in mid-June that a number of its upcoming Marvel films, including “Captain America: Brave New

World” and the next two “Avengers” films, would be pushed back.

These movies join other delayed Marvel projects, such as the forthcoming Disney+ show “Wonder Man” and the feature film “Thunderbolts.”

“Daredevil: Born Again,” an upcoming Disney+ television series, will be put on pause until the end of the WGA strike, too, Deadline reported.

The Ryan Reynolds film “Deadpool 3” was actually moved earlier on Disney’s calendar, from November to May of next year, according to the Hollywood Reporter, even though Reynolds can’t improvise on set and must stick to the pre-strike script because of union rules.

“Blade,” the Marvel Studios vampire

SEE STRIKE ON PAGE 19

WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT

Strike: Most writing won't resume until deal reached

FROM PAGE 18
thriller starring Mahershala Ali, is also set to be delayed because of the strike, according to the Hollywood Reporter. “Blade” was supposed to begin filming in Atlanta in June but has become the first big-ticket movie to be stalled.

‘SNL’ and late-night shows

The “Tonight Show” starring Jimmy Fallon and “Late Night with Seth Meyers” are off the air until further notice, NBC said in a statement in the first week of the writers strike. “Saturday Night Live” will air repeats for the foreseeable future, Variety reported, citing an NBC statement. “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert” on CBS will air repeat episodes because of the strike, the company said.

Other projects

“A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms: The Hedge Knight”
The writers’ room on HBO’s upcoming “Games of Thrones” spinoff has been closed by the strike, co-creator George R.R. Martin said in a supportive blog post. “There are pickets in front of every studio lot and sound stage in La., and many in other cities as well. Get used to them,” he wrote. “I expect they will be there for a long time.”
“Abbott Elementary”
Writers for the Emmy Award-winning show won’t be working during the strike. Writer Brittani Nichols told Democracy Now! that the strike could affect how many episodes can be made for the show’s third season.
“American Dad” and “Family Guy”
These two long-running Seth McFarlane creations will pause production until the WGA strike is over, according to Deadline. MacFarlane and his writing team will not resume work until a new deal is in place.
“Cobra Kai”
Writers for Netflix’s “Cobra Kai” also put down their pencils in May, with co-creator Jon Hurwitz saying, “These aren’t fun times, but it’s unfortunately necessary.”
Netflix did not immediately respond to a request for comment.
“Emily in Paris”
Filming for the hit Netflix show “Emily in Paris” has been delayed, according to Variety. The show’s renewal was announced in January 2022 with an expected start date of late summer 2023. The filming delays will probably push back the show’s start date.
“Hacks”
Jen Statsky, co-creator of the Max comedy-drama, said on Twitter in May that she was “devastated” to not be with her cast and crew but that “there was no other option here.”
“Writing happens at every stage of the process — production and post included,”



Nazanin Boniadi (Bronwyn) and Morfydd Clark (Galadriel) in a scene from “The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power.” Despite the strike, the show will continue filming, but without two of its executive producers who are bound by strike rules.



Release dates of director James Cameron’s planned “Avatar” movie sequels have been pushed further into the future.

she said while sharing an article about filming on the series being halted.
“It Ends with Us”
The Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni film based on Colleen Hoover’s bestselling novel has been delayed due to the WGA strike, according to Deadline. Production on the film, co-financed by Sony and Wayfarer Studios, was temporarily paused on June 5, and might get back underway under WGA’s strike guidelines.
“Good Fortune”
Writer-director Aziz Ansari’s upcoming feature starring himself, Keanu Reeves and Seth Rogen has stopped production, according to multiple reports. The Lionsgate film was being shot in Los Angeles. It’s unclear when production will resume.
“Good Omens”
Promotional events lined up for Neil Gaiman’s fantasy series on Amazon’s Prime Video may be affected, too. Al-

though the second season is complete and set to come out this summer, Gaiman, a member of the WGA, said on May 2 on Twitter that he might not be able to participate in promoting the show given the strike.
“I wish this wasn’t happening and support it absolutely. When I wake up tomorrow I’ll be on strike,” he said. WGA members are prohibited from even making promotional appearances, strike rules state.
Amazon shared a promo for the show’s next season in early June, which gave away plot details. Gaiman tweeted he was “furious” over the leaks, and wrote on his blog that he felt “heartbroken that there are leaks, and that they happened like this.”
“The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power”
Prime Video’s “Lord of the Rings” pre-

quel series based on J.R.R. Tolkien’s novels is one of the few shows to continue production despite the strike, Variety reported. The series, which was set to finish filming by the end of May, is continuing without two of its executive producers who are bound by strike rules, the report said.
“Penguin”
The new Max series about Colin Farrell’s take as the DC villain last seen in director Matt Reeves’ “The Batman” has been suspended until after the writers strike, according to a Max spokesperson.
“Severance”
The Apple TV+ series stopped production in New York on May 8. Members of the show have since picketed in support of the strike, according to Deadline.
“Stranger Things”
The production of the fifth season, the last of the series, will not go ahead during the strike, the Duffer brothers said May 6 on Twitter. “Writing does not stop when filming begins,” the show’s executive producers and creators said in support of the strike, adding that they hope a fair deal is reached “soon” to enable work to resume. The fifth season was supposed to begin filming in June. The news is likely to disappoint fans of the most-streamed show of 2022.
“Unstoppable”
Jennifer Lopez’s “Unstoppable” feature film has been delayed too, per Deadline, with production expected to resume when the strike ends. The wrestling drama, also starring Jharrel Jerome, is seeking a home on Amazon.
“Yellowjackets”
The writers’ room on the Showtime psychological thriller stopped work after only one day on the third season, said Ashley Lyle, one of the creators. “It was amazing, and creatively invigorating, and so much fun, and I’m very excited to get back to it as soon as the #WGA gets a fair deal,” she said on Twitter on May 2.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



Photos by Kim Seccuro

Kim Seccuro takes a selfie in Dingle, Ireland, where she and her mother, Ginny, traveled from Killarney.

Connect with your roots

Experts and travelers explain impacts of, how to plan an ancestry trip

BY SHEEKA SANAHORI
Special to The Washington Post

When Ginny Seccuro and her daughter, Kim, traveled from the United States to Ireland to learn more about her grandfather's homeland, they felt as if they were coming home to a place they'd never been.

They felt a sense of homecoming when they roamed the cobblestone streets of Killarney near the place their family had once lived. There was even a familiarity in small talk with strangers.

"Oh, there's no doubt you're Irish with those eyes and that hair," Seccuro, 52, remembers a woman saying about her blue eyes and reddish-brown hair. "I laughed, and she said, 'May the road rise up to meet you.'"

That phrase, part of a longer Irish blessing, was something Seccuro recalled hearing her grandfather say.

"It was an expensive trip, don't get me wrong, but it was worth every bit of it," she said. "It's just magical. It's so fulfilling to see where you came from."

The rise of heritage trips

Seccuro is one of countless American travelers who've combined a passion for researching their genealogy with visiting the faraway places they uncover in their family tree. Countries have been luring U.S. tourists with heritage trips since the 1950s, but the number of travelers visiting these homelands has increased in

recent years as consumer DNA test kits and digitized genealogical records have become available.

"You do all this research, sitting at home behind your computer, but the past and your ancestors only really come alive when you're there on the ground," said Jackie Hogan, a sociologist and professor at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill.

Hogan writes in her book "Roots Quest: Inside America's Genealogy Boom" that ancestry tourism is most popular in settler countries like the United States, Canada and Australia, where many people can trace their ancestry back to countries in Europe, Africa and Asia.

"It gives people this really profound, really moving, even a spiritual sense of connection with those who came before them," Hogan said.

For some heritage travelers, learning of an ancestor's home country is reason enough to visit to experience the land, culture and food.

How to start planning

When genealogy enthusiasts decide to take an ancestry trip, their itinerary may be full of specific places, like a town or even a home where an ancestor lived. It can require hours of genealogical research or hiring a researcher before booking the trip.

The next step is setting expectations with travel companions

about the goals of the trip so that they aren't bored with an itinerary full of visiting gravesites and archival libraries.

Kim Seccuro, 28, said it was important to prioritize their itinerary.

"My mom had so many places that she wanted to go," she said. "I kept saying, 'Mom, we're only going for a little over two weeks. We have to narrow this down to be able to enjoy the trip while we're there, too, and not be in a car all the time.'"

Hogan warns that a trip centered on viewing original documents in another country can lead to disappointment. Rare records may require advance appointments or even credentials to review them. Researchers may need local language fluency and archival skills to find and interpret data. She recommends using digitized records ahead of an ancestry trip as much as possible.

What resources to use

For those beginning research at home, Ellis Island — once the busiest entry point for immigrants — is a well-known source to search for European ancestors. The historic site allows you to search 65 million passenger records and ship manifests for immigrants who entered the Port of New York between 1820 and 1957. Ellis Island opened as the first federal immigration processing center in 1892.

But a corporate genealogist for



Ginny Seccuro sits on a rock at Ladies View, a popular scenic stop on the Ring of Kerry route through southwest Ireland.

Ancestry notes that the United States has more than 300 ports of entry, including Boston, San Francisco and Galveston, Texas.

"Tons of families have the story of 'My ancestor immigrated through Ellis Island,'" Crista Cowan said. "So they search Ellis Island records and are not successful. Well, it's because their ancestor came in 1870 or 1880 when Ellis Island didn't even exist."

Cowan says that once you know which port your ancestors used to enter the United States, tracking down naturalization records is a great way to confirm countries and even towns of origin. Records from the U.S. census, taken every decade since 1790, may also list countries of origin.

"It becomes a cross between a treasure hunt and a jigsaw puzzle," Cowan said.

For those who want help putting the puzzle together to take an ancestry trip, companies such as Ancestry are available. Ancestry's ProGenealogists service offers genealogy help and heritage trips, but the travel offerings start at \$3,000 per day.

Black Americans who are descendants of enslaved people face more challenges when researching their ancestors. The earliest census to record all Black Americans by name was in 1870, although the 1850 and 1860 censuses named free Black people.

The descendants of slavehold-

ing families may have records of the names of the people their families enslaved, but these records are often private and not accessible online. This makes tracing each generation more difficult than the last, with near impossible chances of tracing an ancestor back to their country of origin.

Consumer DNA tests remain an option for descendants of enslaved people as well as for adults who were adopted and others who may not be able to access information from genealogy records.

African Ancestry offers package tours for customers who've gotten results from their DNA tests.

"I believe that those who came before us wanted to go home," said Gina Paige, co-founder and president of African Ancestry. "We use science, but at our core, we are an identity company. We help people change the way they view themselves."

A lasting impact

For some travelers, the feeling of being home brought them to tears.

Hogan says it's because ancestry travel is a journey into the self.

It's what makes ancestry trips unforgettable. The old stories held in the land combine with the sensory experience of the present-day tourist. It's up to the ancestry traveler to make sense of it all.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

A walk through Rome’s living culture

Throughout Italy, early evening is time to stroll. As I walk through the streets of the Eternal City with my Roman friends, they explain the ritual of this promenade: While elsewhere in Italy it’s called the passeggiata, in Rome it’s a cruder, big-city version called the struscio (which means “rub”).

Unemployment among Italy’s youth is very high; many young Italians live with their parents even into their 30s. They spend a lot of time being trendy and hanging out. Hard-core cruisers from the Roman suburbs, which lack pleasant public spaces, congregate on the downtown boulevard Via del Corso. The Vespa motor scooter is their symbol; haircuts and fashion are follow-the-leader.

In a more genteel small town, the passeggiata comes with sweet whispers of “bella” and “bello” (“pretty” and “handsome”) as the boys and girls eye each other. But in Rome, the admiration is more strongly oriented toward consumption — they say “buona” and “buono,” meaning “tasty” (terms used to describe food). Police barricades keep out the traffic as, from Piazza del Popolo down Via del Corso and up Via

Condotti to the Spanish Steps, shoppers, people-watchers, chunky middle-aged Italians and young flirts on the prowl make the scene.

In their travels, tourists are often content to “experience” the art and culture of a great city such as Rome in museums and on stage. But I strive to be engulfed in the living culture, to enjoy it “in situ” — the art-history term for “on location.” You can be a spectator, sipping a drink at a sidewalk table, but it’s more fun to stroll along with everyone else. It’s the perfect way to start a night in Rome.

The next day, I wander over to the always-thriving Piazza Navona, with its gushing Bernini fountains and famous gelateria. As usual, it’s busy with families out for a stroll, street musicians, artists, fire-eaters, local Casanovas and immigrants selling the latest plastic tourist trinket.

Around the corner, a well-worn old statue sits covered with feedback from this Roman neighborhood. This graffiti tradition goes back centuries, to times



Rick Steves



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCELLI/Rick Steves' Europe

Rome’s Piazza Navona is a particularly atmospheric place to stroll, one of many in the Eternal City.

when people couldn’t speak their minds but could write (anonymously) what was in their hearts.

Under a sloppy Italian flag, messages scrawled around the statue proclaim that all politicians are unhinged. Below that, someone else gripes that Rome’s many pedestrian streets are causing traffic jams everywhere.

A few blocks away, the ancient Pantheon, once a Roman temple, is filled with folding chairs, people, and music — now in action as a modern-day church. Across the street, I drink coffee — a Roman art form in itself — and review a tourist-office flier with the local concert schedule. The Doria Pamphilj Villa, once home

to an 18th-century art-loving duke, is hosting a chandelier-lit string quartet amid paintings by Raphael, Caravaggio and Velázquez. I think I’ll go ... and enjoy more European life in situ.

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

Europeans celebrate with fireworks throughout the summer

Along with lakeside gatherings, picnics and barbecues, American-style Independence Day celebrations are made complete with thundering displays of fireworks. Here are a few places to get your fix of pyrotechnics this summer.

Bingen and Rüdesheim, Germany: Rhein in Flammen, or Rhine in Flames, is a series of five summer events in which locations along the Middle Rhine Valley are made all the more stunning through illuminations in the steep vineyards, displays of fireworks and convoys of brightly lit vessels. Bingen and Rüdesheim host the party July 1, Spay and Koblenz celebrate Aug. 12, Oberwesel’s turn comes Sept. 9 and the last Rhine in Flames event of the season unfolds in St. Goar and St. Goarshausen Sept. 16. Entry is free. Online: rhein-in-flammen.com



Karen Bradbury

Ludwigsburg, Germany: The expansive gardens of this gorgeous palace north of Stuttgart make a fitting venue for a stunning display of fireworks set to music. From 6 p.m. July 1, visitors can enjoy a stroll through lawns that sparkle with tens of thousands of colorful lights. The evening’s highlight, a fireworks display set to music, starts at 10:30 p.m. and lasts about 20 minutes. Adult admission costs 17 euros, youth ages 4-15 pay 10 euros and ages 3 and under enter for free. Online: blueba.de/de/musikfeuerwerk.html

Darmstadt, Germany: The city’s curiously named Heinerfest continues through July 3. Darmstadt’s biggest annual summertime bash sees the city’s downtown area transform into a giant fun zone with rides, gaming booths, stages and beer tents. At 10:30 p.m. on July 3, the skies above town come alive with a sparkling display of fireworks. Prime viewing spots include the city’s Herrngarten Park or the green space known as the Mathildenhöhe. Online: tinyurl.com/2nyyst5h

Heidelberg, Germany: Three times over the course of the summer, Heidelberg finds beauty out of tragic chap-



iStock

The Rhine Falls near Schaffhausen, Switzerland, celebrate Swiss National Day on July 31 with fireworks.

ters of its history. The event known as Castle Illuminations recalls 1689 and 1693, when the troops of the Sun King Louis XIV burned down the castle, leaving behind its current ruins. The Philosopher’s Way, riverbanks and the Nepomuk terrace all offer outstanding views. The spectacle starts at 10:15 p.m. on July 8; the third and last event is Sept. 2. Online: tinyurl.com/43zujfbk

Cannes, France: The swish city on the French Riviera hosts its annual Festival d’Art Pyrotechnique over six summer evenings. The sweeping bay creates a natural amphitheatre for an event which is at once a show and competition. Master firework creators representing their countries put on shows perfectly synchronized to upbeat soundtracks. This year’s program features displays from Norway (July 14); USA (July 21); Austria (July 29); France (Aug. 8 and 15) and Switzerland (Aug. 24). Online: festival-pyrotechnique-cannes.com

Munich, Germany: On July 15, the city’s Olympic Park

hosts Sommernachtstraum, an open-air event combining concerts with pyrotechnics. German reggae artist Gentleman will be joined by JULI and RAHEL on the main stage. Festival foods from around the world are available before everyone gathers around the lake onsite to witness what’s billed as one of the country’s biggest pyro displays. The show includes lasers and is set to music. Tickets cost 49 euros online or 52 euros at the gate. Children must be over the age of 6 in order to attend. Gates open at 4 p.m. Online: sommernachtstraum-muenchen.de

Monaco: The well-heeled city’s Port Hercule will be bathed in multicolor bursts of light as pyrotechnic showcases set to music unfold at 10 p.m. on July 22 and Aug. 5. Online: monaco-feuxdartifice.mc

Schaffhausen, Switzerland: The Rhine Falls near Schaffhausen, by some measure the biggest waterfall in Europe, is the setting for a grand show of fireworks on the eve of Switzerland’s National Day. Each year on July 31, thousands gather to take in “Fire on the Rocks,” a spectacle of fireworks and illuminations. The show begins at 9:45 p.m. This year’s edition will be preceded by a Super Puma flying display by the Swiss Army’s PC-7 team. Admission is free. Online: tinyurl.com/bdcuu52e

Knokke-Heist, Belgium: Belgium’s swankiest seaside resort town is the site of an International Fireworks Festival set to take place on Aug. 18, 20, 22, 24 and 26. The shows set to music begin at 10 p.m. and last approximately 20 minutes each. Online: tinyurl.com/2p879mrt

Hanover, Germany: The city’s stunning Herrenhausen Gardens set the scene for the International Fireworks Competition. Before darkness descends on the baroque gardens, spectators can enjoy live music, walking acts, drama and culinary offerings from the country hosting the display. The remaining dates for 2023 include Aug. 19, Sept. 2 and Sept. 16. Entry costs 24 euros for adults, 21 euros for youth and is free for those under the age of 6. Online: tinyurl.com/2p8vvwt8

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

A pitch for more American fans

Bundesliga clubs in Mainz, Stuttgart, want to spread word of quality baseball to local troops

By MATT WAGNER
Stars and Stripes

Baseball took root in Germany in the aftermath of World War II, when American major leaguers teamed up on military bases and organized activities promoting the game among German youth.

Its popularity waned in the decades that followed. But the Baseball Bundesliga made a comeback in the 1980s and has been around ever since. Several of the teams have small but dedicated fan bases. Now, they'd like to take a swing at getting the Americans back to the ballparks.

The Army's European headquarters is just across the Rhine River from the home of the Mainz Athletics, which is contending for the league championship.

"Occasionally, we do have some (Americans), but we would be glad to have more to enjoy the game, watch the game," said Nici Weichert, the Athletics' sporting director who doubles as its second baseman.

"We should probably find a way to make it more (known) over there because I don't know if everybody in Wiesbaden on the base knows that we exist," he added.

The Athletics began in 1989 as an offshoot of the Mainz Rangers, a team of U.S. service members that played in the former German American League.

A couple of hours southeast, the Stuttgart Reds' baseball and softball complex is just across from the Army's Robinson Barracks gate on Schozacher Strasse.

On the QT

Mainz Athletics

Address: Hartmuehlenweg 3, Mainz, Germany
Cost: 8 euros, 6 euros for students and people with disabilities, 5 euros for club members, 4 euros for reduced club members and free for kids under 12. Can pay with cash, card or Paypal.
Information: Game schedule online at mainz-athletics.de.

Stuttgart Reds

Address: Am Schnarrenberg 10, Stuttgart, Germany
Cost: Up to 15 euros for a weekend series or 10 euros for a day; free for children under 6.
Information: Online: stuttgart-reds.de; Phone: +49 71152089460

Mathew Wagner

Reds chairman Chris Manske, who's been with the club since 1989, talked about the club's close ties with the barracks, having played there before moving to its current location in 2004.

When the club opened its not-quite-complete TVC Ballpark on May 12 against the Athletics, Col. Matthew Ziglar, commander of the garrison in Stuttgart, threw out the ceremonial first pitch, along with Clemens Maier, the city's head of security, order and sport.

Manske said Ziglar's experience highlighted how it's "not well known that there's good baseball" nearby for Americans.

Having watched a pair of Baseball Bundesliga games earlier this month, I concur with that quality assessment.

In Stuttgart's 9-7 loss on June 9 to first place Heidenheim, the Reds and Heidekoepfe showcased contrasting styles. Stutt-



PHOTOS BY MATT WAGNER/Stars and Stripes

The Mainz Athletics ballpark can seat 700 people, according to the club's website. It opened in 2011.



Mainz second baseman Nici Weichert prepares to catch a fly ball during the Athletics' game against Regensburg on June 16.



Stuttgart batter Dustin Ward, left, looks up after hitting a foul ball while Heidenheim catcher Kilian Redle, goes after the ball on June 9.



Mainz's Tim Stahlmann pitches during the Athletics' 4-3 win over Guggenberger Legionaere Regensburg on June 16 in Mainz.



The crowd at TVC Ballpark in Stuttgart, Germany, watches the June 9 Baseball Bundesliga game between the Reds and Heidenheim.

gart played more small ball, getting guys on base. Heidenheim, meanwhile, brought power to the plate.

