US launches new airstrike against Syria site tied to Iran

**By Matthew Adams**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. launched an airstrike on a facility in eastern Syria linked to Iran-backed militants in response to an increasing number of recent attacks against U.S. forces in the Middle East, the Pentagon said Wednesday.

“The United States is fully prepared to take further necessary measures to protect our people and our facilities. We urge against any escalation,” Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement about the U.S. attack.

The strike was carried out by two F-15 fighter jets against a weapons storage facility in Mayssulun, according to a senior U.S. military official who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity. The official watched the engagement and believed there were some secondary explosions indicating the facility was housing weapons used against U.S. forces in the region.

“We’d been watching it for a bit to ensure that when we struck the target, we would strike it at a time that we would be able to eliminate the use of the facility to [Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps] and do so with the minimal number of casualties,” the military official said. “We are very certain this did not involve civilian loss and that the personnel, if they were there, were.

SEE SYRIA ON PAGE 3

**Different approach to defense**

US military placing new emphasis on ground troops for Pacific

**By David Rising**

BANGKOK — As Chinese missile testing in the waters around Taiwan grew increasingly aggressive in 1996, the U.S. sailed two aircraft carrier groups to the island that Beijing claims as its own, and China was forced to back down.

It employed a similar response to Hamas’ surprise attack on Israel a month ago, dispatching two carrier groups to the Eastern Mediterranean in a rapid and massive show of force meant to deter other countries or Iran-backed proxy groups such as Hezbollah from joining the fight.

But what is still viable in the Mideast is increasingly less practical with China, which in 1996 had no carriers of its own and little means to threaten the American ships, but now has the world’s largest navy, including three aircraft carriers, and a coastline bristling with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles.

Instead, ongoing exercises in Hawaii, which conclude Friday, highlight part of a new American approach to Pacific defense and deterrence, with a focus on small groups of mobile land forces operating from islands like those off China’s coast.

In the exercises, the largest-scale training held in Hawaii so far, more than 5,000 troops from the 25th Infantry Division, along with units from New Zealand, Indonesia, Thailand and Britain and supported by the U.S. Air Force, have been practicing fighting in an island jungle environment against an advanced enemy force, with exercises including para-trooper drops, a long-range air assault, and supply by air and sea.

“All of those are examples of the importance of being able to project force here in the Pacific, which first requires seizing and holding ground and building up a base of operations where you can consolidate gains, secure and hold key infrastructure such as an airfield, and

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**Poll: ‘Thank you for your service’ makes many vets feel awkward**

**By Lainey Wilson**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military has placed new emphasis on ground troops for Pacific defense and placed new emphasis on ground troops for Pacific defense, with exercises including para-trooper drops, long-range air assaults, and supply by air and sea.
Disney reports sharp profit growth in 4th quarter

Associated Press  
SAN FRANCISCO — Walt Disney Co. on Wednesday reported sharp profit growth in its fiscal fourth quarter while announcing an expansion of its cost-cutting drive under returning CEO Bob Iger.

The results topped Wall Street expectations and sent shares in the entertainment and theme park company up more than 3% in after-hours trading.

Disney said its net income jumped 63% to $264 million in the quarter that ended Sept. 30, up from $162 million a year earlier. Its adjusted earnings per share, excluding items largely related to the amortization of Disney’s acquisitions of 21st Century Fox’s entertainment assets and Hulu, more than doubled to 82 cents in the quarter. Industry analysts had been expecting 71 cents a share, according to FactSet.

Revenue for the quarter rose 5% to $21.24 billion, up from $20.15 billion. The company credited cost-cutting and other efficiencies from restructuring as well as continued subscription growth in its streaming business. It also noted a 30% increase in operating income from its parks and similar “experiences” compared to the prior year.

Iger returned as CEO a year ago following a challenging two-year tenure by his handpicked successor, Bob Chapek.

He soon announced a “strategic reorganization” and cost-cutting drive that has included thousands of layoffs.

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‘Thanks, but no thanks’

Poll: Phrase makes some active-duty, vets feel awkward

By J.P. Lawrence

Younger American veterans and military personnel who receive a spoken thanks for their service are more apt to think “thanks but no thanks,” according to a new poll.

The finding came from a survey of 1,639 veterans and service members released Wednesday by financial services company USAA as part of a Veterans Day initiative.

About two-thirds of a mix of mostly veterans and some currently serving troops between the ages of 18 and 44 said the phrase “thank you for your service” makes them feel uncomfortable or awkward.

The survey found a generation­al divide on the phrase, which gained prominence after the start of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan more than 20 years ago.

Most veterans over 45 said the phrase does not bother them. And 76% of veterans over 65 said the phrase does not make them feel awkward, with most responding that thanking them for their service is the most appropriate way to honor them.

In contrast, 69% of veterans and currently serving troops ages 18­29 said the phrase makes them uncomfortable, and 66% of respondents ages 30­44 agreed.

The divide on “thank you for your service” comes from the difference in how various genera­tions were viewed on returning home from war, said Kayla Wil­liams, a former Army linguist who served in Afghanistan.

“I’ve always felt like the phrase itself is a good thing,” Klaj said.

“No, does it mean that it’s always offered sincerely? Does it mean the veteran might not have much more complicated feelings about their service? Does it mean that the phrase is sufficient? No.”

By Doug G Ware

WASHINGTON — A rebel group in Yemen shot down a U.S. drone on Wednesday, roughly three weeks after a U.S. warship intercepted missiles fired toward Israel by the same rebels, Penta­gon officials said.

The U.S. drone was an MQ-9 Reaper taken down by the Houthis, an Iranian-backed militant group that has been fighting a civil war against the Yemeni govern­ment since the 1990s, according to a senior U.S. military official.

Attacks against U.S. forces in the Middle East have risen signific­antly since Hamas militants in Gaza attacked Israel a month ago. Israel has retaliated with air­strikes and an invasion of Gaza.

The Pentagon said earlier this week that there have been at least 40 separate attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria in the past three weeks. None have caused any seri­ous injuries or heavy damage to the bases, officials said.

The drone attack came on the same day that President Joe Biden ordered a U.S. airstrike by two F-15 fighter jets on a weapons stor­age facility in eastern Syria used by Iran’s military and rebel groups. The U.S. carried out a sim­ilar strike in the same region of Sy­ria on Oct. 26.

It wasn’t immediately clear Wednesday what the drone was doing or whether it was armed.

MQ-9 Reapers can carry a variety of armaments, including missiles and laser-guided bombs.

The military official said the Reaper was shot down in the wa­ters off the Yemeni coast but didn’t say whether it was de­stroyed.

The attack came three weeks after the USS Carney shot down sev­eral Houthis rockets that were fired toward Israel on Oct. 19. The Pentagon said those missiles had a range of about 1,200 miles and could have reached Israel.

Syria: US responds with strike

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were associated with the IRGC.”

The strike came the same day the Houthis, an Iranian­backed militant group that has been fighting a civil war against the government in Yemen, shot down a U.S. MQ-9 reaper drone. A senior military official said the drone was shot down over the Red Sea, which borders Yemen to the west.

This is the second time in weeks that the U.S. has targeted facili­ties used by Iran­backed militant groups.

On Oct. 26, the U.S. launched airstrike­s on two loca­tions near al-Bukmali in eastern Syria on weapons and am­munition facilities aligned with Iranian militia, a senior U.S. military offi­cial said at the time.

“No one should question the readiness of the Department of Defense with additional options to defend our forces and our inter­ests or President [Joe] Biden’s willingness to direct additional self-defense strikes,” said a senior U.S. defense official on Wed­nesday who also spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity.

The number of attacks against U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria has continued to rise since Oct. 17. Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh on Tuesday said 40 attacks have occurred since then, 22 in Iraq and 18 in Syria. Forty­six service members have been injured by drone or rocket attacks in the two countries, Singh said.

Among the injuries, 25 were cases of traumatic brain injuries and 21 were considered to be minor.

Recently, the U.S. military de­ployed an additional 1,200 troops to the Middle East to support Is­rael and protect other troops in the region. But the Pentagon said its primary objective is to deter other groups and countries from escalating the war between Israel and the militant group Ha­mas, which is backed by Iran. The American service members in Iraq and Syria are part of the U.S. forces in the region deployed to support the ongoing campaign against the Islamic State group.

However, the Pentagon also has mobilized other U.S. military forces to the region after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, includ­ing fighter jets and two Navy air­craft carrier strike groups.

The Pentagon said Sunday that an Ohio­class, nuclear­powered sub­marine had also arrived in the re­gion. Defense officials said last week that the U.S. is flying drones over the region to prevent Hamas­controlled territory southwest of Is­rael — searching for the roughly 200 hostages taken by the militant group.

Houthi rebels shoot down US drone off coast of Yemen

A girl holds a sign welcoming veterans of World War II, Vietnam and Korean wars outside the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Virginia. Many young veterans are uncomfortable with the phrase thank you for your service, a recent USAA survey found.

Most veterans over age 45 said it didn’t bother them.

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USMC leader: Heart attack recovery ‘going well’

By Doug G. Ware
Stars and Stripes
WASHINGTON — Gen. Eric Smith, the new Marine Corps commandant, on Wednesday said his recovery is going well in his first public remarks since suffering a heart attack 10 days ago.

“I appreciate the outpouring of support for my family and me. My recovery is going well, and I look forward to getting back in the fight as soon as I can,” Smith said in a statement.

Smith, who was confirmed by the Senate as the Marine Corps commandant in September, has been in the hospital since suffering the heart attack on Oct. 29 near his home at the Marine Barracks in Washington. At the time, he had been performing the duties of two jobs because the general nominated to become the assistant commandant was blocked from promotion along with hundreds of other military personnel by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala.

Since September, Senate Democrats have sidestepped Tuberville’s hold by individually confirming several of the most senior military nominees, including Smith, Air Force Gen. Charles “CQ” Brown as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Randy George as Army chief of staff, and Lt. Gen. Christopher Mahoney as assistant Marine Corps commandant. Tuberville’s blockade on military promotions is a protest against a Pentagon policy that reimburses troops who travel out of state to receive reproductive care, including abortions. Some Republican-controlled states have outlawed or imposed severe restrictions on the practice since the Supreme Court struck down Roe v. Wade in mid-2022.

The Marine Corps said it will be some time before Smith can resume his duties as commandant, even after he is discharged from the hospital. In the meantime, Mahoney will continue to perform his duties.

“Based on his baseline physical health and his rapid improvement over the last week, his medical team has recommended that he transition to inpatient rehabilitation to expedite his recovery,” the Marine Corps said Wednesday. “They are confident that with focused attention and daily interaction, he will be back to full-duty status sooner than if utilizing outpatient rehabilitation.”

US, S. Korea plan to counter North’s military pipeline to Russia

By David Choi
Stars and Stripes
The United States and South Korea “share profound concerns” over North Korea’s military ties with Russia and will counter that collaboration with action of their own, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during a press conference on Thursday in Seoul.

Speaking alongside South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin, Blinken told reporters that the two allies are concerned about the suspected export of military equipment from North Korea to Russia to use in the war in Ukraine.

U.S. and South Korean intelligence agencies in September assessed that North Korea had likely shipped more than 2,000 containers of roughly a million artillery shells in exchange for satellite support and other technological aid, according to Seoul’s Ministry of National Defense.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had traveled to Russia that month, his first trip outside North Korea’s borders in over four years, and met with President Vladimir Putin to reinforce their ties, the state-run Korean Central News Agency reported at the time.

“We share profound concerns about [North Korea’s] growing and dangerous military cooperation with Russia,” Blinken said.

Washington and Seoul are exploring “further actions that our countries can take with partners to intensify pressure on Moscow not to transfer military technology” to North Korea, Blinken added.

“This is something that we’re very focused on,” he said. “We’re working to identify, to expose, and, as necessary, to counter these efforts.”

Blinken arrived in South Korea on Wednesday evening after a two-day meeting in Tokyo of foreign ministers from the G7, the seven leading industrial nations.

His visit came five days before Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is scheduled to meet with South Korean Defense Minister Suh Woon-sik in Seoul on Monday.

Blinken also met with South Korean national security adviser Cho Tae-yong on Thursday for discussions “aimed at promoting peace, secure and sustainable use of outer space and enhancing the resilience of space systems,” the State Department said in a news release.
YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — For the first time, high-schoolers at U.S. military bases in Japan have taken a new, electronic version of the test that gauges aptitude for military and civilian careers.

Students at Yokota High School, whose parents work at the airlift hub that’s also the headquarters of U.S. Forces Japan, sat for the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, or ASVAB, test on Thursday.

It was the first time the electronic version of the test, being rolled out at on-base schools worldwide, was given in Japan, said school information specialist Colleen McDougall as students tested in a nearby classroom that morning.

“This is the largest ASVAB that has ever been given in the Pacific,” she said.

More than four in five of the school’s 10th through 12th graders — 154 students — were taking the test, McDougall said.

“They have been taking the test for decades, but this is the first time it has been done electronically which gives instant results,” she said.

“It’s a powerful college and career planning tool,” she said.

The test matches students with careers and suggests courses they should take in high school and college. It also lists universities offering recommended courses and quotes tuition costs and what jobs pay in each state.

The test gives students a valid ASVAB score that they can use to enter military career fields for two years, McDougall said.

Between 8% and 10% of Yokota students enter the military, she said.

“Thatt’s normal with your family already knowing about the military,” she said.

The electronic testing comes amid a recruiting crisis with officials citing factors such as a strong civilian job market and obesity among young people that make them unfit to serve.

One of those who took the test at Yokota on Thursday — student board president Melia Okamoto — said she wants to serve in the military as a physical therapist.

“I’m acquainted to the lifestyle and military benefits that go with it and it sets you up to have a career in the private sector,” she said.

Another test-taker, Makayla Lawry, a junior who home-schools at Yokota, said she wants to be a dentist.

Lawry said she has no plans to join the military, although she recognizes the benefits of service such as travel, a stable career and health care.

Lacroyx Harris, a sophomore who played Rumpelstiltskin in the school play, said he’s contemplating a career as a financial adviser, stockbroker or actor.

The test backed up his career interests but also suggested microbiology, he said.

Air Force Maj. Mark Sideno, a JROTC instructor at Yokota, said his twin sons, Nathaniel and Kyle, scored well on the test in science, technology, engineering and math.

“Based on their scores it gave them a road map to classes to prepare for high school, university and career,” he said.

One surprising career suggestion on the test recommended for his sons was nano engineering — designing ultra-small machines — Sideno said.

Students can take the electronic ASVAB anywhere the U.S., even if they attend schools that don’t allow recruiters or JROTC on campus, he said.
Experts: Stopping Ukraine aid would do global damage

By Doug G. Ware

WASHINGTON — Congress must approve President Joe Biden’s request for tens of billions of dollars to pay for another year of military aid for Ukraine because failing to do so would mean big trouble for Europe and the United States, a panel of experts told a Senate committee Wednesday.

“This is the wrong time to walk away because Ukraine is winning. It has already taken back half the territory [Russia] has seized since February 2022,” James O’Brien, assistant secretary of European and Eurasian affairs at the State Department, said during the hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. “You don’t walk away when you’re part way through the job.”

If we falter in our support, Russia will win. And they won’t stop at Ukraine, said Erin McKee, assistant administrator for Europe and Eurasia at the U.S. Agency for International Development, the independent government agency that oversees civilian foreign aid and development assistance.

