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# STARS AND STRIPES®

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## Navy pick lacking in defense experience

By TARA COPP  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump's nominee to be secretary of the Navy, John Phelan, has not served in the military or had a civilian leadership role in the service. While officials and defense experts said the Navy is in sore need of a disruptor, they cautioned that Phelan's lack of experience could make it more difficult for him to realize Trump's goals.

Trump late Tuesday nominated Phelan, a major donor to his campaign who founded the private investment firm Rugger Management LLC.

The Trump transition team did not respond to a request for comment on his qualifications. According to his biography, Phelan's primary exposure to the military comes from an advisory position he holds on the Spirit of America, a non-profit that supports the defense of Ukraine and the defense of Taiwan.

Not all service secretaries come into the office with prior military experience, but he'd be the first in the Navy since 2006.

Current Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth similarly does not have prior military service. She, however, has spent her career in a host of defense civilian positions.

The appointment comes at a

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### RELATED

Trump's Cabinet picks targeted by threats, swatting  
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CAITLYN BURCHETT/Stars and Stripes

Demo, a 3-year-old yellow labrador, receives a pat from a sailor in the galley aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower on July 14. At the time, the warship was on its way to Naval Station Norfolk, Va., from an extended deployment in the Middle East where the crew faced almost daily attacks of missiles and drones launched by Iran-backed militants.

## Testing care by canines

### 'Fur therapy' helps sailors

By CAITLYN BURCHETT  
Stars and Stripes

NORFOLK, Va. — A budding Navy office is trying to sell the idea of "fur therapy" to higher echelons after more than a year of deploying four-legged, tail-wagging honorary officers aboard warships to boost sailor mental health and morale.

At sea aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in mid-July, Capt. Demo bounded through the halls of the ship and toward a crowded eating area. A chorus of "Demo! Demo!" rang out from sailors calling the dog.

The 2-year-old yellow Labrador wedged himself between two sailors seated at a table. Multiple hands reached for Demo, each giving him a pat on the head. "Good boy," one of the sailors said before the dog moved along to another group. Trailing behind the Labrador was one of his handlers, Hospital Corpsman Kindal Kidd.

Demo is one of four facility dogs that has deployed aboard East Coast-based warships since 2023 as part of a small-scale test to evaluate the feasibility of deploying dogs aboard warships across the fleet.

Dubbed the Expeditionary Facility Dog program, the test was initiated by Naval Air Force Atlan-

SEE CANINES ON PAGE 4



# BUSINESS/WEATHER

## US economy grows at 2.8% pace in third quarter

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The American economy expanded at a healthy 2.8% annual pace from July through September on strong consumer spending and a surge in exports, the government said Wednesday, leaving unchanged its initial estimate of third-quarter growth.

U.S. gross domestic product — the economy's output of goods and services — slowed from the April-July rate of 3%, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday.

But the GDP report still showed that the American economy — the world's largest — is proving surprisingly durable. Growth has topped 2% for eight of the last nine quarters.

Within the GDP data, a category that measures the economy's underlying strength rose at a solid 3.2% annual rate from July through September, up from 2.7% in the April-June quarter.

This category includes consumer spending and private investment but excludes volatile items

like exports, inventories and government spending.

Still, American voters — exasperated by high prices — were unimpressed by the steady growth and chose this month to return Donald Trump to the White House to overhaul the nation's economic policies.

Consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of U.S. economic activity, accelerated to a 3.5% annual pace last quarter, up from 2.8% in the April-June period.

### EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates			
Euro costs (Nov. 29)	0.92	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8831
British pound (Nov. 29)	\$1.23	Thailand (Baht)	34.40
Japanese yen (Nov. 29)	150.00	Turkey (NewLira)	34.6051
South Korean won (Nov. 29)	1362.00		
Commercial rates		(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769		
Britain (Pound)	1.2676		
Canada (Dollar)	1.4010		
China (Yuan)	7.2457		
Denmark (Krone)	7.0693		
Egypt (Pound)	49.5946		
Euro	0.9479		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7833		
Hungary (Forint)	391.16		
Israel (Shekel)	3.6519		
Japan (Yen)	151.54		
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3075		
Norway (Krone)	11.0598		
Philippines (Peso)	58.69		
Poland (Zloty)	4.08		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7570		
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3428		
South Korea (Won)	1396.65		

### INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	7.75
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.75
Federal funds market rate	4.58
3-month bill	4.51
30-year bond	4.44

## WEATHER OUTLOOK

### FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



### FRIDAY IN EUROPE



### SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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## STARS AND STRIPES

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## MILITARY

# Army posts in Germany honor vet volunteers

By MATTHEW M. BURKE  
*Stars and Stripes*

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — U.S. Army veteran David Stewart has worked with presidents, famous musicians and movie stars, but his dedication to helping military retirees and spouses in Germany reap the fruits of prior service is what stands out most to many.

At 83 years old, the former military broadcaster and public affairs officer supports 1,300 retired soldiers in the Grafenwoehr area, home to U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria, and has helped dozens of German widows navigate U.S. government bureaucracy to receive much-needed benefits.

Earlier this month, Stewart received the President's Lifetime Achievement Award, the pinnacle of a four-level program that recognizes Americans who devote a certain number of hours to volunteer work. The award given to Stewart requires at least 4,000 volunteer hours.

"It's a nice cap for all these years," Stewart said. "I feel like I've done something."

Stewart has logged 6,812 official hours in the Volunteer Management Information System since 2009, he said.

This doesn't count a further 1,200 hours he accumulated in Grafenwoehr before they were recorded, as well as an untold number of unofficial hours.

Stewart joined the U.S. Army



MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

**David Stewart shows off his President's Lifetime Achievement Award for volunteerism at his home in Bad Berneck, Germany, on Nov. 20.**

Garrison Bavaria Retiree Council in 2003 and began to focus on assisting veterans and their families. Many soldiers marry Germans and live locally but don't prepare their surviving spouse to obtain entitlements after they die.

That assistance has made the difference between comfort and poverty for many, said Gilbert Clarke, a retired sergeant first class from Nuremberg who also works with families.

German spouses often have trouble completing U.S. government and commercial forms because they don't speak enough English, lack computer skills or are unaware of what they are en-



DAVID STEWART

**David Stewart, second from right, then an American Forces Network radio personality, interviews recording artist Tiny Tim, far left, at the Radio Bremen television studio in Bremen, Germany, around 1971.**

titled to, a garrison statement said.

Stewart has spent up to a year with some spouses, planning funerals and guiding them on how to obtain retirement, life insurance, Social Security or disability benefits earned by their U.S. veteran partner.

Bayreuth resident Helga Kohlmann, 84, lost her husband, retired Master Sgt. Karl Kohlmann, in 2017. Stewart helped get military honors for the funeral, including an Army band, and her husband's Social Security and annuity payments.

"I would've been lost. I'm very grateful," Kohlmann said.

Stewart, a natural-born Canadian citizen, had little trouble with the paperwork when he immigrated to the United States in 1960, but he can certainly relate to being a fish out of water.

He had trouble understanding the accents of his fellow trainees at basic and didn't know about American Thanksgiving or college football.

While growing up near Toronto, he had aspired to be in radio. He was told the Army trained broadcasters for the American Forces Network.

Initially sent to Bavaria, he spent seven years as a medical

records specialist before joining AFN in 1968. His first interview in Bremerhaven was the Bee Gees. He would go on to meet the Jackson 5, Tiny Tim, Johnny Cash, Petula Clark and others.

"I couldn't pay for this ride," he said of his life.

Stewart left AFN in 1979 and joined Army public affairs in Heidelberg, staying on as a civilian after his retirement in 1985. The longtime history buff had taken several trips to the Normandy region of France to learn about the D-Day invasion during World War II.

He was tapped to lead the Army public affairs team in 1994 for the 50th anniversary of the Normandy beach landings. He also coordinated events for subsequent anniversaries and moderated forums for presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

In 2001, he spent six months supporting HBO, Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg, working with French reporters ahead of the Normandy premiere of the acclaimed miniseries "Band of Brothers," which depicts Easy Company of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Stewart described Hanks as a gentleman who had "tremendous respect for veterans." Hanks,

along with Spielberg, created and produced the show.

Stewart also befriended one of the men depicted in the show, Donald Malarkey, and was visiting his home in Salem, Ore., when the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked on Sept. 11, 2001.

The volunteerism awards program that would eventually count Stewart among its honorees was established by then-President George W. Bush in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

Stewart recently had to reduce his involvement because of age and family commitments. Jeremiah Wildermuth, a retired Army lieutenant colonel and member of the U.S. Army Europe and Africa Council, has stepped up to assist in his stead.