In Mainz's 4-3 win in 10 innings over the Guggenberger Legionaere Regensburg, both team's starters went deep into the game and pitched well, before the offenses came alive.

Overall, I rate the teams at a level of high Class A or Double-A minor league ball.

The atmospheres also were high quality, as the top four teams in the Baseball Bundesliga South squared off.

Both Mainz's field and Stuttgart's new ballpark, which Manske said will be completed by next year, were rocking, especially as the hosts came back in the later innings.

"We've had a lot of games like that the last couple of years," Weichert said of the atmosphere on June 16. "We hope it's going to stay like this."

The ballparks have room for 700 and 650 seated spectators at Mainz and Stuttgart, respectively. At Mainz on June 16, it was standing room only, while at Stuttgart on June 9, just a hand-

ful of seats were empty.

The regular season ends for the Athletics and Reds on July 9, but their seasons will continue either in a way most American baseball fans would recognize or in a way German soccer fans easily would understand.

Two-time champion Mainz already has clinched a playoff spot, while the Reds, who have been in the Bundesliga since 2012, are clutching the last position.

Stuttgart is hoping to avoid the "playdowns" in which the bottom teams in the league square

off either to get relegated to the second division league, or face the second tier's winner to stay in the top division, in sixth place. The fifth-place team stays up automatically.

The seventh-place team will be relegated this season to align the South with the North, which has six teams.

For those interested, the teams welcome new members at many levels. Both have baseball and softball teams starting from youth up to the top squads.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Glam up your morning at The Parlour

Desserts play a prominent role on cleverly worded menu of breakfast-and lunch-focused eatery in downtown Landstuhl

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

When my wife first sent me a link to The Parlour, I thought she was sharing plans for her next hair-cut.

It turns out that the new breakfast- and lunch-focused restaurant in downtown Landstuhl actually was a barber shop that once belonged to owner Jessica Berberich's father-in-law.

"It was important for us to leave a bit of his legacy in this space," Berberich said. "But (cooking and baking) is what I know how to do best."

She also has an eye for presentation. The Parlour's interior features a fashionable color palette of beige and gray along with plush, wool-like chairs that beckon guests to settle in.

On a sunny Friday afternoon, my wife and I arrived for a late brunch and promptly were seated by the open window off Jacob-Weber-Platz.

The menu's offerings include some clever wordplay and pop culture references, with choices like "Breaking Bread" and "Everyday I'm Waffeling." My personal favorite was the section titled "The Yellow from the Egg," a playful twist on a popular German phrase that roughly translates to "the greatest thing since sliced bread."

I opted for the Veggie Lover bagel, which came stacked with a fried egg, tomatoes, baby spinach, avocado, Gouda and cream cheese, along with a side of arugula topped with Parmesan cheese and balsamic dressing. While the bagel had more of a German kaiser roll texture than the denser, chewy New York style, the sandwich definitely hit the spot. The restaurant also offers its namesake bagel with the same ingredients, plus bacon.

To accompany my bagel, I indulged in a Parlour Café, a large, latte macchiato-style coffee infused with creme brulee syrup and white chocolate. It was a creamy and smooth delight that easily could stand alone as a dessert.

My wife decided to go for a healthier option. She ordered the large grilled chicken salad, topped with fresh vegetables and a creamy Caesar dressing. The portion size was so generous that she couldn't finish it all, and the well-seared chicken left her very happy.

My next dish offered a vacation vibe. The Ocean Smoothie bowl has a vibrant blue hue achieved by blending frozen pineapple, banana and coconut



PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL/Stars and Stripes

The interior of The Parlour in Landstuhl, Germany, offers comfortable charm with clean decor and plush chairs.

with healthy spirulina algae.

Topped with homemade granola, puffed quinoa, fruits, coconut chips, mint and almond sauce, it was a refreshing and satisfying combo.

To top things off, I couldn't resist testing The Parlour's claim of offering the "Best I ever had" waffle.

I certainly can vouch for its ability to rival the famous Belgian waffles located a few hours away. The delightful combination of homemade brownies, strawberries and the rich drizzle of dark and white chocolate is a delight for any dessert aficionado.

Regrettably, I later discovered that I had missed out on a tantalizing treat called "What Dreams Are Made Of." This takes the already delicious waffle and enhances it with popular Ferrero sweets like Raffaello and Kinder Bueno — childhood favorites that surely would ignite nostalgia if you grew up around here.

Desserts play a prominent role at The Parlour, not only on the menu but also in the glass showcase full of fresh cupcakes and pastries that greet visitors upon arrival.

Berberich, the owner, says she learned from her mother, Gaby, that it's perfectly fine to eat a slice of cake for breakfast once in

AFTER
HOURS
GERMANY

The Parlour

Address: Schulstrasse 4, 66849 Landstuhl

Hours: Wednesday through Sunday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

Prices: Breakfast dishes start at 3.20 euros for a Nutella croissant. A German breakfast platter is 14.90 euros. Soft drinks are 3.90 euros; coffee drinks start at 2.90 euros.

Menu: Full dual-language German-English menu available online.

Information: Online: parlour-cakes.com and on Facebook at time-mail at contact@parlour-cakes.com.

Alexander Riedel

a while.

She opened The Parlour with her husband earlier this spring, a move she said some considered bold considering the lingering effects of the pandemic. When asked about her decision to invest in a restaurant during such uncertain times, she responded with unwavering belief and passion.

"We love what we do and we wanted to seize the opportunity without any regrets," she said.

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An ocean smoothie bowl comes adorned with coconut shavings, blueberries, granola and spirulina and is topped with homemade granola and passion fruit.



The Veggie Lover bagel with a fried egg, tomatoes, spinach, avocado and Gouda, served with a side of arugula and Parmesan cheese at The Parlour.



A generous portion of grilled chicken salad topped with fresh vegetables and creamy Caesar dressing, a healthy and flavorful choice at The Parlour.



The "Best I ever had" waffle at The Parlour is served with homemade brownies, fresh strawberries and a drizzle of dark and white chocolate.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY KELLY AGEE/Stars and Stripes

Above: Zipliners head for Godzilla's gaping maw, left, at Nijigen No Mori, a theme park in Hyogo prefecture, Japan, on June 21. The experience starts with a seven-minute video explaining why the figure stands on the island and what the viewer will soon go through.

Zipline straight into Godzilla's mouth

Theme park on Japanese island offers thrills, education and food

BY KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

On Awaji Island, in the eastern part of the Inland Sea, the intrepid may zipline straight into the mouth of Japan's most recognizable reptilian monster.

The Nijigen No Mori theme park, developed by Toho Studios, presents ziplining guests with two options: the stalwart may fly right into the mouth of the 65-foot-high beast (absent its breath of fire); the timorous may glide alongside the exterior.

The experience starts with a seven-minute video in Japanese with English subtitles explaining why the Godzilla figure stands on the island and what the viewer will soon experience.

Tickets for the park and zipline experience are available onsite at the National Awaji-island Institute of Godzilla Disaster. Ages 12 and older pay 3,800 yen, or \$26.86; for 11 and younger, admission is 2,200 yen.

Visitors not interested in ziplining pay 1,700 yen, and children younger than 3 are admitted free. Tickets are also available on the official park website.

Ticket in hand, I lined up for the Internal Body Monitoring Course, the zipline ride into Godzilla's gaping maw. The Body Surface Monitoring Course, the alternative, sends riders along the statuesque monster's flank. To experience the zipline, guests must be at least 3-foot-9, weigh between 55 and 243 pounds and sign a waiver.

The zipline course is 49 feet high and 531 feet long. Godzilla is



The Godzilla Museum at the Nijigen No Mori theme park has large-scale dioramas of scenes from the original "Godzilla" all the way to 2016's "Shin Godzilla," along with storyboards, sketches from the making of the movies and suits worn by the actors.

82 feet wide and 180 feet long.

It was my first time ziplining and I'm not too fond of heights, but I felt safe throughout the experience. The staff helped me put on my gear and triple checked the equipment.

Riders may store loose items for 100 yen in lockers before hitching up to the zipline. A lanyard is available to hold your phone securely so you can record your adventure without the worry of dropping it.

The staff directed me up a ladder and hooked me up to the zipline. With my hands on the zipline handlebars, I leaned back, counted down from three and took off for Godzilla's mouth.

As a Godzilla fan, it was a unique experience and not half as scary as I thought it would be.

After finishing my zipline adventure, I headed down to the shooting game at the bottom of the zipline beside Godzilla. The mission is to remove Godzilla cells that have scattered from the monster and with a laser gun stop the cells from proliferating while you dodge their attacks.

Across from the shooting range is the world's first permanent Godzilla museum, according to the park's official website.

The museum has large-scale dioramas of scenes from the original "Godzilla" all the way to 2016's "Shin Godzilla," along with storyboards, sketches from the making of the movies and suits worn by the actors.

The last stop is a director's chair where guests may pose with a megaphone like they are



The Godzilla theming extends to the restaurant on site, which offers Mothra curry, above, and a Godzilla cream puff, below.

On the QT

Directions: 2425-2 Kusumoto, Awaji City, Hyogo, 656-2301. Best to take a car or taxi; it's a 30-minute walk from the Shin-Kobe train station or a seven-minute walk from Kenritsu Awajishima Koen bus station

Times: Open daily, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.

Costs: Admission is 2,200-3,800 yen

Food: An on-site eatery serves a Godzilla-themed menu, including curry and beer.

Information: Online: nijigennomori.com/godzilla_awajishima

Kelly Agee



directing a Godzilla movie.

Finally, guests are directed to a stage and a Godzilla suit used in the movie "Godzilla Final Wars," set against Awaji Island and the park, for a photo and a video. The two may be purchased for 3,000 yen. The video was neat because it looked like I was fighting Godzilla.

I then headed to the Godzilla shop, which sells Godzilla-themed phone cases, T-shirts, keychains, postcards, curries,

cups and much more.

A restaurant beside the museum serves Godzilla-themed food, including curry with a Godzilla footprint in the rice; a Mothra white curry, in the shape of the giant moth monster that fought Godzilla; Godzilla cream puffs and Godzilla beer.

The whole experience, which takes three to four hours, is a must for Godzilla fans.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER GREEN/Stars and Stripes

The spicy chipotle chicken burrito from Crack Taco Shop near Osan Air Base, South Korea.

Too tasty to be legal

Crack street tacos are cheap, delicious and located conveniently close to Osan Air Base

By CHRISTOPHER GREEN
Stars and Stripes

Military brats, like me, who were privileged to have lived all over the globe, discover that not all cuisines are created equal.

For example, Mexican food prepared in Georgia is completely different from the way it's served in Texas.

And then there's Mexican made in South Korea.

When I came to the peninsula, I knew that some restaurants would go on my Top 10 list and others would simply not make the cut. Fortunately, Crack Taco Shop has secured a spot on that list.

According to its website, this small restaurant just outside Osan Air Base's main gate gets its name from Cardiff Crack, a slang term for a popular marinated tri-tip steak prepared by a market in Southern California.

The Pyeongtaek restaurant, which is more of a taco stand, is situated between a luggage store and an optical shop. It's a small

and colorful place with just enough room to place an order and with patio furniture just outside where customers can relax and enjoy the weather.

I ordered the spicy chipotle chicken burrito. It's stuffed with refried beans, black beans, cilantro lime rice, cheese, guacamole, lettuce, tomatoes, sour cream and salsa all on a warm flour tortilla. The burrito was massive, perfectly wrapped so that none of the ingredients spilled out. It was spicy, juicy and delicious, and cost about \$10.

The street tacos, served on corn tortillas, are stuffed with slow-cooked beef, chicken or pork marinated in a savory chipotle sauce and topped with onions and cilantro. Each taco is about \$3.

The food was amazing. My one gripe is that the menu has only seven items.

If you want a delectable meal that will make your taste buds dance and won't break the bank, check out Crack Taco Shop.

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Crack Taco Shop is a small and colorful place with just enough room to place an order.



Crack Taco Shop

Location: 7-3 Shopping-ro, Pyeongtaek-si, Gyeonggi-do
Directions: A short walk from the main gate at Osan Air Base, South Korea
Times: Open 11 a.m. to noon, Sunday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 3 a.m. Friday and Saturday
Prices: Street tacos for \$3, burritos for \$12; non-alcoholic drinks are about \$2 and alcoholic drinks are about \$5.
Dress: Casual
Information: Phone: 031-611-7441;
Online: cracktaco.com

Christopher Green

Crumble tastes like summer all year with fresh or frozen berries

By CHRISTOPHER KIMBALL
Milk Street/Associated Press

Fresh, in-season berries always make the best crumble, but we always keep a bag of fruit in the freezer to have the taste of summer any time of year.

Both options will taste great with this recipe from our book "Cook What You Have," which uses pantry staples to assemble easy, weeknight meals. It calls for frozen berries tossed and topped with a spiced crumble with oats and almonds, but fresh mixed berries will also work.

The mixture of oats, cardamom, ground coriander and brown sugar does double duty. We add a small amount to the berries to sweeten and thicken the filling; into the remainder we add sliced almonds and softened butter to make a crumble topping that bakes up toasty and crisp, a delicious flavor and textural contrast to the soft, juicy berries.

Quick-cooking oats are best here; old-fashioned oats remain too firm and chewy. Serve warm or at room temperature, ideally with vanilla ice cream.

Mixed Berry Crumble with Spiced Oats and Almonds

Start to finish: 1 hour (20 minutes active)

Servings: 6 to 8

Ingredients

1 cup quick-cooking OR instant oats

½ cup packed light OR dark brown sugar

½ teaspoon ground cardamom

½ teaspoon ground coriander

1-pound bag frozen mixed berries (about 4 cups), not thawed

1½ cups sliced almonds OR 1 cup slivered almonds

¼ teaspoon table salt

8 tablespoons (1 stick) salted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes, room temperature

Directions

Heat the oven to 350°F with a rack in the middle position. In a

medium bowl, stir together the oats, sugar, cardamom and coriander, breaking up any lumps of sugar with your fingers.

Place the berries in a 9-inch pie plate. Add ¼ cup of the oat mixture and toss until well combined; break up any large clumps of frozen berries.

Into the remaining oat mixture, stir the almonds and salt. Add the butter and, using a silicone spatula, work it in until well combined. Using your hands, form the mixture into rough bits and clumps no larger than about the size of an olive and scatter them evenly over the berries.

Bake until the edges are bubbling and the crumble is golden brown, 40 to 45 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.



Mixed Berry Crumble with Spiced Oats and Almonds is a healthy, tasty treat.

MILK STREET/AP

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STARS AND STRIPES

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL



MARY ANN ANDERSON/TNS

The Northern Explorer, owned and operated by Great Journeys of New Zealand, makes several stops on its journey between Wellington and Auckland, including Ohakune, Tongariro National Park, Otorrhagia and Hamilton.

A captivating rail ride through New Zealand

No Wi-Fi needed on breathtaking, 423-mile trip from Wellington to Auckland on country’s longest-running passenger train

BY MARY ANN ANDERSON
Tribune News Service

On a bright, clear fall morning, the train from Wellington to Auckland clatters away from the rail station precisely as scheduled at 7:55. The temperature hovers coolly in the mid-50s, not at all cold, and quite typical for a Southern Hemisphere fall morning.

On the 423-mile journey northward through the rural heart of New Zealand’s North Island, the Northern Explorer, as the train is known and which is owned and operated by Great Journeys of New Zealand, will make several stops, including Ohakune, Tongariro National Park, Otorrhagia, Hamilton and finally, some 12 hours later, Auckland.

The Northern Explorer is New Zealand’s longest-running passenger train, tracing its beginnings to 1883, and one of the world’s greatest rail journeys. The ride

is spectacular, simply breathtaking and arcs across a swatch of one of the world’s most captivating and isolated countries.

The spotlight is on flower-filled meadows, fast-running rivers and Tongariro National Park with its snow-cloaked volcanic peaks of Ruapehu, Tongariro and Ngauruhoe. Those who are “Lord of the Rings” fans will recognize Ngauruhoe as Mount Doom in the film trilogy, the picturesque lands of Tolkien’s Middle-earth. The views are dramatic, the impetus for not only fiction, but also sonnets, poetry and song.

Impelled by my heart to get away from it all, and by my unrelenting human quiddity of wanderlust, I have come by myself to New Zealand from Brisbane to ride the Northern Explorer to grandly end a working trip. I love the splendor of train travel, especially when I sojourn alone.

Although I’m an excellent driver and have an adventuresome soul, I’ve never

quite worked up the courage to rent a car on foreign soil, especially when driving is on the left side of the road. When someone else is at the wheel, whether it’s car or train, there’s no sense in worrying about traffic congestion, getting lost on unfamiliar back roads or finding parking places; ergo, riding by rail is the perfect alternative to renting a car.

One of Great Journey’s options is to have a tour guide with you, and in Wellington I meet Mark Hockley, who will accompany me to Auckland. I’m excited about the journey as we climb aboard and find seats in the comfortable, well-lit cabin.

“We don’t have Wi-Fi on the train,” he says as we begin inching northward. “We don’t need it. There’s so much to see that you won’t miss it.”

Instead of traveling straight on into Auckland, I break up the trip with two nights, one at the Powderhorn Chateau in

Ohakune with the other at the Park Hotel Ruapehu, the gateway to Tongariro National Park. That’s the wonder of the Northern Explorer: It gives you the option to get off the train and discover the North Island.

As the Northern Explorer leaves Wellington, I find the aria of the train, cozy and warm inside, a soothing blend of heavy metal wheels whirling rhythmically against the track, sort of iambic pentameter on rails, and complemented with the gentle laughter of other riders sharing secrets among themselves and the constant whooshing song of sliding doors opening and closing as guests move from car to car.

Along the way, as the miles jangle away beneath the train, the riveting, geographically diverse landscape that stitches together Wellington and Auckland is ever-

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

New Zealand: Train provides opportunities to disembark, sightsee

FROM PAGE 26

changing as it slides by through the panoramic windows. Outside of Wellington, we near the vast, sparkling jewel-toned water of the Kapiti coast of the Tasman Sea before later passing over silvered streams glissading through deep, narrow gorges.

Ancient hills of green fly by, their steep slopes kept neatly mowed by a billion-trillion sheep munching on sweet grass, their fluffy white and black coats of wool providing splashes of vibrancy against an emerald background. Nary a ram, ewe or lamb, apparently used to the clacking of the rails, is disturbed by the train's presence.

Completely enthralled by sheep and scenery, I have absolutely no need for Wi-Fi.

“No mammals are native to New Zealand except for two little bats,” Hockley explains as we watch sheep scamper across meadows. “There are no predators or primates or native snakes.”

Among the other animals and birds of a feather that share the meadows with the sheep are the celebrated and iconic kiwi, half-mammal and half-bird; wild turkeys; horses; cattle; and ducks. It is the sheep that rules, though, as more of them live in New Zealand than people. The general consensus is that six sheep exist for every person. I would have guessed a number even higher than that, judging by the number of fluff-balls I see roaming the pastures that are, almost impossibly, greener than any I've seen in Ireland.

Several times, Mark and I brave the chilly air and wander to the open-air carriage to get an

unobstructed view of the countryside, my breath syncopating to the staccato-like yet lulling cadence of iron wheels as the train chugs northward. Mark has made this journey hundreds of times, but he seems as enthralled as I with this magnificent place that is his homeland.

Soon after passing through Taumarunui, we enter the engineering marvel of the Raurimu Spiral, a part of the track that glides over a series of hairpin turns, loops and tunnels as the train twists, turns and then amazingly doubles back on itself. Some five hours since Wellington, the train stops at Ohakune Station, where we disembark for an overnight stay at Powderhorn Chateau.

Great Journeys partners with Visit Ruapehu, a sort of chamber of commerce, for local sight-seeing adventures, and we're met by Visit Ruapehu's Mahalee Guieysse, who will also accompany Mark and me for the next two days so I get the complete experience of the region.

Among the sites we visit are Ohakune Railway Museum, where curator Ian Heappey tells us the fascinating story of the railroad with a special display of the Tangawai disaster, New Zealand's worst-ever rail catastrophe, when on Christmas Eve 1953, the Wellington to Auckland night express plunged into the flooded Whangaehu River, killing and injuring dozens.

Mahalee, Mark and I then pop next door into Opus Fresh to peruse the stunningly soft and gorgeous outerwear and blankets handmade of merino wool and possum fur. Don't cringe at the thought of possum fur. New Zea-



Nirvana, Nella and Musty, resident alpacas at Nevalea Alpacas, the largest alpaca farm in New Zealand, frame the emerald-green landscape of the North Island. The writer was assigned Musty to ride.



PHOTOS BY MARY ANN ANDERSON/TNS

Mark Hockley of Great Journeys shows off a massive carrot sculpture, the centerpiece of Ohakune Carrot Adventure Park. Great Journeys offers the option of having a tour guide like Hockley accompany you.

land's possums have longer, silkier fur than their wiry-haired American cousins.

On our way to Ohakune Carrot Adventure Park, a combination park, playground and gardens, to see what is probably the world's largest carrot sculpture, we stop for eclairs and pastries at the Chocolate Éclair Shop. After we see the goliath carrot, we stop in for a tasting at Big Mountain Mead, where local ingredients help to create a light, dry sparkling (and delicious) version of honey mead.

Later that evening at Powderhorn Chateau, we dine at the Powderkeg, the hotel's restaurant that serves amazing dishes including New Zealand lamb and beef, a spinach- and ricotta-filled ravioli and pork ribs that are known far and wide for their deliciousness. With it all washed down with New Zealand wines, we toast to the end of the day.