The hearing Wednesday came amid debate in Congress over Biden’s $106 billion supplemental funding request, which includes money in 2024 to aid Ukraine and Israel, which is at war with the militant group Hamas. The funding request also would pay for enhanced security at the U.S.-Mexico border and spend billions of dollars to make key investments across the U.S. defense industry. Ongoing aid for Ukraine still has wide bipartisan support in Congress, though some to set sail... are questioning or opposing it. Pentagon officials have said they are running out of money for equipment and weapons for the Eastern European country.

“If Ukraine loses [Russian President Vladimir Putin] will promote instability in the Baltics and around Eastern Europe,” O’Brien said. “He will also reach into Africa and the Middle East, where we see he’s already active. He’ll try that anyway, but he will be much more powerful if we walk away [from Ukraine].

“We can’t let up now,” Geoffrey Pyatt, assistant secretary of energy resources at the State Department, said, adding Russia is constantly attacking civilian energy infrastructure to break the will of the Ukrainian people. “Congress’ continued support of our efforts is vital to U.S. interests. Putin is targeting Ukraine’s energy infrastructure because he sees it as central to his war aims. The energy sector funding that is included in the [Biden] supplemental [request] is essential to Ukraine’s success on the battlefield.”

Putin must not succeed. We must continue to support the people of Ukraine in their fight to thrive as a free, secure, independent country,” McKee said. “None of what we have achieved together would have been possible without the generosity of Congress and the American people.”

The three officials told senators that Putin is counting on Americans becoming fatigued with the war in Ukraine and waiting for U.S. support to disappear. They said failure in Ukraine would ripple into the Middle East, where the United States is also providing aid to Israel after it was attacked by Hamas on Oct. 7.

Putin sees Hamas as a way to distract us and to weaken the coalition that we have built against him,” O’Brien said. “His unwillingness to condemn what Hamas did on Oct. 7 and his unwillingness to use any leverage he might have to get them [out of Gaza] is a sign that he prefers to see us distracted by this fight. Putin has hosted Hamas recently in Moscow, the president of [North Korea] and he’s visited China. That’s who wins if we walk away.”

The officials said aid for Ukraine is an investment that pays dividends in many ways. For instance, they said it strengthens the U.S. military throughout the world, expands defense research and innovation, grows the U.S. economy with good-paying jobs and discourages other authoritarian countries such as China and North Korea from similar aggression.

For years, China has expressed a desire to “unify” with Taiwan, which it considers a breakaway territory. Some U.S. military officials have said a Chinese invasion of Taiwan could happen as soon as the late 2020s.

“So, we have to shore that up if we are going to have the heft to compete with China over time,” O’Brien said. “All of that is included in this supplemental, and that’s going to make us better able to defend Taiwan, to work in the South China Sea.”

There were some tense moments during the hearing when Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., who has repeatedly opposed sending aid to Ukraine, berated the officials by arguing the supplemental funding request would only benefit the weapons industry.

“The money is coming from somewhere where it would be in a productive use to where it’s into the use of basically fomenting a war and continuing a war,” Paul said.

“No, that’s not the choice in front of us, senator. And I’m sorry you feel that’s the way you want to frame it,” O’Brien responded. “The choice in front of us is, do we invest in the capacities that allow this war to be won — capacities in energy, in defense, [in information technology].”

Russian missile hits ship with Liberia flag in Odesa

The Odesa port and others in the region are economically vital to Ukraine as its outlets to the Black Sea, from which ships can head for world markets. Odesa port facilities have come under Russian attacks 21 times since Russia in August declined to renew a deal allowing Ukraine to safely export grain via the Black Sea, Kubrakov said.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said in October that a new Black Sea export corridor had allowed some 50 ships to get through Russian attacks 21 times since Russia in August declined to renew a deal allowing Ukraine to safely export grain via the Black Sea, Kubrakov said.

Three other civilians were killed in Russian attacks over the past day, according to a summary from the presidential office.

Russian reportedly using Ukrainian POWs to fight in their homeland on Moscow’s side

Russia is sending Ukrainian prisoners of war to the front lines of their homeland to fight on Moscow’s side in the war, the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti reported.

The news agency said Tuesday the soldiers swore allegiance to Russia when they joined the battalion, which entered service last month.

The Associated Press could not immediately confirm the authenticity of the report or video re-released by the news agency, or whether the POWs were coerced into their actions. Both Ukrainian military and human rights officials as well as the Russian Defense Ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment from the AP.

Experts say such actions would be an apparent violation of the Geneva Conventions relating to the treatment of POWs, which forbids them from being exposed to combat or from working in unhealthy or dangerous conditions — coerced or not.

“Russian authorities might claim they are recruiting them on a voluntary basis but it’s hard to imagine a scenario where a prisoner of war’s decision could be taken truly voluntarily, given the situation of coercive custody,” said Yulia Gorbunova, senior researcher on Ukraine at Human Rights Watch.

Nick Reynolds, research fellow for Land Warfare at the Royal United Services Institute in London, added that “the entire scenario is laced with the potential for coercion.”

A prisoner of war, he said, does not have “a huge amount of agency” and is in a “very difficult situation.”

Earlier this year, Russian media reported about 70 Ukrainian POWs joined the battalion. RIA Novosti reported the Ukrainians will operate as part of an anti-Japanese alliance and will focus on fighting in the Black Sea region. They are also expected to participate in a new cruise missile system.

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Pacific: Troops utilizing ‘geography in its favor’ to overcome difficulties

FROM PAGE 1
then introduce additional combat power,” said Maj. Gen. Marcus Evans, commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division, in an interview at the Wheeler Army Airfield on Oahu.

While the exercises are not officially directed against a specific threat, the U.S. Department of Defense in its report last month to Congress reiterated that it considers China its “pacing challenge” as “the only competitor to the United States with the intent and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order.”

Even though China’s navy is now larger than the U.S.’s in terms of numbers of ships, the U.S. Navy is still more capable and has 11 carriers to China’s three, and that helps the U.S. to overcome its numerical disadvantages as China’s navy is continuing to expand. The U.S. has to do what it can to try and close the gap, and land forces are part of the equation.”

Beyond just being able to take and hold positions, the military has to overcome what Evans called a “tyranny of distance” in the Pacific where troops may find themselves on remote islands many hundreds of miles away from new supplies of water, fuel and ammunition. Among several new technologies being tested in the ongoing exercises in Hawaii are three variants of an “atmospheric water generator” to produce potable water in field conditions.

Operating from the first and second island chains would require the consent of the countries they belong to, and the U.S. has also been working hard to shore up and expand alliances in the region.

It runs large-scale training exercises with the Philippines, where earlier this year it signed an agreement for the use of bases, as well as with South Korea, Japan, Australia, Indonesia, Thailand and India.

The exercises provide experience in technical and procedural interoperability and also build human bonds that can be critical in times of crisis.

“We are just finishing up a defense here on the island of Oahu and watching soldiers from Indonesia, Thailand and New Zealand alongside soldiers from the United States Army dig fighting positions together, experience a crucible of privilege — that challenges, but most importantly forges relationships,” Evans said.

On the political level, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin is on his ninth trip to the Indo-Pacific this week with stops in India, South Korea and Indonesia, in which he is to “underscore the depth of the long-standing U.S. commitment to strengthening the Indo-Pacific’s dynamic security architecture.” Austin’s travels overlap with Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s own visits to Tokyo, Seoul and New Delhi.

Planning and training by the U.S. and its allies have not been going on in a vacuum, and China has been working hard to extend the operational capability of its navy. It has also developed so-called “carrier killer” missiles able to hit targets at long distances, and a ballistic missile capable of striking Guam.

It launched its first domestically designed and manufactured aircraft carrier in 2022, and that same year signed a security pact with the Solomon Islands in the Pacific, which many say could be used as a port to re-supply China’s navy ships.

That could give the Chinese navy a better ability to operate well beyond the second island chain and disrupt American supply lines or reinforcements coming from Hawaii — making it even more important for forward units to buy time in the event of a conflict.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has not ruled out the use of force to take Taiwan, and while the American policy on whether it would come to Taiwan’s aid is that of “strategic ambiguity,” or not saying how far it is willing to go, President Joe Biden has said that Washington would intervene militarily.

With tensions rising over Taiwan, the U.S. use of the island chains could both deter China from considering an invasion, and also exact a heavy price if they tried, Graham said.

“Having long-range anti-ship missiles and long-range air defense missiles operated by small groups that are designed to be resilient, and logistically able to operate without resupply under distress, they could do a lot to deter the Chinese from ever thinking about operating in that scenario,” he said. “But if push comes to shove, they could impose a cost in terms of attrition of those forces as they move closer to Taiwan.”

Air carrier groups would still likely play a large role in a conflict but would more likely be surged in and then quickly moved out, putting them at greater risk than in the past, he added.

“But then,” he said, “aircraft carriers are designed to be risked.”

Senator touts cap on attorney fees in Lejeune toxin case

By Corey Dickstein

Stars and Stripes

Former troops and their family members who became sick from exposure to toxic water decades ago at Camp Lejeune, N.C., cannot be charged by their attorneys more than 25% of the money paid to them as compensation by the government, federal officials have ruled.

The Justice Department made the decision in an Oct. 27 court filing, adopting a request from Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, who said he had worked for more than a year on legislation to cap attorney fees in cases involving the Marine Corps base. Sullivan, who spoke Wednesday on Capitol Hill, accused some attorneys involved in these cases of signing their clients to contracts that would award the lawyers more than 65% of the money that victims eventually receive.

“We do not want sick Marines and their families to be scammed,” said Sullivan, who is an attorney, a colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve and a member of the American Legion in Alaska. The Justice Department decision, shared by Sullivan’s office on Wednesday, caps attorney fees at 25% for suits filed in federal court.

Sullivan said Wednesday that Attorney General Merrick Garland had assured him that the federal government would levy criminal or civil penalties under the Federal Tort Claims Act on lawyers who charge their clients fees beyond those caps.

The American Legion has lobbied lawmakers to cap law firm fees since the Camp Lejeune Justice Act was passed in 2022, which allowed for those sickened by toxic water at the Marine base between 1953 and 1987 to sue for damages. American Legion National Commander Daniel Seehafer, who spoke Wednesday alongside Sullivan, said he was angered by wall-to-wall radio and television ads promoting law firms seeking Camp Lejeune clients.

Seehafer said law firms have “spent billions (of dollars) … on predatory marketing campaigns targeting sick Marines and their families.” He called on Congress to encode those fee caps in law, which Sullivan and other Republican lawmakers have unsuccessfully attempted previously.

More than 100,000 Marine veterans and their family members who served at Camp Lejeune between the 1950s and 1980s have filed claims, Navy officials said. So far, no one has been paid a settlement nor gone to trial in the case.

Navy officials said the processes to vet claims have been slow moving, but they have promised staffing has been increased and they are making progress on the backlog.

In September, the Navy and Justice Department announced the government would offer some victims a preset settlement option, which would pay between $100,000 to $550,000 to those who have developed certain diseases and spent at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 21, 1987.

Known as the elective option, those settlements are meant to provide some claimants a “quick and early resolution” to their cases, the Justice Department said in September.

Government officials said they had not estimated how many victims would take the elective option.
Air Force completes Reaper drones transfer

**By Matthew M. Burke and Mari Higa** Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The U.S. Air Force has completed a transfer of MQ-9 Reaper drones to Okinawa from a Japanese air force base farther north, a Japanese defense official said this week.

Six Reapers from the 319th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron arrived at Kadena Air Base between Oct. 13 and Oct. 22, according to the Kyushu Defense Bureau’s website. The drones came from Kanoya Air Base, a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force installation on Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan’s four main islands.

The Reapers are already flying intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions over Japan’s southern island chain in close coordination with Japan’s Ministry of Defense, 1st Lt. Robert Dabbs, a spokesman from Kanoya’s 19th Wing, said by email Thursday.

“The MQ-9s at Kadena are conducting various missions to enhance our senior leaders’ ability to make informed decisions that help maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific,” he said. “All operations will occur in accordance with our agreements with Japan and international law.”

Two Reapers will remain at Kanoya until Tuesday, when they will be withdrawn, an Okinawa Defense Bureau spokesman said by phone Thursday. He would not comment on where the drones are headed next.

The bells represent Japan’s Defense Ministry on their respective islands. Some government officials in Japan may speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

The Reaper, made by General Atomics of San Diego, is a medium-altitude, long-endurance, remotely operated aircraft used primarily for surveillance, according to the Air Force. They are capable of carrying a combination of Hellfire missiles and Paveway laser-guided bombs.

Their mission in southern Japan consists primarily of monitoring potential flashpoints across the Indo-Pacific and providing time-sensitive intelligence to U.S. commanders, allies and partners, including an intelligence analysis cell made up of U.S. and Japanese military officials, 18th Wing spokesman Lt. Col. Raymond Geoffroy said last month.

Their plan is to move the Reapers to Kadena was announced Oct. 6. About 150 airmen from the reconnaissance squadron and eight Reapers had been based at Kanoya for about a year.

The unmanned aircraft are originally from Creech Air Force Base, Nev.

The Reapers will be operating out of the southern air hub for the foreseeable future, Geoffroy said.

From Kadena, the Reapers can reach the disputed Senkaku Island chain in half the time the trip took from Kanoya, the bureau website said. The Senkakus, a string of five uninhabited islands and three rocks 105 miles east of Taiwan, are administered by Japan but claimed by both Taiwan and China.

Japan wanted the drones based in the southern islands because of a heightened need for information gathering due to the increased activities of potential adversaries, Japanese Defense Minister Seiji Kihara said Oct. 10.

China in recent years has stepped up challenges to its neighbors’ maritime claims in the East and South China Seas. Its coast guard frequently enters seas claimed by Japan around the Senkakus.

After learning about the deployment last month, Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki called the plan unacceptable and asked the Okinawa Defense Bureau to reconsider, he wrote in a letter published to a prefectural X account, formerly known as Twitter.

He acknowledged an increasingly severe security environment but called the drones burdensome on Okinawa.

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Historical salvage platform collapsing into Pearl Harbor

**By Wyatt Olson** Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — It took Japanese torpedo bombers less than an hour to sink the battleship USS Arizona during the Dec. 7, 1941, surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

Salvaging the unrepairable hulk that rested half submerged on the harbor floor took almost two years. A pair of platforms were welded to the sides of the Arizona to which ferries, barges and ships tethered to the workers stripped parts critical to the war effort.

Now, after eight decades of exposure to saltwater and ever-trembling tides, one of those submerged platforms has collapsed after breaking loose from the ship, which is now part of the USS Arizona National Memorial.

On Oct. 27, staff with the Pearl Harbor National Memorial discovered the smaller of the two platforms had shifted, with its concrete surface now inclined diagonally in the water.

A preliminary assessment found that the platform appeared to be stable, but a much more in-depth evaluation will be needed to determine what can or should be done to preserve it, David Kilton, a spokesman for the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday.

Preserving both platforms is essential to historical preservation, he said.

“Our mission at the National Park Service is not just Dec. 7, 1941,” he said. “It’s the lead up to the attacks, the actual attack and the aftermath, continuing all the way to peace and reconciliation—a story still playing out today.”

“Those platforms tell the part of the story of the salvage,” he said.

The top of the now-listing platform is a roughly 2-by-6-foot concrete slab, about a foot thick, Kilton said. It is lined with bollards that had been used to secure vessels.