Friends say it's fitting that Stewart's efforts have continued on to ensuring the spirit of helping others endures beyond his own work in the community.

"He has made it a priority to continue finding retired soldier volunteers to fill key leadership positions in support of the local retiree council," said Dave Fulton, a retired Army lieutenant colonel and president of the Europe and Africa council.

## Navy: Nominees usually have some experience in a defense-related organization

FROM PAGE 1

critical moment for the Navy, which has been stretched thin with deployments around the world and must contend with a shrinking fleet even as the naval forces of its main rival, China, are growing.

Trump has campaigned on expanding the Navy and would need to fight bureaucratic inertia to do so. But it's uncertain whether a secretary with no military experience — either in uniform or as a defense civilian — would be well-positioned to lead that effort.

"It will be difficult for anyone without experience in the Pentagon to take over the leadership of a service and do a good job," said Stacie Pettyjohn, a senior fellow and director of the defense pro-

gram at the Center for a New American Security. "Services are sprawling organizations with distinct cultures, subcultures and bureaucratic interests, and where decisions are made through many formal processes. To change a service's plans, one must understand this Byzantine landscape."

Experts said Phelan's nomination reflects that Trump is seeking service branch heads who will not push back on his ideas — but that Phelan's lack of experience is likely to create issues and delays of its own.

They say the Navy can't afford to lose time. One of the Navy's biggest challenges is preparing for a potential military confrontation with China over Taiwan, a self-ruled island that China claims as

its own.

"The stakes are high," said Brad Bowman, senior director of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "The success or failure in addressing key problems in the U.S. Navy over the next couple years may have a decisive effect on war and peace in the Taiwan Strait and elsewhere."

Trump has called for a 350-ship Navy since his 2016 presidential campaign, but he experienced first-hand the difficulty in realizing that goal, given the challenges to shipbuilding and the erratic and often delayed congressional budget process.

There are just under 300 battle force ships in the fleet — vessels that have a direct role in conduct-

ing combat operations.

"The Navy is stretched covering Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific. Strategists have wanted to pull back from Europe and the Middle East, but recent conflicts have prevented that," said Mark Cancian, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "So the next secretary will have a shrinking fleet, expanded overseas commitments, and an uncertain budget environment."

Service branch chiefs spend vast amounts of time not only responding to the White House but also appealing members of Congress in frequent hearings on Capitol Hill, shaping budget requests, holding constant meetings on service member issues, attending in-

dustrial conferences and filling speakers requests.

That all requires a nuanced understanding of the service that a secretary is leading, because major change in any of the branches often involves a lengthy process to review directives and past policy. Any changes to the many weapons systems the Navy and Marine Corps need and pursue are subject to lengthy contract award challenges.

"The Navy's problem here is money," Cancian said. "Even if the defense budget goes up, there will only be a relatively small increase available for shipbuilding. (If) the budget stays steady or goes down, then the Navy will have a major problem. The fleet will continue to shrink."



## MILITARY

# Canines: Pup pilot program got combat test on Ford

FROM PAGE 1

tic, based at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., as part of phase two of a quality-of-life initiative the Navy launched in 2022 in the wake of a cluster of sailor suicides.

Overseeing the canine program is the Force Improvement Office, which was created in 2022 in reaction to concerns about the mental health of sailors. That year, the service recorded 71 suicides among active members. Another 69 were documented in 2023.

“[The goal of the pilot program] is so that if people start getting into a bad cycle and the domino starts falling, if we can stop that next domino, we can interrupt the cycle,” said Terri Farricker, team lead of the pilot program and force improvement officer for Naval Air Force Atlantic.

Aside from Demo on the Eisenhower, the dog program has also placed Capt. Sage and Capt. Rudder on the aircraft carriers USS Gerald R. Ford and USS Harry S. Truman, respectively, and Lt. Cmdr. Ike on the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp. There are plans to place a dog aboard the carrier USS George H.W. Bush in 2025.

The dogs, guided by handlers, visit sailors throughout the warships to help individuals feel safe and comfortable and give them a positive mental health boost.

Other measures the sea service is taking to improve quality of life includes putting Wi-Fi on aircraft carriers, increasing the number of non-clinical mental health providers and chaplains aboard ships, and moving sailors off ships while in shipyards.

The Navy has begun implementing some of those initiatives across the fleet. But dogs on ships cannot be rolled out fleet-wide without evidence that the dogs make a positive impact.

“Like anything, we have to see if the juice is worth the squeeze. All this training to put a dog onboard — is any of that moving the needle to increase sailor quality of service and quality of life?” Farricker said.

## Commitment and cost

Capt. Christopher Hill, commanding officer of the Eisenhower, was first approached with the idea of deploying with a dog during a morale event where facility dogs in training came aboard the warship to interact with sailors.

Hill said he was skeptical about the idea, calling it an apparent “logistical nightmare.” His concerns were: How does the ship feed the dog when on deployment? Where does the dog urinate and defecate? How many people must take care of the dog, and how will that distract from their ordinary duties?

But those perceived challenges seemed less daunting with each puppy kiss that Hill received dur-



CAITLYN BURCHETT/Stars and Stripes

**Demo poses July 14, on a couch alongside one of his handlers, Hospital Corpsman Kindal Kidd. At the time, Demo was aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, which was on its way to Naval Station Norfolk, Va., from an extended deployment in the Middle East.**

ing the morale event, he said. That day, the captain agreed to consider the program, and in October 2023, Demo deployed aboard the Eisenhower. The deployment, he said, solidified his belief in the program.

“I was skeptical, too, until I saw it in action on a nine-month challenging deployment and the impact that he had on people’s lives. Just to see Demo walk through a passageway and watch sailors light up — it is so hard to quantify, but it is definitely impactful,” Hill said recently.

The canines deploying on Navy warships are dogs that are owned by Mutts with a Mission, a Virginia Beach-based nonprofit. The dogs are loaned to the aircraft carriers under a memorandum of understanding between the nonprofit and the commanding officer of the warship. The memorandum of understanding is for two years or until the commanding officer is reassigned.

With the dog, comes a hefty commitment: identifying four to five sailors to act as handlers, 120 hours of training, dedicating a bathroom on the ship exclusively for the dog, and the responsibility of accommodating a dog 24/7 for the duration of the memorandum of understanding, including when the ship is in port or underway.

But the responsibility of having a dog onboard is balanced out by the “extraordinarily low” cost, the Force Improvement Office said. The only program cost for the Navy is dog food. All other costs associated with the dog are provided by Mutts with a Mission. This includes specialized goggles, ear protection and shoes for the dogs

to be in and around aircraft, a harness, leash and facility dog vest, and a dog kit containing emergency medical supplies.

While those items can total hundreds of dollars, Mutts with a Mission has not indicated a need to pass those costs along to the Navy, Farricker said.

Additionally, the Force Improvement Office ensures the dog has an emergency medical kit, equipped with necessary supplies for a range of illnesses, from upset stomachs to minor surgeries. And the office has partnered with the Army to offer telehealth vet appointments and in-port veterinarian care to the dogs while deployed. The Army is the only U.S. armed force that has veterinarians.

Hill said the commitment to the Expeditionary Facility Dog program paid off and is something he is continuing aboard the Eisenhower now that it has returned from deployment.

Morale is critical, he said, to motivating people to be the best versions of themselves. By enhancing quality of life and work for sailors, morale is enhanced, which leads to more mission success.

“Now, let’s say we added a furry beast to this package. I think it has nothing but positive results,” Hill said.

## ‘Come for the dog’

A plush animal replica of Sage, a yellow Labrador, is perched on the corner of Capt. Genevieve Clark’s desk at Naval Air Force Atlantic. Clark, now the force chaplain for the Norfolk command, was the Navy’s first primary handler for an expeditionary facility

dog. Clark was one of four handlers for Sage while aboard the USS Gerald R. Ford during its 2023 maiden deployment.

“It was team Sage all day, every day,” Clark said, smiling fondly at the plush toy. “We worked as a team, saw each other daily, and Sage loved us all equally.”

The Force Improvement Office works with commanding officers to identify sailors in medical or counseling fields — such as hospital corpsman, physical therapists or civilian counselors — to act as handlers. In placing dogs with individuals in a “helping role,” the facility dog can complement the responsibilities of the handler.

Handlers accompany the dogs to events, classes, and one-on-one sessions offered to sailors. Handlers are also tasked with walking the dog around the ship to expose the dog to sailors who might not otherwise have the option of interacting with the dog. This typically takes two to four hours per day walking the dog to communal areas, such as the galley and the hangar bay where sailors congregate during their downtime. Departments across the ship can also reserve time with the dog. While sailors interact with the dog, the handler observes and extends resources to any sailors who indicate a need for a deeper level of care.