The next morning, after a visit with always laughing, always smiling Ben Wiggins of TCB Ski Board and Bike — both skiing and biking can be arranged through TCB for the more adventurous types — Mahalee drives Mark and me to Forgotten World Adventures for a rail cart journey along an abandoned railway line. It would be impossible to count the herds of sheep and cattle that graze these serene hills, but the highlight for me, as a birdwatcher, is a dozen or so wild turkeys prancing on a hillside, their black feathers glittering like diamonds in the morning sun.

Our next stop is Nevalea Alpacas, where we are each assigned an alpaca to walk the



Among the outdoor activities offered to guests of Great Journeys New Zealand through Visit Ruapehu are canoeing, hiking, rail cart tours and walking with alpacas, bottom left.

verdant pastures. My furry friend's name is Musty, and he seems more interested in munching grass than walking. I call him the reluctant alpaca, as he is an aggravating cuss who wants to stop every moment to eat and needs a firm rope tug to get going again.

Afterward, we visit the fragrant Lauren's Lavender Farm in Aukopae and Bradley's Garden, a peaceful, tranquil garden comprised of nine separate "rooms," including an olive grove cathedral, an Italian garden and a lane of lavender that is as pretty as a melody.

For the second night off the train, we stay at Park Hotel at Tongariro National Park. The hotel is low-key and comfortable,

and its Spiral Restaurant and Bar offers heaping portions of comfort food like ribs, burgers and salads.

The next morning, Mark and I board the Northern Explorer for its final leg into Auckland, from where I would begin the long journey from halfway around the world back to Georgia and he would return to his home in Christchurch.

Mother earth has always called me to her heart and her soul, and traversing New Zealand by train is the idyllic if not romantic path to savor her unending natural beauty. And if you take a moment and gaze across the dazzling vistas long enough, you may, as I did, see all the way to creation itself.

WEEKEND: MUSIC



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

Taylor Swift performs during her Eras tour in Glendale, Ariz., on March 17.



JOHN LOCHER/AP

Morgan Wallen performs at the iHeartRadio Music Festival in Las Vegas on Sept. 23.



AMY HARRIS/AP

SZA performs at the Astroworld Music Festival in Houston in 2021.



ROB GRABOWSKI/AP

Toosii performs at the Lollapalooza music festival in Chicago in 2021.

The battle for song of the summer

Offering predictions on what might dominate the upcoming season

By MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

The sun is shining, the beach is calling and school is out: It's time to prepare the song of the summer.

Often, there's a clear champion: In 2017, Lusi Fonsi, Daddy Yankee and Justin Bieber's "Despacito" was unavoidable. In 2019, Lil Nas X's ubiquitous "Old Town Road" foretold future superstardom. Olivia Rodrigo's "Drivers License" did the same in 2021. But that's not always the case.

Was Harry Styles' "As It Was" the go-to jam of the 2022 season? Who claimed the title during the summer-that-barely-was in 2020? When all the world's music is available on streaming platforms, can

genre-loyal listeners agree on a single song of the summer?

What if they didn't have to? Well, here are AP's 2023 song(s) of the summer predictions — and some past holders of each crown:

■ **Club song of the summer:** "Put It On Da Floor Again" by Latto ft. Cardi B

Rapper Latto's combative, no-nonsense flow atop a hot, minimalist beat on "Put It On Da Floor" makes it a club-ready contender for song of the summer. It also doubles as a seasonal mantra: "I'm sexy dancin' in the house / I feel like Britney Spears," guest Cardi B spits.

■ **Past champion:** "Break My Soul" by Beyoncé (2022)

■ **Song of the summer that inexplicably came out in January:** "Boy's a Liar PT. 2"

by PinkPantheress, Ice Spice

The dream duo of PinkPantheress hyperpop-punk and lackadaisical rapper Ice Spice created "Boy's a Liar PT. 2," a treatise on modern dating with an undeniable hook, and a very creative pronunciation of the word "Liar." (That boy's a ... Leo?) Few songs have six-plus months worth of staying power, but few songs have challenged what a pop hook can sound like: space-y and, at times, charmingly self-effacing. Like the Capricorn it is.

■ **Past champion:** So nice, it must be mentioned twice — "Drivers License" by Olivia Rodrigo (2021)

■ **The post-ironic, TikTok-heavy, too online, micro-hit song of the summer:** "The Margarita Song" by That Chick Angel, Casa Di & Steve Terrell

What do you get when you take a confrontational evangelical sermon on "slut-shaming" given by a woman who calls herself Sister Candy on college campuses, remix it and give it a trap beat? A hit, thanks to comedian/rapper Angel Laketa Moore and artists Carl Dixon and Steve Terrell.

■ **Past champion:** "Birthday Suit" by Cosmo Sheldrake (2019)

■ **Hot (divorced) girl (song of the) summer:** "Flowers" by Miley Cyrus

Those waiting for a Texas-sized country anthem from Miley Cyrus will continue to do just that, but in the meantime: "Flowers" is an '80s synth-rock for those brokenhearted — and getting over it. For

SEE SUMMER ON PAGE 29

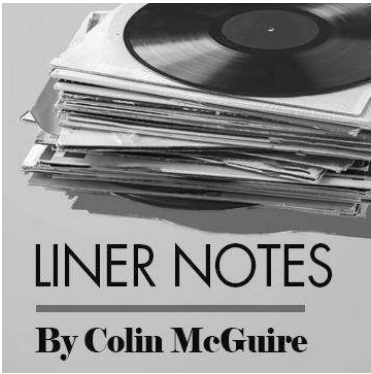
WEEKEND: MUSIC

Rateliff, Night Sweats offer mixed bag on EP

It's one thing to put out an EP; it's another to advertise it as an EP that rose from the ashes of your last LP. Conversely, having that previous LP be a couple of years old is entirely different. But that's what Nathaniel Rateliff and the Night Sweats did with their latest five-song set, "What If I," and the results feel exactly like five songs that didn't have a place on 2021's "The Future," which is exactly what this release is.

In some ways, it's admirable — artists have a hard enough time focusing on the Full Album these days rather than the Song, so an EP, at this point, is somewhat of a novelty. In other ways, it feels like a lazy afterthought, borne out of a desire to tour this summer and needing something new to promote.

The fun part is that these songs are pretty good, no matter which



way you look at it. So much so that when they wind down after about 21 minutes, the listening experience feels only half-done, a mildly frustrating reality that elicits hope these guys would have toughed it out for another five songs and released a full-length. If nothing else, this short set highlights the group's versatility, and even if these are afterthoughts from an old album, they

are still worth the listener's time.

The best moment comes quickly with "Buy My Round," the Mark Shusterman brainchild that takes the spotlight off Rateliff and opens the set with Abbey Road curiosity and a scatting hook that won't soon leave the ears. It's a jangly pop tune that leans heavily on a slinking organ and a full ensemble of players that colors in the lines nicely. The song is so good that it unfairly raises expectations that are impossible to meet for the rest of the EP.

Still, that doesn't mean there aren't worthwhile things to discover. "Slow Pace of Time" is a jazzy New Orleans comedown that feels almost entirely new in the Rateliff oeuvre. Most of that could be because of the presence of Preservation Hall Jazz Band's Charlie Gabriel, but even if that's the case, it's one thing to bring in

some NOLA authenticity, but it's another to pull it off with so much accuracy. Here, Rateliff and the Night Sweats do just that; the results are as delicious as any meal in the French Quarter.

Meanwhile, "Suffer Me" is pretty standard Night Sweats stuff. Leaning more on Southern rock here than elsewhere, the track comes off as an homage to the days when Credence Clearwater Revival weren't yet known as classic rock. Complete with a bed of organs and an anthemic groove, it does the Stax imprint proud, mixing warm soul and call-to-action ethos. The title song's alternate version evokes that same spirit, exuding the same qualities while paired with little more than a funky piano and Rateliff's drawl. The only real miss is "That's Your Opinion," but that's only because it sees the band's leader return to

his acoustic roots. Considered alongside a short set with other, more interesting compositions, the proceedings could have used more horns and less tenderness. It's the only time the notion that these songs are quasi-castoffs feels real.

Taken as a whole, that could be forgiven, however, merely because of how strong "Round" and "Time" are, not only in the context of this EP but the Night Sweats' catalogue as a whole. So, while What If I might only be for fans and completists, it still carries weight as a fun aside that's worth the time of Southern music fans — be it soul, rock, jazz or blues.

In a world driven more by the Song than anything else, this has at least a couple of tracks that should remain a staple in the Night Sweats' live sets for years to come.

Summer: Swift, Wallen, SZA have a shot at song of the season

FROM PAGE 28

Cyrus, its a song about life after divorce, but for her fans, it is a celebration in finding partnership within yourself.

Past champion: "Next Girl" by Carly Pearce (2020)

■ **Song of the summer ... this week:** "Padam Padam" by Kylie Minogue

Like a summer fling, Kylie Minogue's disco heartbeat "Padam Padam" is crush-worthy pop music for those who like their songs to burn bright, fast and hard.

Past champion: "Work From Home" by Fifth Harmony (2016)

■ **Biggest song of the year, and therefore the default song of the summer:** "Last Night" by Morgan Wallen

The reign of Morgan Wallen continues into the summer, with his country pop-rock breakup record "Last Night" dominating terrestrial radio — and, likely, the headphones of the person next to you.

Past champion: "Somebody That I Used to Know" by Gotye, Kimbra (2011)

■ **Song of the summer that's actually a cover:** "Fast Car" by Luke Combs

The country star takes the Tracy Chapman classic and turns it into a North Carolina campfire tune. Perfect for driving in your car, speed so fast.

Past champion: "Fast Car" by Jonas Blue, Dakota (2015) — or really any another cover of "Fast Car," past and present

■ **Song for the Swifties' summer:** "Karma" by Taylor Swift

In a phrase: Karma is my boy-



AMY HARRIS/AP

Luke Combs, shown during CMA Fest 2022 in Nashville, offers a summer-worthy cover of "Fast Car."

friend, Karma is a god, "Karma" is everywhere this season ... just like Taylor Swift, as her Eras Tour continues.

Past champion: "Red" by Taylor Swift (2013)

■ **Song for people who always live like it's summer:** "WHERE SHE GOES" by Bad Bunny

With a title like "WHERE SHE GOES," it might seem like the Puerto Rican reggaetonero Bad Bunny was preparing to release a crossover hit recorded in English. But that's not his style. Instead, Benito (as he's lovingly dubbed by fans) marries the world of dembow and drill, still

sung in Spanish — perfect for a late-night party or the early morning at the beach that follows.

Past champion: "Mi Gente" by J Balvin, Willy William (2017)

■ **Song of the summer of revenge:** "Kill Bill" by SZA

SZA's genre-ambivalent soulful pop reaches new levels of self-actualization in this revenge fantasy. "I might kill my ex," she croons, a soft exorcism of her worst impulses. "Not the best idea."

Past champion: "Where My Girls At" by 702 (1999)

■ **Song for singles ready to**

mingle this summer: "Ella Baila Sola" by Eslabon Armado x Peso Pluma

Is there a greater success story than the sierrero hit "Ella Baila Sola" from Eslabon Armado and Peso Pluma? Regional Mexican music has entered the American mainstream — horns and all — and this flirty track about a woman dancing on her own is just more proof.

Past champion: "Buy You A Drank (Shawty Snappin)" by T-Pain, Yung Joc (2007)

■ **Song of the summer romance:** "Calm Down" by Rema, Selena Gomez

The inescapable Afrobeats track from Nigerian singer Rema and pop star Selena Gomez isn't slowing down this season. Expect to hear it at an oceanside hang and inside your local grocery store in equal measure, but mostly, playing quietly during a backyard makeout session.

Past champion: "I Swear" by All-4-One (1994)

■ **Empowering song of the summer:** "All My Life" by Lil Durk ft. J. Cole

A children's choir, a trap beat and an inspirational hook make "All My Life" the feel-good track of the summer, a reminder that positive attitude is a potent medicine.

Past champion: "Born This Way" by Lady Gaga (2011)

■ **Slow burn song of the summer:** "Favorite Song" by Toosii

Bangers come and go, but ballads live inside the soul. Rapper Toosii's "Favorite Song" is for those hoping to have a romantic summer spent inside with a loved one.

Past champion: "If Your Girl Only Knew" by Aaliyah (1996)

■ **Song of the summer for sad girls:** "Cupid" by Fifty Fifty

Apologies to all fans of the indie-adjacent pop group Boygenius (Phoebe Bridgers, Lucy Dacus and Julien Baker), but the sad girl song of the summer comes courtesy of the K-pop girl group Fifty Fifty. The harmonies on their lovelorn bubblegum pop song "Cupid" are sweet like candy, ripe for rolling the windows down and scream-singing along.

Past champion: "Summertime Sadness" by Lana Del Rey (2012)

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



PHOTOS BY ELECTRONIC ARTS/TNS

Immortals of Aveum mixes fantasy elements and a military shooter with surprisingly engaging results. The three kinds of magic in the game act like different types of firearms.

More than just a Call of Duty with magic

Exploration, slight puzzle elements help Ascendant Studios' fantasy 1st-person shooter, Immortals of Aveum, stand out

By GIESON CACHO
The Mercury News

Ascendant Studios has created a narrative-driven, magic first-person shooter that has intriguing potential with its mix of fantasy and military themes.

Some of the best fare is created when genres mix. Star Wars is heavy on swashbuckling sci-fi, but it melds that with fantasy elements through Force-using space wizards. Warhammer 40,000 presents a darker and grittier take on the distant future, but it's one that also includes star-traveling elves and orcs.

The fledgling Ascendant Studios has its own take on the fantasy genre: Immortals of Aveum mixes swords and sorcery with a military shooter. Players will be trading guns for the ability to shoot magic from their fingertips, but don't mistake this for fantasy Call of Duty; the title does more with its themes and settings than just replacing bullets for mana.

The story of Jak

In Immortals of Aveum, players take on the role of Jak, a street urchin who manifests his abilities late in life as an Unforeseen. Not only is he a later bloomer, but he has the rare ability to wield all three forms of magic. He's recruited off the streets of Seren by General Kirkan to fight in a war between Aveum's two biggest powers: the autocratic Theocracy of Rasharn and the Kingdom of Lucium.

He accepts Kirkan's offer to join the Lucium forces with the goal of being an Immortal, which are basically Lucium's version of the U.S. Navy Seals. Lucium needs all the help it can get as it faces a series of setbacks against Rasharn's military leader Sandrakk. The warlord has been making progress in seizing the ley lines that are



Players have a dodge and a triple jump, which they'll need against some enemies. Maneuverability is key.

sources of the world's magic.

It's a decent setup that jars initially as the mixture of modern war images and world of high fantasy collide. The campaign starts with a wide-eyed Jak's recruitment, and five years later, it sees him as a hardened soldier, smoking a cigarette as Lucium's positions are bombarded by dragon-like Howlers and magical projectiles. It's a strange juxtaposition, but when players pick up the controller and play, that strangeness melts away. Everything becomes instinctive and familiar.

Tight controls and intuitive gameplay

This is the best part about Immortals. The game taps into the shooter mentality with tight controls and intuitive combat. Players will have no problem switching between the three types of magic: Force (blue), Chaos (red) and Life (green). They each act as different firearms.

Force is a powerful single shot with a slow firing rate almost like that of a sniper rifle, but a little faster. Chaos is a close-ranged attack comparable to that of a shotgun while Life magic is rapid fire but doesn't do as much damage. Players will need to constantly switch between each magic type in battle.

On top of that, players have heavy spells such as Shatter, which destroys enemy shields, but its use is limited.

They also have a Control spell called Lash that's tied to one of the shoulder buttons: Jak tosses whiplike tendrils and drags faraway enemies closer. Lastly, players have Gear called Sigils and Totems that act almost like gadgets that can debuff enemies by slowing them down or causing other effects.

With more than 25 spells and 80 talents to unlock and upgrade, players can craft a hero with certain combos and playstyles. The Immortals combat reminds me a lot of Bulletstorm's, but Ascendant Studios explores the potential gameplay opportunities more fully.

Puzzle-solving and exploration

The single-player narrative-driven campaign isn't just about blasting whatever is in front of you. Immortals also has slight puzzle elements and exploration. The puzzle elements are tied to multicolored switches that players have to hit with the right magic. They unlock doors and paths that lead players to chests with equipment that deliver stat boosts and other benefits.

Other parts of the game will require players to look for glyphs that allow Jak to manipulate objects such as statues. They can twist figures so that the protagonist can use a statue's hand to double jump across a chasm. It seems as though Immortals will reward players who go the extra mile to venture off the beaten path and uncover chests or bits of lore. They can even get points for their talents. The campaign features a skill tree and that empowers players to use a particular gameplay style they enjoy.

Although at first glance, Immortals seems like an odd melding of fantasy and military shooter. But when players get their hands on the game, the intuitive combat systems and tight controls work wonderfully. It has a way of deepening the immersion so that the world of Aveum seems more natural and believable. From what I played in the short time I had with the game, it looks promising and should be on your radar this summer.

Immortals of Aveum is scheduled for release July 20 on PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X and Series X and PC.

Online: ascendantstudios.com/immortals-of-aveum

WEEKEND: BOOKS

‘I’m not Vince Neil’

Former Twisted Sister singer Dee Snider says he wrote debut novel ‘Frats’ without assistance using craft he’s honed since early 1980s

By WAYNE PARRY
Associated Press

Dee Snider is taking a novel approach to life after rock stardom. The former singer for the '80s glam rock band Twisted Sister just released his first novel, “Frats,” about the madness, cruelty and alcohol and testosterone-fueled bravado of the 1970s high school fraternity scene on Long Island, N.Y., where he grew up.

His debut as a novelist follows his previous stints as a radio disc jockey, TV voice-over artist, Broadway actor, horror film writer and of course the drag-wearing face of the band best known for the hits “We’re Not Gonna Take It” and “I Wanna Rock.”

“Always something new and interesting; that’s key to me,” Snider said. “I want to feel challenged.”

He got the writing bug coming up with the script for the band’s breakthrough 1984 video for “We’re Not Gonna Take It” in which a stern father berates his

teenage son, who then morphs into Snider and engages in cartoonish takedowns of dear old dad.

“I started to teach myself how to write,” he said. “In 1984, everybody was out partying; I was in the dressing room or in the hotel working on writing. I’m not a singer who decided to write a book — or had someone write one for him. I’ve been laboring away, honing the craft.”

“I’m not Vince Neil,” Snider said in a swipe at the Motley Crüe singer. “I’m the guy you saw in Washington (where he testified before the U.S. Senate defending heavy metal against allegations it was violent and dangerous for kids), a guy who can put together a sentence, and express himself.”

In his autobiography “Shut Up and Give Me The Mic,” Snider learned about the bane of many writers: editors. His editor wanted 315 pages; Snider had 700 written and wasn’t finished.

“They chopped it in half,” he said. “I call it ‘killing babies.’ You have a great section for a book,

but you have to remove something.”

“Frats,” which Snider says he wrote without assistance, follows the lives of high school friends who had to navigate the minefields posed by frat boys, the pressure to conform and the insane risks taken in the name of belonging. The main character, Bobby Kovacs, is loosely drawn from Snider’s own high school experiences in Baldwin, N.Y.

There’s even a few hidden Easter eggs that sharp-eyed Twisted Sister fans may spot: The fictional reporter who wrote a story about a heinous crime integral to the plot of the book is named Mark Segall, taking the first name of Twisted Sister’s bassist, Mark “The Animal” Mendoza, and the second name of guitarist Jay Jay French, born John Segall.

The band playing the high school prom is named Dusk; Kovacs notes that the singer went on to become quite famous. Dusk was Snider’s real-life high school band, and their singer did indeed become quite famous.



WILLY SANJUAN, INVISION/AP

Dee Snider poses for a portrait in Redondo Beach, Calif., on June 21 to promote his novel “Frats” about his upbringing on Long Island, N.Y.

‘100 Places to See After You Die’ a travel guide to afterlife

By NICHOLAS CANNARIATO
The Washington Post

Ken Jennings’ new book is all about the afterlife. If that sounds unexpected, it all started at an airport bookstore.

“I saw one of those bucket list travel books,” he said. “I was looking at it upside down, and I thought it said ‘A Thousand Destinations to Die Before You See.’ I came out of the bookstore and I told my friends at the gate, ‘I think I have an idea for a book.’”

The idea would become “100 Places to See After You Die.” In it, the “Jeopardy!” host — and the show’s all-time winningest champion — surveys ideas from around the world about what happens to us after we die. It’s written in the form of a travel guide, with an eclectic mix of 100 accounts, ranging from mythology and religion to ideas floated in books, movies and TV shows. In the introduction, Jennings suggests that readers dip in and out of the book, consulting it as a “post-bucket list.”

Threaded throughout are comic asides and passing insights in the form of information boxes with headings such as “Meet the Locals,” “When to Go,” “Best to Avoid,” “Time-Savers” and “Off the Beaten Path.” The book’s tone is light and irreverent, sometimes bordering on shticky. But ultimately it reads a lot like what you expect in a book by Jennings: long on knowledge and mercifully short on claims about the grand truth of things.

“The miracle of life and consciousness seems already so unusual to me that it seems like such a waste if that all just

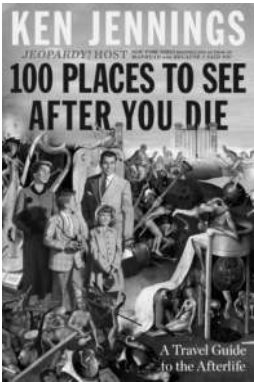
sparks for some shorter time and then vanishes,” Jennings said. “We would love to believe that that’s not true and that it’s not just such a brief flowering. Of course, the other attractive thing about it is that we’re never going to know.”