The slab is attached to a submerged steel frame that had been welded to the ship.

The Arizona was one of only three ships so badly damaged in the attack that they were unrepairable, Kilton said.

The wreck of the USS Utah remains in the harbor, and a memorial was erected near the site in 1972. At the time it was sunk, the Utah was no longer an active battleship and was used primarily for anti-aircraft training.

The battleship USS Oklahoma underwent salvage work until 1946, when a private company purchased the Oklahoma’s hull and attempted to pull it to California. The battleship sank about 500 miles east of Hawaii.

The sunken wreck of the Arizona is the centerpiece of the Pearl Harbor National Memorial. Roughly 1.7 million visitors each year take the short ferry trip to the memorial’s viewing platform that was erected above the sunken hull. The area includes a shrine room listing the names of the 1,177 crew members who died because of the attack.

The memorial’s dive team is working with the Navy and a dive resource team from the National Park Service’s Denver Service Center to conduct a more thorough assessment of the platform’s condition, Kilton said.
GOP debate focuses on Israel, China, Ukraine

Associated Press

MIAMI — In their first debate since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, the Republican presidential candidates all declared hawkish support for Israel but squabbled over China. DeSantis and Ukraine as they faced growing pressure to try to catch Donald Trump, who was again absent.

Sparring over several issues were Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley, who has appeared competitive with DeSantis’ distant second-place position in some national polls. Much of the debate focused on policy — especially foreign policy issues — rather than Trump and his record.

Haley, the former South Carolina governor and United Nations ambassador, declared she would end trade relations with China “until they stop murdering Americans from fentanyl — something Ron has yet to say that he’s going to do.” In return, the Florida governor said Haley “welcomed” Chinese investment to her state, referencing a land deal with a Chinese manufacturer while she led South Carolina.

All five candidates face growing urgency, with the leadoff Iowa caucuses just a little more than two months away, to cut into Trump’s huge margins in the 2024 primary and establish themselves as a clear alternative. But it’s not clear many Republican primary voters want a Trump alternative. And given his dominance in early state and national polls, Trump again skipped the debate to deprive his rivals of attention.

Trump was the subject of the debate’s first question, when moderators asked each candidate to explain why they were the right person to beat him.

DeSantis said, “He owes it to you to be on this stage and explain why he should get another chance.” He suggested Trump had lost a step since winning the White House in 2016, saying he failed to follow through on his “America First” policies.

Haley, who is pulling some votes and donor curiosity from DeSantis, said Trump “used to be right” on supporting Ukraine but “now he’s getting weak in the knees.”

But the conversation moved on to policy issues with relatively few head-to-head confrontations. The moderators often declined to call on candidates who were mentioned by others on stage, as is normally the custom.

The DeSantis and Haley campaigns for months have attacked each other on China, long a topic of scorn in GOP primaries. Their allied super PACs have run ads in early primary states alleging the other side is soft on Beijing.

Abortion was also a topic of the debate after Democrats and abortion rights supporters won several statewide races in Tuesday’s elections.

DeSantis, who signed a six-week abortion ban in Florida, said anti-abortion activists were “flat-footed” in mobilizing and noted that people who voted for the measures included Republicans who have previously supported GOP candidates.

Haley, long credited by anti-abortion activists for how she talked about the issue, called abortion “a personal issue for every woman and every man” and said she doesn’t “judge anyone for being pro-choice.”

She said Republicans need to acknowledge they don’t have the votes in Congress to pass a national abortion ban but should instead work to find some consensus to “ban late-term abortions,” make contraception available and ensure states don’t pass laws that punish women for getting abortions.

Also appearing on stage Wednesday were South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and bio-tech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy.

Republican presidential candidates from left, Chris Christie, Nikki Haley, Ron DeSantis, Vivek Ramaswamy and Tim Scott, stand on stage before a GOP presidential primary debate Wednesday in Miami. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)

Scott frequently referenced the Bible and appealed to the Christian faith of many Republican primary voters, echoing his campaign themes and his singular focus on Iowa, where white evangelical voters typically hold sway.

Christie defended U.S. support for Ukraine in its defense against Russia’s invasion, saying that for the United States, “This is not a choice. This is the price we pay for being the leaders of the free world.”

Ramaswamy tried several times to push his way into the center of the debate. Having long styled himself as someone willing to challenge his rivals, Ramaswamy repeatedly went after other candidates, notably Haley, who tussled with him in the first two debates.

Haley seemed to ignore his first barbs, but snapped during a discussion about the social media app TikTok, which many Republicans want banned in the U.S. due to its parent company’s ties to China.

Ramaswamy accused Haley’s daughter of having had her own TikTok account until recently. Responded Haley, “Leave my daughter out of your voice!” She then told him, “You’ve just scumb.”

All the candidates said they were staunchly behind Israel as it mounts an offensive in Gaza following Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack that killed more than 1,400 people. The candidates did not discuss humanitarian aid for civilians in Gaza as the number of Palestinians killed in the war passed 1,500, including more than 400 children, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza.

Several also said they would pressure colleges campuses to crack down on antisemitism.

To complicate matters this time, Republicans are refusing Biden’s request to support Ukraine in batting Russia unless the president agrees to their demands to bolster security along the U.S. border with Mexico.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said he spoke Monday with Biden and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and did “make it clear to both of them: We have to have a credible solution” to the border.

Congress is in this budget-shut-down loop because the House and Senate have failed, as they often do, to pass the dozen individual bills needed to fund the various agencies in the federal government. When the new budget year began Oct. 1, lawmakers agreed to approve funding at the current levels until Nov. 17, to allow time to finish up the work.

To Hedge One’s Bet, Congress Expands List Days Before Potential Shutdown

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Several days before a potential government shutdown, Congress is no closer to resolving the standoff and is even compounding the issue with Republican demands for border policy changes as a condition for further support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia.

New House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said Tuesday that Republicans do not want to close things down, but he is well aware that his predecessor, Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., was rebuffed as speaker after compromising with Democrats in September to keep federal offices open.

“Some certainly want to avoid a government shutdown,” Johnson said at a news conference alongside families with loved ones kidnapped in the Israeli-Hamas war.

“It’s a dangerous time around the world right now,” he said. “We recognize that, and we’re doing our job.”

Johnson is facing one of his most difficult tests yet, just two weeks into the job. Rather than lead the House Republicans into a strategy, Johnson appears to be crowd-sourcing a way out of the government funding dilemma with his GOP colleagues.

At a closed-door meeting, House Republicans discussed stopgap measures, including a new idea gaining traction: a “laddered” approach that would fund parts of the government until early December and the rest until mid-January, according to Republicans granted anonymity to discuss the private gathering.

The Senate, which is controlled by Democrats, has been working to devise a more comprehensive spending plan that would fund the government at current levels while also considering President Joe Biden’s nearly $106 billion request for supplemental money for Ukraine, Israel, the Asia-Pacific region and border security.

“None of this will be easy to do,” said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. “The outcome of the next two weeks will hang on the same thing I’ve emphasized all year — bipartisanship cooperation.”

The White House has been discussing some border policy changes, but dismissed the Senate Republican proposal and said it lacked policy provisions that would be important to Democrats, such as a path to citizenship for unaccompanied illegal immigrants assigned to come as children.

“Some we from Senate Republicans is not a serious piece of legislation,” press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.

Biden is seeking nearly $54 billion in border money for holding facilities, asylum officers and other needs, including efforts to stop the flow of deadly fentanyl. Republicans have said that does not go far enough and they are demanding policy changes that would make it more difficult for immigrants to claim asylum at the border. They also want to revive building the border wall.

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Actors, studios reach accord ending strikes

By Andrew Dalton and Krysta Fauria

LOS ANGELES — On Thursday, for the first time in more than six months, neither Hollywood’s actors nor its writers will be on strike.

The long-awaited clearing in the industry’s stormiest season in decades comes as a deal was reached late Wednesday to end what, at nearly four months, is the longest strike ever for film and television actors.

The three-year contract must be approved by the board of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and its members in the coming days. But union leaders declared that the strike will end at 12:01 a.m. on Thursday, putting all of the parts of production back into action for the first time since spring.

Duncan Crabtree-Ireland, SAG-AFTRA’s executive director and chief negotiator, said the gains made in the deal justified the struggle.

“It’s an agreement that our members can be proud of. I’m certainly very proud of it,” Crabtree-Ireland told The Associated Press in an interview. “We said we would only accept a fair, equitable deal, and that’s precisely what this deal is. So I think our members, as we are able to release more of the details of it, will look at them and say, now this is something that was worth being on strike for.”

More than 60,000 SAG-AFTRA members went on strike July 14, joining screenwriters who had walked off the job more than two months earlier. It was the first time the two unions had been on strike together since 1960. The studios and writers reached a deal that brought their strike to an end on Sept. 26.

The union valued the deal at over a billion dollars. Crabtree-Ireland said the deal includes boosts to minimum payments to actors, a greater share of streaming revenue going to performers, a bolstering of benefit plans and protections against the unfettered use of artificial intelligence in recruiting performances. Details of the terms will not be released until after a meeting on Friday where board members review the contract.

The AI protections were a sticking point in the negotiations that had moved methodically, with long breaks for both sides to HUD, since they restarted on Oct. 24.

“It is something that has evolved even while we’ve been in this negotiation of process,” Crabtree-Ireland said. “The capabilities of generative AI tools have expanded dramatically. So we have really been focused on making sure that the guardrails that we negotiated for were future-proof or at least future-resistant.”

The other side in the negotiations, Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers said in a statement that the “agreement represents a new paradigm. It gives SAG-AFTRA the biggest contract-on-contract gains in the history of the union.” The AMPTP said it “looks forward to the industry resuming the work of telling great stories.”

Executives from top entertainment companies including Disney, Netflix, Warner Bros. Discovery and Universal had a direct hand in negotiations.

The Writers Guild of America applauded Wednesday’s deal. “We’re thrilled to see SAG-AFTRA members win a contract that creates new protections for performers and gives them a greater share of the immense value they create,” the union said in a statement. “When workers are united, they win!”

Although the writers strike had immediate, visible effects for viewers, including the month-long suspension of late-night talk shows and “Saturday Night Live,” the impact of the actors’ absence was not as immediately apparent. But its ripple effects — delayed release dates and waits for new shows — could be felt for months or even years.

Actors should quickly return to movie sets where productions were paused, including “Deadpool 3,” “Gladiator 2” and “Wicked.” Other movies and shows will restart shooting once returning writers finish scripts.

And beyond scripted productions, the end of the strike allows actors to return to red carpets, talk shows and podcasts, as Hollywood’s awards season approaches.

“The SAG strike is over! I can finally say it: watch my documentary Saturday night at 8 on HBO-MAX!” actor-director Albert Brooks said on social media moments after the strike ended.

“Couldn’t say a word until now!”

House Republicans subpoena Hunter and James Biden

WASHINGTON — House Republicans issued subpoenas Wednesday to members of President Joe Biden’s family, taking their most aggressive step yet in an impeachment inquiry bitterly opposed by Democrats that is testing the reach of congressional oversight powers.

The long-awaited move by Rep. Jamie Raskin, the chairman of the House Oversight Committee, to subpoena the president’s son Hunter and brother James comes as Republicans look to gain ground in their nearly yearlong investigation. So far, they have failed to uncover evidence directly implicating the president in any wrongdoing.

But Republicans say the evidence trail they have uncovered paints a troubling picture of “influence peddling” by Biden’s family in their business dealings, particularly with clients overseas.

“No, the House Oversight Committee is going to bring in members of the Biden family and their associates to question them about this record of evidence,” Com­mer, of Kentucky, said in a state­ment.

The stakes are exceedingly high, as the inquiry could result in Republicans bringing impeachment charges against Biden, the ultimate penalty for what the U.S. Constitution describes as “high crimes and misdemeanors.”

The subpoenas demand that Hunter Biden and James Biden as well as former business associate Rob Walker appear before the Oversight Committee for a deposition by mid-December.

Lawmakers also requested that James Biden’s wife, Sara Biden, and Hallie Biden, the wife of the president’s deceased son Beau, appear voluntarily for transcribed interviews.

Hunter Biden’s attorney Abbe Lowell called the subpoenas “yet another political stunt” and said the investigation has been full of “worn-out, false, baseless, or de­bunked claims.”

“Nevertheless, Hunter is eager to have the opportunity, in a public forum and at the right time, to dis­cuss these matters with the Com­mittee,” he added.

An attorney for James Biden said there was no justification for the subpoena as the committee had already reviewed private bank records and transactions between the two brothers.

The committee found records of two loans that took place when Biden was not in office or a candidate for president.

“There is nothing more to those transactions, and there is nothing wrong with them,” attorney Paul Fishman said in a statement late Wednesday. “And Jim Biden has never involved his brother in his business dealings.”

The White House has contin­uously dismissed the investiga­tion as a political ploy aimed at hurting the Democratic president. They say the probe is a blatant attempt to help former President Donald Trump, the early front-runner for the 2024 GOP presidential nomi­nation, as he runs again for the White House.

“The vicious and groundless subpoenas and interview requests are yet further proof that this sham impeachment inquiry is driven only by the de­mands of political opportunism and pravar­icating Donald Trump,” Rep. Ja­mie Raskin, the top Democrat on the Oversight Committee, said in a statement.

Jobless aid claims inch down

Associated Press

Slightly fewer Americans applied for jobless claims last week, further indicating that the labor market remains strong in an era of high interest rates.

Applications for unemployment benefits fell by 3,000 to 27,000 for the week ending Nov. 4, the Labor Department reported Thursday. Jobless claim applications are seen as representative of the number of layoffs in a given week.

The four-week moving average of claims, a less volatile measure, inched up by 1,500 to 212,250.

Overall, 1.83 million people were applying for unemployment benefits the week that ended Oct. 28, about 22,000 more than the previous week and the most since April.

Those “continuing claims,” ana­lyst suggest, are rising because many of those who are already un­employed may now be having a harder time finding new work.

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Israel agrees to 4-hour pauses in Gaza fighting

By Aamer Madhani
Associated Press

Israel has agreed to put in place four-hour daily humanitarian pauses in its assault on Hamas in northern Gaza starting on Thursday, the White House said, as President Joe Biden pressed Israel Friday, saying “we know they have lines of communication with Hamas that we don’t,” Kirby said of Qatar. “And we’re going to continue to work with them and regional partners to try to secure the release of all the hostages.”

Secretary of State Antony Blinken had warned Israel last week that it risked destroying an eventual possibility for peace unless it acted swiftly to improve humanitarian conditions in Gaza for Palestinian civilians as it intensifies its war against Hamas.

In a blunt call for Israel to pause military operations in the territory to allow for the immediate and increased delivery of assistance, Blinken said the situation would drive Palestinians toward further radicalism and effectively end prospects for any eventual resumption of peace talks to end the conflict.

Kirby confirmed that the U.S. continues to have “active discussions with partners about trying to secure the release of hostages,” noting in particular Qatar’s help.

“We know they have lines of communication with Hamas that we don’t,” Kirby said of Qatar. “And we’re going to continue to work with them and regional partners to try to secure the release of all the hostages.”

Israel agrees to 4-hour pauses in Gaza fighting
Should robots be humanlike?