“When a facility animal is around, you see a different side of people. Maybe they were angry and having a bad day for whatever reason. But at least for that moment with the animal, they are happy,” Clark said.

The Ford deployed for the first time May 2023 from Naval Station

Norfolk, Va. In October 2023, near the end of an otherwise uneventful deployment, the warship and its strike group were ordered to sail to the Eastern Mediterranean to deter a regional conflict in the wake of the Oct. 7, 2023, surprise attack on Israel by Hamas militants. Suddenly the crew were thrust into an unknown combat environment.

“Sailors didn’t know what they could say or not say [to their families]. It became even more important to have a little bit of normal in the midst of a lot of uncertainty. That was what Sage brought to the crew — normalcy. It’s normal to have a pet, and it is something that takes your mind off the gravity and immediacy of the situation,” Clark said.

Sage participated in more than 62,000 group activities across the eight months the Ford was deployed, averaging 7,830 per month, according to Clark. Actual interactions with sailors totaled more than 18,700 spanning the deployment.

Of those interactions, there were 911 documented instances of “plus-up care,” where a sailor would attend an event to see Sage and would ultimately seek out a resource beyond the facility dog. Additionally, Sage was requested by individual sailors to be in the room for 3,368 one-on-one counseling sessions.

“They would come for the dog, but stay for the care,” Clark said.

She said she often observed a shift in a sailor’s mood during and in the minutes after they interacted with Sage.

“I am not a scientist by any stretch, but I would see it have an impact for 10-20 minutes. In a day of a sailor — even in a stressful situation like being on a ship — that can take them from ‘I can’t bear anymore’ to ‘OK, I can get through this,’” Clark said.

## Examining the impact

Religious Program Specialist Javarus Stewart was one of Demo’s handlers during the Eisenhower’s deployment to the Middle East where the crew faced almost daily attacks of missiles and drones launched by Iran-backed militants.

Like Sage on the Ford, Demo was in high demand, said Stewart, who was responsible for scheduling Demo’s interactions. There were upwards of 20 requests per day from sailors or departments asking to reserve time with Demo. As the pair visited sailors in communal spaces, people flocked to pet Demo as if he were a celebrity.

But it was the quieter moments, one-on-one interactions, that Stewart said he saw the most impact.

One day, Stewart encountered a

SEE CANINES ON PAGE 5



## MILITARY

**Canines:** Expert to present data from survey of impact on sailors**FROM PAGE 4**

distraught sailor sitting in the Eisenhower's chapel. With Demo in tow, he approached.

"She was having a really bad day. But she hugged Demo, and for a moment, she was not in the Red Sea," Stewart said.

Kenneth Sausen, a psychologist with the Navy's Force Improvement Office, visited the Eisenhower three times during its deployment to measure the program's impact, gather observations and interact with sailors face-to-face.

"Let's say a puppy makes you feel good — who doesn't love a puppy? But how long does that last? 30 seconds? A few minutes? As soon as you walk out the door?" Sausen said.

To quantify this information, Sausen designed a seven-page survey for sailors to rate their overall experience and satisfaction with having a dog aboard. He began analyzing the survey results in mid-September to present the data to leaders at Naval Air Force Atlantic and U.S. Fleet Forces.

The survey, Sausen said, covered a range of topics: Are you a dog person or a cat person? How much stress are you under? Does having a dog on board improve your connection with home?

The data and Sausen's analysis of that information, Naval Air Force Atlantic said, would be presented to U.S. Fleet Forces. It has not yet been released to the public.

Sausen said he would like to see the dogs have a 20- to 30-minute positive impact on sailors. But gauging the impact on sailors during an unprecedented combat-paced deployment introduces variables that can be difficult to measure.

"It depends on what happens, right? So, I'm nice and chill because I got to play with the pooch, and then all of a sudden, a fire alarm goes off," he said. "I don't know that there is a really good answer for what would be considered by most psychologists to be an effective treatment in terms of length of time."

**West Coast ships**

Lt. Cmdr. Ike has taken social media platform Instagram by storm, documenting his deployment aboard the USS Wasp, which has been deployed to the Eastern Mediterranean since June. According to his Instagram profile, which is not an official Defense Department page, the yellow Labrador has mastered climbing steep stairwells, flying in helicopters and being a very good boy. His make-shift blue coveralls, customized by crew members, match that of sailors, except his have cutouts for four legs and a tail.

"Fur is not FOD (foreign object debris), but we would not change it for a thing!," read a post publish-

ed on Ike's Instagram page, referencing debris that could potentially damage aircraft. "A little 'lab glitter' is just part of Ike's charm, and there is nothing a lint roller can't fix. He is here to spread love and maybe a few extra hairs on the USS Wasp!"

The post, published Oct. 30, showed the dog with his tongue out as a sailor cleaned near a stairwell.

While the pilot program is gaining traction on the East Coast, it likely won't be an official program of record for multiple years, Naval Air Force Atlantic said.

After Sausen's data is presented to Naval Air Force Atlantic and U.S. Fleet Forces, it will be presented to the chief of naval operations and the Navy secretary.

Typically, from there, a proposal would be made to the Defense Department to elevate it to a full program, including justification for funding and resource allocation. If approved by all necessary entities, the program would be included as a line item in the Future Years Defense Program, a five-year plan that projects the Defense Department's needs for resources, manpower, and force structure.

But even if it becomes a program of record, there are some limits that would prevent the program from rolling out to West Coast-based ships and smaller warships.

Ike is the only expeditionary facility dog assigned to an amphibious assault ship because there is a question about whether warships smaller than aircraft carriers can accommodate a dog. Aircraft carriers are more than 1,000 feet long, while the amphibious assault ships are around 850 feet. In comparison, destroyers, which typically deploy as part of a carrier strike group are about 500 feet long.

"Smaller ships are steeper and narrower. They are trained to go up and down the ladder wells. But a really steep ladder well is a challenge for me, and I only have two feet," Farricker said.

The smaller ships also don't have extra space to dedicate to a dog — a bathroom exclusively for the animal, staterooms large enough for crew and the dog, as well as the storage for the dog's emergency medical kit.

Additionally, West Coast-based ships typically deploy to regions that have strict regulations that would not allow the dog to leave the warship during port calls. Specifically, some countries in the Indo-Pacific region require animals — even service animals — to quarantine for 180 days before entering the country.

"If the dog ever wants to get off the boat in the 7th Fleet, they have to do a six-month quarantine. We can't always guarantee that," Farricker said. "To go back to my original phrasing, is the juice

worth the squeeze to embark the dog and have them skip 7th Fleet port call entirely?"

While Farricker recognizes the pilot program will require years of energy, with numerous hurdles, she said she wholeheartedly believes "the juice will be worth the squeeze."

"If this is the investiture in terms of what we can do to meet

sailors [and] invest in their mental health so they can come talk about whatever is going on in their lives that they may not feel comfortable talking about, so that we can be disruptive in a stress continuum — I find that to be more than equitable for the exchange in sailor life," Farricker said.

A sailor knocked on Farricker's office door. In his hands were

three framed photos of the canines — Sage, Demo and Rudder. Ike's photo had not yet arrived.

"Oh, they are here!" she exclaimed as the sailor placed the frames on her desk. Farricker, in anticipation of the photos, had cleared a wall. She plans to make a "wall of heroes" to honor the dogs.

"Because they are heroes," she said.

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## WAR IN UKRAINE

## Draft 18-year-olds, White House tells Kyiv

By AAMER MADHANI  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden's administration is urging Ukraine to quickly increase the size of its military by drafting more troops and revamping its mobilization laws to allow for the conscription of troops as young as 18.

A senior Biden administration official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the private consultations, said Wednesday that the outgoing Democratic administration wants Ukraine to lower the mobilization age to 18 from the current age of 25 to help expand the pool of fighting age men available to help a badly outmanned Ukraine in its nearly 3-year-old war with Russia.

The official said "the pure math" of Ukraine's situation now is that it needs more troops in the fight.

The White House has pushed more than \$56 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the start of Russia's February 2022 in-

vasion and expects to send billions more to Kyiv before Biden leaves office in less than two months.

But with time running out, the Biden White House is also sharpening its viewpoint that Ukraine has the weaponry it needs and now must dramatically increase its troop levels if it's going to stay in the fight with Russia.

The official said the Ukrainians believe they need about 160,000 additional troops, but the U.S. administration believes they probably will need more than that.

More than 1 million Ukrainians are now in uniform, including National Guard and other units.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has also been hearing concerns from allies in other Western capitals that Ukraine has a troop level problem and not an arms problem, according to European officials who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive diplomatic conversations.

The European allies have also stressed

that the lack of depth means that it may soon become untenable for Ukraine to continue to operate in Russia's Kursk border region that Ukraine seized this year. The situation in Kursk has become further complicated by the arrival of thousands of North Korean troops who have come to help Moscow try to claw back the land.