Jennings has been interested in death and the afterlife for as long as he can remember. Part of his interest when he was a child stemmed from the fact that he hadn’t yet experienced any deeply personal losses.

“And so,” he said, “a lot of my formative experiences with death were fictional characters, like Spock dying, Mr. Hooper dying, Jean Grey from the X-Men. That’s the kind of American experience with death. You talk about it more with Big Bird than with your own loved ones sometimes.”

Jennings describes himself as “a generalist who loves knowing a tiny bit about a million things.” The book stems from his interest in how “people’s ideas about their own culture and priorities change” based on how they see the next world.

Of course, how exactly one sees the afterlife is tricky. In the book, Jennings nods, if only obliquely, to the elephant in the room: The afterlife is the speculation



of living people who, you know, haven’t died before. He expresses skepticism with dollops of dry wit, which can feel reflexive but do usefully lighten some very serious, even grim material.

But the afterlife is also about our need for abiding connection. Jennings said that part of what motivates his own hopes for it is possible reunion with the people he’s known and loved.

“When you think about what you can take with you,” he said, “it’s clearly not material things. But it might be the relationships you have. I would like to think that that continues.” There might not be anything more human than feeling that our bonds with each other are eternal.

Jennings does some of his most entertaining writing in the less-devout sections of the book: those that address how literature, movies and TV have dealt with the subject. One example is his (most excellent) account of the movie “Bill and Ted’s Bogus Journey.” To escape Death in the movie, Jennings writes, you can give him a “melvin, which is a most egregious type of wedgie,” or “you’ll need to challenge Death to a contest, like the game of chess from Ingmar Bergman’s “The Seventh Seal” — and win. Be warned that Death has only been defeated once — and he was a super-poor sport about it.”

I asked Jennings if his faith — he’s a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — informed his thoughts about the subject. He said that “coming from a Latter-day Saint background, there’s a real emphasis on [the idea that]

even the afterlife has growth — that it’s not just a static cloud, but that you could still learn things and do things.” To him, it’s an attractive part of the faith, “that the afterlife is not just a reward. It’s not just the dessert, but there’s something to do and places to go.”

That’s in part why he chose to write his book in the form of a travel guide, since such books are all about “the vibe of a place,” he said. “You’re trying to convey not just what time the bars close or how regular the buses are, but you’re really trying to convey what you know, what is the spirit of the place that you can’t get at home. And I guess that’s exactly what’s implicit in how we think about God, too. What can you get from him that you can’t get from your loved ones, your king, your boss, your favorite YouTuber? Must be something. Or else, why God?”

Which is to say that religion is important in his life, but more in the present moment than for reasons having to do with the hereafter. Jennings consults it, he said, as a way to wonder: “What kind of person am I going to be today? I think that might be unusual, for a religious person to tell you that. I should be fixated on my heavenly reward maybe, but I’m not. Maybe that’s a sign of a less robust or certain faith.”

Writing the book has changed him, too.

“Years and years of working on this book,” he said, “and the funny thing is, I now find myself thinking about the afterlife all the time. Whatever the end is, whether it exists or not, that’s got the meaning of life in it.”

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Battling the bite in your backyard

Keep mosquitoes away with these expert tips

By KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS
The Washington Post

Ah, the sounds of summer: The sizzle of a grill. The pop of a gin and tonic. The unmistakable whining of a mosquito in your ear.

“Unfortunately, 85% of what makes us alluring or less alluring to mosquitoes is hardwired in our genetic circuit board,” says Timothy C. Winegard, author of “The Mosquito: A Human History of Our Deadliest Predator.” The factors at play, he says, include your blood type; the amount of carbon dioxide you emit when you exhale; lactic acid in your skin; and your natural odors. “So, at the end of the day, unless you CRISPR yourself with genetic engineering, you’re kind of stuck with what you got.”

Still, there are ways to outsmart summer’s most annoying party-crashers, especially if all you want is to enjoy an evening on your patio. We’re not talking about eradicating them from your yard — mosquitoes are vital to ecosystems — but if you want to keep them away from an entertaining space for a few precious hours, here’s what experts recommend:

Know your blood type

Only female mosquitoes feast on humans, and for good reason: The proteins in your blood help them grow and mature their eggs.

“She’s just being a good mom,” Winegard says. “People with blood Type O are her vintage of choice. ... They get bitten twice as much as people with blood Type A, with blood Type B falling in between.”

If you’re an O, pay extra attention to the precautions recommended below.

Stay cool

“Mosquitoes hunt by both smell and infrared sight, if you want to call it that,” Winegard says. “They can smell the carbon dioxide and see the heat signature of their target.” Avoiding alcohol can keep your body temperature lower — making you harder to find — so consider opting for a mocktail instead.

Wear light colors

Shirking dark clothing can also keep you cooler, but that’s not the only reason it may offer relief.

“Mosquitoes, like many biting flies, are attracted to darker colors,” says Daniel Markowski, technical adviser for the American Mosquito Control Association. “The thinking behind this is

that the animals they typically feed upon are larger, dark-bodied mammals. Hence, they’ve adapted to locate dark, moving animals.”

Protect yourself

Even if you can’t keep every mosquito away, you can prevent them from biting you with the right repellent. DEET is “the gold standard,” Markowski says, “because it’s highly effective in most all situations.”

Despite an enduring stigma around it, the Environmental Protection Agency has found that normal use of DEET doesn’t present a health concern to the general population. Markowski also notes that it’s endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

He also recommends Picaridin, an odorless, synthetic repellent that’s effective against a variety of mosquito species, and oil of lemon eucalyptus, which comes from the *Corymbia citriodora* plant. Other plant-based options such as citronella, lavender and peppermint “can be good if you’re not highly attractive to mosquitoes,” Markowski says.

When relying on any bug spray, make sure you’re thorough: “Any chink in your armor, they will find it,” Winegard says.

For further protection, Eric



iStock photos

Wearing lighter-colored clothing won’t just keep you cool but may also help ward away mosquitoes, which are attracted to darker colors.



Even a small amount of standing water left alone in the yard can be a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Caragata, assistant professor at the Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory at the University of Florida, suggests donning clothes in a thicker material such as denim, which is tough for a mosquito’s proboscis (mouthpart) to pierce.

Blow them away

Mosquitoes are not especially strong fliers, so adding a fan to your patio can be an effective deterrent. But a lazily whirring overhead fan, such as what you’d find on a covered porch, won’t be enough. Instead go for a larger box fan set on high, Markowski says.

Smoke them out

If it’s not too sweltering out-

side, try lighting a wood-burning firepit or chiminea. Smoke from a wood fire is an effective mosquito repellent “the same way it is for any other animal, whether it’s humans or lions or anything else,” Winegard says, because “we don’t like smoke in our face.”

Get rid of standing water

Even a glass of drinking water left on the deck can become a breeding ground for mosquito eggs — and mother mosquitoes lay about 100 eggs at a time.

“They don’t need very much at all to breed. It can be a backyard toy, like a Tonka truck that has a bit of water in it, or a crushed pop can,” Winegard says. If you get rid of it, “they’ll go some-

where else to lay their eggs.”

If you have a bird bath, try picking up a biopesticide sold at hardware stores, such as Mosquito Dunks — tablets you drop in water that can nix mosquito larvae for 30 days or more.

“These are naturally derived products that are available for home use, and they’re quite effective at killing mosquitoes, but won’t kill the birds,” Caragata says. He also advises inspecting any water around your home regularly for mosquito eggs, and promptly dumping it onto dry land if you spot any. “They look like tiny little grains of rice. Sometimes they’re black or mostly black.”

What doesn’t work

You may be wondering if old-school remedies (such as Citronella candles) and new gimmicks (such as ultrasonic mosquito repellents and scented stickers that affix to your clothes) actually work. Not necessarily, Markowski says. “Their effectiveness will vary depending on wind, airflow patterns and the species of mosquito that are present in your area,” he says.

Bug zappers, meanwhile, are not only ineffective — they’re harmful. Their ultraviolet light winds up attracting and killing many beneficial insects, while zapping few mosquitoes, Markowski says. “I wouldn’t use them for mosquitoes at all.”

WEEKEND: FAMILY



iStock

Experts suggest that you have a discriminating mindset about what you share about your child online and consider asking them for permission before you post.

Best ‘sharenting’ practices

Experts offer tips for when, how to post about your children’s lives online

BY SHIRA OVIDE
The Washington Post

There’s a lot of attention on the risks of children sharing about themselves on social media.

But what about the other side of the discussion: What should parents consider when posting about their kids online?

This question is not only about keeping children safe from creeps, although that’s part of it.

It’s also about whether posting about children might make them hung up on what other people think about them, learn to value digital experiences over real-world connections or feel resentful at having their childhood temper tantrums and birthday parties documented online.

The first generation of children born in the Facebook era are coming of age now, and they’re raising new questions about what it means to grow up with everyone watching.

Thinking about the drawbacks and the potential benefits of this new reality is helpful for people with children and for those of us who aren’t parents or guardians.

I also want to acknowledge that parents don’t need one more thing to feel guilty about or to judge other parents’ choices. We’re all imperfect humans trying our best.

I spoke to child development specialists and other experts to offer advice on what to consider when you post about your children online — and how to maximize the good parts for you and your kid:

Consider asking children for permission

Asking preteens or teens for permission before you post about them “shows that you respect them and consider their perspective,” said Sara Valencia Botto, a lecturer with Emory University’s psychology department.

Even if you post about your daughter’s orchestra recital because you’re proud of her, your child may feel self-conscious or embarrassed. That’s not necessarily a bad sign. Botto says it’s a fundamental human characteristic to care about what other people think of us.

Devorah Heitner, author of the upcoming book “Growing Up in Public: Coming of Age in a Digital World,” said that asking even younger children for permission teaches them to respect their own privacy and reputation and that of others.

They may feel more comfortable asking their

friends not to post a video of them on TikTok. And they’ll learn to check before they post about their friends, too.

“You have modeled that you don’t share without checking,” Heitner said. “You’re setting a value with your kid that they take to others.”

Some parents also avoid showing their children’s faces or limit sharing of online photos entirely to protect young people’s privacy and self-image.

Be discriminating about what you share

Heitner described a version of the golden rule for what she calls “sharenting”: Imagine how you’d feel if what you’re posting about your child were about you instead.

You probably wouldn’t want your spouse to share an Instagram photo of you looking exhausted and rumpled in the morning, and you’d recoil if your co-worker publicly posted about your meltdown at a staff meeting. That’s a gut check that you might not want to share similar moments about your child.

“If there’s any doubt, don’t share it out,” said Heitner, who leads workshops about children and technology.

That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t share your difficult or joyful parenting moments, but Heitner suggested some selective editing.

She gave the example of your kid feeling devastated that her team lost a soccer tournament and the coach gave an inspiring speech after the game. Consider writing a post that acknowledges the hard day for your family but focuses on what you learned from the coach’s message and not on your child’s reaction to the loss.

Heitner wrote in her new book that waiting 24 hours to share a post gives you time to consider whether it’s worth doing. Or you might choose to share in more controlled spaces such as a private Instagram account for your family.

Heitner also recommended tailoring where you post about your kid depending on the sensitivity of the information.

If you want advice to help your teen through his first breakup or you need support for your child’s mental health diagnosis, Heitner said that posting in a local Facebook parenting group can put your child in a vulnerable position.

Instead, can you solicit advice about your child’s breakup from a friend or in a small group text chat? Can you post anonymously in an online mental health support group?

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Mothering doesn’t end when the nest empties

Five hours into my 13-hour drive home from our annual family vacation, I got the call. “I’m in the ER,” my daughter said in a groggy voice.

“What’s wrong?” I replied urgently, steadying the steering wheel.

It had been an unusual vacation. Normally, my husband and I would reserve the same 1970s rental beach cottage in North Carolina’s Outer Banks for us and our three children, now adults. We had been vacationing there since they were born. As a military family that moved often, the cottage had become like home to us. We also invited my mother each year, and sometimes my best friend and her family. We’d all pack into the little cottage with its ancient wood paneling and uncomfortable This End Up furniture, and spend a week or two taking a much-needed break from the grind.

But this summer, my husband was absent, due to recent surgery and scheduled follow-up appointments. And our son, Hayden, a young software engineer, had obligations at work that kept him from making the trip. With the two males in my family unable to come, our vacation turned into a girls’ trip. The group of women included me, my 80-year-old mother, my 25-year-old daughter Anna, my 22-year-old daughter Lilly, my BFF Patrice and her 20-year-old daughter Olivia.

As the host, I stayed at the cottage for the full occupancy, but the others showed up when schedules permitted. We all overlapped for a few fun-filled days. Anna flew back to her East Village apartment in New York City three days before I checked out and began my long drive back to Rhode Island.

“I was throwing up all night and my back hurts really bad,” Anna said on the phone. “They said I have a kidney infection.” Immediately, I wanted to crawl into the phone to get to her. The misery in her voice triggered something. For three decades of being a military spouse, I’d been the primary caregiver to our three children due to my husband’s work demands. Even though our kids were mostly on their own, I still felt an urge to mother them.

My animal instinct told me that I needed to go to Anna. Tuck her into bed. Take her temperature. Bring her juice. Make her soup. Clean her apartment. Kiss her forehead.

Stuck in my packed-to-the-gills car with our 18-month-old puppy, I careened northward on Route 13 through Maryland, prepared to detour to New York City if needed. “Are you sure I shouldn’t come?” I asked, or pleaded, more accurately.

“No, Mom ... I just need sleep,” she said, repeating the discharge instructions, which included a prescription for antibiotics. I reluctantly continued on, arriving home just before bedtime.

The next day, a hint of need in my daughter’s text was all it took. “Do you need me to come to NYC?” I texted.

“Yeah it might help, but my apartment is really gross. I’m a bit embarrassed,” she replied. Within minutes, I was on the way to my daughter.

For two days, I mothered. I ran errands. I brought toast, fruit and yogurt. I cleaned. I tucked. I gave medications. I did laundry. I made soup. Whether it filled a need in me, in Anna, or in both of us, I wasn’t certain. All I knew is that it felt right.

On the second night, Anna turned the corner, and we decided I could go back home the next morning.

“Thank you so much for everything, Mom. You didn’t have to do all that,” Anna said as I packed my bag to go.

“Honey, believe it or not, it feels good to take care of you. I’m used to doing it, and it justifies my role as your mother,” I heard myself say.

Back on I-95 headed northward again, I realized that motherhood doesn’t end when the nest empties. We will always need our moms, and our moms will always need to mother.

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

MY TWO CENTS

BY JOE DIPIETRO / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Joe DiPietro owns the bar “one star” in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan. Its website self-deprecatingly calls it “a dingy hole” “on a deadish street” (but it gets 4.5 stars on Yelp). This is Joe’s 137th crossword for The Times since 1995. He began it after seeing 46-Across on a food package and thinking, Hmm. Joe says, “I will never not love coming up with theme ideas and filling grids.” — W.S.

ACROSS

1 Lamented, in a way

5 Citi Field mascot

10 Ray in warm waters

15 Scotland’s ____ of Arran

19 “OMG!” quaintly

20 “What’s the ____?”

21 Be of service to

22 Its capital is Ndjamena

23 “It’s obvious the actors aren’t doing these stunts”

25 “Hares and rabbits are really the same animal, some say”

27 Rick’s last name in “Casablanca”

28 Fight

30 Natives of the Negev

31 Total kvetch

32 Actor Ray

34 Take (down)

35 Sound effect when the Stooges whapped each other

36 Having serial success

40 “Y,” as in Yucatán

42 Overture follower

45 Bid’s counterpart in stock trading

46 “Waiter, you can hold off bringing the coffee till the end of the meal”

50 Make difficult to find

52 Wide-eyed

53 11th-century founder of Scholasticism

150 Shares on Twitter, for short

155 Musk’s position at 57-Across, in brief

157 See 55-Across

159 Simu who starred in “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings”

160 Barracks bed

161 “Alas, yes”

166 Clipped

168 Lead-in to save

169 “Wool will keep you the warmest”

174 They’re never free of charge

175 “____ beaucoup!”

176 Like some confrontations

177 Red snapper, on a sushi menu

178 Sports org. in a 1976 merger

180 Religion with circled pentagrams

183 Smoked ____

184 Famed Giant slugger

185 Easton ____, singer with the 2009 No. 1 country hit “A Little More Country Than That”

187 It has human potential

190 “You stay here”

194 “Being contrarian is fun!”

198 Artist who was part of Der Blaue Reiter

199 Art ____

200 “Hi and Lois” creator Browne

201 Joan who wrote “Slouching Towards Bethlehem”

202 Site that reviews tech products

103 Fess (up)

105 One moving left to right

108 Lots have lots of them

110 Smiling, as members of an audience

113 Banjo sounds

115 Like hot stuff

116 “Whaddya mean it’s the pits? It’s the best part of an apple!”

118 “Use it for Thanksgiving stuffing and saltimbocca”

121 First name in “Casablanca”

122 TV producer Michaels

123 Senescence

124 “Too many to list” abbr.

125 Does in the forest

126 Windblown soil

127 “What a ____!”

128 Square

12 They hold people’s handles

13 Draw

14 Secondary characters, in gamerspeak

15 Skimmer over a frozen lake

16 Fail electrically

17 Pianist Downes

18 “Scooping since 1928” sloganeer

24 What many people do on their dating profiles

26 Journey to Mecca

29 Internet speed-test signal

31 M.I.T. Sloan degrees

33 Resident of Westwood, Brentwood or Hollywood

37 Controversial org. that filed for bankruptcy in 2021

38 Part of G.P.A.: Abbr.

39 Nonstop jokester

41 Place to talk turkey, maybe

43 Glinda’s reassurance to Dorothy on whether her dog can also return to Kansas

44 See 67-Down

46 The Iron ____, pro-wrestling Hall of Famer from Iran

47 Capital on the Willamette River

48 Take weapons from

49 Sch. in Dallas

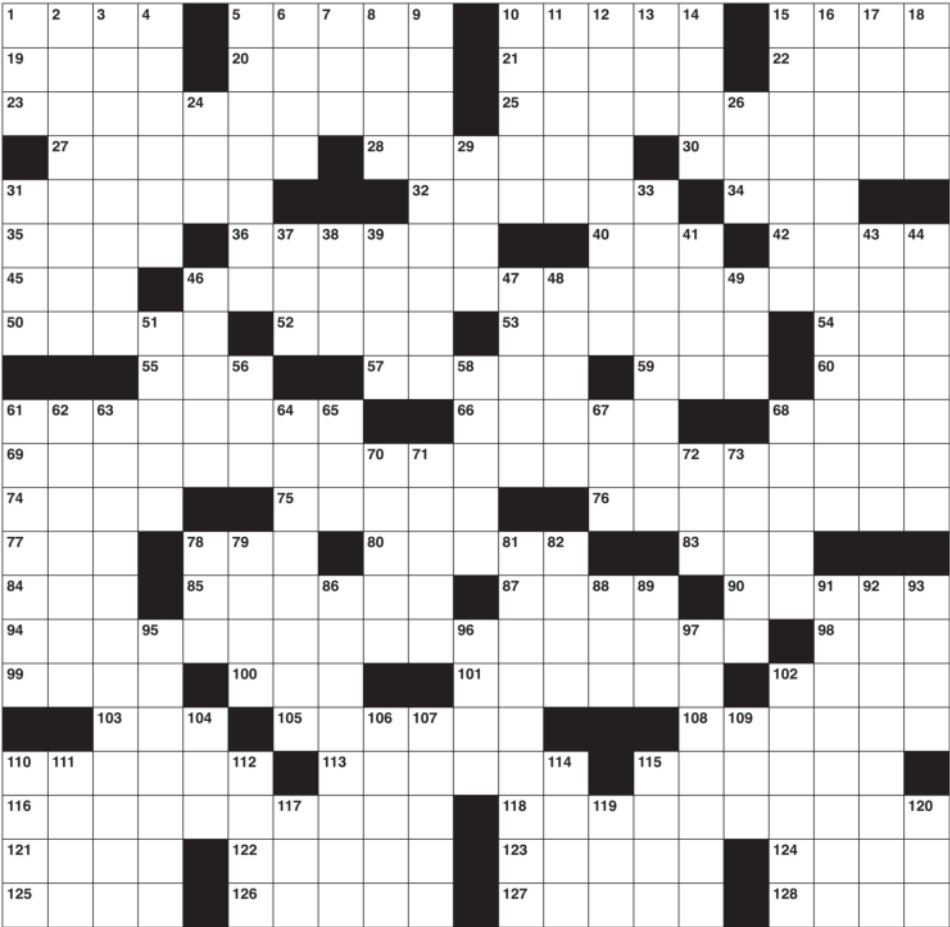
51 Reads, in a way

56 Lines of dedication

58 Impassive

61 Somewhat off

62 Kid’s buoyancy aid



63 Developed and finished naturally

64 One of the Leewards

65 Resource mined in Minecraft

67 With 44-Down, not subject to change

68 Ring-shaped reef

70 Physicist Schrödinger

71 Including on an email thread

72 Dennis’s sister on “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia”

73 Had dinner at home

78 Big diamond?

79 Strong link

81 Curve cutter for carpenters

82 Passionate

86 What might get pumped up for a race

88 Prefix with cycle

89 It’s mine in Italy

91 Prominent figure in the O.J. Simpson murder trial

92 Vehicle with lower emissions

93 Goes (for)

95 What you can’t make a silk purse out of, proverbially

96 More than binge-watch, maybe

97 In the limelight, say

102 Had a cow

104 Corn Belt state: Abbr.

106 Four-time gold medalist in the 1936 Olympics

107 Features of some bookstores

109 Keeper of the peas?

110 ____ rock

111 Infiltrator

112 Small valley

114 Stretched-out yarn?

115 Certain email folder

117 John for Cleese

119 PX clientele

120 Beef alternative in burgers

GUNSTON STREET



“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

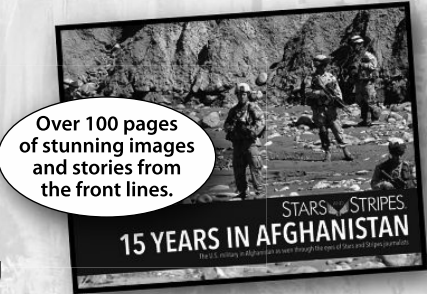
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FACES

Actor mulls end of era as Andor

Luna could be 1st Latino actor to get Emmy nomination for a drama series since 1995

By **BERENICE BAUTISTA**
Associated Press

Diego Luna has mixed emotions about the looming end of his Star Wars series “Andor.” “I am very excited filming; all the time I feel that we are approaching the end and, therefore, the process is lived with a certain melancholy,” the Mexican actor said in a recent interview by video call during a break in shoots in Great Britain for the acclaimed series’ second season.