Startups say functionality and lessons learned during development more important than design

BY MATT O'BRIEN
Associated Press

Building a robot that’s both humanlike and useful is a decades-old engineering dream inspired by popular science fiction. While the latest artificial intelligence craze has sparked another wave of investments in the quest to build a humanoid, most of the current prototypes are clumsy and impractical, looking better in staged performances than in real life. That hasn’t stopped a handful of startups from keeping at it.

“The intention is not to start from the beginning and say, ‘Hey, we’re trying to make a robot look like a person,’” said Jonathan Hurst, co-founder and chief robot officer at Agility Robotics. “We’re trying to make robots that can operate in human spaces.”

Do we even need humanoids? Hurst makes a point of describing Agility’s warehouse robot Digit as human-centric, not humanoid, a distinction meant to emphasize what it does over what it’s trying to be.

What it does, for now, is pick up tote bins and move them. Amazon announced in October it will begin testing Digits for use in its warehouses, and Agility opened an Oregon factory in September to mass produce them.

Digit has a head containing cameras, other sensors and animated eyes, and a torso that essentially works as its engine. It has two arms and two legs, but its legs are more bird-like than human, with an inverted knees appearance that resembles that of so-called digitigrade animals such as birds, cats, and dogs that walk on their toes rather than on flat feet.

Rival robot-makers, like Figure AI, are taking a more purist approach on the idea that only true humanoids can effectively handle the work of humans as birth rates decline around the world.

“There’s not enough people doing these jobs, so the market’s massive,” said Figure AI CEO Brett Adcock. “If we can just get humanoids to do work that humans are not wanting to do because there’s a shortage of humans, we can sell millions of humanoids, billions maybe.”

At the moment, however, Adcock’s firm doesn’t have a prototype that’s ready for market. Founded just over a year ago and after having raised tens of millions of dollars, it recently revealed a 38-second video of Figure walking through its test facilite in Sunnyvale, Calif.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk is also trying to build a humanoid, called Optimus, through the electric car-maker’s robotics division, but a hype-up live demonstration last year of the robot’s awkwardly halting steps didn’t impress experts in the robotics field. Seemingly farther along is Tesla’s Austin, Texas-based neighbor Appletronik, which unveiled its Apollo humanoid in an August video demonstration.

All the attention — and money — poured into making musically humanoid machines might make the whole enterprise seem like a futile hobby for wealthy technologists, but for some pioneers of legged robots, it’s all about what you learn along the way.

“Not only about their design and operation, but also about how people respond to them, and about the critical underlying technologies for mobility, dexterity, perception and intelligence,” said Marc Raibert, the co-founder of Boston Dynamics, best known for its dog-like robots named Spot.

Raibert said sometimes the path of development is not along a straight line. Boston Dynamics, now a subsidiary of carmaker Hyundai, experimented with building a humanoid that could handle boxes.

“That led to development of a new robot that was not really a humanoid, but had several characteristics of a humanoid,” he said via an emailed message. “But the changes resulted in a new robot that could handle boxes faster, could work longer hours, and could operate in tight spaces, such as a truck. So humanoid research led to a useful non-humanoid robot.”

Some startups aiming for humanlike machines focused on improving the dexterity of robotic fingers before trying to get their robots to walk.

Walking is “not the hardest problem to solve in humanoid robotics,” said Geordie Rose, co-founder and CEO of British Columbia, Canada-based startup Sanctuary AI. “The hardest problem is the problem of understanding the world and being able to manipulate it with your hands.”

Sanctuary’s newest and first bipedal robot, Phoenix, can stock shelves, unload delivery vehicles and operate a checkout, early steps toward what Rose sees as a much longer-term goal of getting robots to perceive the physical world to be able to reason about it in a way that resembles intelligence. Like other humanoids, it’s meant to look endearing, because how it interacts with real people is a big part of its function.

“We want to be able to provide labor to the world, not just for one thing, but for everybody who needs it,” Rose said. “The systems have to be able to understand speech and they need to be able to convert the understanding of speech into action, which will satisfy job roles across the entire economy.”

Agility’s Digit robot caught Amazon’s attention because it can walk and also move around in a way that could complement the e-commerce giant’s existing fleet of vehicle-like robots that move large carts around its vast warehouses.

“The mobility aspect is more interesting than the actual form,” said Tye Brady, Amazon’s chief technologist for robotics, after the company showed it off at a media event in Seattle.

Right now, Digit is being tested to help with the repetitive task of picking up and moving empty totes. But just having it there is bound to resurrect some fears about robots taking people’s jobs, a narrative Amazon is trying to prevent from taking hold.

Agility Robotics co-founder and CEO Damion Shelton said the warehouse robot is “just the first use case” of a new generation of robots he hopes will be embraced rather than feared as they prepare to enter businesses and homes.

“So in 10, 20 years, you’re going to see these robots everywhere,” Shelton said. “Forever more, human-centric robots like that are going to be part of human life. So that’s pretty exciting.”

New 1MORE headphones good for bass

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

1MORE has unveiled their Penta Driver P50 wired headphones, which feature five drivers: one diamond-like carbon dynamic driver and four exclusive planar units.

The feel and sound of the 1MORE Penta Driver earbuds is exceptional. 1MORE produced the P50s to showcase a unique and sophisticated design that is visually stunning and acoustically impressive.

The diamond-like carbon dynamic driver in the new Penta Driver P50 wired headphones is an industry first, according to 1MORE. The sound it helps produce has incredible clarity and accuracy in reproducing bass frequencies. Every playlist of different music types held that clear sound at head-banging volume levels, all without the need for extra amplifiers.

To achieve this sound, 1MORE enlisted the help of Grammy award-winning sound engineer Luca Bignardi. 1MORE also emphasized the construction and appearance of the new earbuds, which use premium materials, including an aluminum alloy body.

They have been tested on many ear models for a comfortable fit with pre-formed ear hooks and delicately designed 45-degree curved nozzles. Each P50 earbud attaches on or off the detachable cable with a 3.5mm connector. An in-line controller manages music selections, pause, volume and hands-free calls. Most smartphones and tablets are made for wireless headphones only, but adapters are readily available. I primarily tested the earbuds using the 3.5mm headphone port built into my laptop. Extra ear tips are included.

Online: usa.1more.com; $169.99
DaCosta makes her mark with ‘Marvels’

‘Candyman’ director the youngest, 1st Black woman to helm MCU film, also 1st in franchise with female leads and villain

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

N is DaCosta, director of the upcoming “The Marvels,” has a diagnosis for the recent struggles of superhero movies. It basically comes down to, she says, “Mo’ money, mo’ problems.”

Success inevitably breeds bigger budgets. Box-office expectations get inflated. Even superhero spandex can’t sustain endless cycles of wash, rinse and repeat.

“Growth has to stop at some point,” DaCosta says. “As you make more and more films, you want those films to be more interesting, more dynamic and to appeal to different audiences. But that requires risk. And there’s a conundrum where you’re so big that you can’t take risks. I pens to be me,” DaCosta says, laughing. “What was cool about realizing that, I was sort of like: ‘Wow, I’m the first Black woman. But I’m also the third woman and the fourth or fifth person of color. It was cool to see that I wasn’t just stepping into an all-white, all-male world.’”

“The Marvels” brings together Carol Danvers/Captain Marvel (Larson), Monica Rambeau/Photon (Parris) and Kamala Khan/Ms. Marvel (Vellani). While the film was originally conceived as a post-“Endgame” follow-up to “Captain Marvel,” Marvel chief Kevin Feige was drawn to the chance to unite Captain Marvel with Rambeau from “WandaVision” and Ms. Marvel of her standalone Disney+ series.

In “The Marvels,” the trio has become linked. Every time they use their powers, they swap places with each other, causing their worlds to collide in comic and surreal ways.

“When I was reading the outline that they sent me initially before I was pitching, I was like, ‘This is insane,’” DaCosta says. “It felt so comic book-y. I was like, ‘Wow, they’re really going for it.’”

DaCosta was drawn to what she calls “a really crazy, sci-fi space opera” that was wacky and tonally different from most MCU films.

“I wanted to honor what they set out to do, which is make something very frankly strange,” she says.

The heart of the film for DaCosta is about the dichotomy of Danvers and Ms. Marvel. While Danvers has been tirelessly doing the solitary work of Captain Marvel out in deep space, Ms. Marvel’s foundation is her family. DaCosta, a self-described workaholic, can relate.

“I mean, this my third film in six years and I’m onto my fourth,” she says. “I’m from New York City and my family’s mostly there and I’ve never shot there since I’ve been working. My mom once forgot to invite me to a family thing because she forgot I was in town. Stuff like that that makes me go, ‘I need to connect more.’”

That’s hard, though, when you’re one of Hollywood’s fastest-rising directors. DaCosta’s ascent has been meteoric but steady, even though she’s more comfortable with self-deprecation than self-promotion. Instead, her level-headed filmmaking talent — particularly for conjuring atmosphere and playing with perspective — has fueled her success.

After making “Candyman,” a Marvel movie was, DaCosta says, “definitely not in my near future.” But it also wasn’t entirely off her radar. She’s wanted to direct one since she started making films and traces her interest directly to Sam Raimi’s “Spider-Man.” She saw it when she was 12. “And I still love it,” she says.

When DaCosta was tapped to helm “The Marvels,” Feige encouraged her to reach out to other Marvel movie directors for advice. The bit that most stuck with her came from “Black Panther” director Ryan Coogler. He said simply: “Be yourself.”

“I was like, ‘Wait, what?’ Then I kind of got it,” DaCosta says. “He was like. Just bring yourself to it. It’s a big thing. It’s really a Kevin Feige movie; it’s a Marvel film. But they chose you for a reason.”

‘The Marvels’ stars Brie Larson, Teyonah Parris, Iman Vellani and Samuel L. Jackson, isn’t anyone’s idea of going far out on a limb. It’s loosely a sequel to 2019’s “Captain Marvel,” which surpassed $1.1 billion worldwide. By any measure, “The Marvels” is one of the fall’s most anticipated titles.

But it’s also a big-budget attempt to try some new things. It’s the first Marvel movie to feature not just all-female leads but a female villain (Zawe Ashton plays Dar-Benn), as well. DaCosta, 33, is the youngest filmmaker to helm an MCU release. She’s also the first Black woman to do so.

“Day to day, I don’t really think about it. But it is nice to finally have a Black woman directing one — it just happens to be me,” DaCosta says, laughing. “What was cool about realizing that, I was sort of like: Wow, I’m the first Black woman. But I’m also the third woman and the fourth or fifth person of color. It was cool to see that I wasn’t just stepping into an all-white, all-male world.”

‘The Marvels’ opens in theaters this weekend, it seems quite so automatic. For DaCosta, whose two previous films were the Jordan Peele-produced horror remake “Candyman” and the acclaimed 2018 indie crime drama “Little Woods,” it’s imperative that superhero movies aspire to be fresh and daring — like “Across the Spider-Verse.”

“As the ‘Marvels’ opens in theaters this weekend, it debuts in uncommonly uncertain times for superhero films. There’s talk of oversaturation. DC and Warner Bros. are in makeover mode. Box-office dominance this year. ‘I also think you have to not set your sights on such a big box-office return so then you can comfortably take risks.”

“The more we can do that as an industry, the better,” DaCosta says. “As you make more and more films, you want those films to be more interesting, more dynamic and to appeal to different audiences. But that requires risk. And there’s a conundrum where you’re so big that you can’t take risks. I think that’s what the audience is feeling. They’re like: ‘I’ve seen it before, and I liked it the first time.’”

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Capturing the substance and style of 1970

‘Holdovers’ set in that year, shot largely with equipment and lenses from same period

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

The great films of the 1970s have long loomed in the imagination of filmmakers raised during one of the most fertile periods of American movies. Alexander Payne wanted to take it a step further.

Payne’s latest film, “The Holdovers,” isn’t just set in 1970, it seeks to imbibe the humanistic spirit of films like “The Last Detail,” “Harold and Maude,” “The Landlord” and “Paper Moon” — all movies he screened for his cast and crew.

“We were very fully making a ‘70s movie,” Payne says, recently speaking by phone from his desk in Omaha, Neb.

Payne, 62, shot “The Holdovers,” set at a New England boarding school, largely with filmmaking equipment and camera lenses from that period. He mixed it in mono.

“We were trying to play the exercise of: We are in 1970 making this movie,” he says.

“The Holdovers,” released widely this weekend, is Payne’s first film in six years and it’s one of his best. Payne, the filmmaker of “Election,” “Sideways” and “The Descendants,” has long made “the kind of films they don’t make anymore”: smart, funny, melancholic dramas for adults. And yet he’s kept making them. After decades of making contemporary films that in some way evoke a ‘70s sensibility of cinema, he’s finally made the genuine article.

“I was just trying to replicate the experience of the movies I love as much as possible,” Payne says. “I don’t think it makes the movie quaint. I think it lends the warmth of nostalgia, the warmth of a lost time, maybe even some traces of memory.”

“The Holdovers” reunites Payne with Paul Giamatti nearly two decades after the actor’s memorable, merlot-loving breakthrough performance in “Sideways.”

This time, Giamatti plays a curmudgeonly Barton Academy classics teacher named Paul Hunham tasked to stay at school with a handful of kids without family plans over the Christmas break.

The setup could be broad: a gang of outcasts and troublemakers sneaking joints while the widely loathed Hunham chases them down the halls. And while there is some of that, Payne pared the script no one wants to read — was in need of a road trip to jostle him out of a rut, his Hunham is likewise due for some self-reflection and maybe a little encouragement.

For Payne, it was a long-overdue reunion.

“I wanted to work with that guy again for 20 years,” he says. “I was waiting for the right thing — and created it. I told (screenwriter) David Hemingson: ‘We’re writing for Paul Giamatti. That’s who we’re writing for.’”

“I was just trying to replicate the experience of the movies I love as much as possible. I don’t think it makes the movie quaint. I hope it lends it the warmth of nostalgia, the warmth of a lost time, maybe even some traces of memory.”

— Alexander Payne
“The Holdovers” director

“He’s just the best actor,” Payne adds. “He’s the finest actor. Not casting aspersions on others, I just think there’s nothing he cannot do.”

When Payne screened “The Holdovers” for buyers at last year’s Toronto International Film Festival, it prompted heated interest. Focus snapped it up for $30 million — far more than is typical — a sign of the indie distributor’s belief in the movie as a crowd-pleaser and an awards contender. The three lead actors are likely to be in the Oscar mix.

But while Giamatti and Randolph are well-known performers, Sessa is appearing in his first film. After sifting through some 800 submissions, Payne felt like he still hadn’t found someone to play Angus. He and the casting director decided to call up the schools they were going to be shooting in to see if their drama departments had anyone to recommend.

“One of the schools we were going to be shooting was Deerfield Academy in West-
Jeff Tweedy is known to fans as a prolific songwriter and poignant lyricist. So it may come as a surprise that the frontman of the Grammy-winning rock band Wilco has long found the act of writing intimidating. “I’ve always been really afraid of prose because I wasn’t good in school. I was always underachieving. And part of it was I always felt overwhelmed by how much there is to say,” he said.

Perhaps ironically, that fear is in part what compelled a young Tweedy to start writing music four decades ago. “Songwriting is condensing things and giving yourself the freedom to omit lots of things, just to try and get the essence of an emotion or the essence of a story to come through,” he said.

But as he geared up to release his third book, out Nov. 7, Tweedy admitted the task of writing no longer daunts him the way it once did. Having already tackled a memoir and a “how to” book on songwriting, Tweedy is now shifting his attention to other musicians and the ways their art has influenced him in “World Within a Song.”