The stepped-up push on Ukraine to strengthen its fighting ranks also comes as Ukraine braces for President-elect Donald Trump to take office on Jan. 20. The Republican said he would bring about a swift end to the war and has raised uncertainty about whether his administration would continue the vital U.S. military support for Ukraine.

Ukraine has taken steps to broaden the pool of draft-eligible men, but the efforts have only scratched the surface against a much larger Russian military.

In April, Ukraine's parliament passed a series of laws, including lowering its draft-eligible age for men from 27 to 25, aimed at broadening the universe of men who could

be called on to join the grinding war.

Those laws also did away with some draft exemptions and created an online registry for recruits. They were expected to add about 50,000 troops, far short of what Zelenskyy said at the time was needed.

Conscription has been a sensitive matter in Ukraine throughout the war. Russia's own problems with adequate troop levels and planning early in the war prevented Moscow from taking full advantage of its edge. But the tide has shifted and the U.S. says the Ukrainian shortage can no longer be overlooked.

Some Ukrainians have expressed worry that further lowering the minimum conscription age and taking more young adults out of the workforce could backfire by further harming the war-ravaged economy.

The official added that the administration believes that Ukraine can also optimize its current force by more aggressively dealing with soldiers who desert or go absent without leave.

## Kyiv prepares to sell Trump on US maintaining support

By SIOBHÁN O'GRADY,  
SERHII KOROLCHUK  
AND DAVID L. STERN  
The Washington Post

KYIV, Ukraine — As Ukraine prepares for the looming uncertainty of a new U.S. president, officials and business executives here are coming up with ways to sell Donald Trump on the idea that a strong Ukraine is useful to his political goals — and expressing cautious optimism that he may act faster and more decisively than President Joe Biden.

Kyiv hopes to convince Trump that Ukraine is not a charity case but a cost-effective economic and geostrategic opportunity that will ultimately enrich and secure the United States and its interests. Ukraine hopes that by embracing Trump's transactional approach to diplomacy — including offering American companies lucrative business opportunities — the new president will help ward off Russia's advance.

Hopes that Trump will help end the war in a way Kyiv deems fair persist among officials despite views expressed by Trump and many in his inner circle that the conflict is costing U.S. taxpayers too much money and must be brought to a swift end. Such rhetoric has stirred fears that Trump will abruptly cut U.S. support for Ukraine's military and push it to cede territory to Russia.

But officials here describe their frustration with the Biden administration's slow rollout of aid. Many Ukrainians are essentially ignoring Trump's recent negative comments to instead focus on how Trump was the first U.S. leader to directly sell lethal weapons to Ukraine.

During Trump's first term, Ukraine got Javelin missiles — the shoulder-fired antitank weapons that the Obama administration had long refused to sell — which helped thwart Russian forces from seizing the capital in early 2022. Trump later pointed to the sales, the second of which came after his call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy became a key point in his impeachment scandal, to claim he was tougher on Russian President Vladimir Putin than Democrats were.

"The first weapons that Ukraine received from the United States came from a president



EFREM LUKATSKY/AP

**Officer Sergiy Filimonov of Ukraine's 1st Separate Mechanized Battalion "Da Vinci Wolves," named after Dmytro Kotsiubailo, callsign Da Vinci, stands in the honor guard at Kotsiubailo's tomb during the opening ceremony for the Kotsiubailo monument in Kyiv, Ukraine, last week. Kotsiubailo was killed in a battle with Russian troops in March.**

who hates Ukraine," said Dmytro Kuleba, who served as Ukraine's foreign minister until September. He said that despite Trump's unpredictability, his presidency could usher in an era of positive change for Ukraine.

To win Trump's support this time around, Kyiv will need to create similar "situations when supporting Ukraine will be a projection of Trump's strengths," Kuleba said. "If his goal is to project strength and to say eventually that 'I'm better than Biden, that Biden failed and I ended [the war],' then selling out Ukraine is not the way forward."

Ukrainians saw the Biden administration's restrained approach toward aid as damaging to U.S. credibility as a global security guarantor. They also grew frustrated that Biden expressed support for Ukraine publicly but that when it came down to key weaponry decisions, his team took a conservative approach, expressing fears over Russian retaliation.

In recent weeks, the Ukrainians have begun pitching a new era for America's Ukraine policy involving "peace through strength." They hope that message will resonate with

Trump in a way it did not with Biden.

Ukrainian opposition lawmaker Volodymyr Arieiev said he expects Trump to "check out every penny we spent in Ukraine as American aid," not necessarily because he opposes Ukraine but because he is engaged in a feud with the Biden administration.

"If Trump wants to make America great again, it's in his direct interest to protect Ukraine from being swallowed by Russia because this could be really a point of no return for the United States' image as worldwide supervisor for security," he said.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukraine's presidential office, said it will be up to Kyiv to explain to Trump the political pragmatism behind supporting Ukraine.

"We need to provide representatives of the Trump administration, and Mr. Trump himself, with the most comprehensive information about the logic of the process," he said. "You spend a small amount of money today to support Ukraine — on weapons, finances and so on — investing and producing. You completely nullify Russia's military potential, and after that, you dominate."

"I can barely imagine Trump playing along with someone like Putin," he added.

Still, much has changed since Trump approved sending Javelins to Ukraine.

The president-elect is surrounded by an almost entirely new entourage — including Vice President-elect JD Vance, who as a senator voted against U.S. aid to Ukraine, and billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, who has supported Ukraine with Starlink internet access but also mocked Zelenskyy and cast doubt on the U.S. role in the war.

Full-scale war has been raging in Ukraine for nearly three years, Kyiv is demanding membership in NATO — the military alliance Trump has threatened to quit — and Putin, responding to Biden's recent decisions to loosen some military restrictions on Ukraine, has ramped up threats that he could intensify and expand the war.

Much of Ukraine's ability to sway Trump's views on next steps, observers say, will rely on Zelenskyy's personal ability to convince him.

"A lot is going to fall on Zelenskyy's shoulders," said Scott Cullinane, head of government affairs for Razom, a U.S.-based nonprofit that supports Ukraine. "He'll have to take on that role of becoming that personal interlocutor with Trump. ... And at this point, I'm not sure any other person or personality can do what's required except for him."

Ukraine is framing its resources as fruitful business opportunities for Americans. It points to its natural gas storage, the largest in Europe, and the presence of minerals, including lithium, as potentially game-changing for microchips and electric car industries — something that might be of interest to Musk and his electric car business, as well.

The message has already reached some U.S. Republicans.

Speaking on Fox News last week, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who has repeatedly visited Ukraine throughout the war, described Ukraine as home to trillions of dollars of rare earth minerals.

"Ukraine is ready to do a deal with us, not the Russians," he said. "So it's in our interest to make sure Russia doesn't take over the place."



## EUROPE

# Envoy pick favors talks to end war

## Retired general has proposed linking US aid to Ukraine to peace talks

By **PATRICK SVITEK**  
AND **ALEX HORTON**  
*The Washington Post*

President-elect Donald Trump announced Wednesday that he would nominate retired Army Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg as special envoy for Ukraine and Russia, bringing back a key adviser from his first term to help fulfill his top campaign promise of ending the war between the two countries.

Kellogg, a retired lieutenant general, was chief of staff for the National Security Council during Trump's first term. He also served as national security adviser to Vice President Mike Pence and briefly served as acting national security adviser to Trump.

Trump, in his Wednesday post, said Kellogg "was with me right from the beginning!" Kellogg will

also carry the title of assistant to the president.

Kellogg accepted the appointment in a social media post, saying he looked "forward to working tirelessly to secure peace through strength while upholding America's interests."

Trump ran for president promising to quickly settle the conflict that broke out after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Trump regularly claimed he could end the war within his first 24 hours of returning to office.

But Trump largely declined to provide details on his strategy for winding down the war, and his campaign rhetoric raised concerns that he would be too deferential to Russia in any peace negotiations.

On the campaign trail, he sug-

gested Ukraine could have averted the conflict by making unspecified concessions to Russia before its invasion.

Kellogg has been serving as co-chair of the Center for American Security at the America First Policy Institute, a conservative think tank aligned with Trump. In that role, Kellogg co-wrote an April report on the war that advocated for a "formal U.S. policy to seek a ceasefire and negotiated settlement of the Ukraine conflict."

"The United States would continue to arm Ukraine and strengthen its defenses to ensure Russia will make no further advances and will not attack again after a ceasefire or peace agreement," the report said. "Future American military aid, however, will require Ukraine to participate in peace talks

with Russia."