Luna knew the series, about a Rebel spy introduced to fans in 2016’s “Rogue One,” was meant to last only two seasons. But he’s not looking forward to the end.

“There is also an inevitable part of saying how sad it is to leave this team, to leave this dynamic, to leave this time living here,” he said.

The show has taken a thriller approach to telling the backstory of Cassian Andor, a thief-turned-spy for the rebels resisting the brutal Galactic Empire of the original Star Wars trilogy.

Luna’s portrayal of Andor’s survive-at-all-costs ethos has placed him on many shortlists for a drama series actor Emmy nomination. If it happens, he would be the first Latino actor to get an Emmy nom in the category in nearly 30 years; Puerto Rican star Jimmy Smits was the last actor to compete in the category in 1995 for his role in “NYPD Blue.”

There are other possible contenders: Pedro Pascal for “The Last of Us,” Jenna Ortega for “Wednesday” and Selena Gomez for the comedy series “Only Murders in the Building.” While Luna is happy he’s in the mix, the long drought for Latin actors is troubling.

“What makes me sad is the fact, the fact that the last nomination for a Latino actor in this category was so many years ago, it is very absurd knowing the number of interesting stories that have been told, the number of actors who have done memorable jobs,” he said. “But it’s also exciting to know that I’m not the only one and that makes me think that good things are coming for people who look like me, who come from where I come from.”

For now, Luna focuses on “what has already happened,” including the positive reception that “Andor” has received.

Created and produced by Tony Gilroy, “Andor” has received nominations for honors at the BAFTAs, Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild awards and numerous others. It’s a rare achievement for a sci-fi series, which generally do not find themselves in the main categories at shows like the Emmys.

“There are many prejudices in some way with science fiction cinema and with ‘Andor’ very beautiful things have happened,” Luna said. “It’s very nice to see that for the team, the people who do this, the people in the industry are celebrating them and the series.”

The second series arrives on Disney+ in August 2024.



LUCASFILM LTD./AP

Diego Luna plays Cassian Andor in the Disney+ series “Andor,” currently filming its second and final season.

Madonna hospitalized, postpones world tour

Madonna spent several days in intensive care after developing a serious bacterial infection on June 24. Her manager said in a statement that she will be postponing a world tour that was scheduled to kick off next month.



Madonna

The singer remains under medical supervision, Guy Oseary said on Instagram, but is expected to make a full recovery. “We will share more details with you soon as we have them, including a new start date for the tour and for rescheduled shows,” he said. No further details were available.

Madonna’s Celebration Tour, announced in January, was set to begin in Vancouver on July 15, with concerts planned to stretch into next year. The tour was set to include stops in Seattle, New York, Washington, D.C., Mexico City and London.

Swift, Butler, Palmer, Quan invited to join Film Academy

Taylor Swift, best supporting actor Oscar winner Ke Huy Quan, “Elvis” star Austin Butler, “Nope’s” Keke Palmer and The Weeknd are among those who have been invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The organization behind the Oscars said Wednesday that it extended invitations to 398 individuals this year.

Among those invited are 22 Oscar winners and 76 nominees, like “Everything Everywhere All at Once” writer-director-producers Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, as well as actors Paul Mescal, Stephanie Hsu and Kerry Condon.

A majority of this year’s invitees hail from countries outside of the U.S.

Other music notables, in addition to Swift, who recently penned a song for “Where the Crawdads Sing,” and Abel Makkonen Tesfaye (“The Weeknd”), include David Byrne, “RRR’s” M.M. Keeravaani and Son Lux’s Ryan Lott and Ian Chang.

Other news

■ Comedian **Pete Davidson** has made the decision to enter rehab for mental health reasons, according to sources familiar with the situation who spoke with TMZ. Davidson has been known for his candidness regarding his mental health journey, often discussing it openly during his segments on the Weekend Update portion of “Saturday Night Live.”

■ Wren Alexander Stephens, the fourth child of **John Legend** and **Chrissy Teigen**, was born June 19 via surrogate. The couple announced his arrival Wednesday on Instagram. Teigen, 37, gave birth Jan. 13 to a girl, Esti. She and Legend, 44, also have two older children, 7-year-old Luna and 5-year-old Miles.

■ **Noah Cyrus** announced that she has been engaged to fashion designer Pinkus for a month. The 23-year-old singer-songwriter revealed the engagement Monday with an Instagram post, showing off photos with her beau as well as a shot of her engagement ring.

■ The next **Grammy Awards** ceremony will be held Feb. 4 in Los Angeles. The show, which honors the best in music, will air live on CBS and be livestreamed on Paramount+. Nominations will be announced on Nov. 10.

From wire reports

A-list actors urge union to seek meaningful deal

By **ANOUSHA SAKOUI**
Los Angeles Times

Some of Hollywood’s biggest stars are urging their union to hold the line in contract negotiations and signaled strong support for a strike if necessary.

In a sharply worded letter to the leaders of SAG-AFTRA, more than 300 members of the performers union said they would support a strike if negotiators could not secure a “transformative deal” on a new film and TV contract.

The letter was signed by several high-profile members, including Meryl Streep, Glenn Close, Jennifer Lawrence, Amy Poehler, Rami Malek and John Leguizamo.

“A strike brings incredible hardships to so many, and no one wants it,” the letter said. “But we are prepared to strike if it comes to that.” They added: “This is not a

moment to meet in the middle.”

The letter appeared to be in response to an upbeat video message posted June 24 by SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher in which she described contract talks with the studios as “extremely productive,” appearing to suggest that a deal was near and that Hollywood might avert a second strike.

Writers have been on strike since May 2. “We are concerned by the idea that SAG-AFTRA members may be ready to make sacrifices that leadership is not,” the letter said.

A spokesperson for SAG-AFTRA declined to comment.

The union and the studios have until Friday at midnight to agree on a new contract. SAG-AFTRA has been in talks with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers since June 7.

The union’s members have already voted overwhelmingly to grant their leaders authority to call a strike if they can’t reach a deal, although it’s possible that negotiations could continue even after the contract deadline expires.

The actors who signed the letter said they are seeking a “seismic realignment” of minimum pay to combat inflation, an increase in streaming residuals, as well as curbs in the process of self-taping in auditions and protections from artificial intelligence, which they view as a threat to their livelihoods.

“We believe that, if we settle for a less than transformative deal, the future of our union and our craft will be undermined, and SAG-AFTRA will enter the next negotiation with drastically reduced leverage,” the letter said.

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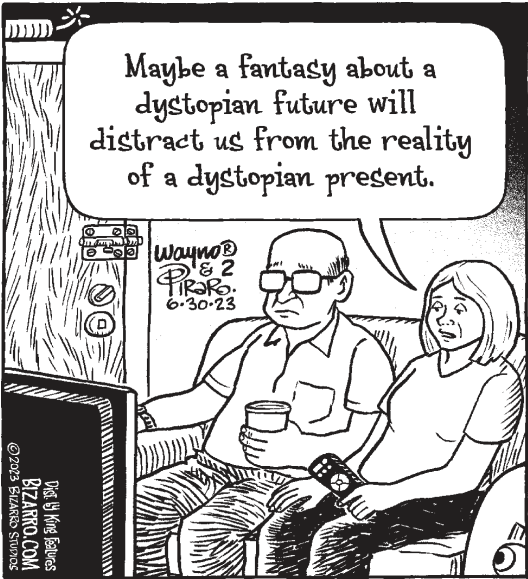
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Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11
12						13				14		
15						16				17		
		18			19				20			
21	22			23				24				
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29				30			31			32	33	34
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38	39	40				41		42		43		
44						45			46			
47				48				49			50	51
52				53				54				
55				56				57				

- ACROSS
- 1 Young sheep

6 "Ant- — and the Wasp" (2018)

9 Scoundrel

12 Farewell

13 "As I see it," in a text

14 Japanese sash

15 Darth who was introduced in an original summer blockbuster

16 Type of golf club

18 "Born a Crime" memoirist Noah

20 "Rats!"

21 Roswell sighting

23 Grafton's "— for Ricochet"

24 Choreographer Alvin

25 Tools with teeth

27 Chocolate source

29 Cream pie flavor

31 Crashed into

35 Novelist Alison

37 Missile shelter

38 Handed out hands

41 Family docs

43 Poorly lit

44 River in Tuscany

45 Ban

47 "Call the —" (BBC drama)

49 Two-tone cookies

52 Luau instrument

53 Greyhound vehicle
- 54 Inventor Nikola

55 Mas' mates

56 Orig. texts

57 Filled fully
- DOWN
- 1 Restroom, for short

2 Oklahoma city

3 City's central section

4 "Cheers" order

5 More confident

6 Orange juice and champagne

7 "Industry" actor El-Masry

8 Doze (off)

9 Pink hue

10 Dry as — (parched)

11 Squalid

17 Figures of speech

19 Parish leader
- 21 PC port

22 Air safety org.

24 Small battery

26 Yellowish

28 Went on all fours

30 Fanatic

32 Corn Belt region

33 Yale grad

34 — Pérignon

36 "Reckon so"

38 Block the flow of

39 Ship captain in "Hotel Transylvania 3" (Var.)

40 Peaks of Peru

42 Job openings

45 "Just the two —"

46 Region

48 Co. that created Watson

50 World Cup cheer

51 Feeling down

Answer to Previous Puzzle

W	A	D	E	S	I	B	R	S	T	U
E	L	A	L	T	I	A	A	T	E	S
B	O	R	A	A	I	R	M	A	L	E
B	E	T	T	O	R	B	L	A	R	E
				E	N	D	A	D	S	
T	A	S	S	U	S	S	M	A	I	N
A	L	T		S	E	T		G	E	E
B	L	A	C	K	T	E	A	I	N	T
				R	E	O		R	D	S
B	E	F	A	I	R	T	R	O	O	P
E	L	I	S		O	A	R	B	R	I
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6-30

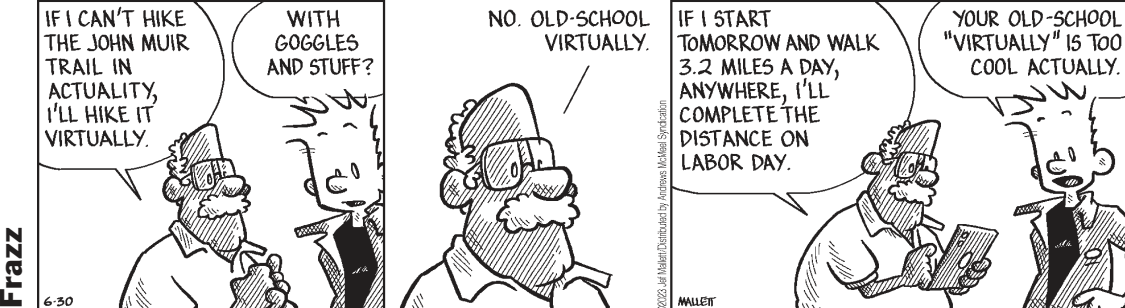
CRYPTOQUIP

YQDB ZARQB VLN KDJJ ELJOW
YQL JLLO ZNKQ BQP WDZP DW
LXP LE VLNI KJLWP EIAPXHW?
FNHHV HLNFPJPW.

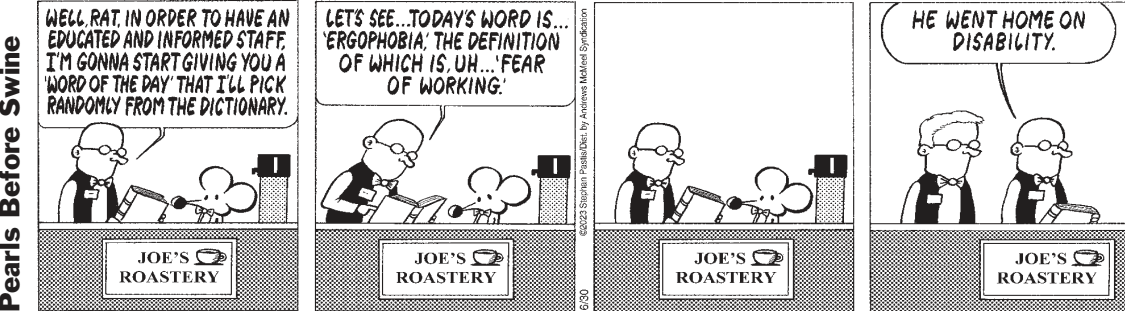
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WELL-RECEIVED TELEVISION SHOW FEATURING A BUNCH OF FOLKS WHO ARE TERRIBLE COOKS: "BAKING BAD."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals O

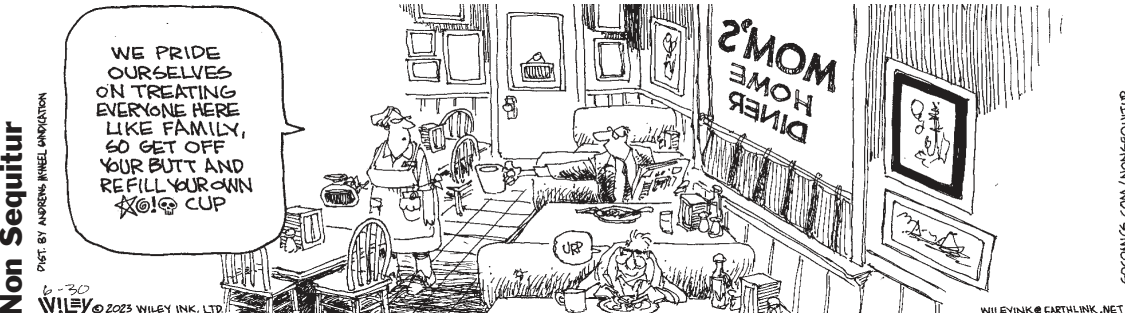
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



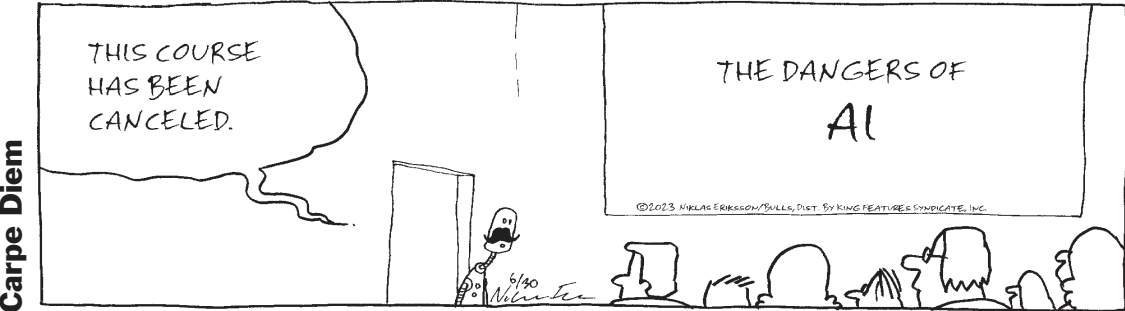
Non Sequitur



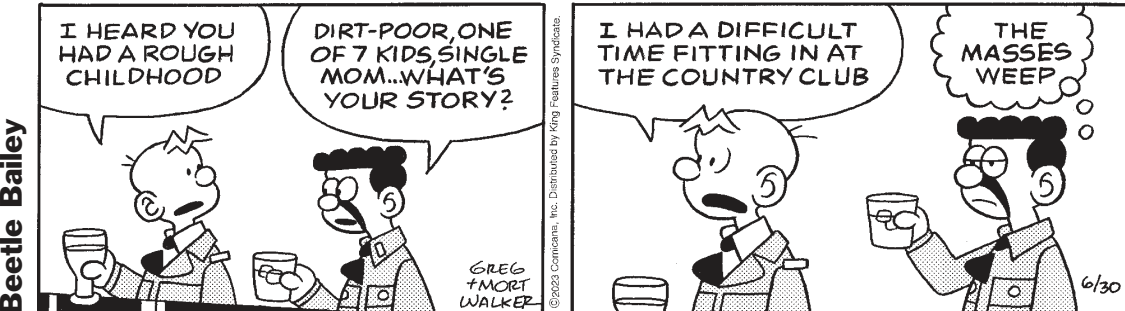
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	
11							12					13
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47			48				49		50			
51							52					
	53						54					

ACROSS

- 1 Exams for future attys.
6 County expos
11 "Swan Lake," e.g.
12 Hebrew prophet
14 Singer Grande whose "Break Free" played during the credits of "Ice Age: Collision Course"
15 Hang loosely
16 2012 summer movie starring a talking bear
17 Throat affliction
19 Possesses
20 Notion
22 French salt
23 JFK guesses
24 "Queenie" author Michael
26 Supple
28 Squeak stopper
30 Lush
31 Dry white wine
35 "Swell!"
39 Current blockbuster "Transformers: — of the Beasts"
40 Command to Fido
42 Peruse
43 Leftover bit
44 Intent look
46 Deli loaf
47 Composer Prokofiev

- 49 Open, as a sleeping bag
51 Naval rank
52 Emblem
53 Lingo
54 Shocking weapon used in many a summer blockbuster

- 23 Perfume compound
25 Have a cold
27 Abel, to Adam
29 Realtor's offering
31 Angry
32 New staffers
33 Stellar
34 "Chandelier" singer
36 Oxygen-dependent organism
37 12th U.S. president
38 Nancy of "Access Hollywood"
41 Have faith in
44 Rapper/producer Combs
45 New Age singer
48 "Today" rival, briefly
50 Apt. divisions

DOWN

- 1 Rio Grande city
2 Small burger
3 In the manner of
4 Sawbucks
5 Sports figures
6 "Semper —"
7 Now, in a memo
8 Author Fleming
9 "Yes sirree!"
10 Respectful bow
11 Dyeing art
13 "Siddhartha" author
18 Seminary subj.
21 Pueblo material

Answer to Previous Puzzle

L	A	M	B	S		M	A	N		C	A	D
A	D	I	E	U		I	M	O		O	B	I
V	A	D	E	R		M	I	D	I	R	O	N
						T	R	E	V	O	R	
U	F	O				R	I	S		A	I	L
S	A	W	S			C	A	C	A	O		
B	A	N	A	N	A		R	A	M	M	E	D
						L	U	R	I	E		
D	E	A	L	T		G	P	S		D	I	M
A	R	N	O			O	U	T	L	A	W	
M	I	D	W	I	F	E			O	R	E	O
U	K	E				B	U	S		T	E	S
P	A	S				M	S	S		S	A	T

7-1

CRYPTOQUIP

ZHIDTAH EG ANPCHNNXA BHLH
OLXRTIHR PS NKH ADEH
GHDL NKDN P BDA ZXLS,
P'E DA XCR DA NKH KHHCA.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT MIGHT YOU CALL FOLKS WHO LOOK MUCH THE SAME AS ONE OF YOUR CLOSE FRIENDS? BUDDY DOUBLES.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals T

Frazz



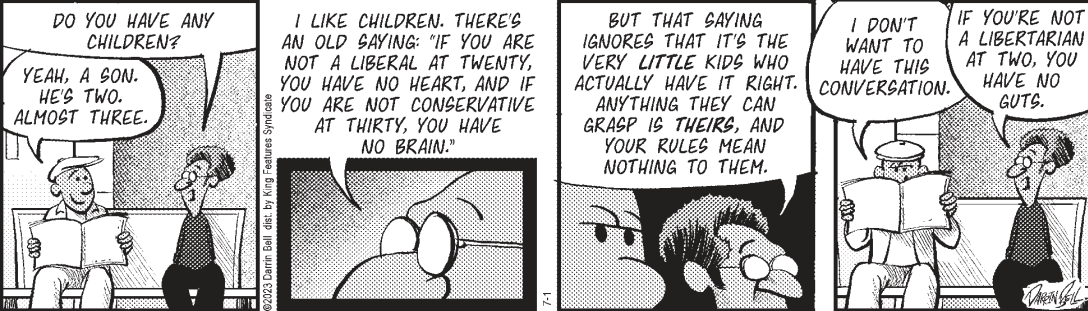
Pearls Before Swine



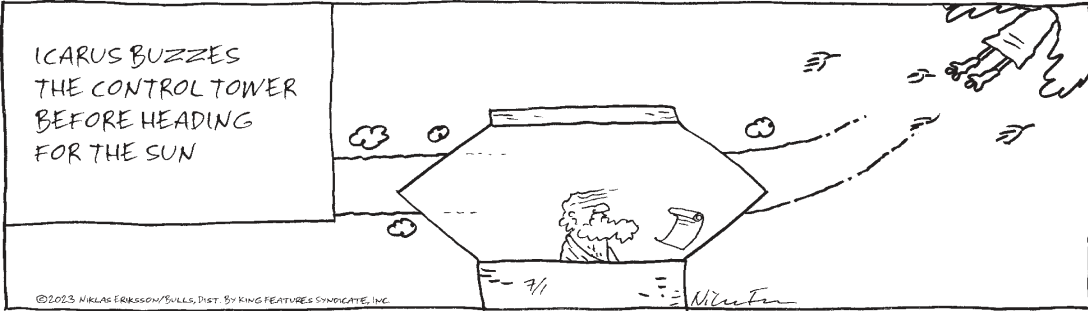
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