The book is just as much about the circumstances in which Tweedy experienced these eclectic 50 tracks as it is about the songs themselves — the comfort that hearing “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” with his Judy Garland-loving mom brought him as a kid or the ways in which Minutemen’s “History Lesson — Part II” bred his longing to be a rock star.

And while Tweedy, whose unadulterated love for music is still palpable after decades in the industry, recognizes the benefits of the unfettered access to songs that streaming platforms grant, he also laments what is lost when listeners don’t have to “work for it” in their search for music. “I think that there was something really important about the way my generation and previous generations invested themselves in music. The only way to get it was to pay for it. And once you had made just even that outlay of cash, you made time to find a way into it,” he said. “Now, I think if you don’t like something immediately, there’s 10,000 other...
Springsteen heads to Europe; Creed to reunite

While we typically focus far too much on what’s happening stateside each month, here’s a Thanksgiving treat: Let’s lead with European dates this time around.

Or, more specifically, Bruce Springsteen’s European dates.

The Boss (assuming all health issues will be overcome by then, of course) will hit the European road in May of next year, kicking things off in Cardiff, Wales on May 5. The run, along with his E Street Band, will go all the way through July 25 when things wrap up at London’s Wembley Stadium. This, of course, will come after his North American dates — some of which will be held over from 2023 and will begin in Phoenix on March 19. Springsteen was on his way to the top of the live music charts for 2023 earlier this year when peptic ulcer disease forced the singer to shut things down for what was then the foreseeable future. A consolation prize was Pollstar naming The Boss’ tour at No. 2 on its mid-year top 10, having already raked in a little less than $150 million by the middle of 2023.

Speaking of Pollstar, our monthly check in with its Live 75 list, which ranks active tours by tickets sold for shows performing over the last 30 days, reveals that the week of Oct. 30 saw The Weeknd running away with the top spot, selling an average of about $55,000 tickets in the aforementioned time period. Coldplay, of all bands, came in at No. 4 with an average of 30,000 tickets sold, while Guns N’ Roses landed at the No. 4 spot with an average of about 22,000 tickets sold. Shania Twain rounded out the list at No. 10 with an average of approximately 12,000 tickets sold over the last 30 days.

And while Twain might be most associated with country music, her crossover work in the pop realm has proved as fruitful as anything she’s done throughout her career. So with pop music in mind… how about some New Kids On The Block?! That’s right, the boy band, along with Paula Abdul and DJ Jazzy Jeff, will head out for The Magic Summer 2024 Tour next year, hitting a total of 40 North American cities along the way. As for what it is that said magic precisely entails, Donnie Wahlberg, he of NKOTB fame, claimed that “the true magic of the tour is the music, the moments and the shared memories that we get to create with our amazing fans each night,” in a recent interview.

Oh, OK, then. Perhaps just as magical? A Creed reunion. And no. I’m not kidding. The ‘90s rockers are getting the band back together and plan to hit the road with 3 Doors, Down, Daughtry, Switchfoot, Tonic, and (high fives for this!) Canadian greats Big Wreck. It will be a summer jaunt and they’ll be hitting the bulk of outdoor amphitheaters with arms wide open beginning July 17.

If that’s not enough rock for you, Lynyrd Skynyrd and ZZ Top announced last week that they will reboot their successful 2023 run in 2024 as they commence The Sharp Dressed Simple Man Tour for a run of spring dates. Those kick off March 8 in Savannah, Ga., and after taking a break between April and August, will conclude Sept. 22, 2024, in Ridgefield, Wash.

Be sure not to forget your cheap sunglasses, all while giving your best three steps to the proceedings. Or something like that.

Hey, there.

Happy concert-ing!

FROM PAGE 16

Tweedy: Singer’s love of music shines through

songs that you want to go to and find something that’s going to hit you right away.”

To combat that throwaway culture, Tweedy makes a habit of listening to music he’s not into, trying to discern why that is — a practice, he says, that often confuses “the algorithm” used by streaming services to predict people’s tastes.

“I don’t like not liking music. And so a lot of times I visit stuff thinking, ‘I know I’m not a big fan of this, but I want to know what other people are hearing in it,’ he explained. “I think there’s really something interesting about listening to things that you don’t love or don’t think were made for you.”

Although often dubbed an alternative country band, Wilco has bent genres since they first formed 30 years ago, solidifying their reputation for experimentation and musicality into an impressive run spanning their seminal 2002 record, “Yankovic Hotel Fooktotr” — their best-selling album to date.

“We’ve tried hard to kill genres for ourselves,” Tweedy said of the Chicago-based band’s per­spect­ive on their country associa­tions. “It’s an artistic tool, in a way. When somebody is coming at your music with a precon­ceived notion, then you have some friction to push against. And that’s artistically enticing.”

That genre defiance continues with their 13th studio album, “Cousin,” released in September. The band has spent most of 2023 touring, despite Tweedy’s ongo­ing battle with osteoarthritis in his hips. The pain is at times debilitating, and even walking short distances proves difficult for the 56-year-old. During a recent show in Los Angeles, though, Tweedy’s pain was hard­ly apparent during a two-hour set.

While the discomfort is at times distracting for him, he says the act of performing does, for brief moments, make him forget.

“Music has an amazing mag­i­cal power to transport you from pain, emotional and physical, for sure. And I do feel like I go some­place else most of the night,” he said.

Bruce Springsteen, who was sidelined by peptic ulcer disease, will get back on the road in March.

Of course, Cat Power, otherwise known as Chan Marshall, returns not to the Manchester Free Trade Hall but to the Royal Albert Hall for this live re­creation of the famous show. But it’s not a copy. She puts her own stamp on the mate­rial while not deviating from Dylan’s 1966 arrangements.

She delivers the first set solo acoustic just as Dylan did, alone with harmonica and guitar. She serves up spine-tingling versions of some of Dylan’s best work including “Visions of Johanna,” “Desolation Row” and “Mr. Tambourine Man.”

Then she returns in the second set with a full band to deliver purer Dylan: “Ballad of a Thin Man,” “Just Like Tom Thumb’s Blues” and clos­ing, just as Dylan did, with “Like a Rolling Stone,” one of the greatest rock songs ever written.

Unlike the original Dylan show, which he released in full in 1998, Cat Power’s electric set is more of a celebration than a tussle with the audience.

Cat Power could never replicate that comba­tive energy, but she doesn’t have to. While remaining faithful to the songs and the live ar­rangements, she shines a light on Dylan’s genius and the beauty of the music nearly 60 years after the original concert, while leaving her own mark.

BY SCOTT BAUER

“Cat Power Sings Dylan: The 1966 Royal Albert Hall Concert” is a faithful song-by-song recreation, without the boos, of Bob Dylan’s infamous concert — from the tour where he played electric guitar for the first time.

Unlike Dylan’s divisive 1966 shows, no one seeing singer-songwriter Cat Power in 2022 when this was recorded — also at the famed Royal Albert Hall — was likely so angered or surprised by what they heard that they felt compelled to walk out or hurl insults. Her acoustic first set, followed by second set com­plete with a full, plugged-in band, is rightfully met with thunderous applause.

Back in 1965, when Dylan angered folk music traditionalists by plugging in and playing his new songs backed by a band, fans stomped their feet, jeered and walked out. In Manchester, England, one attendee was so an­gered that he famously yelled “Judas!” at Dylan just before he launched into “Like a Rolling Stone.”

The moment gained fame on bootlegs that remained faithful to the songs and the live arrangements, she shines a light on Dylan’s genius and the beauty of the music nearly 60 years after the original concert, while leaving her own mark.

Cat Power replicates Bob Dylan’s infamous ’66 concert, without boos

BY COLIN McGUIRE

Liner Notes
Why are some people so afraid of clowns?

Unpredictability, inscrutability among patterns psychologists have noted among coulrophobics

BY TEDDY AMENABAR
The Washington Post

For 15 years, psychology professor Philip John Tyson has been teaching classes on phobias. At the start of every semester, he asks his students the same question: What are you afraid of?

Students routinely cited spiders, snakes and claustrophobic spaces, but a consistent minority would say they were “terrified of clowns,” said Tyson, an associate professor of psychology at the University of South Wales. He wanted to know why.

Tyson and his colleagues began researching “coulrophobia,” or fear of clowns. Although the prevalence of clown phobia isn’t clear, one recent survey in the United States found that about 5% of the population said they were afraid — or very afraid — of clowns. Tyson’s team used its own surveys to identify more than 500 people who suffered from clown fear and then asked them to rate their feelings about clowns.

- How often did they think of clowns?
- What would they do if they encountered a clown on the street?
- How long have they feared the red-nosed jokers?

In what may be a first-of-its-kind study focusing on the origins of clown fear, the University of South Wales team noticed some distinct patterns in the group. The study, called “Fear of clowns: An investigation into the aetiology of coulrophobia,” was published in the journal Frontiers in Psychology. While the research is not based on a representative sample of the population, the findings offer insights into the reasons some people fear clowns, Tyson said.

“One of the most surprising findings is that for many people, having a “scary personal experience with a clown wasn’t a main contributor to the fear,” Tyson said. Instead, people said they were crested out by clowns because:

- You can never really know what a clown is thinking. It’s can be difficult to know what’s really going on in the mind of a clown with a painted on smile or frown.
- There’s something about not being able to read facial expressions,” Tyson said. “And the fact that there might be something hidden and dangerous, there might be harmful intent behind the makeup.”

Clowns are unpredictable. Clowns make some people laugh, but they often behave in unpredictable and startling ways that normal people never would (such as squirting water from a flower or honking a horn). People who are scared of spiders say something similar, worrying the spider will jump on them unexpectedly, Tyson said.

- A clown’s exaggerated features are disturbing. The big red nose, the egg head, the puffs of neon-colored hair. People seem to be scared of beings that look nearly human but not exactly, in the same way some people find baby dolls, aliens or robots disturbing.

- Movie clowns are terrifying. Many of those surveyed also said their fear is due, in part, to movies starring scary clowns, such as Joaquin Phoenix in “The Joker” or Pennywise, the demonic clown in Stephen King’s “It.”

The fear of clowns is not entirely born from fiction. The mass murderer John Wayne Gacy, who killed at least 33 teenage boys and young men in the Chicago area, was known to have entertained at children’s parties as “Pogo the Clown.” In a trailer for a Netflix documentary about Gacy, he’s heard saying on tape that “clowns can get away with anything.” More recently, a spate of creepy clown sightings in the U.K. and the United States in 2016 caused schools to lock down, which all led King to tweet: “Hey, guys, time to cool the clown hysteria — most of ’em are good, cheer up the kiddies, make people laugh.”

The clowns would like to have a word

Jon Davison, a clown performer, teacher, director and researcher at the London Metropolitan University, said the reports of coulrophobia don’t match up with what he sees himself or hears from other performers. He said that in 38 years of clowning, he has only on two occasions come across fear of clowns. Clowns typically aren’t trying to unnerve or unsettle their audiences when they perform, he said.

“In fact, completely the opposite,” Davison said. The goal is to portray this person who is “helpless, vulnerable and, actually, doesn’t have a clue about how the world works.”

Clowns want audiences to laugh at their performances but they’re also trying to get people to sympathize with their character, who’s often “at the mercy of our society.” “Somehow, you sense the humanity,” he said. “It’s like a little kid.”

What makes somebody creepy?

Tyson and colleagues are in the process of studying whether it’s certain aspects of clown makeup — specifically, the white and red paint — that elicit the fear or phobia.

James Greville, a lecturer in psychology at the University of South Wales, said one theory is that the white face paint can be perceived as a “deathly pallor,” pale and lifeless and something to be avoided. And the red lipstick or accents on a clown’s face may feel threatening because they tap into our wariness of blood or a contagious infection.

Frank McAndrew, a psychology professor at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., said “firmly believes” clowns have “wonderful intentions” to entertain audiences, but that doesn’t change whether some people are on guard when they see a clown. People don’t want to become the butt of a joke, McAndrew said.

“No one comes out of an interaction with a clown looking dignified,” he said. “For a lot of people who want to present themselves well in public, the clown is a threat.”

In 2016, McAndrew co-authored a study called “On the Nature of Creepiness,” surveying more than 1,300 people to better understand the behaviors and characteristics that may lead someone to feel creeped out. In one section, the respondents rated 21 different occupations from “not at all creepy” to “very creepy.” Clowning scored the highest among the group, rating higher in creepiness than a taxidermist, sex shop worker or funeral director.

There’s a lot of uncertainty regarding an interaction with a clown, McAndrew said. You’re not sure how the performer is going to respond — and that can be unnerving.

“There’s this very easy connection between clowns and horror,” he said. “I don’t think they became creepy to us because people started putting them in haunted houses. I think they got put in haunted houses because people found them creepy to begin with.”

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* STARS AND STRIPES *
Friday, November 10, 2023

HEALTH & FITNESS

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- There’s something about not being able to read facial expressions,” Tyson said. “And the fact that there might be something hidden and dangerous, there might be harmful intent behind the makeup.”

Clowns are unpredictable. Clowns make some people laugh, but they often behave in unpredictable and startling ways that normal people never would (such as squirting water from a flower or honking a horn). People who are scared of spiders say something similar, worrying the spider will jump on them unexpectedly, Tyson said.

- A clown’s exaggerated features are disturbing. The big red nose, the egg head, the puffs of neon-colored hair. People seem to be scared of beings that look nearly human but not exactly, in the same way some people find baby dolls, aliens or robots disturbing.

- Movie clowns are terrifying. Many of those surveyed also said their fear is due, in part, to movies starring scary clowns, such as Joaquin Phoenix in “The Joker” or Pennywise, the demonic clown in Stephen King’s “It.”

The fear of clowns is not entirely born from fiction. The mass murderer John Wayne Gacy, who killed at least 33 teenage boys and young men in the Chicago area, was known to have entertained at children’s parties as “Pogo the Clown.” In a trailer for a Netflix documentary about Gacy, he’s heard saying on tape that “clowns can get away with anything.” More recently, a spate of creepy clown sightings in the U.K. and the United States in 2016 caused schools to lock down, which all led King to tweet: “Hey, guys, time to cool the clown hysteria — most of ’em are good, cheer up the kiddies, make people laugh.”

The clowns would like to have a word

Jon Davison, a clown performer, teacher, director and researcher at the London Metropolitan University, said the reports of coulrophobia don’t match up with what he sees himself or hears from other performers. He said that in 38 years of clowning, he has only on two occasions come across fear of clowns. Clowns typically aren’t trying to unnerve or unsettle their audiences when they perform, he said.

“In fact, completely the opposite,” Davison said. The goal is to portray this person who is “helpless, vulnerable and, actually, doesn’t have a clue about how the world works.”

Clowns want audiences to laugh at their performances but they’re also trying to get people to sympathize with their character, who’s often “at the mercy of our society.” “Somehow, you sense the humanity,” he said. “It’s like a little kid.”

What makes somebody creepy?

Tyson and colleagues are in the process of studying whether it’s certain aspects of clown makeup — specifically, the white and red paint — that elicit the fear or phobia.

James Greville, a lecturer in psychology at the University of South Wales, said one theory is that the white face paint can be perceived as a “deathly pallor,” pale and lifeless and something to be avoided. And the red lipstick or accents on a clown’s face may feel threatening because they tap into our wariness of blood or a contagious infection.