Kellogg has also proposed delivery of U.S. weapons as a cudgel to bring Moscow to the table. If Putin were to refuse the opportunity to negotiate, he told Reuters in a June interview outlining potential diplomatic pressure on Russia, then the United States could give Kyiv "everything they need to kill you in the field."

In 2022, Kellogg joined a coalition of conservative groups in signing a letter to lawmakers to delay consideration of a major new aid package to Ukraine. In the letter, obtained by The Washington Post, Kellogg and others warned that another Ukraine aid bill would "add to our already substantial national debt and budget deficit."

Ultimately, Congress would opt to continue providing assistance to



Retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg

Ukraine over the objections of the groups.

The war in Ukraine is personal for Kellogg's family. His daughter, Meaghan Mobbs, is president of R.T. Weatherman Foundation, a group that has provided aid to civilians and repatriation of the remains of American volunteer fighters killed in battle.

Kellogg is likely to work closely with Trump's pick for national security adviser in his incoming administration, Rep. Michael Waltz, R-Fla.

# Russia grid hit puts 1M in dark

*Associated Press*

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia conducted a "massive" attack against Ukraine's energy infrastructure on Thursday, firing nearly 200 missiles and drones and leaving more than a million households without power, Ukrainian officials said.

Russia's second major aerial attack on Ukraine's power grid in less than two weeks amplified fears that the Kremlin aims to cripple the country's power generation capacity before winter.

"Attacks on energy facilities are happening all over Ukraine," Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko said in a post on Facebook. He added that emergency power outages were implemented nationwide.

Russia in previous years has targeted Ukraine's electricity generation, aiming to deny civilians critical heating and drinking water supplies during the bitter winter months and break Ukrainian spirits. The attacks also seek to hobble Ukraine's defense industry that is now producing missiles, drones and armored vehicles, among other military assets.

In some regions on Thursday, Kalibr cruise missiles with cluster munitions smashed into civilian targets, Ukrainian President Vo-



Pilots of an Su-34 bomber of the Russian air force fly over Ukraine.

lodymyr Zelenskyy said, calling it "an insidious escalation." Cluster munitions release numerous small bombs over a wide area, making them dangerous to civilians both during and after an attack.

Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed his forces struck 17 Ukrainian targets Thursday, including military facilities and their "support systems," with 100 drones and 90 missiles. It was the 11th massive combined attack by Russia on Ukraine's energy infrastructure this year.

But the Ukrainian air force claimed to have shot down 76 cruise missiles and three other types of missile as well as 32 drones. It added that it lost track of 62 Russian drones, which most likely were jammed by electronic warfare.

Neither side's claims could be independently verified.

Ukrainian officials have

warned recently that Russia was stockpiling cruise and ballistic missiles, presumably for another pre-winter aerial campaign against Ukraine's power grid.

Around half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been destroyed during the almost three years of war with Russia, and rolling electricity blackouts are common.

Last March, the International Criminal Court in The Hague issued arrest warrants for two high-ranking Russian military officers on war crimes charges linked to attacks on Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, including power plants and electricity sub-stations.

The war has been going in Russia's favor in recent months as its bigger army uses its advantages in manpower and equipment to push Ukrainian forces backward in eastern areas, though its offensive has been slow and costly.

Putin said that over the past two

days Russia had fired 100 missiles and 466 drones at Ukraine, saying they were a response to Ukraine using American-made missiles to hit targets on Russian soil after gaining permission to do so from President Joe Biden.

Speaking at a summit in Kazakhstan of a security alliance of former Soviet nations, Putin threatened to use a new intermediate-range ballistic missile, called Oreshnik, against "decision-making centers" in Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital.

The missile launched for the first time at Ukraine last week has six warheads and flies at 10 times the speed of sound, according to Putin, who declared that it can't be intercepted by any modern air defense systems.

Explosions in Thursday's Russian attack were reported in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Rivne, Khmelnytskyi, Lutsk, and many other cities in central and western Ukraine.

# Russian jets intercept US B-52s over Baltic Sea

By **CAITLYN BURCHETT**  
*Stars and Stripes*

Two U.S. Air Force long-range bombers were intercepted Monday by Russian aircraft over the Baltic Sea, a defense official confirmed.

The B-52H Stratofortresses were in international airspace flying a pre-planned route, the official said Wednesday.

The incident occurred the same day two long-range bombers conducted a simulated weapons drop training mission as part of integrated training with Finnish and Swedish fighter jets.

The bombers are assigned to the 20th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, based at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

It is unclear if the pair of bombers involved in the interception were the same bombers training with Finland and Sweden.

This is not the first time U.S. bombers have had a close call with Russian aircraft in the militarily important Arctic region. In July, two B-52H Stratofortresses were intercepted by Russian fighters over the Barents Sea on a pre-planned mission that involved coordination with NATO fighter planes, the U.S. Air Forces Europe and Africa said.

In Europe, encounters between allied and Russian aircraft are relatively commonplace. In most cases, intercepts occur over international airspace without incident.



## NATION



FERNANDO LLANO/AP

Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum, above, spoke with President-elect Donald Trump on Wednesday, soon after Trump threatened to impose tariffs on Canada and Mexico as part of his effort to crack down on illegal immigration and drugs. Trump said Sheinbaum "agreed to stop Migration through Mexico."

## Trump, Mexican leader have different takes on border call

Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — President-elect Donald Trump declared a win on stopping illegal immigration through Mexico on Wednesday after talking with that country's leader. But Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum suggested Mexico was already doing its part and had no interest in closing its borders.

The two spoke just days after Trump threatened to impose sweeping new tariffs on Canada and Mexico as part of his effort to crack down on illegal immigration and drugs.

Trump said Sheinbaum "agreed to stop Migration through Mexico." Sheinbaum indicated separately on social media that she told Trump that Mexico is already "taking care of" migrant caravans, calling it an "excellent conversation."

"We reiterate that Mexico's position is not to close borders but to build bridges between governments and between peoples," Sheinbaum added.

While the state of the proposed

tariffs remained unclear, Trump said in a post on his Truth Social account that this was "effectively closing our Southern Border." He called it a "very productive conversation."

The exchange between the two leaders appeared to confirm for Trump the value of threatening to disrupt trade with import taxes. His initial social media post moved financial markets and gave him a response he was quick to describe as a win. Even if the proposed tariffs fail to materialize, Trump can tell supporters that the mere possibility of them is an effective policy tool and continue to rely on tariff threats.

Sheinbaum wrote on social media that the leaders "discussed Mexico's strategy on migration issues, and I told him the caravans are not reaching the northern (U.S.) border, because Mexico is taking care of them."

"We also talked about reinforcing cooperation on security issues, within the framework of our sovereignty, and the campaign we are carrying out to prevent fentanyl consumption," she said.

Illegal migration across the Mexico border is down in part because the Biden administration secured some stepped-up cooperation from Mexico — the sort Trump seems to be celebrating.

Arrivals at the U.S.-Mexico border have dropped 40% from an all-time high in December. U.S. officials mostly credit Mexican vigilance around rail yards and highway checkpoints.

Driven by mounting pressure from the U.S. to block migrants going north, in the past few years Mexican authorities have turned to rounding them up across the country and sending them to southern Mexico, in a strategy seen by experts as an attempt to wear out migrants until they give up.

Neither side clarified the status of the tariffs. But their implementation could fuel higher prices and slow economic growth, potentially blowing up the trade agreement among the U.S., Canada and Mexico that was finalized in 2020 during Trump's previous time in the White House.

## Trump appointees targeted by bomb threats, swatting

By JILL COLVIN AND ALANNA DURKIN RICHER  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A number of President-elect Donald Trump's most prominent Cabinet picks and appointees have been targeted by bomb threats and "swatting attacks," Trump's transition team said Wednesday. The FBI said it was investigating.

"Last night and this morning, several of President Trump's Cabinet nominees and Administration appointees were targeted in violent, unAmerican threats to their lives and those who live with them," Trump transition spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said in a statement.

She said the attacks ranged from bomb threats to swatting, in which attackers initiate an emergency law enforcement response against a target victim under false pretenses. The tactic has become a popular one in recent years.

Leavitt said law enforcement and other authorities acted quickly to ensure the safety of those who were targeted and Trump and his transition team are grateful.

Among those targeted were New York Rep. Elise Stefanik, Trump's pick to serve as the next ambassador to the United Nations; Matt Gaetz, Trump's initial pick to serve as attorney general; and former New York Rep. Lee Zeldin, who has been tapped to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.

Law enforcement officials are also looking into whether Susie Wiles, Trump's incoming chief of staff, and Pam Bondi, the former Florida attorney general whom Trump has chosen as Gaetz's replacement, and other incoming administration officials were also victims — as well as how each was targeted, according to a law enforcement official who spoke on condition of anonymity as the investigation continues.