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OPINION

China should be major campaign issue

By HUGH HEWITT
The Washington Post

What ought to be an election cycle’s focus sometimes doesn’t figure into it much at all. Two examples: Democrats competing for the 2020 presidential nomination ought to have been talking about COVID-19, but it seldom came up in their debates, even as the pandemic was unfolding. The election season ought to put front and center the threat to the United States posed by the Chinese Communist Party and dictator Xi Jinping. (To President Joe Biden’s credit, on Tuesday he referred to Xi as a dictator. Let’s drop the farce of calling Xi “president”; it’s an insult to democracy.) But will this topic, vital to the future of the United States, feature prominently in the 2024 campaign? The country can’t afford another election in which what ought to be a central matter is little mentioned. Every Republican would-be nominee needs to be smart on China for the primary debates, of course, but the eventual nominee should also make command of the subject an essential qualification when selecting a running mate. That, plus the willingness and skill to go after the Democratic ticket relentlessly. Mike Pence played the role of attacker well in his two trips down the vice-presidential lane. Now running for the top job, he would know what to look for in a VP: a disciplined, tireless fighter who can hammer the Democratic ticket for Biden’s mishandling of China. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has just returned from a trip to Beijing that brought to mind the sort of kowtowing that “Middle Kingdom” emperors once demanded of vassal states. Blinken asserted,

no doubt much to his hosts’ delight, that the Chinese surveillance balloon episode in February is a “chapter” that “should be closed.” I suspect the Republican ticket will have to make its case about China elsewhere than in debates. Those are unlikely in 2024 because the GOP now regards the organizing entity, the Commission on Presidential Debates, as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Democratic Party. The Republican VP nominee will need to pound home the message about Biden and China in every other available forum. Beyond the GOP candidates currently vying for the top spot but possibly interested in settling for No. 2, who would be a good choice for that supporting role? With one exception, my short-listers are young but all are deadly serious about the CCP menace. If the increasingly frail Biden is the Democratic nominee, a new-generation Republican would underscore that frailty while taking the Biden administration to task for its failure to deal adequately with China’s rising threats to U.S. national security and economic interests. Sen. Tom Cotton hails from deep-red Arkansas and is never not up for a fight. This 46-year-old veteran of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has the heft of combat experience that is rare among politicians. Biden’s appeasement of the Taliban and the calamitous U.S. exit Afghanistan deserve to be a major issue in the 2024 campaign. Former secretary of state Mike Pompeo — at 59 the oldest on my list, but with energy equal to any of them — would also match nicely with the current slate of presidential candidates. Well, maybe not Donald Trump right now; Pompeo recently criticized the former president following his indictment

Supreme Court’s ruling on free speech wise

By ERWIN CHEMERINSKY
Los Angeles Times

The Supreme Court long has said that “true threats” are not protected by the 1st Amendment, but what is a true threat? Although the issue is not new, social media has exponentially increased instances of speech that is perceived as threatening. Not surprisingly, courts in recent years have struggled with the question of how to determine what is a true threat that can be punished. On Tuesday, in Counterman v. Colorado, the Supreme Court resolved this question and adopted a sensible compromise meant to both protect free speech and safeguard people from being threatened. Over a half century ago, in United States v. Watts, the Supreme Court held that true threats are speech unprotected by the 1st Amendment. Robert Watts, then 18, attended a rally and stated, “I have already received my draft classification as 1-A and I have got to report for my physical this Monday coming. I am not going. If they ever make me carry a rifle the first man I want to get in my sights is L.B.J.” Watts was arrested and convicted for violating a federal law that makes it a crime to “knowingly and willfully” threaten the life of the president. The Supreme Court upheld the federal statute, but reversed Watts’ conviction. The court said true threats are unprotected by the 1st Amendment, but that they must be

distinguished from speech that is just hyperbole. The court concluded that Watts’ statement was “political hyperbole.” Over the decades, the lower courts across the country have divided between two major approaches to defining what is a true threat. Some state and federal courts, including the Colorado Supreme Court in the Counterman case, said that it should be an objective test: Speech is unprotected if it would cause a reasonable person to feel threatened. But other courts adopted a subjective approach, holding that to punish such speech there has to be a subjective intent on the part of the speaker to threaten. This is a much harder standard to meet because of the difficulty of proving a person’s intentions. In Tuesday’s decision, the court devised a compromise and said that speech can be punished when the speaker was “reckless” if he “consciously disregarded a substantial risk that his communication would be viewed a threat of violence.” It rejected the subjective standard as not providing enough protection for safety and the objective standard as not doing enough to safeguard speech. The case involved Billy Raymond Counterman, who for over two years sent hundreds of messages over Facebook to a singer, identified as C.W. Sometimes the messages were conversational about his life;

in the classified documents case. But if Trump is nominated, his greatest need will be a safe pair of hands, someone who is skilled at messaging and who knows national security cold. That’s Pompeo. Because Trump values central-casting good looks, in addition to subject matter expertise, he might be inclined toward Robert C. O’Brien, the 57-year-old former national security adviser. He is well-versed in the China threat and, as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, O’Brien could be a difference-maker in Arizona and Nevada. I’m hardly alone in thinking a great potential running mate for any Republican nominee would be Rep. Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin. He’s especially strong on China as chairman of the House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party. The 39-year-old former Marine and Iraq War veteran is a dynamic politician who, with his committee, is already working every day to educate Americans about the long battle with China that lies ahead. Two other promising 39-year-olds on my shortlist who would mark the change to a new generation: Rep. Dan Crenshaw of Texas, a Navy SEAL veteran, who is well known for his public presence and combat service, and Rep. Ashley Hinson of Iowa, who serves on Gallagher’s select committee and thus knows the CCP threat well. Other strong potential vice-presidential candidates will no doubt emerge, but the job requirement regarding China remains the same: the ability to make the case that Cold War 2.0 is already upon us.

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SCOREBOARD/GYMNASTICS

PRO SOCCER						
MLS						
EASTERN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Cincinnati	13	2	4	43	30	19
New England	10	3	6	36	33	23
Nashville	10	5	5	35	28	16
Philadelphia	10	5	4	34	34	20
Columbus	9	6	4	31	38	26
Atlanta	7	5	8	29	37	35
Orlando City	7	5	7	28	25	22
CF Montréal	8	9	2	26	20	27
D.C. United	7	8	5	26	29	26
Charlotte FC	6	8	6	24	27	35
New York	5	6	8	23	17	18
Chicago	5	6	8	23	25	28
NYCFC	4	7	9	21	21	26
Toronto FC	3	7	10	19	18	26
Inter Miami CF	5	13	0	15	17	28
WESTERN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Saint Louis SC	10	7	2	32	37	24
LAFC	9	4	5	32	28	19
Seattle	8	7	5	29	24	18
Houston	8	8	3	27	24	25
San Jose	7	7	6	27	23	26
Real Salt Lake	7	7	6	27	25	31
FC Dallas	7	7	5	26	21	22
Austin FC	7	8	4	25	24	27
Vancouver	6	5	7	25	30	23
Portland	5	8	7	22	22	27
Sporting KC	5	10	6	21	23	30
Minnesota	5	7	6	21	17	24
LA Galaxy	3	9	6	15	16	29
Colorado	2	9	8	14	14	27
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.						
Saturday's games						
New England at Cincinnati New York at Columbus Austin FC at Miami New York City FC at CF Montréal Chicago at Orlando City Real Salt Lake at Toronto FC Los Angeles FC at FC Dallas Vancouver at Sporting Kansas City Portland at Minnesota D.C. United at Nashville Colorado at Saint Louis City SC LA Galaxy at San Jose Houston at Seattle						
Sunday's game						
Philadelphia at Atlanta						
Tuesday's games						
Columbus at Miami Toronto FC at Orlando City D.C. United at FC Dallas Portland at Colorado Saint Louis City SC at LA Galaxy ppd. Los Angeles FC at LA Galaxy						
Wednesday's game						
Charlotte FC at New York City FC						
Saturday, July 8						
Cincinnati at Charlotte FC New York City FC at Columbus Miami at D.C. United Atlanta at CF Montréal New England at New York Saint Louis City SC at Toronto FC Nashville at Chicago Sporting Kansas City at Houston Austin FC at Minnesota FC Dallas at Colorado Orlando City at Real Salt Lake Philadelphia at LA Galaxy San Jose at Los Angeles FC Seattle at Vancouver						
NWSL						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Portland	7	2	4	25	33	18
North Carolina	7	4	2	23	19	11
OL Reign	7	4	2	23	21	15
Washington	6	2	5	23	20	16
Gotham FC	6	4	3	21	15	13
San Diego	6	5	2	20	19	15
Houston	4	3	6	18	10	10
Louisville	3	4	6	15	15	13
Angel City	3	6	4	13	16	22
Orlando	4	8	1	13	11	21
Kansas City	4	9	0	12	15	24
Chicago	3	9	1	10	17	33
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.						
Saturday's games						
Louisville at OL Reign Orlando at Washington Houston at North Carolina San Diego at Chicago Kansas City at Portland						
Sunday's game						
Angel City at Gotham FC						
Friday, July 7						
OL Reign at Orlando Kansas City at Louisville Chicago at Houston						
Saturday, July 8						
Washington at San Diego						
Sunday, July 9						
Portland at Gotham FC North Carolina at Angel City						

TENNIS

Eastbourne International

Wednesday

At Devonshire Park Lawn Tennis Club

Eastbourne, Great Britain

Purse: Euro 723,655

Surface: Grass

Men's Singles

Round of 16

Miomir Kecmanovic (8), Serbia, def. Aleksandar Vukic, Australia, 7-6 (6), 6-4.

Gregoire Barrere, France, def. Nicolas Jarry (5), Chile, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4.

Mackenzie McDonald, United States, def. Taylor Fritz (1), United States, 7-6 (3), 7-6 (8).

Mikael Ymer, Sweden, def. Liam Broady, Britain, 6-2, 6-4.

Jeffrey John Wolf, United States, def. Luca van Assche, France, 6-2, 6-7 (5), 6-1.

Francisco Cerundolo (4), Argentina, def. Marc-Andrea Huesler, Switzerland, 7-6 (2), 7-6 (5).

Zhang Zhizhen, China, def. Maxime Cressy, United States, 3-6, 7-5, 6-4.

Tommy Paul (2), United States, def. Sebastian Baez, Argentina, 6-1, 7-6 (7).

Women's Singles

Round of 16

Petra Martic, Croatia, def. Beatriz Haddad Maia (8), Brazil, 6-4, 3-2, ret.

Daria Kasatkina, Russia, def. Karolina Pliskova, Czech Republic, 3-6, 6-3, 6-3.

Madison Keys, United States, def. Wang Xiyu, China, 6-2, 7-6 (3).

Coco Gauff (5), United States, def. Jodie Anna Burrage, Britain, 6-1, 6-1.

Jessica Pegula (3), United States, def. Camila Osorio, Colombia, 6-2, 1-6, 6-3.

Jelena Ostapenko, Latvia, def. Harriet Dart, Britain, 6-3, 6-4.

Camila Giorgi, Italy, def. Ons Jabeur (4), Tunisia, 6-3, 6-2.

Caroline Garcia (2), France, def. Ana Bogdan, Romania, 6-3, 6-4.

Mallorca Championships

Wednesday

At Santa Ponca

Mallorca, Spain

Purse: Euro 915,630

Surface: Grass

Men's Singles

Round of 16

Arthur Rinderknech, France, def. Constant Lestienne, France, 6-3, 6-2.

Christopher Eubanks, United States, def. Ben Shelton (3), United States, 6-7 (4), 6-4, 7-6 (2).

Yannick Hanfmann, Germany, def. Stefanos Tsitsipas, Greece, 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.

Feliciano Lopez, Spain, def. Jordan Thompson, Australia, 7-6 (6), 1-6, 6-3.

Bad Homburg Open

Wednesday

At Bad Homburg Tennis Club

Hamburg, Germany

Purse: \$259,303

Surface: Grass

Women's Singles

Round of 16

Katerina Siniakova, Czech Republic, def. Evgeniya Rodina, Russia, 6-2, 6-4.

Lucia Bronzetti, Italy, def. Mayar Sherif (4), Egypt, 1-6, 7-6 (2), 6-3.

Iga Swiatek (1), Poland, def. Jil Teichmann, Switzerland, 6-3, 6-1.

Anna Blinkova (9), Russia, def. Leylah Annie Fernandez, Canada, 7-5, 6-2.

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	10	3	.769	½
Connecticut	12	4	.750	—
Washington	9	5	.643	2
Chicago	6	9	.400	5½
Atlanta	5	8	.385	5½
Indiana	5	9	.357	6

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Las Vegas	13	1	.929	—
Los Angeles	7	8	.467	6½
Dallas	7	8	.467	6½
Minnesota	5	9	.357	8
Seattle	4	10	.286	9
Phoenix	2	11	.154	10½

Tuesday's games

New York 89, Connecticut 81
Minnesota 104, Seattle 93
Dallas 77, Phoenix 62

Wednesday's games

Chicago 80, Los Angeles 63
Washington 109, Atlanta 86

Thursday's games

Indiana at Phoenix
Minnesota at Seattle
New York at Las Vegas

Friday's games

Washington at Atlanta
Los Angeles at Chicago

Saturday's games

Connecticut at Las Vegas
Minnesota at Phoenix

Sunday's games

Los Angeles at Atlanta
Washington at Dallas
Chicago at Indiana
New York at Seattle

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball

American League

DETROIT TIGERS — Recalled RHP Garrett Hill from Toledo (IL). Optioned LHP Anthony Misiewicz to Toledo.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Sent LHP Angel Zerpa and RHP Brad Keller to Omaha (IL) on rehab assignments.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Sent RHP Cole Sands to St. Paul (IL) on a rehab assignment.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Optioned RHP Jhony Brito to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL). Reinstated RHP Ian Hamilton from the 15-day IL.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Sent INF Brandon Lowe to Durham (IL) on a rehab assignment.

National League

ATLANTA BRAVES — Reinstated LHP Kolby Allard from the 60-day IL. Optioned RHP Derek Rodriguez to Gwinnett (IL).

CINCINNATI REDS — Sent RHP Derek Law to Louisville (IL) on a rehab assignment. Sent RHP Randy Wynne outright to Louisville.

COLORADO ROCKIES — Recalled RHP Gavin Hollowell from Albuquerque (PCL). Placed RHP Nick Mears on the 15-day IL. Sent INF Kris Bryant to Albuquerque (PCL) on a rehab assignment.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Selected the contract of LHP Thomas Pannone from Nashville (IL). Optioned RHP Peter Strzelecki to Nashville.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Sent RHP Noah Song to Clearwater (IL) on a rehab assignment.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Recalled 3B Jared Triolo from Indianapolis (IL). Placed 3B Ke'Bryan Hayes on the 10-day IL, retroactive to June 25. Sent DH Ji Man Choi and LHP Rob Zastryzny to Indianapolis on rehab assignments.

SAN DIEGO PADRES — Recalled LHP Ray Kerr from El Paso (PCL). Placed RHP Reiss Knehr on the 15-day IL.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Sent OF Heliot Ramos to San Jose (PCL) on a rehab assignment.

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association

MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES — Signed C Naz Reid to a contract extension.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

CALGARY FLAMES — Signed C Yegor Sharangovich to a two-year contract.

NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Signed RW Timo Meier to an eight-year contract.

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Traded F Ross Colton to Colorado in exchange for a second-round 2023 draft pick.

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Signed C David Kampf to a four-year contract.

VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS — Signed D Brayden Pachal to a two-year contract. Traded RW Reilly Smith to Pittsburgh in exchange for a 2024 third-round draft pick.

SOCCER

Major League Soccer

INTER MIAMI CF — Named Gerardo 'Tata' Martino head coach.

National Women's Soccer League

ANGEL CITY FC — Signed Ds Elizabeth Eddy and Kelsey Hill as national team replacement players.

HOUSTON DASH — Signed M Andressa Alves, pending receipt of her international transfer certificate (ITC) and P-1 visa.

GOLF

World rankings

Through June 26

1.	Scottie Scheffler	12.09
2.	Jon Rahm	10.14
3.	Rory McIlroy	9.36
4.	Patrick Cantlay	7.53
5.	Viktor Hovland	6.64
6.	Xander Schauffele	6.45
7.	Cameron Smith	5.58
8.	Matt Fitzpatrick	5.31
9.	Max Homa	5.27
10.	Jordan Spieth	4.90
11.	Wyndham Clark	4.63
12.	Brooks Koepka	4.57
13.	Will Zalatoris	4.51
14.	Tony Finau	4.45
15.	Tyrrell Hatton	4.36
16.	Sam Burns	4.28
17.	Justin Thomas	4.24
18.	Keegan Bradley	4.23
19.	Cameron Young	4.11
20.	Collin Morikawa	3.90
21.	Tommy Fleetwood	3.70
22.	Sungjae Im	3.65
23.	Kurt Kitayama	3.44
24.	Tom Kim	3.42
25.	Jason Day	3.01
26.	Hideki Matsuyama	3.01
27.	Brian Harman	3.00
28.	Shane Lowry	2.96
29.	Corey Connors	2.93
30.	Sahith Theegala	2.92
31.	Justin Rose	2.90
32.	Russell Henley	2.88
33.	Denny McCarthy	2.80
34.	Si Woo Kim	2.71
35.	Rickie Fowler	2.67
36.	Harris English	2.58
37.	Sepp Straka	2.53
38.	Joaquin Niemann	2.46
39.	Adam Scott	2.44
40.	Tom Hoge	2.41
41.	Emiliano Grillo	2.35
42.	Billy Horschel	2.30



DMITRI LOVETSKY/AP

Simone Biles bites her gold medal after winning the women's individual all-around at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Biles returning to competition

Gold medalist ending 2-year hiatus

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

Simone Biles is back.

The gymnastics superstar plans to return to competition at the U.S. Classic outside Chicago in early August, her first event since the pandemic-delayed 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

USA Gymnastics announced Wednesday that Biles, a seven-time Olympic medalist and the 2016 Olympic champion, is part of the women's field for the single-day event set for Aug. 5 at NOW Arena in Hoffman Estates.

Biles has taken most of the last two years off following her eventful stay in Japan in the summer of 2021, where her decision to remove herself from multiple events to focus on her mental health shifted the focus from the games themselves to the overall wellness of the athletes.

She served as a cheerleader as her American teammates won the team silver then sat out the all-around, vault and floor exercise finals she had qualified for while dealing with what is known as “the twisties” — a gymnastics term for when an athlete loses their spatial awareness when airborne.

Biles returned for the balance beam final, where she won a bronze medal that tied Shannon Miller's record for most Olympic medals by an American female gymnast. She hinted at the Paris 2024 Olympics but only after taking a lengthy break.

The last two years have been a whirlwind of sorts. She headlined her post-Olympic tour in the fall of 2021 and married NFL player Jonathan Owens — now a defen-

sive back for the Green Bay Packers — this spring.

The 26-year-old Biles has also become one of the most vocal advocates for athletes finding space to protect their mental health after her stand in Japan put the issue front and center. While the conversation around the subject is constantly evolving, Biles' return to the sport she dominated for nearly a decade suggests an athlete who wants to go out on her own terms.

The U.S. Classic is one of the marquee events on USA Gymnastics' annual calendar and typically serves as a warm-up of sorts for the national championships, this year scheduled for late August in San Jose.

Biles used the Classic as her comeback meet in 2018 following a two-year hiatus after her record medals haul in Rio de Janeiro. It took her all of two hours to show she remained the gold standard in her sport, setting the stage for another spectacular run that included two more world all-around championships in 2018 and 2019 and three more national titles.

Biles became adept at navigating the various demands of her time as her stardom rose. She appears to be plotting a more subdued path as she tries to make a third Olympic team, a rarity for an American female gymnast. Dominique Dawes (1992, 1996 and 2000) is the only U.S. woman in the last 50 years to be selected for three Olympic teams.

Then again, Biles is also competing at a time when it is becoming more commonplace for elite gymnasts to compete well into their 20s and beyond.

TOUR DE FRANCE/AUTO RACING

Major rivals meet for next chapter

BY SAMUEL PETREQUIN
Associated Press

One rider, two-time Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar, was so strong at the start of the season that he was compared to the great Eddy Merckx before an injury stopped his seemingly unstoppable rise.