Frank McAndrew, a psychology professor at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., said “firmly believes” clowns have “wonderful intentions” to entertain audiences, but that doesn’t change whether some people are on guard when they see a clown. People don’t want to become the butt of a joke, McAndrew said.

“No one comes out of an interaction with a clown looking dignified,” he said. “For a lot of people who want to present themselves well in public, the clown is a threat.”

In 2016, McAndrew co-authored a study called “On the Nature of Creepiness,” surveying more than 1,300 people to better understand the behaviors and characteristics that may lead someone to feel creeped out. In one section, the respondents rated 21 different occupations from “not at all creepy” to “very creepy.” Clowning scored the highest among the group, rating higher in creepiness than a taxidermist, sex shop worker or funeral director.

There’s a lot of uncertainty regarding an interaction with a clown, McAndrew said. You’re not sure how the performer is going to respond — and that can be unnerving.

“There’s this very easy connection between clowns and horror,” he said. “I don’t think they became creepy to us because people started putting them in haunted houses. I think they got put in haunted houses because people found them creepy to begin with.”
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

FABRIC-ATIONS
BY ALINA ABIDI / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

ACROSS
47 Site with a “Culturally Jewish” option
50 “Calvin and …” post (SATEEN)
40 Thumbs-up (SATEEN)
44 James of “The Blacklist”
46 Location for a tragus piercing

DOWN
1 Grand
2 Skirt style
3 Omate garden features
4 Broken down
5 Visits, as a restroom
6 “Love, Reign ____ Me” (song by the Who)
7 Formula 1 event
8 Sole protector?
9 True
10 Weed gummy, e.g.
11 Famed New York City hotel
12 Trick-taking card game
13 Bugaboos
14 Dungeons & Dragons and others, for short
15 Did a great job, in Gen Z lingos
16 Pride: ions: business
17 Components of a mind map
18 Superfans
19 A red one is sweeter
20 Got comfortable with
21 What integrals calculate
22 Got comfortable with
23 Holiday building materials (GABARDINE)
24 Toy with verbal endearment
25 Stay up all night
26 Chocolate brand with a “Culturally Jewish” option
27 Like some language exams
28 Hawkins who wrote “Gone With the Wind” (2015)
29 “You ____?”
30 Without
31 Lighter alternative to (GABARDINE)
32 Makes some stitches
33 “Siddhartha” author
34 Elilor
35 In its prime
36 Washington post (SATEEN)
37 Components of a mind map
38 Thrupus (SATEEN)
39 Get seriously conked
40 James of “The Blacklist”
41 Understand someone else’s side
42 Away
43 Try out
44 Altman who’s the C.E.O. of OpenAI
45 Energy sanctions measure
46 A red one is sweeter than a green one
47 Soaps, e.g.
48 Carbon levy, for instance
49 Fiberglass spring roll
50 “As It ____” (Harry Styles hit)
51 The Diamondbacks, e.g.
52 Fare that’s filled and folded
53 A red one is sweeter than a green one
54 Filipino spring roll
55 “As It ____” (Harry Styles hit)
56 It’s found next to mercurio on the periodic table
57 Bear’s home
58 Type of quasipercept
59 Common Father’s Day gift
60 Towel word
61 How everything flows
62 Common Father’s Day gift
63 Trick-taking card game
64 How everything flows
65 Visual-arts style
66 How everything flows
67 Hawkins who wrote “Gone With the Wind” (2015)
68 Mother
69 Rapper who originated “Shallow” (2018)
70 Latin “Behold!”
71 Clog in a bathtub drain, maybe
72 Monkeys (around)
73 Lighter alternative to (GABARDINE)
74 Nev. neighbor
75 Where Six Flags theme parks originated
76 Severe punishment
77 Fiction writing
78 “One of the best thing ___” (movie tagline)
79 Precurso to the main act (NEOPRENE)
80 Daily crossword answer, for short
81 Ornate garden features
82 What vampires don’t turn into, in “Twilight”
83 Rainbow creator
84 Cozy socks
85 Mr. Whipple of old commercials, e.g.
86 Trick-taking card game
87 "One of the best thing ___” (movie tagline)
88 Like most running shoes
89 Easily shockable sort
90 Car model whose name comes from the Japanese word for “crown”
91 Who said, “Opinion is the medium between ignorance and knowledge and ignorance”
92 Something that may be cast
93 “WandaVision” actress
94 Particle Rivera
95 “WandaVision” actress
96 United, English soccer team
97 Some hotel lobbies
98 Country that’s more than a green one
99 Ship that may have inspired Homer’s “Odyssey”
100 Manticore
101 Young fellow
102 Big ask?
103 Part of a Yahtzee set
104 Pharmacy giant

GUNSTON STREET

“Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.
Nintendo developing live-action ‘Zelda’ film

BY YURI KAGEYAMA
Associated Press

Nintendo is developing a live-action film based on its hit video game “The Legend of Zelda,” the Japanese company behind the Super Mario franchise said Wednesday.

The film, with financing from Sony Pictures Entertainment as well as its own investment, will be directed by Wes Ball, the American director of the upcoming “Planet of the Apes” film. It’s being co-produced by Nintendo and Arad Productions Inc., which is behind the live-action Spider-Man films and headed by Avi Arad.

The move highlights Kyoto-based Nintendo’s strategy to leverage various aspects of its business, including theme parks, merchandising and movies, to boost machine and software sales, and vice versa.

That strategy has met success. Its animated film “The Super Mario Bros. Movie,” released earlier this year, has raked in more than $1.3 billion and drew an audience of nearly 170 million worldwide.

President Shuntaro Furukawa, briefing reporters online, said the company was pleased with the success of the Super Mario animation film, the first movie of which Nintendo was a direct producer.

The planned release date of the Zelda movie was not announced. Shigeru Miyamoto, the Nintendo executive who has spearheaded the creative innovations at the company for decades, said it will be released only when it’s ready, while stressing that work on the project has been going on for a decade.

“I realize there are so many Zelda fans, and we cannot betray their expectations. That is a big hurdle. But we are ready,” Miyamoto said.

Nintendo reported Tuesday an 18% rise in net profit for its first fiscal half, totaling nearly 271.3 billion yen ($1.8 billion), up from 230 billion yen a year earlier.

Lainey Wilson wows CMAs

Singer wins 5 awards including entertainer of the year, album of the year

BY ANDREW DALTON
Associated Press

Lainey Wilson took home five trophies including entertainer of the year Wednesday night at the Country Music Association Awards.

The 31-year-old Louisiana singer was the undisputed star of the night at Nashville’s Bridgestone Arena, where she also was named female vocalist of the year and won album of the year for “Bell Bottom Country.”

Wilson also gave a fiery rendition of her song “Wildflowers and Wild Horses” that looked like it came from a classic Hollywood Western.

“This is all I’ve ever wanted to do, it’s the only thing I know how to do,” Wilson said through tears as she accepted entertainer of the year.

“It finally feels like country music is starting to love me back.”

Wilson came into the night the top nominee with nine nods, and had won one award before the ABC telecast even started as she and HARDY were named as winners in the musical event of the year category, for “Wait in the Truck.”

It was also another major Nashville night for rapper-turned-singer Jelly Roll, who earlier this year topped the CMT Music Awards.

He opened the show with a performance of his hit “Need a Favor,” along with surprise guest Wynonna Judd, then closed it in a duet with K. Michelle on “Love Can Build A Bridge,” Judd’s classic song with her late mother Naomi.

In between, Jelly Roll won best new artist.

“There is something poetic about a 39-year-old man winning new artist of the year,” he said from the stage. “What’s in front of you is so much more important than what’s behind you.”

Luke Combs, winner of entertainer of the year the previous two years, took home single of the year for “Fast Car” by Tracy Chapman, who became the unlikely winner of song of the year for a tune she wrote in 1988.

“I want to thank Tracy Chapman for writing one of the greatest songs of all time,” the 33-year-old North Carolina singer said as he accepted the award.

“It’s the first favorite song I ever had.” Chapman, who won two Grammys for “Fast Car” in 1989, was not at the ceremony, but said in a statement that it’s “truly an honor for my song to be recognized 35 years after its debut.”

Luke Bryan and Peyton Manning hosted the ceremony, which featured a musical tribute to the late singer-songwriter Jimmy Buffett that included Kenny Chesney, the Zac Brown Band, Alan Jackson and Mac McAnally, a long-time member of Buffett’s band.

The group made a beach party of a medley of Buffett’s hits, beginning with “A Pirate Looks at Forty” and ending with “Margaritaville” as Chesney shouted “Thank you Jimmy!” to Buffett, who was always beloved among country artists.

In what is becoming a series of CMA traditions, Chris Stapleton won male vocalist of the year for the seventh time, Old Dominion won vocal group of the year for the sixth time, and Brothers Osborne won duo of the year for their sixth time.

“We’re shocked, honestly, every year this happens,” T.J. Osborne said.
Rising heat may cause fights among predators

BY CHRISTINA LARSON
Associated Press

Cheetahs are usually daytime hunters, but the speedy big cats will shift their activity toward dawn and dusk hours during warmer weather, a new study finds.

Unfortunately for endangered cheetahs, that sets them up for more potential conflicts with mostly nocturnal competing predators such as lions and leopards, said the authors of research published Wednesday in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

“Changing temperatures can impact the behavior patterns of large carnivore species and also the dynamics among species,” said University of Washington biologist Briana Abrahms, a study co-author.

While cheetahs only eat fresh meat, lions and leopards will sometimes opportunistically scavenge from smaller predators.

“The cheetahs will not fight the larger cats, they will just leave,” said Bettina Wachter, a behavioral biologist who leads the Cheetah Research Project at the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research.

“The cheetahs will not fight the larger cats, they will just leave,” said Wachter, who is based in Namibia and was not involved in the study.

Hunting at different times of the day is one long-evolved strategy to reduce encounters between the multiple predator species that share northern Botswana’s mixed savannah and forest landscape. But the new study found that on the hottest days, when maximum daily temperatures soared to nearly 113 degrees Fahrenheit, cheetahs became more nocturnal — increasing their overlapping hunting hours with rival big cats by 16%.

“There’s a greater chance for more unfriendly encounters and less food for the cheetahs,” said co-author Kasim Rafiq, a biologist at the University of Washington and the nonprofit Botswana Predator Conservation Trust.

For the current study, researchers placed GPS tracking collars on 53 large carnivores — including cheetahs, lions, leopards and African wild dogs — and recorded their locations and hours of activity over eight years. They compared this data with maximum daily temperature records.

While seasonal cycles explain most temperature fluctuations in the study window of 2011 to 2018, the scientists have said the observed behavior changes offer a peek into the future of a warming world.

In the next phase of research, the scientists plan to use audio-recording devices and accelerometers — “like a Fitbit for big cats,” said Rafiq — to document the frequency of encounters between large carnivores.

In addition to competition with lions and leopards, cheetahs already face severe pressure from habitat fragmentation and conflict with humans.

The fastest land animal, cheetahs are the rarest big cat in Africa, with fewer than 7,000 left in the wild.

These climate changes could become really critical if we look into the future — it’s predicted to become much warmer in this part of Africa where cheetahs live, in Botswana, Namibia and Zambia,” said Wachter of the Cheetah Research Project.

Last 12 months on Earth were hottest ever recorded, analysis finds

By Sabella O’Malley
Associated Press

The last 12 months were the hottest Earth has ever recorded, according to a new report by Climate Central, a nonprofit science research group.

The peer-reviewed report says burning gasoline, coal, natural gas and other fossil fuels that release planet-warming gases like carbon dioxide, and other human activities caused the unnatural warming from November 2022 to October 2023.

While the course of the year, 7.3 billion people, or 90% of humanity, endured at least 10 days of high temperatures that were made at least three times more likely because of climate change. “People know that things are weird, but they don’t they don’t necessarily know why it’s weird. They don’t connect back to the fact that we’re still burning coal, oil and natural gas,” said Andrew Pershing, a climate scientist at Climate Central.

“I think the thing that really came screaming out of the data this year was nobody is safe. Everybody was experiencing unusual climate-driven heat at some point during the year,” said Pershing.

The average global temperature was 2.3 degrees higher than the pre-industrial climate, which scientists say is close to the limit countries agreed not to go over in the Paris Agreement — a 2.7 rise.

The impacts were apparent as one in four humans, or 1.9 billion people, suffered from dangerous heat waves.

Here’s how a few regions were affected by the extreme heat:

1. Extreme heat fueled destructive rainfall because a warmer atmosphere holds more water vapor, which lets storms release more precipitation. Storm Daniel became Africa’s deadliest storm with an estimated death toll that ranges between 4,000 and 11,000, according to officials and aid agencies. Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey also saw damages and fatalities from Storm Daniel.

2. In India, 1.2 billion people, or 86% of the population, experienced at least 30 days of elevated temperatures, made at least three times more likely by climate change.

3. Drought in Brazil’s Amazon region caused rivers to dry to historic lows, cutting people off from food and fresh water.

4. At least 383 people died in U.S. extreme weather events, with 93 deaths related to the Maui wildfire event, the deadliest U.S. fire of the century.

5. One of every 200 people in Canada evacuated their home due to wildfires, which burn longer and more intensely after long periods of heat dry out the land.

Canadian fires sent smoke billowing across much of North America.
**In the Ukraine war, which side is the GOP on?**

**By Trudy Rubin**

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

The “party of Putin,” also known as the Republican Party, seems determined to help Vladimir Putin defeat Ukraine. By boosting the Russian president, the GOP is not only undermining U.S. security and supporting a dangerous adversary, but it is also helping Hamas in its effort to destroy the Israeli state.

You don’t believe me? Consider the following:

The House Republican majority, bowed by its MAGA wing and encouraged by Donald Trump, has rushed to abandon Ukraine. Mike Johnson, the newly installed speaker, ripped up a combined military assistance package for Israel and Ukraine and eliminated aid for Kyiv.

And now, even Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who previously pushed back forcefully against GOP isolationists, seems to have been swayed by the extremists. That is dangerous for U.S. security and for Israel, as well.

At first, McConnell tried to fight back against MAGA recklessness.

“One day I get the chance, this is a false choice,” McConnell said late last month. “If Russia prevails, there’s no question that Putin’s appetite for empire will actually extend into NATO, raising the threat to the U.S. transatlantic alliance and the risk of war for America.”

Too true.

Yet McConnell now appears to have been trapped into tying further Ukraine military aid to fixing the southern border, a process that will take months or years if ever it happens — leaving Ukraine without the military support it will need this winter and onward.

The GOP might as well tell Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky: “Drop dead.”

What’s so bizarre about this GOP blindness is that Putin has positioned himself as the staunch ally of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran — all groups that most Republicans rally against. By helping Putin, Republicans are strengthening all three.

A senior Hamas delegation visited Moscow on Oct. 26, as did a top Iranian official. The Kremlin refuses to call Hamas a terrorist group and has not condemned Hamas’ actions on Oct. 7. A stunned Israeli foreign ministry condemned Putin’s hosting of Hamas as a reprehensible step that gives support to terrorism.

Certainly, Hamas thinks Russia is supporting it (as it has done for many years).

“We have factories producing Kalashnikov assault rifles and their ammunition. We have a Russian license to produce Kalashnikov ammunition in Gaza. There are countries that support us politically. Even Russia sympathizes with us,” Ali Baraka, a senior Hamas official, boasted on Russia Today’s Arabic news channel.