The FBI said in a statement that it

was "aware of numerous bomb threats and swatting incidents targeting incoming administration nominees and appointees" and was investigating with its law enforcement partners.

The FBI added: "We take all potential threats seriously, and as always, encourage members of the public to immediately report anything they consider suspicious to law enforcement."

White House spokesperson Saloni Sharma said President Joe Biden had been briefed and the White House is in touch with federal law enforcement and Trump's transition team. Biden "continues to monitor the situation closely," Sharma said, adding the president and his administration "condemn threats of political violence."

Stefanik's office said that, on Wednesday morning, she, her husband, and their 3-year-old son were driving home from Washington for Thanksgiving when they were informed of a bomb threat to their residence in Saratoga County.

The New York State Police said a team was dispatched to sweep Stefanik's home on Wednesday morning in response to the bomb threat but did not locate any explosive devices. The agency directed further questions to the FBI.

Zeldin said in a social media post that he and his family had been threatened.

"A pipe bomb threat targeting me and my family at our home today was sent in with a pro-Palestinian themed message," he wrote on X. "My family and I were not home at the time and are safe. We are working with law enforcement to learn more as this situation develops."

Police in Suffolk County, Long Island, said emergency officers responded to a bomb threat Wednesday morning at an address listed in public records as Zeldin's home and were checking the property.

## Zuckerberg dines with Trump, once kicked off Facebook, at Mar-a-Lago

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Donald Trump dined on Wednesday with Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg at the president-elect's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, bringing together the Facebook founder and the former president who was once banned from that social network.

Stephen Miller, who has been appointed deputy chief of staff for Trump's second term, said Zuckerberg, like other business leaders,

wants to support Trump's economic plans. The tech CEO has been seeking to change his company's perception on the right following a rocky relationship with Trump.

"Mark, obviously, he has his own interest, and he has his own company and he has his own agenda," Miller said in an interview on Fox News about the meeting.

"But he's made clear that he wants to support the national renewal of America under Trump's

leadership."

A spokesperson for Meta confirmed that Zuckerberg and Trump met on Wednesday, saying he was invited for dinner with the president-elect and other members of his team to talk about the incoming administration.

Trump was kicked off Facebook following the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. The company restored his account in early 2023.

During the 2024 campaign,



Zuckerberg

this year, he praised Trump's response to his first assassination attempt, calling it "badass." Zuckerberg also complained that senior

Zuckerberg did not endorse a candidate for president.

Zuckerberg has since taken a more positive stance toward Trump. Earlier

Biden administration officials pressured Facebook to "censor" some COVID-19 content during the pandemic.

Still, Trump in recent months had continued to attack Zuckerberg publicly. In July, he posted a message on his own social network Truth Social threatening to send election fraudsters to prison in part by citing a nickname he used for the Meta CEO. "ZUCKERBUCKS, be careful!" Trump wrote.



## NATION

# Walmart's DEI rollback signals profound shift

By ALEXANDRA OLSON  
AND CATHY BUSSEWITZ

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Walmart's sweeping rollback of its diversity policies is the strongest indication yet of a profound shift taking hold at U.S. companies that are re-evaluating the legal and political risks associated with bold programs to bolster historically underrepresented groups.

The changes announced by the world's biggest retailer on Monday followed a string of legal victories by conservative groups that have filed an onslaught of lawsuits challenging corporate and federal programs aimed at elevating minority and women-owned businesses and employees.

The retreat from such programs crystallized with the election of former President Donald Trump, whose administration is certain to make dismantling diversity, equity and inclusion programs a priority. Trump's incoming deputy chief of policy will be his former adviser Stephen Miller, who leads a group called America First Legal that has aggressively challenged corporate DEI policies.

"There has been a lot of reassessment of risk looking at programs that could be deemed to constitute reverse discrimination," said Allan



DUSTIN CHAMBERS /Bloomberg

Walmart announced sweeping changes to diversity policies Monday.

Schweyer, principal researcher at the Human Capital Center at the Conference Board. "This is another domino to fall and it is a rather large domino," he added.

Among other changes, Walmart said it will no longer give priority treatment to suppliers owned by women or minorities. The company also will not renew a five-year commitment for a racial equity center set up in 2020 after the police killing of George Floyd. And it pulled out of a prominent gay rights index.

Schweyer said the biggest trigger for companies making such changes

is simply a reassessment of their legal risk exposure, which began after U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in June 2023 that ended affirmative action in college admissions. Since then, conservative groups using similar arguments have secured court victories against various diversity programs, especially those that steer contracts to minority or women-owned businesses.

The Trump administration is also likely to take direct aim at DEI initiatives through executive orders and other policies that affect private companies, especially fed-

eral contractors.

"The impact of the election on DEI policies is huge. It can't be overstated," said Jason Schwartz, co-chair of the Labor & Employment Practice Group at law firm Gibson Dunn.

With Miller returning to the White House, rolling back DEI initiatives is likely to be a priority, Schwartz said.

"Companies are trying to strike the right balance to make clear they've got an inclusive workplace where everyone is welcome, and they want to get the best talent, while at the same time trying not to alienate various parts of their employees and customer base who might feel one way or the other. It's a virtually impossible dilemma," Schwartz said.

Marc Morial, CEO of the National Urban League, a civil rights group that has worked with Walmart on diversity and inclusion efforts in the past, called the company's pullback from DEI "stunning" and "unexpected."

"This is inconsistent with the Walmart I know," said Morial, who argued that DEI policies are how organizations ensure compliance with federal anti-discrimination laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and any suggestion of favoritism or preferential treatment "is really de-

famatory against what DEI represents."

He said that Walmart would see "a strong message" to the decision but that civil rights leaders "are first very interested in dialogue" with Walmart executives.

A recent survey by Pew Research Center showed that workers are divided on the merits of DEI policies. While still broadly popular, the share of workers who said focusing on workplace diversity was mostly a good thing fell to 52% in the October survey, compared to 56% in a similar survey in February 2023.

There will be more companies pulling back from their DEI policies, but it likely won't be a retreat across the board, said David Glasgow, executive director of the Meltzer Center for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at New York University.

"There are vastly more companies that are sticking with DEI," Glasgow said. "The only reason you don't hear about it is most of them are doing it by stealth. They're putting their heads down and doing DEI work and hoping not to attract attention."

Walmart confirmed will no longer consider race and gender as a litmus test to improve diversity when it offers supplier contracts.

## Schools bracing for upheaval over fear of mass deportations

By BIANCA VAZQUEZ TONESS

Associated Press

Last time Donald Trump was president, rumors of immigration raids terrorized the Oregon community where Gustavo Balderas was the school superintendent.

Word spread that immigration agents were going to try to enter schools. There was no truth to it, but school staff members had to find students who were avoiding school and coax them back to class.

"People just started ducking and hiding," Balderas said.

Educators around the country are bracing for upheaval, whether or not the president-elect follows through on his pledge to deport millions of immigrants who are in the country illegally. Even if he only talks about it, children of immigrants will suffer, educators and legal observers said.

If "you constantly threaten people with the possibility of mass deportation, it really inhibits people's ability to function in society and for their kids to get an education," said Hiroshi Motomura, a professor at UCLA School of Law.

That fear already has started for many.

"The kids are still coming to school, but they're scared," said

Almudena Abeyta, superintendent of Chelsea Public Schools, a Boston suburb that's long been a first stop for Central American immigrants coming to Massachusetts. Now Haitians are making the city home and sending their kids to school there.

"They're asking: 'Are we going to be deported?'" said Abeyta.

Many parents in her district grew up in countries where the federal government ran schools and may think it's the same here. The day after the election, Abeyta sent a letter home assuring parents their children are welcome and safe, no matter who is president.

Immigration officials have avoided arresting parents or students at schools. Since 2011, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has operated under a policy that immigration agents should not arrest or conduct other enforcement actions near "sensitive locations," including schools, hospitals and places of worship. Doing so might curb access to essential services, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas wrote in a 2021 policy update.

The Heritage Foundation's poli-

cy roadmap for Trump's second term, Project 2025, calls for rescinding the guidance on "sensitive places."

Trump tried to distance himself from the proposals during the campaign, but he has nominated many who worked on the plan for his new administration, including Tom Homan for "border czar."

If immigration agents were to arrest a parent dropping off children at school, it could set off mass panic, said Angelica Salas, executive director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles.

"If something happens at one school, it spreads like wildfire and kids stop coming to school," she said.

Balderas, now the superintendent in Beaverton, a different Portland suburb, told the school committee there this month it was time to prepare for a more determined Trump administration. In case schools are targeted, Beaverton will train staff not to allow immigration agents inside.

"All bets are off with Trump," said Balderas, who is also president of ASSA, The School Superintendents Association.