The other, defending champion Jonas Vingegaard, dethroned Pogacar last year and arrives in top form to defend his title next month. The two have already gone head-to-head twice at the Tour, and are building one of the greatest rivalries in the storied history of cycling's most famous race.

Add to this fierce rivalry four mountain-top finishes and a Tour record 30 difficult climbs, and you've got the ingredients for a mouth-watering three-week duel in the scorching heat of July.

And as if the script wasn't exciting enough, there are more storylines in store to spice up the 110th edition of the grueling race that starts this weekend from the Spanish city of Bilbao. Former champion Egan Bernal is returning into the fray at the Tour for the first time since his life-threatening crash, while veteran sprinter Mark Cavendish tries to become the most decorated stage winner in the history of the race.

Pogacar was in a class of his own a bit earlier this year, triumphing nearly everywhere he showed up. Following his wins at the Amstel Gold Race and Fleche Wallonne, he aimed for a hat trick of the Ardennes one-day classics when he suddenly found himself down on the ground, forced to abandon Liege-Bastogne-Liege because of a crash that left him with a broken wrist requiring surgery.

Before the accident two months ago, Pogacar had been untouchable on all sorts of terrain, also dominating the field at the Tour of Flanders and the weeklong Paris-Nice.

His setback has reshuffled the cards.

Pogacar still had a decent amount of time to prepare for the Tour with

training camps at altitude, and proved last week at the Slovenian national championships that he is back in form by winning both the time trial and the road race.

In addition to his own skills, and since you can't win the Tour alone, the UAE Team Emirates leader will be supported by a squad made of excellent climbers and all-around riders, including the experienced Rafal Majka, Mikkel Bjerg, Matteo Trentin and Adam Yates.

"As a team, we have worked so hard to prepare and everything is where it needs to be, we have a very good group," Pogacar said. "There will be some serious competitors, but that will always be the case in the biggest races. We are going there to put on a good show and of course with the aim of victory."

To cover the 2,116 miles featuring eight mountain stages across five mountain ranges, Vingegaard, too, can count on awe-inspiring teammates, the "super domestiques" who dedicate themselves to their leaders' glory. Wout van Aert, Dylan van Baarle, Sepp Kuss, Tiesj Benoot, Christophe Laporte, Nathan Van Hooydonck and Wilco Kelderman will be supporting him.

The former fish factory worker from Denmark was runner-up to Pogacar in his first Tour two years ago then came out on top in a thrilling battle with his Slovenian rival last year, building his triumph on two big rides in the Alps and the Pyrenees.

Starting in the Basque Country in northern Spain, the mountainous nature of this year's course, which features only one time trial, could well give Vingegaard an edge again, as his recent win at the Criterium du Dauphine — a tough stage race serving as a rehearsal for the Tour — suggested.

Behind the two, other contenders include Jai Hindley, who last year won the Giro d'Italia, Ben O'Connor, Enric Mas, and French riders David Gaudu and Romain Bardet. The Ineos-Grenadiers team will have various cards to play with Bernal, Tom Pidcock and Daniel Martinez.



Eventual champion Jonas Vingegaard, left, and Tadej Pogacar climb during the 11th stage of the Tour de France last year.



Construction goes on at East Congress Plaza Drive on Tuesday for the NASCAR Cup Series race in Chicago.

1st-ever NASCAR Cup Series street race set for Chicago

BY JAY COHEN
Associated Press

CHICAGO — During the runup to NASCAR's first street race in downtown Chicago, Julie Giese walked through the site twice a day.

While making sure everything was on schedule, she also tried to carry along the moment.

"There's a lot of moving parts and pieces and it's easy to get lost and caught up in all of that," said Giese, a longtime racing fan who was appointed track president for NASCAR's daring Chicago venture last August. "But what we need to remember is ultimately we're putting on something that is the first time that this sport has ever done. And that's incredibly special."

That history arrives this weekend, when NASCAR holds a Cup Series street race for the first time as part of its 75th season. The Xfinity Series runs the The Loop 121 on Saturday, and the Cup Series takes over for the Grant Park 220 on Sunday.

It was quite an adventure to get to this point, especially when it comes to setting up for the event in the heart of a busy city in a relatively short period of time — causing some headaches for commuters and tourists with road closures and parking restrictions in the area.

The start-finish line for the 12-turn, 2.2-mile course is near Buckingham Fountain, and drivers will

race by several downtown landmarks while Lake Michigan and Grant Park provide a picturesque backdrop for spectators and TV viewers on NBC.

The races are the centerpiece of a NASCAR festival that also includes music and other entertainment options right in the middle of what series leaders believe is one of their most important markets.

"I think everyone understands the magnitude of this event from our industry perspective," Giese told the AP in a conference room at the race's office near the course.

NASCAR is hoping the high-profile event can accomplish what it was unable to create at Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet, a 45-mile drive from downtown. It ran 19 Cup races at the track, including the opening race of the 2011 playoffs, but it was too far from Chicago to attract a new audience and NASCAR pulled out after the 2019 season.

Two of NASCAR's biggest sponsors, Xfinity and McDonald's, signed on as founding partners for the inaugural event downtown, along with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois. The unique location has presented some challenges.

"We're very used to a lot of transporters and haulers moving things around, and that becomes part of the setup," Giese said. "Obviously, that's not something we can do in and around the park. And so our partners, I think it's

given them an opportunity to kind of think differently a little bit about their activations, maybe lean into their festival teams a little bit more and really just kind of think about how you activate this event."

The race weekend is part of a three-year deal with the city of Chicago — one that was finalized under previous Mayor Lori Lightfoot. But Giese said the city has been a great partner under Mayor Brandon Johnson's new administration.

When it comes to the traffic around the event, Giese said they will learn from this year.

"When you look at it from a planning perspective, where we started to where we are now, we trimmed a week off of that schedule from the initial plan because of that," she said. "I'm trying to be really mindful of where we're racing and the impacts that it has to the community around it."

The drivers are also going to have to learn a lot in a hurry. They will have precious little time on the course before each race, adding to the unpredictability with the weekend.

The simulators should get plenty of work before NASCAR arrives in Chicago.

"I've heard it's really bumpy," Kyle Larson said. "It looks narrow in one of the little overhead shots I think I saw. So, yeah, I don't really know. I don't really know anything about it until I get some laps."

NFL/MLS



JEFFREY T. BARNES/AP

Dalton Kincaid was the only rookie tight end taken in the first round of the 2023 NFL Draft, going to Buffalo with the 25th overall pick.

History against rookie tight ends contributing

By STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — This rookie class of tight ends already made quite an impact on the NFL Draft.

It will have to buck history if it's going to leave the same type of impression on the field this year. Tight end arguably is the toughest position for rookies to make huge contributions.

Detroit Lions coach Matt Campbell, who played tight end in the NFL from 1999-2008, understands why.

"I always make this argument: Besides the quarterback, the tight ends have to know more than anybody else offensively," said Campbell, who played for the New York Giants, Dallas Cowboys and Lions. "You've got to know it all."

Campbell has high hopes for Sam LaPorta, the tight end Detroit drafted out of Iowa in the second round. LaPorta was one of nine tight ends selected in the first three rounds of the recent draft, the highest total since the common draft era began in 1967.

The others are Buffalo's Dalton Kincaid (formerly at Utah), Las Vegas' Michael Mayer (Notre Dame), Green Bay's Luke Musgrave (Oregon State) and Tucker Kraft (South Dakota State), Dallas' Luke Schoonmaker (Michigan), Jacksonville's Brenton Strange (Penn State), Pittsburgh's Darnell Washington (Georgia) and San Francisco's Cameron Latu (Alabama).

Kincaid, the 25th overall pick, was the lone first-round selection. Mayer, Musgrave, Schoonmaker and Strange joined LaPorta as second-round picks. Kraft, Washington and Latu went in the third round.

The question is whether there's anyone who could approach the rookie production Atlanta's Kyle Pitts

had a couple of years ago. Pitts caught 68 passes for 1,026 yards in 2021 after the former Florida star was selected fourth overall, the earliest a tight end had ever been drafted. But he's an exception.

Only five rookie tight ends in NFL history have caught as many as 60 passes. Four have caught more than seven touchdown passes in their debut seasons. Pitts had one. Just two accumulated 1,000 yards receiving.

Pitts was the first rookie tight end to reach the 1,000-yard mark since Chicago's Mike Ditka had 12 touchdown catches and 1,076 yards receiving — both rookie records — in 1961. The record for catches by a rookie tight end is owned by Keith Jackson, who had 81 receptions for the Philadelphia Eagles in 1988.

Green Bay Packers coach Matt LaFleur agrees tight ends face a bigger learning curve than most because of all that's expected of them. Some tight ends who might have put up big receiving numbers in college discover pass-catching skills aren't enough to succeed in the NFL.

"There's just so much that you have to, so much knowledge that you have to acquire in terms of you're responsible in the running game and the passing game and you might have some protection responsibility," LaFleur said.

Buffalo's Dawson Knox puts it in more descriptive terms.

A 2019 third-round pick from Mississippi, Knox remembers his own challenges as a rookie.

"It's like trying to drink from a firehose," he said.

AP sports writers Mark Anderson, Larry Lage and John Wawrow contributed to this report.

"It's like trying to drink from a firehose."

Dawson Knox
Bills TE on rookie challenges

Anticipation rises ahead of Messi's Miami debut

By ALANIS THAMES
Associated Press

MIAMI — There are reminders around Miami of Lionel Messi's impending arrival: A mural of the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner painted with pink and black Inter Miami colors in the artsy Wynwood neighborhood. Another painting of the soccer star at the entrance of a local Argentinian restaurant. No. 10 Argentina jerseys sprinkled throughout the city.

Messi, who turned 36 this month, announced on June 7 that he was joining Inter Miami in a move that stunned the soccer world and will bring one of the sport's biggest names to the United States and Miami, where enthusiasm for the sport has been growing.

Messi, who spent the past two years with Paris Saint-Germain, is still finalizing paperwork with his new club. He is expected to make his Inter Miami debut on July 21 at home against Cruz Azul in the Leagues Cup.

The move is hoped to provide a huge boost to attendance and interest in Major League Soccer ahead of the 2026 World Cup, part of which will be hosted in the U.S., as well as for Inter Miami, a club led by another global soccer icon, David Beckham, that is looking to garner the same popularity



LYNNE SLADKY/AP

Staff at Fiorito restaurant in Miami hold an Argentinian flag as they pose for a photo in front of a mural of Lionel Messi. The Argentine soccer star is joining Inter Miami.

as other sports franchises in South Florida.

"He's going to be able to leave this wonderful legacy, and it's a legacy that couldn't be better timed," said Anson Dorrance,

who's in his 47th season as the women's soccer coach at North Carolina. "We're going to be hosting the next World Cup on the men's side. ... And a part of constructing a plat-

form to make sure we sell out every stadium is to make sure our top men's professional league, the MLS, is also selling out all of our stadiums."

The league is already getting there. Ticket prices for Inter Miami matches have skyrocketed since Messi's announcement and teams are already selling additional tickets to future matches against the club.

According to data provided by Vivid Seats, a ticket marketplace, the average listed price for Inter Miami's match against Cruz Azul jumped from \$126 on June 6 (one day before Messi's announcement) to \$2,151 on June 20 — a 1,607% increase.

Site traffic, the company said, increased by 27,037% from June 6 to June 7.

On SeatGeek, another ticket exchange site, the average ticket to watch an Inter Miami match was \$34 on June 6. On June 7, it was \$178, according to data provided by the company.

Messi chose Miami over Al-Hilal in Saudi Arabia, where many thought he would go and follow longtime rival Cristiano Ronaldo. Returning to Barcelona, a storied franchise where he spent most of his career, was also an option, but Messi said that he wanted to go to the United States to "live football in another way."

Pushing to play

Moultrie prompted rules change, leading to youth movement as more teens take the field

BY ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

When Olivia Moultrie was just 13, her family moved from California to Oregon so she could train with the Portland Thorns.

The National Women's Soccer League had a rule at the time that all players had to be at least 18, so Moultrie could only practice with the team. On game days, she watched the Thorns from afar.

She wasn't happy with the situation and did something about it, successfully suing two years ago for the right to play and paving the way for a youth movement in the NWSL that will likely grow as talented players see a path toward a professional career that doesn't include playing in college.

"When I was fighting for the ability to play, I was just thinking, 'This isn't right. If you're good enough, you're old enough. Women should have the exact same opportunities as men should have,'" Moultrie said.

The league is now welcoming others who followed the 17-year-old's lead after adopting new rules for players under 18 to join the league last year.

Alyssa Thompson became the first high schooler to be drafted in the league this year when she was selected with the No. 1 overall pick by Angel City. She also played her way onto the U.S. squad headed to the Women's World Cup starting next month in Australia and New Zealand.

Thompson and Moultrie are

among six teenagers in the league this season, and they're not the youngest. In March, the San Diego Wave signed 15-year-old Melanie Barcenas, the youngest player ever to reach a deal in the NWSL. That followed the Washington Spirit's signing of 15-year-old Chloe Ricketts.

The influx started in 2021 when a then-15-year-old Moultrie signed with the Thorns after winning her legal challenge. Her lawsuit alleged the rule requiring players to be 18 or older violated antitrust law and hindered Moultrie's career development and chances of joining the U.S. team. There was no such age rule in the top U.S. men's league, Major League Soccer.

"Obviously, I'm super excited that we now have that equal opportunity, the same as they have in Europe, the same as they have in MLS," Moultrie said. "I just think that will continue to evolve the women's game, and at the end of the day that's what we all want."

It wasn't just the lawsuit that spurred action. Younger players, like Trinity Rodman and Mallory Swanson, came into the league before playing meaningful games at the college level and it was clear the future was getting younger.

"I think the future of American soccer is very, very bright because there's so many really, really bright, intelligent soccer players coming through the youth ranks," San Diego Wave coach Casey Stoney said.

Under the NWSL rules adopted last year, players under 18 must live with a parent or guardian, must be U.S. citizens, and cannot be traded



LINDSEY WASSON/AP

Portland Thorns midfielder Olivia Moultrie, center, is fouled by OL Reign defender Sofia Huerta, left. Moultrie successfully sued the NWSL in 2021 to play before she was 18, paving the way for more teens.

without the consent of the player and her parent or guardian.

Thompson developed her skills playing for the under-17 Total Futbol Academy boys' team in MLS Next and scored in her Angel City debut.

"I think she has lived up to all the hype," teammate Ali Riley said.

Thompson also caught the eye of U.S. senior team coach Vlatko Andonovski, who included the high schooler on his roster for a pair of European matches last year — including a match against England at Wembley Stadium. Thompson, then 17, played as a substitute in the waning minutes of the game in front of a sellout crowd of 76,000.

Thompson was called into the second game of the national team's recent two-game series against Ireland after forward Swanson was injured. Swanson tore her patellar tendon, and won't be ready in time for the World Cup — providing the opening for Thompson to become the youngest player among the 23 on the roster for soccer's biggest tournament.

"The environment of a pro is very similar to (the national team). There's a little bit more pressure here," Thompson said during her latest U.S. call-up. "But Angel City has prepped me really well for this. I'm just continuing to grow my skills and continuing to grow as a player."

Barcenas, who played for the San Diego Surf youth club and the U.S. under-17 team, made her professional debut in a recent match this season between the Wave and the Orlando Pride.

"She's an exceptional talent, but she's obviously still only 15, so we need to look after her," Stoney said. "She's still got lots of lessons to learn."

Ricketts, now 16, played for a boy's team, the Michigan Tigers 2007 Boys Gold, that won the under-15 national championship last year. She already has a sponsorship

“Obviously, I’m super excited that we now have that equal opportunity, the same as they have in Europe, the same as they have in MLS.”

Olivia Moultrie
 Teen who sued for right to play in NWSL



JEFF ROBERSON, LEFT, AND NATHAN HOWARD, RIGHT/AP

Left: Alyssa Thompson became the first high schooler to be drafted in the NWSL this year. Right: Melanie Barcenas, 15, is the youngest player ever to reach a deal in the NWSL.

deal with Adidas.

"I think people jumped to a conclusion, like I don't have a life outside of soccer. But my life is soccer, that's what I do to feel happy. My friends support me and so does my family, and they've supported me so I could get here. This is my journey," Ricketts said. "Managing it is actually pretty easy because I have practice in the morning so then I have the rest of the day to do school and hang out with friends and just have time to be a kid."

Spirit coach Mark Parsons cau-

tioned that as players get younger, greater care must be taken to ensure they are ready to become pros — and that they aren't pushed too hard once they get there.

"You've seen just as much as I have, Chloe deserves to be on the pitch, she makes it better when she comes on and it's the start of a fun journey for her," Parsons said. "The biggest role I've played with her is try and make sure this goes slow, probably slower than it needs to, but we all need to take this one step at a time."



NATHAN HOWARD/AP

Spirit midfielder Chloe Ricketts, 16, takes a selfie with fans following a match against the San Diego Wave on May 6 in Washington.

NBA/NHL



Heat guard Max Strus, left, is among the players in for big pay raise during free agency, which starts this weekend. He might go from making \$1.8 million this season to potentially \$12 million a year or more.

Already hectic offseason now poised for free agency

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

Chris Paul has already been traded twice this offseason, ending up in Golden State. Bradley Beal is now in Phoenix, John Collins was sent to Utah, and Kristaps Porzingis is about to start anew in Boston in a deal that sent Marcus Smart to Memphis.

They have new places to call home. It's time to see if Kyrie Irving, Draymond Green, James Harden, Khrist Middleton and dozens of other players will be on the move in the next few days as well.

As proven by the run of trades in recent weeks, NBA teams aren't waiting for free agency to make moves. But the real season of off-season player movement begins Friday at 6 p.m. Eastern, when teams are permitted to start talking to free agents — with the caveat that most deals cannot become official until July 6.

"Obviously, money's a thing. I mean, that's just for anybody," said Miami guard Max Strus, a free agent now in line for a big payday, going from \$1.8 million this season to potentially \$12 million a year or more. "These are moments that you work for, and these are opportunities that could be life-changing — so you can't ever take that out of it. But I love playing basketball and that's always going to be the first thing for me."

Money and fit. That's what players like Strus will be seeking, and that's what teams will be weighing over the next few days — especially with a new Collective Bargaining Agreement, and new rules designed to at least slightly curb spending by the deeper-pocketed teams, set to go into effect on Saturday.

That's part of the reason why some trades have been made in re-

cent days. The Warriors gave up Jordan Poole to get Paul from Washington in part because Paul's contract expires in a year and Poole is on the books for four years (at more than \$30 million annually), and Atlanta sent Collins to Utah for similar reasons.

"I think a lot can be made of all the challenges that are coming our way, whether it be aging roster, the new CBA with some of the limitations there, anything else you can bring up," Warriors general manager Mike Dunleavy Jr. said. "We're aware of all those things."

There could be more trades coming as well, with all eyes on Portland and whether Damian Lillard will eventually ask to be dealt elsewhere — Miami or Brooklyn, specifically — or remain with the Trail Blazers.

In the interim, there will be some massive deals struck — some possibly reaching \$200 million.

Philadelphia is likely going to have to make a big commitment to keep Harden alongside reigning MVP Joel Embiid or he could walk. Green turned down a \$27.5 million option with Golden State to seek a longer deal. Milwaukee has decisions to make with both Middleton and Brook Lopez, two key members of their championship in 2021.

"Both of those guys specifically are core to who we have been," Bucks general manager Jon Horst said. "Ultimately, what matters is we're hopeful to have them back. We've been really good and they're a big part of that and we want to try to keep them."

There's also intrigue in Dallas with regard to Irving's future.

Irving averaged 27 points in 20 games with the Mavericks after getting traded there for the stretch

run of this past season. For his career, he's averaged 23.4 points and is an eight-time All-Star.

He and Luka Doncic could form one of the league's most powerful 1-2 punches. Irving also is coming off a season where he was suspended by Brooklyn for eight games after the team said it was dismayed by his repeated failure to "unequivocally say he has no anti-Semitic beliefs." And that saga came after many others involving Irving, who has raised eyebrows for things ranging from saying the earth is flat to not getting vaccinated against COVID-19.

Still unclear: How many years and how much money Dallas will commit to keep him.

"Obviously, he's someone that we've already told everybody that we want to re-sign and we're excited about," Mavericks general manager Nico Harrison said.

The new champions have a big decision looming as well.

Denver's biggest free agency issue is versatile guard Bruce Brown, who was tremendous off the bench for the Nuggets during their run to the title. All the Nuggets can offer Brown is one year at \$7.8 million; other teams, such as the Los Angeles Lakers, might be prepared to offer more. Denver can give Brown a longer, richer deal in the summer of 2024 — so it's up to Brown to decide whether to wait or get more money now.

At the team's championship parade, Nuggets coach Michael Malone made clear that Denver intends to keep Brown.

"Is Brucie B going anywhere? Hell no," Malone shouted, as the crowd roared in approval. "Hell no. Hell no. We're running this ... back."

The next few days will tell if Malone is right.

Flyers will wait for top pick Michkov

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Philadelphia Flyers are in rebuilding mode, so that makes waiting for Matvei Michkov to finish his commitment in Russia a bit easier.

The Flyers answered perhaps the biggest question coming into Wednesday night's NHL Draft by taking the Russian right winger at No. 7 overall.

Michkov wasn't the first Russian selected. That was defenseman Dmitriy Simashev at No. 6 by Arizona despite Michkov being considered possibly the best Russian prospect since Alex Ovechkin and Evgeni Malkin in 2005.