“Russia is happy that America is getting embroiled in the Palestinian war. It eases the pressure on the Russians in Ukraine. One war eases the pressure in another war. So we’re not alone on the battlefield,” he said.

The Israel-Hamas war has given Putin an opportunity to pose as the champion of the Global South against Western or Israeli policies. Or as Putin describes it, “The ugly neocolonial system of international relations.”

But anyone who buys that nonsense (including some Americans on the progress left) ignores the grim fact that Putin is the ultimate colonialist, trying to destroy the sovereign state of Ukraine and force it back under the control of a rebuilt Russian empire.

Moreover, the Kremlin critique of Israel’s bombing of Gaza — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov denounced “indiscriminately using force” against civilians — is nauseatingly hypocritical.

Russia deliberately pulverized hospitals and markets in Syria and has deliberately targeted Ukrainian civilians, schools, hospitals, and markets for the past two years.

If this isn’t enough to wake the GOP isolationists to the danger of helping Putin, let us consider that Iran is providing Russia with weapons to use against Ukraine. Ukraine’s president, with Russian-made surface-to-air defense systems to be used against Israel. These systems were gifted to Damascus by the Kremlin. Such a gift would require a green light from Moscow. They would be a thank you to Tehran for its drones.

So let’s sum up the plot of this theater of the absurd: The GOP wants to cut aid to Ukraine (or make its passage impossible) even as the current temporary funding bill expires at the end of November.

At that point, U.S. aid to Ukraine runs out, meaning that Kyiv may be fighting without enough ammunition at a critical juncture in its effort to push back Russia. Contrary to many GOP assertions, a stalemate in Ukraine’s efforts is not inevitable, because Ukraine has been making progress in cutting off Russian supply routes to Crimea.

If President Joe Biden would only, finally, send the kind of long-range ATACMS missiles Kyiv needs (he hasn’t, contrary to a lot of bad news reporting), Ukraine could finish that job.

Instead, to repeat, Republicans are playing into Putin’s hands, helping Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. In so doing, they are increasing the danger to Israel — and to America.

*Which side are you on, boys? Which side are you on?*

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial board member for The Philadelphia Inquirer.
Wednesday's scores

MIDWEST
Miami (Ohio) 19, Akron 9

SOUTH
Georgia Southern 78, Yellow Jackets 49

CUMULATIVE
Miami (Ohio) 19

Wednesday’s scores

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CUMULATIVE
Miami (Ohio) 19
NCAA: Officiating in women’s final was below expectations

By Doug Feinberg  
Associated Press

The national championship game in women’s basketball last spring was unforgettable for a lot of good reasons. LSU beating Iowa for its first title. A record television audience of nearly 10 million viewers. The spicy intensity between star players Angel Reese and Caitlin Clark.

The game will also be remembered for its controversial officiating and The Associated Press has learned that an NCAA review concluded the refereeing did not meet expectations.

The organization had planned a review of NCAA Tournament officiating after the 2024 championship concludes next April, but it was sped up by a year after criticism of the LSU-Iowa showdown.

NCAA vice president for women’s basketball Lynn Holzman said the officials were graded on the accuracy of their calls and the overall accuracy number fell short.

“Tenth-ranked Florida Atlantic came in with its highest ranking and the expectations to match. The Owls are off to a good start. Vladislav Goldin tied a career-high 19 points and set one with 10 rebounds and FAU beat Loyola Chicago 75-62 in the teams’ season opener on Wednesday night.

Goldin also set personal bests with five blocks and four steals. Nick Boyd scored 13, while Johnell Davis and Brandon Weatherspoon added 12 apiece. Boyd and Weatherspoon each hit three 3-pointers, and the balanced Owls showed why they have their sights on the NCAA championship coming off a surprising run to the Final Four. With all five starters back and only one player gone from a team that went 35-4 and got knocked out by San Diego State in the semis on a buzzer-beating jumper, FAU is off to a good start.

Just to put closure on last year, coach Dusty May said. “It was a special season, but as a coach, as a program and as a group of players still chasing their individual goals and dreams, it was nice just to move on to the next chapter and see what this team can become.”

Goldin sounded as if he has turned the page.

“New team, new season, new chapter,” he said.

May was an assistant at Florida during the 2017-18 season when Loyola knocked off the fifth-ranked Gators for their first win over a top-five team since 1984. The Ramblers won 32 games and stunned the nation with a Final Four run.

There were no surprises this time, though FAU didn’t exactly have an easy go of it. Though there were no lead changes, Loyola didn’t go quietly.

The Owls went on a 17-2 run in the first half to break open a two-point game. They withstood several pushes in the second half by Loyola — no stranger to surprising Final Four runs — and opened their sixth season under May on a winning note.

Philip Alston scored 15 for the Ramblers, who are trying to bounce back from a 10-win season. Big picture, that is a top-10 team and it’s our first game of the year so that’s a gauge, that’s where we want to be by the end of the year,” he said. “I thought that gives us a little confidence that obviously we know we can play with anybody.”

Owls prevail

Sister Jean, who became a celebrity during Loyola’s Final Four run, was on hand for the game, which was part of a doubleheader sponsored by Barstool Sports, with Arizona State playing Mississippi State later. The beloved 104-year-old nun had to like what she was seeing when Alston scored in the paint to cut it to 24-22.

Weatherspoon quickly quieted the crowd at Wintrust Arena — about 10 miles south of Loyola’s home on the Far North Side — when he nailed a 3 to start a 17-2 run. Bryan Greenlee finished it with a layup that bumped the lead to 41-24 with 1:47 remaining in the half.

FAU led by 18 early in the second before Loyola scored 11 straight, pulling within 50-43 on a corner 3 by Patrick Mwamba. But FAU regrouped.

It was 56-48 when Goldin scored on a hook. Boyd scored on a fastbreak layup, Weatherspoon hit a free throw and Jalen Gaffney hit a jumper to bump the lead to 63-48 with just under eight minutes remaining.
GMs careful with words on Ohtani sweepstakes

By David Brandt
Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The race to add two-way baseball super star Shohei Ohtani is a black­butter free agency deal is off to a clandestine start.

“Special player, that’s all I’ll say,” said Chris Young, general manager of the World Series champion Texas Rangers.

“We’re going to be interested in looking at everything that’s available that can make us better,” New York Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said.

“We may ask some questions, but I can’t tell you we’re diving all in,” Houston Astros general manager Dana Brown said.

All 30 Major League Baseball general managers have gathered this week at baseball’s GM meetings in Scottsdale, though the meetings were cut short after a stomach virus that spread and af­ fected over 20 executives. Private­ ly, they’re surely discussing the developing Ohtani sweepstakes, which could cost the winning team upward of $500 million. But pub­ licly, questions about the poten­ tially historic bidding have been met with careful statements.

Even the team that employed the Japanese sensation the past six seasons — the Los Angeles Angels — doesn’t seem to have a good read on his future.

“There’s going to be a lot of at­ tention on it and I understand why,” Angels GM Perry Minasian said. “Great player. We’ll see how the offseason develops. We’ve got our plan and we’re going to try to execute that plan and see where it leads us.”

Ohtani is one of the most fasci­ nating cases for baseball’s free agency system since it began in 1976.

He’s 29 years old and just pro­ duced one of the best two­way sea­ sons in MLB history, batting .304 with 44 homers while also having a 3.14 ERA.

It’s unclear how much value he’ll provide as a pitcher in the coming seasons. He had Tommy John surgery in September of the second time in six years, and the list of pitchers who have success­ fully returned after having the pro­ cedure done twice is fairly short.

Recently World Series winner Nathan Eovaldi, Jameson Taillon and Daniel Hudson are a handful who have had success. Two­time All­Star Carlos Carrasco had the surgery three times and still came back to have a few more solid seasons. Current Dodgers star Walker Buehler — who recently had his second TJ surgery — hopes to join that group.

Even if Ohtani can’t contribute much on the mound, he’s one of the game’s elite hitters. He’s also a good enough athlete that he could be an option for first base or the outfield as he gets older.

There’s also an off­the­field component that can’t totally be quantified. Ohtani has reached a celebrity status that few other current baseball players can even imagine, and his arrival in any city would undoubtedly mean a huge boost for fan interest.

Instead of setting the free­agent market this off­ season, Ohtani is a market all his own.

“I brings so much to the game, so much excitement, he’s got a fan base, he’s an exciting player,” said Brown, the Astros GM. “I would love to have him, but are we going to go out and pursue Ohta­ ni? We may ask some questions, but I can’t tell you we’re diving all in.”

Then he said what pretty much every GM in Arizona was saying this week.

“We will definitely ask ques­ tions, though.”

Ohtani is the crown jewel of this year’s free­agent class, which ap­ pears a little short on franchise­altering players, particularly among hitters. Cody Bellinger is a former MVP who had a great bounce­back year with the Cubs. Four­time Gold Glove winner Matt Chapman is a top­quality third baseman. Tim Anderson is a two­time All­Star who is looking for a change of scen­ ery.

The pitching scene is a little more robust, with veterans Aaron Nola, Sonny Gray, Jordan Monte­ gomery and Japanese star Yoshi­ nobu Yamamoto on the market.

But none of them come close to bringing the juice — on or off the field — that Ohtani provides.

Still, a half­billion bucks? Former Angels teammate Mike Trout has the richest contract in the sport’s history at $426.5 million over 12 years, signed in 2019.

You don’t base an offseason on one single player,” Minasian said. “You have to have Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, Plan D, so on and so forth. We’re going to work like we always do. We’re going to be aggressive, we’re going to have a lot of conversations and see how everything goes.”

The Seattle Mariners are among a handful of teams that would seem a logical fit for Ohtani, given the upward trajectory of the franchise, the city’s history with former Japa­ nese star Ichiro Suzuki and its rela­ tively large Asian population.

Seattle GM Jerry Dipoto agreed that the Mariners have a lot to offer — though he wasn’t specifically talking about Ohtani.

“I think that’s with any free­ agent courtship,” Dipoto said. “It’s the one time in a baseball player’s life that you’re recruiting like a col­ lege program. You’re trying to sell your city, you’re trying to sell your vision, you’re trying to sell your people.”

New Angels manager Ron Washington will be entering his first job as a skipper since 2014 after spending the past seven seasons as Atlanta’s third base coach, helping the Braves win the World Series in 2021.

Washington hired as new Angels manager

By Greg Beacham
Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Los An­ geles Angels hired Ron Washing­ ton to be their new manager Wednesday, turning to a veteran baseball mind in an attempt to end nearly a decade of losing.

The 71­year­old Washington be­ came the majors’ oldest current manager and only the second ac­ tive Black manager, joining Dave Roberts of the Los Angeles Dodg­ ers.

“I’m lost for words, but not the work it will take,” Washington told The Associated Press by text mes­sage.

Washington led the Texas Ran­ ders from 2007­14, winning two AL pennants and getting 664­611. He spent the past seven seasons as Atlan­ tanta’s third base coach, helping the Braves to their 2021 World Se­ ries title.

Washington replaced Phil Ne­ vin, who wasn’t re­signed last month after 1­½ losing seasons in charge of the long­struggling An­ gels. Los Angeles is mired in stretches of eight consecutive los­ ing seasons and nine straight non­playoff seasons, both the longest streaks in the majors.

Washington has never shied away from work: He’s regularly among the first on the field, hitting hundreds of grounders to in­ fielders.

Arte Moreno, the Angels’ 77­ year­old owner, clearly hopes the experienced Washington can get the most out of a long­underachiev­ing franchise with a big payroll and three­time AL MVP Mike Trout, but almost no team success to show for it. Shohei Ohtani, the team’s su­ perstar two­way player, became a free agent this winter.

Washington got a two­year con­ tract. He’s the fourth manager in the last six seasons for the Angels following the departure of Mike Scioscia, who spent 19 years run­ ning the Halos’ bench before walk­ ing away after the 2018 season. Brad Ausmus, Joe Maddon and Ne­ vin have all tried and failed to re­ verse the Angels’ slide.

Washington’s successful tenure at Texas had plenty of ups and downs along the way. He tested positive for co­ canine use during the 2009 season and offered to resign, but he kept his job and led the Rangers to the World Series in 2010 and again in 2011.

Washington abruptly resigned from the Rangers on Sept. 5, 2014, surprising the baseball world. Two weeks later, he acknowledged hav­ ing an extramarital affair and cited it as the reason for leaving Texas, which had intended to bring him back in 2015.

With a reputation as a personal­ ble, old­school manager with an ob­ dulient personality and an exci­ ting edge, Washington also knows the AL West well. Along with his time in Texas, he spent 13 seasons over two stints as a coach with the Oakland Athletics.

Washington is also one of the most respected infield coaches in the game’s history — and former A’s third baseman Eric Chavez once gifted Washington one of his Gold Gloves because he played such a vital role. His drills and viewpoints have been used across the majors to improve players’ per­ formance, and he helped the Braves’ infielders throughout his most recent coaching stop — all four Atlanta infielders made the 2023 NL All­Star team, along with former Washington disciples Fred­ die Freeman and Dansby Swanson.

Washington passes Bruce Bochy of Texas and Brian Snitker of Atlan­ tanta, both 68, as Major League Base­ ball’s oldest current manager.

Dusty Baker was the oldest at 74 be­ fore retiring this month as Houston Astros manager, and he was also the only Black manager besides Roberts.

Shohei Ohtani, above, Cody Bellinger, Jordan Montgomery, Blake Snell and Aaron Nola are among 130 who are now free agents.

Associated Press

Shohei Ohtani sweepstakes
Wembanyama’s NBA education is in full swing
French teen is passing the early tests

By Tim Reynolds
Associated Press

Here’s some of what San Antonio’s Victor Wembanyama has experienced so far in the NBA: Scoring 38 points in a game, playing in a back-to-back-to-the-first time, being part of two 40-point losses, wasting a huge lead and losing, overcoming a huge deficit and winning.

It’s been an education.

And by all accounts, the French rookie who stands nearly 7-foot-4 is passing the tests.

Wembanyama’s numbers so far: 19.4 points, 4.8 rebounds and 2.6 blocks per game. The last player to have such averages over the first seven games of his career was Shaquille O’Neal in 1992. Back then, the consensus was O’Neal was one of a kind. The refrain are familiar today.

“We’ve never seen anything like this,” Indiana coach Rick Carlisle said. “We’ve never seen anything like this,” Indiana coach Rick Carlisle said. “We’ve never seen anything like this,” Indiana coach Rick Carlisle said.

It’s a different game now, but it’s hard to argue what Carlisle is saying when factoring in the inside-outside game that Wembanyama possesses. There’s never been a rookie who averaged so many points and rebounds along with one 3-pointer made per game. Larry Bird was the closest; it’s a small sample size, but Wembanyama is making nearly two 3s per contest so far.

The league is raving about the kid who goes by Wembay and has been from the moment he got drafted — long before that night, really. That hasn’t changed, nor has Wembanyama’s humble approach.

“Every night is a challenge,” Wembanyama said. “I’ve still got a lot to prove to my teammates and my coach.”

His coach might disagree.

Gregg Popovich — the Hall of Famer, the winniest coach in NBA history and someone who just happened to sign a five-year extension shortly after Wembanyama came to the Spurs — makes no effort to downplay his new star’s enormous potential.

“The first thing I would say is that his parents did a very good job,” Popovich said. “He’s one of the most mature 19-year-olds I’ve ever been around. His character is incredible. His view of the world is so far.