Many school officials are reluc-



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

President-elect Donald Trump's pledge to deport millions has created anxiety among immigrant school children.

tant to talk about their plans or concerns, some out of fear of drawing attention to their immigrant students. One school administrator serving many children of Mexican and Central American immigrants in the Midwest said their school has invited immigration attorneys to help parents formalize any plans for their children's care in case they are deported. The administrator spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

More than two dozen superintendents and district communica-

tions representatives contacted by The Associated Press either ignored or declined requests for comment.

"This is so speculative that we would prefer not to comment on the topic," wrote Scott Pribble, a spokesperson for Denver Public Schools.

The city of Denver has helped more than 40,000 migrants in the last two years with shelter or a bus ticket elsewhere. It's also next door to Aurora, one of two cities where Trump has said he would start his mass deportations.



## NATION

# Court backs razor wire at Mexico border

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — A federal appeals court Wednesday ruled that Border Patrol agents cannot cut razor wire that Texas installed on the U.S.-Mexico border in the town of Eagle Pass, which has become the center of the state's aggressive measures to curb migrant crossings.

The decision by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals is a victory for Texas in a long-running rift over immigration policy with the Biden administration, which has also sought to remove floating barriers installed on the Rio Grande.

Texas has continued to install razor wire along its roughly 1,200-mile border with Mexico over the past year. In a 2-1 ruling, the court issued an injunction blocking Border Patrol agents from damaging the wire in Eagle Pass.

"We continue adding more razor wire border barrier," Republican Gov. Greg Abbott posted on the social platform X in response to the ruling.

A spokesperson for the Depart-

ment of Homeland Security did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment Wednesday.

Some migrants have been injured by the sharp wire, and the Justice Department has argued the barrier impedes the U.S. government's ability to patrol the border, including coming to the aid of migrants in need of help. Texas contended in the lawsuit originally filed last year that the federal government was "undermining" the state's border security efforts by cutting the razor wire.

The ruling comes ahead of President-elect Donald Trump returning to office and pledging a crackdown on immigration. Earlier this month, a Texas official offered a parcel of rural ranchland along the U.S.-Mexico border to use as a staging area for potential mass deportations.

Arrivals at the U.S.-Mexico border have dropped 40% from an all-time high in December. U.S. officials mostly credit Mexican vigilance around rail yards and highway checkpoints.

## Man wins \$412M lawsuit after injections ruin penis

The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer

A jury in New Mexico awarded \$412 million to a man who sued over what he said were unnecessary erectile dysfunction shots that decimated his penis, court documents and his attorneys said.

The jury awarded \$37 million in compensatory damages and \$375 million in punitive damages Monday in the case in Bernalillo County, documents said.

"Because of corporate fraud and greed, (the man) faces irreversible harm that has profoundly impacted his body and his life," Nick Rowley, one of his attorneys, said in a news release. The 72-year-old man's penis is "completely ruined," Rowley said.

The lawsuit names NuMale as well as several people involved with the company. Brad Palubicki, NuMale Medical Center president, said the company is "committed to providing safe, high-quality patient care."

The man who brought the lawsuit sought care at NuMale's Albuquerque clinic in 2017 for testosterone replacement therapy and

weight loss, his attorneys and court documents said.

However, he was misdiagnosed as having erectile dysfunction and sold on a \$5,000 treatment program based on that misdiagnosis, the news release said. The treatment included testosterone pellet implantation and injections in his penis, the attorneys said.

The pellets were implanted at the clinic, and "a medical assistant provided (the man) penis medication, including reversal medication, and taught him how to inject them at home," the release said.

He eventually determined the medications weren't working and returned for a follow-up, where his technique was criticized, his attorneys said.

A physician assistant "went on to 'demonstrate' the penis injection and sent (the man) home with a medically induced and medically unnecessary erection," the release said.

The erection wouldn't go away, and he eventually needed emergency surgery, which was unsuccessful, the attorneys said.



YUKI IWAMURA / AP

King Combs, center, son, D'Lila Combs and Jessie Combs, daughters of Sean "Diddy" Combs, leave Manhattan federal court Friday. A judge denied a bail request from Sean "Diddy" Combs on Wednesday.

## Diddy denied bail by third judge in sex trafficking case

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Sean "Diddy" Combs was denied bail on Wednesday as he awaits a May sex trafficking trial by a judge who cited evidence showing him to be a "serious risk" of witness tampering and proof he has tried to hide prohibited communications with third parties while incarcerated.

U.S. District Judge Arun Subramanian ruled in a five-page order following a bail hearing last week. At the hearing, lawyers for the hip-hop mogul argued that a \$50 million bail package they proposed would be sufficient to ensure Combs doesn't flee and doesn't try to intimidate prospective trial witnesses.

Two other judges previously had agreed with prosecutors that the Bad Boy Records founder was a danger to the community if he is not behind bars. Subramanian concurred.

"There is compelling evidence of Combs's propensity for violence," Subramanian wrote.

Lawyers for Combs did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment on the decision. Nicholas Biase, a spokesperson for prosecutors, declined comment.

Combs, 55, has pleaded not guilty to charges that he coerced and abused women for years, aided by associates and employees. An indictment alleges that he silenced victims through blackmail and violence, including kidnapping, arson and physical beatings.

A federal appeals court judge last month denied Combs' immediate release while a three-judge panel of the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan consid-

ers his bail request. That appeal was put on hold while Subramanian, newly appointed to the case after an earlier judge stepped aside, considered the bail request for the first time.

Subramanian said he took a fresh look at all the bail arguments and the evidence supporting them to make his decision.

Prosecutors have insisted that no bail conditions would be sufficient to protect the public and prevent the "I'll Be Missing You"

**"There is compelling evidence of Combs's propensity for violence."**

U.S. District Judge Arun Subramanian

singer from fleeing.

They say that even in a federal lockup in Brooklyn, Combs has orchestrated social media campaigns designed to influence prospective jurors and tried to publicly leak materials he thinks can help his case. They say he also has contacted potential witnesses through third parties.

Lawyers for Combs say any alleged sexual abuse described in the indictment occurred during consensual relations between adults and that new evidence refutes allegations that Combs used his "power and prestige" to induce female victims into drugged-up, elaborately produced sexual performances with male sex workers known as "Freak Offs."

Subramanian said evidence shows Combs to be a "serious risk of witness tampering," particular-

ly after he communicated over the summer with a grand jury witness and deleted some of his texts with the witness.

The judge also cited evidence showing that Combs violated Bureau of Prisons regulations during pretrial detention at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn when he paid other inmates to use their phone code numbers so he could make calls to individuals who were not on his approved contact list.

He said there was also evidence that he told family members and defense counsel to add other people to three-way calls so their communications would be more difficult to trace and that he made efforts to influence his trial's jury pool or to reach potential witnesses.

Subramanian said his "willingness to skirt" jailhouse rules to conceal communications was "strong evidence" that any conditions of release would not prevent similar behavior.

The judge said defense claims that Combs stopped using one particular phone technique criticized by prosecutors was belied by the fact that Combs apparently used it again on Sunday, two days after his bail hearing last week.

Even a bail proposal that would include the strictest form of home confinement seemed insufficient, the judge said.

"Given the nature of the allegations in this case and the information provided by the government, the Court doubts the sufficiency of any conditions that place trust in Combs and individuals in his employ — like a private security detail — to follow those conditions," Subramanian wrote.



# NATION



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON/AP

**New York Police arrest Pro-Palestinian protesters on Sixth Avenue during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on Thursday.**

## Thanksgiving Day Parade kicks off amid rain, protest

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade was drenched in rain Thursday and briefly disrupted by Pro-Palestinian demonstrators.

New York City police said they arrested 21 people after protesters sat down on the parade route with Palestinian flags and a "Don't Celebrate Genocide" banner.

People protesting Israel's war in Gaza also interrupted last year's parade.

Thanks to the wet weather, this year's parade saw lots of ponchos and umbrellas along with the usual lineup of giant balloons, floats and star-studded performances.

The latest edition of the annual holiday tradition featured new Spider-Man and Minnie Mouse balloons, zoo and pasta-themed floats, an ode to Big Apple coffee and bagels, performances from Jennifer Hudson, Idina Menzel and Kylie Minogue, and more.

The lineup was a far cry from the parade's initial incarnation a century ago, which featured floats showing scenes from Mother Goose, Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, Miss Muffet and the Spider, and other fairy tales.

Some things remained the same, though. As in 1924, there are

plenty of marching bands and lots of clowns, followed by the grand finale of Santa Claus riding through Manhattan and ushering in the holiday season.