Now the Flyers have no choice but to be patient after the team drafted a Russian in the first round for the third time in its history.

"We can't wait to have that answer ourselves," general manager Daniel Briere said of exactly when Michkov will play for Philadelphia.

"It is what it is. We know he has got a contract for three more seasons. But for us we just felt after watching him play and after meeting him, we just felt it's a talent that we cannot pass up and if we have to wait, we'll wait."

Especially if this pick turns into what Briere hopes.

"We hope that this turns out to be a home run. Time will tell," Briere said. "It's a little early. But we feel when he's ready to come, he could really be a difference-maker. And that's the risk that we were willing to take it to wait a little bit, to hopefully have a difference-maker on our hands."

The Flyers met with the 5-foot-10, 172-pound right wing, who's so elusive Arizona general manager Bill Armstrong called him a "ghost" on Tuesday.

The 18-year-old forward from Perm, Russia, has been playing for Sochi in the KHL, and he is under contract with St. Petersburg through the 2025-26 season. He was rated the No. 2 international skater behind Sweden's Leo Carlsson, who went second overall to Anaheim.

Michkov brings speed and the kind of playmaking ability that could make him a superstar in the NHL. He persuaded the Flyers to be patient when they met with him a couple of times.

The Russian also made clear he loves the Flyers.

"He wanted to be part of the Flyers," Briere said. "We saw it on stage. His reaction was amazing. He convinced us basically in the meeting he wanted to be there and he wanted to be a Flyer. Our staff felt really good about selecting him."



Matvei Michkov adjusts his Flyers hat after being drafted at No. 7 of the first round.

A translator who spoke for the Russian said Michkov expects to reward the patience of the Flyers and their fans.

"The ice will show everything," the translator said. "So maybe everyone has to wait a bit, but when Matvei comes to the ice, everyone will see the wait was worth it."

Briere said the team has made clear to fans that its turnaround won't be instantaneous.

"He's a clear example of that," Briere said of Michkov.

Scoreboard

- NHL Draft
Wednesday
First round
1. Chicago, Connor Bedard, C, Regina (WHL).
 2. Anaheim, Leo Carlsson, C, Orebro (Sweden).
 3. Columbus, Adam Fantilli, C, Michigan (NCAA).
 4. San Jose, Will Smith, C, USA U-18 (NTDP).
 5. Montreal, David Reinbacher, D, Klotten (Switzerland).
 6. Arizona, Dmitriy Simashev, D, Yaroslavl Jr. (Russia).
 7. Philadelphia, Matvei Michkov, RW, St. Petersburg (KHL).
 8. Washington, Ryan Leonard, RW, USA U-18 (NTDP).
 9. Detroit, Nate Danielson, C, Brandon (WHL).
 10. St. Louis, Dalibor Dvorsky, C, AIK (Sweden).
 11. Vancouver, Tom Willander, D, Rogle Jr. (Sweden).
 12. Arizona (from Ottawa), Daniil But, LW, Yaroslavl Jr. (Russia).
 13. Buffalo, Zach Benson, LW, Winnipeg (WHL).
 14. Pittsburgh, Brayden Yager, C, Moose Jaw (WHL).
 15. Nashville, Matthew Wood, RW, UConn (NCAA).
 16. Calgary, Samuel Honzek, LW, Vancouver (WHL).
 17. Detroit (from New York via Vancouver), Axel Sandin Pellikka, D, Skelleftea Jr. (Sweden).
 18. Winnipeg, Colby Barlow, LW, Owen Sound (OHL).
 19. Chicago (from Tampa Bay), Oliver Moore, C, USA U-18 (NTDP).
 20. Seattle, Eduard Dallas, LW, Brno (Czech Republic).
 21. Minnesota, Charlie Stramel, C, Wisconsin (NCAA).
 22. Philadelphia (from Los Angeles via Columbus), Oliver Bonk, D, London (OHL).
 23. New York Rangers, Gabriel Perreault, RW, USA U-18 (NTDP).
 24. Nashville (from Edmonton), Tanner Molendyk, D, Saskatoon (WHL).
 25. St. Louis (from Toronto), Otto Stenberg, C, Frolunda Jr. (Sweden).
 26. San Jose (from New Jersey), Quinton Musty, LW, Sudbury (OHL).
 27. Colorado, Calum Ritchie, C, Oshawa (OHL).
 28. Toronto (from Boston via Washington), Easton Cowan, RW, London (OHL).
 29. St. Louis (from Dallas via New York Rangers), Theo Lindstein, D, Brynas (Sweden).
 30. Carolina, Brady Nadeau, LW, Penticton (BCHL).
 31. Colorado (from Montreal), Mikhail Gulyayev, D, Omsk Jr. (Russia).
 32. Vegas, David Edstrom, C, Frolunda Jr. (Sweden).

NHL



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

Chicago Blackhawks first-round draft pick Connor Bedard puts on his jersey after being selected first overall Wednesday in Nashville, Tenn. Bedard is now the second No. 1 overall pick in Blackhawks history.

As expected, Bedard taken first in draft by Blackhawks

By JOHN WAWROW
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Connor Bedard can finally appreciate looking forward to playing for the Chicago Blackhawks after spending the past few months avoiding the subject.

And the Blackhawks — and their fans who began chanting “Let’s go, Hawks!” in Music City after Bedard was selected with the first pick in the NHL Draft on Wednesday night — can begin looking forward to a new era with a highly skilled offensive forward who’s drawn comparisons to Connor McDavid and Sidney Crosby.

Bedard became the second No. 1 pick in Blackhawks history, joining Patrick Kane, who went first overall in 2007 and helped form the core of a team that won three Stanley Cups from 2010 to 2015. Kane’s tenure in Chicago ended in February when he was traded to the New York Rangers.

“I can’t put into words growing up and obviously, that’s when they were going on their runs winning Cups,” said Bedard, who turns 18 on July 17. “You watched a lot of them and you see the United Center going crazy and all of Chicago getting behind them and you know (the) Original Six and so much history here.”

As for why he spent the past two months deflecting questions about the Blackhawks? Bedard smiled and said: “I didn’t want to jinx myself.”

At just under 5-foot-10 and 185 pounds, Bedard is regarded as a generational prospect, much like McDavid, who was selected first in 2015 and this week was named the league’s MVP for the third time.

Impressive as Bedard’s résumé has been, Blackhawks GM Kyle Davidson was careful not to put too much on his new player’s shoulders right away.

“He’s a pretty special player, a very special person. We’ll let him determine how special that first season is,” Davidson said when asked about his expectations for Bedard.

While Bedard’s selection by Chicago was a near certainty, the first round of the draft featured several twists — but no trades.

Sweden’s Leo Carlsson went second overall, chosen by the Anaheim Ducks over Michigan freshman Adam Fantilli. Ducks general manager Pat Verbeek had declined to speak to reporters in the weeks leading up to the draft but believes the sturdy, 6-foot-3 forward can become a dominant two-way player.

“There was a lot of really healthy debate on which player to take,” Verbeek said.

Carlsson got an inkling of the Ducks’ interest after a follow-up meeting with team officials on Tuesday. That was a day after he and his family had to rent a van to drive from Newark, N.J., to Music City because their flight was canceled.

Fantilli, the third freshman to win college hockey’s top award, the Hobey Baker Trophy, went third to Columbus.

The first American player off the board went fourth when the San Jose Sharks selected USA Hockey Development Program forward Will Smith, who is from Boston and has committed to playing at Boston College next season.

David Reinbacher was the first defenseman off the board, selected

fifth by Montreal. But the player from Austria had to wait a few extra seconds to hear his name called.

Announcing the pick, Canadiens goalie Carey Price stopped after saying “David,” apparently forgetting the player’s last name. General manager Kent Hughes came to the rescue and said: “We planned it that way. It’s David Reinbacher.”

Price posted an apology on Twitter: “Boy, that was embarrassing. Sorry, David ... Reinbacher.”

The Arizona Coyotes went with what was considered an off-the-board pick by selecting Russian defenseman Dmitriy Simashev a year after drafting five defensemen. They passed over forward Matvei Michkov, who has captivated draft watchers because the offensively skilled player is under contract to play in his native Russia through the 2025-26 season.

The Philadelphia Flyers ended Michkov’s wait with the seventh pick. Danny Briere, the Flyers’ first-time general manager, is overseeing a major overhaul, putting him in position to be patient while the 18-year-old Michkov finishes out his contract in Russia.

A translator spoke to The Associated Press about Michkov and said the player is highly motivated to show he should have been picked higher.

“He’ll do his best to play against them, win against them, so he will have double motivation to prove that he’s the best player,” the translator said. “The ice will show everything. So maybe everyone has to wait a bit, but when Matvei comes to the ice, everyone will see the wait was worth it.”

Killorn, Compher, Kane among free agents to watch

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

Stanley Cup rings have a handful of players set up for big paydays when NHL free agency opens Saturday.

Recent champions Alex Killorn and J.T. Compher and three-time winner Patrick Kane are among the players available in the free-agent market, which lost a top option Wednesday when Ivan Barbashev re-signed with Vegas.

The 2023 free-agent class includes a handful of intriguing veteran goaltenders and not a lot of top-tier defensemen.

Here’s a look at the top free agents by position:

Forwards

Alex Killorn: Coming off setting career highs with 27 goals, 37 assists and 64 points, Killorn could get the highest salary of any player in unrestricted free agency. He helped the Tampa Bay Lightning win the Cup back to back in 2020 and ’21 and reach the Final in 2022, playing a key role during each run.

Killorn also turns 34 before opening night and plays a heavy style of game. Still, he’s a proven winner, much like former teammate Ondrej Palat, who cashed in last summer with a \$30 million, five-year contract.

J.T. Compher: The Avalanche would love to bring back Compher, a versatile 28-year-old forward who can play center and wing and is coming off a career year with 52 points. They have some extra cap space to use because captain Gabriel Landeskog will likely spend the entire season on long-term injured reserve following knee cartilage replacement surgery.

Plus, Colorado traded restricted free agent forward Alex Newhook to Montreal on Tuesday, so perhaps there is a road back for Compher. If not, he’ll be well compensated on the open market.

Patrick Kane: The second-most prolific scorer among U.S.-born players is the most accomplished star available. He has won the Cup three times with

Chicago.

But Kane is 34 and could miss several months recovering from hip resurfacing surgery, which only Washington’s Nick Backstrom and one other player have come back from. Kane figures to be the perfect veteran addition for a growing team ready to take that next step.

Jonathan Toews: A longtime teammate of Kane’s in Chicago, Toews and the Blackhawks are parting ways after 15 seasons. Now 35, Toews could be a depth center helping a contending team chase a championship.

Defensemen

Dmitry Orlov: Another Cup winner (from the Capitals in 2018), Orlov made himself some real money with an impressive couple of months in Boston following a trade from Washington. After 19 points in 43 games with the Capitals, Orlov had 17 in 23 the remainder of the regular season with the Bruins.

He’s soon to be 32, so he might not get the maximum eight-year deal. But it’s not out of the realm of possibility to imagine \$36 million for Orlov over six seasons.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson: The 31-year-old Swede wasn’t supposed to be a free agent for four more summers. Then the Vancouver Canucks bought him out and put an intriguing player into the pool. He hasn’t been at his best in recent years, but the right opportunity could allow him to recapture some of his past success.

Goaltenders

Frederik Andersen: On the verge of turning 33, Andersen has taken three different organizations to the playoffs over his lengthy career. He was good for Carolina this past spring, going 5-3 with a 1.83 goals-against average and .927 save percentage.

Tristan Jarry: An All-Star in 2022 with Pittsburgh, Jarry is just 28 and might still have the potential to be an above-average NHL starter. The Penguins are firmly in win-now mode with Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and Kris Letang under contract, so they might swing big for a goalie via trade.



KARL B. DEBLAKER/AP

The Tampa Bay Lightning’s Alex Killorn skates against the Carolina Hurricanes in Raleigh, N.C., on March 5. Killorn is a free agent.

MLB

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	55	28	.663	—
Baltimore	48	31	.608	5
New York	44	36	.550	9½
Toronto	44	37	.543	10
Boston	40	41	.494	14
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	39	40	.494	—
Minnesota	40	42	.488	½
Detroit	34	45	.430	5
Chicago	35	47	.427	5½
Kansas City	22	58	.275	17½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	49	31	.613	—
Houston	43	37	.538	6
Los Angeles	44	38	.537	6
Seattle	38	41	.481	10½
Oakland	21	61	.256	29
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	53	27	.663	—
Miami	47	34	.580	6½
Philadelphia	42	37	.532	10½
New York	36	44	.450	17
Washington	32	48	.400	21
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cincinnati	43	38	.531	—
Milwaukee	42	38	.525	½
Chicago	37	41	.474	4½
Pittsburgh	37	42	.468	5
St. Louis	33	46	.418	9
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Arizona	48	33	.593	—
San Francisco	45	35	.563	2½
Los Angeles	44	35	.557	3
San Diego	37	43	.463	10½
Colorado	32	50	.390	16½
Wednesday's games				
Texas 10, Detroit 2 Cleveland 14, Kansas City 1 N.Y. Yankees 11, Oakland 0 Chicago White Sox 11, L.A. Angels 5 Atlanta 3, Minnesota 0 Washington 4, Seattle 1 Toronto 6, San Francisco 1 Miami 6, Boston 2 Pittsburgh 7, San Diego 1 Milwaukee 5, N.Y. Mets 2 Houston 10, St. Louis 7 Cincinnati 11, Baltimore 7, 10 innings Philadelphia 8, Chicago Cubs 5 Colorado 9, L.A. Dodgers 8 Tampa Bay 3, Arizona 2				
Thursday's games				
Detroit at Texas Cleveland at Kansas City N.Y. Yankees at Oakland Chicago White Sox at L.A. Angels San Diego at Pittsburgh Tampa Bay at Arizona Miami at Boston San Francisco at Toronto Milwaukee at N.Y. Mets Houston at St. Louis Philadelphia at Chicago Cubs L.A. Dodgers at Colorado				
Friday's games				
Cleveland (Quantrill 2-4) at Chicago Cubs (TBD) San Diego (Darvish 5-6) at Cincinnati (Ashcraft 3-6) Washington (Gray 5-6) at Philadelphia (Sánchez 0-1) Minnesota (López 3-5) at Baltimore (Kremer 8-3) Milwaukee (Peralta 5-7) at Pittsburgh (Bido 0-1) Boston (Paxton 3-1) at Toronto (Berríos 8-5) San Francisco (TBD) at N.Y. Mets (Carrasco 2-3) Miami (Hoeing 1-1) at Atlanta (TBD) Houston (Blanco 1-0) at Texas (Eovaldi 9-3) Detroit (Lorenzen 2-5) at Colorado (Gomber 5-7) L.A. Dodgers (TBD) at Kansas City (Lyles 1-11) N.Y. Yankees (TBD) at St. Louis (Liberatore 1-2) Arizona (Kelly 9-4) at L.A. Angels (Canning 6-2) Chicago White Sox (TBD) at Oakland (Medina 1-7) Tampa Bay (McClanahan 11-1) at Seattle (Miller 5-3)				
Calendar				
July 9-11 — Amateur draft, Seattle. July 10 — Home Run Derby, Seattle. July 11 — All-Star Game, Seattle.				

Mets owner considering selloff

Says Showalter, Eppler safe for rest of season

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Mets owner Steven Cohen threatened his underperforming team with the prospect of a trade deadline selloff unless New York gets back into contention for a playoff berth, while promising job security through the season's end to manager Buck Showalter and general manager Billy Eppler.

"All is not lost yet, but it's getting late," Cohen said during a news conference Wednesday



Showalter

with the Mets in fourth place in the NL East. "I'm preparing my management team for all possibilities. If we don't get better, we have decisions to make at the trade deadline, and that's not my preferred end result but I'm preparing all contingencies.

"And we'll see where it goes. It's on the players, right?" Cohen continued. "They're veterans. They've been there before. These are players who have done it, and we'll see if they can get their act together and string together some wins. I can't pitch and I can't hit. That's the way it goes."

New York currently projects to a \$360 million payroll and is on track for a record luxury tax of about \$99 million. The Mets are shattering the previous payroll high for \$291 million set by the 2015 Los Angeles Dodgers, who set a tax record that year at \$43.6 million.

And yet, the Mets began Wednesday 36-43 after losing seven of their previous 10 games and 16 of 22. They were 16½ games back of



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Mets owner Steve Cohen speaks during a news conference before Wednesday's game against the Milwaukee Brewers in New York. The Mets have a \$360 million payroll this season.

first-place Atlanta and 8½ games out of the last NL wild-card berth. Their 4.58 ERA is 25th among the 30 teams.

In stark contrast to Yankees owner George Steinbrenner's behavior in the 1970s and 1980s, Cohen promised stable management.

"I'm a patient guy, OK?" the 67-year-old hedge fund billionaire said. "Now, everybody wants a headline. Everybody says: Fire this person, fire that person. But I don't see that as a way to operate.

"If you want to attract good people to this or-

ganization, the worst thing you can do is be impulsive, OK, and win the headline for the day. ... You're not attracting the best talent. You're not going to want to work for somebody who has a short fuse. Listen, I know fans, they want something to happen. I get it. But sometimes, you can't do it because you have long-term objectives."

This year's trade deadline is Aug. 1 and an unsuccessful season could increase interest in a youth movement for a team that had the oldest average age on opening day.

Flawless: Germán's curveball set up everything

FROM PAGE 48

He mixed 51 curveballs and 30 fastballs that averaged 92.5 mph with 17 changeups and one sinker.

He went to three balls on a batter just twice, falling behind Ryan Noda 3-1 in the fourth and Jonah Bride by the same count in the eighth. Noda struck out on consecutive curveballs, and Germán followed with three straight curves to Bride: one for a called strike, the next resulting in a foul ball and the third in a groundout.

"It was just so fun to watch him do that and go to work. We've seen him flirt with outings like that over time," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said, thinking to when Boston's Alex Verdugo broke up Germán's no-hit bid in the eighth in July 2021.

"When he gets rolling like that he's just so fun to watch at his craft because he's so good at commanding all of his pitches. His curveball was great tonight, but because his changeup and his fastball were good, too, it made that curveball even more special."

Seth Brown came the closest to reaching base for the A's, hitting a sharp grounder in the fifth inning



GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP

New York Yankees pitcher Domingo Germán is mobbed by teammates after throwing a perfect game Wednesday against the Athletics in Oakland, Calif. It was the franchise's fourth perfect game.

to first baseman Anthony Rizzo, who made a diving stop and tossed to Germán for the out.

With the crowd of 12,479 on its feet for the ninth, Germán quickly finished what he started. He got Aledmys Díaz to ground out before Shea Langeliers flied out to short center field. When Esteury Ruiz grounded out to third base-

man Josh Donaldson to end it, New York's dugout and bullpen emptied as Germán's teammates raced to the mound to celebrate.

"That last inning was very different — very different. I felt an amount of pressure that I've never felt before," Germán said. "I'm trying to visualize what I want to execute there. At the same time, I

don't want to miss. So much pressure, but yet so rewarding.

"The key there was not to over-throw," he added.

A's leadoff hitter Tony Kemp said Germán's curveball set up everything else.

"He threw that curveball in any count that he wanted to," Kemp said. "It was spinning differently and moving differently. He put his fastball where he wanted to. Changeup as well. He just kind of mixed them. Got a couple of good swings off him, but no results."

Six days after allowing a career-high 10 runs (eight earned) and four homers over 3½ innings in a loss to the Mariners at home, Germán got his 500th career strikeout and was the definition of perfection.

"This has not been an easy week or time for him," Boone said. "For him to go out there and paint that masterpiece was really just a lot of fun just to be able to watch."

It was the 13th no-hitter in Yankees history, including Larsen's perfect game in the World Series. Corey Kluber pitched their previous no-hitter against the Texas Rangers on May 19, 2021.

SPORTS



Top choice

As expected, Chicago uses No. 1 pick to select Bedard » **NHL Draft, Page 46**

MLB

FLAWLESS

Yanks' Germán throws perfect game

By MICHAEL WAGAMAN
Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Since arriving in the big leagues six years ago, Domingo Germán has been anything but perfect. Until now.

The New York Yankees right-hander pitched the 24th perfect game in major league history Wednesday night, retiring every Oakland batter in an 11-0 victory over the Athletics.

It was the first perfect game since Seattle Mariners ace Félix Hernández threw one against the Tampa Bay Rays on Aug. 15, 2012. There were three that season — but none since until Germán finished off the first no-hitter in the majors this year.

He joined Don Larsen (1956), David Wells (1998) and David Cone (1999) as Yankees to pitch perfect games. Larsen's gem came in Game 5 of the 1956 World Series against the Brooklyn Dodgers.

"So exciting," Germán said through a translator. "When you think about something very unique in baseball, not many people have an opportunity to pitch a perfect game. To accomplish something like this in my career is something that I'm going to remember forever."

Coming off a pair of terrible starts, Germán (5-5) struck out nine of 27 hitters against the A's, who have the worst record in the majors at 21-61.

The 30-year-old pitcher served a 10-game suspension last month after getting ejected from a game in Toronto for using an illegal sticky substance on the mound. He was also banned 81 games by Major League Baseball earlier in his career over an alleged domestic violence incident.

His only previous complete game as a professional came with Double-A Trenton in April 2017.

Winless in six previous outings against Oakland, Germán threw 72 of 99 pitches for strikes.

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New York Yankees pitcher Domingo Germán reacts after the final out of Wednesday's perfect game against the Athletics in Oakland, Calif. The Yankees won 11-0.

GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP

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