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Friday, November 10, 2023

### COLLEGE FOOTBALL

**Next NFL Draft could mark departure from usual SEC dominance**

**By Teresa M. Walker**

Associated Press

Georgia coach Kirby Smart hugged Xavier Truss at the Bulldogs’ final home game last season, unsure if the offensive lineman would return for another year.

Truss came back for another season, so Saturday night’s home finale against No. 10 Mississippi might not be a clear sign of who won’t be back in 2024.

“This class has been great,” Smart said. “This group of leaders has been very impactful. I think it speaks for itself what they’ve been able to accomplish thus far, and they still have goals ahead they want to achieve.

The latest round of mock drafts indicate Smart might have more time to reload after having 34 Bulldogs chosen over the last three NFL Drafts. The same goes for the rest of his fellow Southeastern Conference coaches.

One mock draft projects the SEC could have just five players taken in the first round next April. That would be the fewest first-rounders in 15 years for a league that has either led or tied for the most first-round draft picks of the last 13 years. Five would match the SEC teams with at least one player drafted in the first round last April alone.

Josh Heupel, coach of the 14th-ranked Tennessee Volunteers, dismissed mock draft projections with so much football left and the actual NFL Draft months away. He expects the SEC will wind up with lots of players selected, just like the last 17 where the league led all conferences.

In April, the SEC had 62 players drafted, three short of the record league set in 2022. Of the SEC’s 14 members, 13 had at least one player picked.

Why is Heupel so confident in just his third SEC season? Tape he watches every week.

“This league is littered with talent,” Heupel said.

The SEC could wind up with nine or fewer players taken in the first round, which would be the seventh time in 15 drafts. Speculation about the SEC’s top pick ranges from Alabama edge rusher Dallas Turner, Georgia right tackle Amarius Mims or offensive tackle JC Latham of Alabama.

Another mock draft has Alabama cornerback Kooi-Aid McKinstry as the SEC’s first pick overall at No. 9. That’s a big drop from No. 1 overall, where Alabama quarterback Bryce Young was selected in April by Carolina as the third top pick overall from the SEC in the last four drafts alone.

Georgia tight end Brock Bowers, the 2022 John Mackey Award winner as the nation’s top tight end, is projected possibly as high as No. 8. He could also return for his senior season. He is recovering from ankle surgery that has cost him two games and working hard to return as fast as possible.

Yet Bowers, who still leads Georgia with 41 catches for 567 yards and four touchdowns, might see the NFL payday as the easiest move with two national championship rings already in hand.

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**Washington, Oregon set for final clash in Pac-12**

**By Pat Graham**

Associated Press

DENVER — The Pac-12 comes down to two as the season enters the home stretch.

Two teams — No. 5 Washington (9-0) and No. 6 Oregon (8-1) — remain in prime contention for a College Football Playoff spot.

Two programs — Washington State and Oregon State — are about to be left behind when Pac-12 teams scatter after this season.

For the 10 bolting Pac-12 schools, it’s off to the promise of greener pastures in mega-conferences. But just how big is too big for a league? The Big 12 expands to 16 with the incoming Pac-12 arrivals, the Big Ten Ballrooms to 18 and the ACC to 17.

That’s a lot of teams, time zones and money. Some programs may end up getting lost in the reshuffle, which may be part of the price for playing a lucrative game of musical chairs.

“If you’re a smaller school or a smaller brand moving into a bigger conference, it’s OK to get lost if you’re going to get paid,” said David Carter, founder of the Sports Business Group, a consulting firm, and adjunct professor at Southern California.

“It’s that old notion about aren’t you better off being the least expensive house in a great neighborhood than the top house in an average neighborhood? That’s really where a lot of this realignment is for the remaining schools.

No. 13 Utah (7-2) at No. 5 Washington (9-0)

AFN-Sports

9:30 p.m. Saturday CET

5:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

USC (7-3) at No. 6 Oregon (8-1)

AFN-Sports

5 a.m. Sunday CET

1 p.m. Sunday JKT

“It’s always been a case of you either poach someone for your conference — or you get poached.”

There’s certainly been a lot of poaching, too, with Arizona, Arizona State, Utah and Colorado going to the Big 12. And with Oregon, Washington, USC and UCLA heading to the Big Ten. And with Stanford and California going to the ACC. Remaining on the Pac-12 sideline are No. 12 Oregon State and Washington State.

All this in such an entertaining Pac-12 season, too. The Huskies and Ducks are the league’s top contenders, with another clash potentially taking place in the conference championship game on Dec. 1 in Las Vegas. Hypothetically speaking, the Ducks would be a 6½-point favorite, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

It was a month ago that Heisman Trophy candidate Michael Penix Jr. and the Huskies held on for a 36-33 win after the Ducks missed a last-second field goal.

Don’t pencil Oregon and Washington into the Pac-12 title game — or beyond — just yet.

Washington’s path still includes No. 13 Utah this week, followed by a trip to Oregon State and closing the regular season against rival Washington State. The Ducks still have to go through Caleb Williams and USC, travels to Arizona State and then host Oregon State.

“The Pac-12 is absolutely awesome at eating their own late in the season,” Carter said of a conference that has roots dating back more than 100 years. “So I would say this conference has ship rings already in hand.

Orbison’s version of ‘Don’t miss the boat’ is a good motto for a Pac-12 league that hurts fandom a little every day. That fans don’t root for balance sheets and budgets.”

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Oregon running back Bucky Irving runs for a touchdown against Washington safety Mishael Powell, right, and cornerback Jabbar Muhammad during the first half Oct. 14 in Seattle.
Undrafted players stay mindful of roots

By Schuyler Dixon
Associated Press

If Carl Granderson and Terrace Steele splurged after joining a short list of undrafted free agents to sign big contracts, they aren’t telling. The New Orleans edge rusher and Dallas offensive lineman fit the profile of players who wait three days and never hear their names called during the draft, feeling as far as possible from NFL riches. Humble. Grateful. Mindful of their roots.

“I guess your lifestyle changes a little bit,” said Carolina receiver Adam Thielen, who once followed the same path to a big payday in Minnesota. “You’re not maybe pinching pennies as much. But you still try to have that humble beginning.”

Steele signed an $87 million, five-year extension with $50 million guaranteed about a week before the season started, jumping to lion guaranteed about a week before the season started.

Barrett said of the franchise tag. “I wanted a long-term deal, thought I had earned one. I didn’t like the franchise tag, but you’re talking about $16 or $17 million. That’s more money than I had ever made in my life. And, I understood they wanted to see more.”

Injuries cleared the way for Steele to play all 16 games, with 14 starts at right tackle, as a rookie in 2020. He was one of the few bright spots in a difficult debut season in Dallas for coach Mike McCarthy and now has 48 starts over three-plus seasons.

The 26-year-old hasn’t missed a start this year after tearing a knee ligament in December last season.

Granderson, whose draft stock might have been affected by a sexual misconduct case that led to probation, became a full-time starter this season and should finish with a career high in sacks.

Their salaries are about to jump three-fold, or more than 10 times what they were making annually as rookies.

“It still doesn’t even feel real, really.” Steele said nearly two months after signing. “The first person I called was my mom and dad. They were super proud of me. All the hard work and all the dedication.”

Implying these undrafted players have hit the lottery would seem to put luck over all that hard work and dedication, not to mention the talent necessary to survive all the roster cuts along the way.

But they don’t really scoff at the notion.

“Sometimes I sit and think about how far I’ve come, how no one wanted me 10 years ago and how all the hard work has paid off,” Tampa Bay edge rusher Shaquil Barrett said. “I feel real fortunate for the opportunity to get a four-year deal. Now I just want to do everything I can to show the Bucs I deserved it.”

Barrett’s path was a little different from Steele, Granderson and Thielen’s. Those three signed big contracts with the teams that grabbed them after their respective drafts.

The former Colorado State player picked Denver and was a backup in 2015 on a Super Bowl-winning defense that featured Von Miller and Pro Football Hall of Fame DeMarcus Ware. After four seasons, Barrett signed a $4 million, one-year “prove it” deal with Tampa Bay, led the league with 19 1/2 sacks in 2019 and had the $15.8 million franchise tag slapped on him.

The long-term security finally came in 2021, when Barrett signed a $68.5 million, four-year contract. The 30-year-old is fifth on the list of most guaranteed money over the past 20 years at $34.5 million.

“Of course, I wasn’t happy,” Barrett said of the franchise tag. “I wanted a long-term deal, thought I had earned one. I didn’t like the franchise tag, but you’re talking about $16 or $17 million. That’s more money than I had ever made in my life. And, I understood they wanted to see more.”

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Thielen, who came out of Minnesota, was seldom used for two years by the Vikings before recording 2,649 yards receiving and 13 touchdowns over the next two seasons and signing a $65 million, four-year contract with $33 million guaranteed.

After being released by Minnesota this past offseason, Thielen signed a $25 million, three-year deal with the Panthers with $14 million guaranteed a few months before turning 33.

Statement: Michigan controls its own fate in Big Ten race

FROM PAGE 32

But the Wolverines know this game won’t be as easy.

“They’re a super-talented team,” Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy said. “They’re well coached. It’s going to be a good one for us to see where we’re at.”

The Wolverines are in control of their fate. They play at Maryland on Nov. 18 before hosting No. 3 Ohio State in the season finale. For that game to mean more, Michigan must deal with Penn State’s outside noise.

Penn State edge rusher Adisa Isaac and some of his defensive teammates put in extra time preparing for No. 2 Michigan.

Corum said. “Great defense, top 10 in every category.”

Corum is pretty good, too. He has 108 carries for 671 yards and 11 touchdowns. It’s cause for concern for a Penn State secondary that’s allowed an average of 280 passing yards and two touchdowns per game over the last three weeks.

McCarthy has had good chemistry with wideouts Roman Wilson and Cornelius Johnson, who’ve combined for 60 catches, 1,011 yards and 11 touchdowns. It’s cause for concern for a Penn State secondary that’s allowed an average of 280 passing yards and two touchdowns per game over the last three weeks.

King said he was taking prepa- rations personally after struggling to contain Marvin Harrison Jr. in Columbus.

“That loss, it brought us closer,” King said. “I feel like this stretch in November is really where we going to do a lot of our talking.”

Michigan running back Blake Corum hasn’t faced a defense like Penn State’s in a long time.

“Penn State is a great football team,” Corum said. “Great defense, top 10 in every category.”

Corum is pretty good, too. He has 108 carries for 671 yards and 11 touchdowns. It’s cause for concern for a Penn State secondary that’s allowed an average of 280 passing yards and two touchdowns per game over the last three weeks.

Since Michigan’s alleged sign-stealing scheme became public nearly three weeks ago, coach Jim Harbaugh and his players have had to deal with the distraction. Zak Zinter, an All-Big Ten offensive guard, has embraced the outside noise.

“There’s a lot of noise going on outside the building,” he said. “If someone thinks we’re the villain, I’m fine with being the villain. Sometimes, the villain wins and takes down the superhero.”

Secondary motivation

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Chargers continue offensive struggles

BY JOE REEDY
Associated Press
COSTA MESA, Calif. — Justin Herbert was expected to be directing one of the NFL’s elite offenses this season.

As the Los Angeles Chargers reach the midway point, though, the offense remains a work in progress.

The Chargers (4-4) go into Sunday’s game against the NFC North-leading Detroit Lions ranked 15th in the league in total offense, averaging 341 yards per game.

“We are where we are right now. I think that this group is still figuring it out together, but I like the group that we are coaching and I like the way this group’s competing,” coach Brandon Staley said.

The offense gained only 191 yards in last Monday’s 27-6 win over the New York Jets. It was the first time since 2018 the Chargers had fewer than 200 offensive yards, but only the fifth time in franchise history they won when it happened.

An outing such as that certainly wasn’t expected when the Chargers hired Ken Whisenhunt as offensive coordinator during the offseason.

Moore’s system was built on taking more chances downfield along with more balance in the running game. Despite a 2-2 start, there were some signs that the offense was ready to break out. That has not been the case, though, since the bye week.

“Games like that (against the Jets) can be frustrating. We would like to play a little bit better to score a bunch of points. It didn’t go our way,” Herbert said. “But, for us, it was important to stay together, stick together, do everything that we can to convert those third down, get the ball moving and be smart and safe with the football.”

Herbert has been inconsistent since breaking the middle finger on his non-throwing hand after missing four games — including a 28-3 loss to the Ravens on Oct. 1. Herbert learned some lessons that day, and obviously that’s how we start evolving this offense, although we’re not even close to where we want to be yet,” Herbert said.

The offense remains a work in progress.体育

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Despite three touchdowns from Austin Ekeler in the past two games, the Chargers are averaging only 82.5 rushing yards in the past four weeks, the seventh-lowest rate in the league during that span. Ekeler will remain the lead running back as Staley indicated he doesn’t foresee an even split in carries between Ekeler and Joshua Kelley.

There also are concerns on the offensive line and at wide receiver.

Will Clark has struggled at center since taking over for Corey Linsley, who doesn’t have a timetable to return as he continues to deal with a heart issue. Herbert has been sacked five times in two of the past three games.

With Justin Herbert sidelined at least the next three games because of a sprained knee, first-round pick Quentin Johnston will be expected to pick up the slack as Herbert looks for another option in addition to Keenan Allen.

In a crowded AFC, where 11 teams are .500 or better, Los Angeles needs to quickly fix its offensive shortcomings if it hopes to make the playoffs for a second straight season.

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STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — As their teammates filed out of practice earlier this week, Penn State defensive ends Adisa Isaac, Chop Robinson and Dani Dennis-Sutton lingered at the far end of the facility.

The Nittany Lions’ most disruptive defenders stutter-stepped and bull-rushed their way around and through assistant coaches, putting in extra work before the biggest game of the season.

They seek to upstage Michigan’s top-ranked defense when the No. 2 Wolverines (9-0, 6-0 Big Ten) visit Beaver Stadium on Saturday.

“This is a statement game from our defense because you know a lot of people around the country believe that Penn State is unable to take the next step,” cornerback Kalen King said. “And I feel like this game is the perfect opportunity for us to go out and prove ourselves against a powerhouse team like Michigan.”

The Nittany Lions (8-1, 5-1) also want to keep their conference title hopes alive. The Wolverines, who’ve arguably been just as good on offense as they have been on defense, can snuff them out.

They’ve foiled everything every opponent has thrown at them so far.

Michigan is allowing just 6.7 points and 231.4 total yards per game. No team has taken a single snap inside Michigan’s 10-yard-line this season.

Penn State looks to upstage Michigan’s defense

‘A statement game’

By Travis Johnson

Associated Press

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — As their teammates filed out of practice earlier this week, Penn State defensive ends Adisa Isaac, Chop Robinson and Dani Dennis-Sutton lingered at the far end of the facility.

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GMs choose words carefully about Ohtani sweepstakes

By Travis Johnson

Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — The Los Angeles Angels have prioritized first baseman Albert Pujols’ return to the lineup over top pitching prospect Reid Detmers, who’s the favorite to be called up to the majors at some point this season.

When Pujols, who has been out with a plantar fascia tear in his right foot, takes the field against the Chicago White Sox on Tuesday night, it will be the first time since July 1 that he has played.

“I’ve been doing some stuff that’s not my normal routine, so I’m really excited to get back out there,” Pujols said Monday. “I feel good. My body feels good.”

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