This year's parade featured 17 giant, helium-filled character balloons, 22 floats, 15 novelty and heritage inflatables, 11 marching bands, 700 clowns, 10 performance groups, award-winning singers and actors, and the WNBA champion New York Liberty.

Other highlights included reality TV star Ariana Madix, hip-hop's T-Pain, country duo Dan + Shay, The War and Treaty, The Temptations, Jimmy Fallon & The Roots, Broadway veteran Lea Salonga, and "Glow" actor and Macy's spokesperson Alison Brie.

One new float spotlighted the Rao's food brand, featuring a knight and a dragon in battle made with actual pasta elements. Another celebrated the Bronx Zoo's 125th anniversary with representations of a tiger, a giraffe, a zebra and a gorilla.

"The work that we do, the opportunity to impact millions of people and bring a bit of joy for a couple of hours on Thanksgiving morning, is what motivates us every day," said Will Coss, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade executive producer.

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## WORLD



HUSSEIN MALLA/AP

**A man collects the remains of his destroyed house after he returned to Chehabiyeh village in Lebanon on Thursday, following a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah that went into effect on Wednesday.**

## Israeli troops fire on returnees after truce

Associated Press

BEIRUT — At least two people were wounded by Israeli fire in southern Lebanon on Thursday, according to state media. The Israeli military said it had fired at people trying to return to certain areas on the second day of a ceasefire with the Hezbollah militant group.

The agreement, brokered by the United States and France, includes an initial two-month cease-fire in which Hezbollah militants are to withdraw north of the Litani River and Israeli forces are to return to their side of the border. The buffer zone would be patrolled by Lebanese troops and U.N. peacekeepers. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said two people were wounded by Israeli fire in Markaba, close to the border, without providing further details. It said Israel fired artillery in three other locations near the border. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

An Associated Press reporter in northern Israel near the border heard Israeli drones buzzing overhead and the sound of artillery strikes from the Lebanese side.

The Israeli military said in a statement that "several suspects were identified arriving with vehicles to a number of areas in southern Lebanon, breaching the conditions of the ceasefire." It said troops "opened fire toward them" and would "actively enforce violations of the ceasefire agreement."

Israeli officials have said forces will be withdrawn gradually as it ensures that the agreement is being enforced. Israel has warned people not to return to areas where troops are deployed, and says it reserves the right to strike Hezbollah if it violates the terms of the truce.

A Lebanese military official said Lebanese troops would gradually deploy in the south as Israeli troops withdraw. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief media.

The ceasefire agreement announced late Tuesday ended 14 months of conflict between Israel and Hezbollah that began a day after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack out of Gaza, when the Lebanese militant group began firing rockets, drones and missiles in solidarity.

## Police file criminal complaints against Philippines' VP, aides

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Philippine police officials on Wednesday filed criminal complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte and her security staff for allegedly assaulting authorities and disobeying orders in a recent altercation in Congress.

The criminal complaints filed by the Quezon City police were separate from any legal action that may arise after she publicly threatened to have President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., his wife and the speaker of the House of Representatives assassinated if she were killed herself in an unspecified plot. She has not provided details of that plot.

A presidential adviser, Larry

Gadon, separately filed a Supreme Court petition on Wednesday to disbar the vice president as a lawyer, citing her assassination threats, which he said were "illegal, immoral and condemnable."

Speaking in a news conference, the vice president broadly denied and played down the criminal complaints, allegations and potential lawsuits against her, including a possible impeachment case and an alleged violation of the country's anti-terror law. Duterte said that the danger to her life was real but added that the threats she made were not actual and illegal.

"This is really oppression and harassment for remarks taken out of logical context," Duterte said.

# Australian lawmakers pass under-16 social media ban

By ROD MCGUIRK  
Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — A social media ban for children under 16 passed the Australian Senate on Thursday and will soon become a world-first law.

The law will make platforms including TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram liable for fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (\$33 million) for systemic failures to prevent children younger than 16 from holding accounts.

The Senate passed the bill 34 votes to 19. The House of Representatives on Wednesday overwhelmingly approved the legislation 102 votes to 13.

The House has yet to endorse opposition amendments made in the Senate. But that is a formality since the government has already agreed they will pass.

The platforms will have one year to work out how they could implement the ban before penalties are enforced.

The amendments bolster privacy protections. Platforms would not be allowed to compel users to provide government-issued identity documents including passports or driver's licenses, nor could they demand

digital identification through a government system.

The House is scheduled to pass the amendments on Friday. Critics fear that banning young children from social media will impact the privacy of users who must establish they are older than 16.

While the major parties support the ban, many child welfare and mental health advocates are concerned about unintended consequences.

Sen. David Shoebridge, from the minority Greens party, told the Senate that mental health experts agreed that the ban could dangerously isolate many children who used social media to find support.

"This policy will hurt vulnerable young people the most, especially in regional communities and especially the LGBTQI community, by cutting them off," Shoebridge said.

Opposition Sen. Maria Kovacic said the bill was not radical but necessary.

"The core focus of this legislation is simple: It demands that social media companies take reasonable steps to identify and remove underage users from their platforms," Kovacic told the Senate.

"This is a responsibility these

companies should have been fulfilling long ago," she added.

Wayne Holdsworth, whose teenage son Mac took his own life after falling victim to an online sextortion scam, had advocated for the restriction and took pride in its passage.

"I have always been a proud Australian, but for me subsequent to today's Senate decision, I am bursting with pride," Holdsworth told the AP in an email.

Christopher Stone, executive director of Suicide Prevention Australia, the governing body for the suicide prevention sector, said the legislation failed to consider positive aspects of social media in supporting young people's mental health and sense of connection.

"The government is running blindfolded into a brick wall by rushing this legislation. Young Australians deserve evidence-based policies, not decisions made in haste," Stone said in a statement.

The platforms had complained that the law would be unworkable, and had urged the Senate to delay the vote until at least June when a government-commissioned evaluation of age assurance technologies made its report on how young children could be excluded.

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## HEALTH &amp; FITNESS



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# Weighing workouts with kettlebells

The fitness tools, considered to be more comfortable and stable than dumbbells, can exercise your entire body

BY TEDDY AMENABAR  
*The Washington Post*

**T**odd VanKerkhoff doesn't have much time to exercise. The 34-year-old physician in Chicago has three young kids. So for workouts, he often uses kettlebells in his backyard.

"Crushed this kettlebell workout while my 2 year old watched Mickey Mouse," he recently wrote on Instagram.

VanKerkhoff is among the many busy dads who are turning to kettlebells, which look like cannonballs with handles, to get in their workouts. VanKerkhoff said he started using the weights when he had a "crazy" schedule working nights during the pandemic, with not a lot of time to exercise. Now, he says kettlebells make up the bulk of his training.

"You don't need a gym," said VanKerkhoff, who posts his workouts as "dr\_dadbod." "You just need one chunk of iron to get a good workout for the day and get stronger."

Kettlebells are beloved by fans because the simple weights can be held in various ways to quickly conduct full-body workouts. Fitness instructors who regularly train with kettlebells say the weights appeal to people who are looking for short and dynamic strength-training routines that can also raise their heart rate.

"People choose kettlebells because then you don't need to build out a whole home gym," said Samantha Ciaccia, the founder of Bell Mechanics, which offers training for fitness instructors and kettlebell enthusiasts. "That takes money; that takes space."

Cameron Martin, a 36-year-old father of three who also posts kettlebell workouts from his backyard on Instagram, said many of his followers consist of 30-to-50-year-old men and women juggling long hours at work while parenting their kids.

"The emails don't stop and kids are doing more than they ever have," Martin said. "We know we need to be healthy. We also know we have very limited time and resources."

## The perks of using kettlebells

Machines at the gym often move in fixed positions and work one muscle group at a time, said Adriell Mayes, a fitness trainer in Boston. With kettlebells, you can do more complex movements, such as starting with a squat that works the legs and then transitioning into a thruster — pushing the weight above your head to strengthen your arms and shoulders.

"If you have a full set of bells," Mayes said. "you really don't need anything else."

Compared with dumbbells, VanKerkhoff said, kettlebells feel "more comfortable and stable." A dumbbell's weight is distributed to two sides, which can create "two teetering ends" balancing on your wrist, he said.

Lester Marbury, a 28-year-old dad whose handle on Instagram is @dopekettlebelldad, said he can set a timer for 15 minutes and still get in a good kettlebell workout.

"It's only 15 minutes compared to an hour, driving to the gym, getting set up and everything," said Marbury, who lives in Laurel, Md. "And it's right here in the house."

Plus, kettlebell exercises mimic the moves already required of dads.

"Picking up one of my daughters and throwing her in the air is like doing a kettlebell squat into a thruster," said Brad Simpson, a 38-year-old father who lives in Cincinnati. "It mimics that real-life thing I do with my kids all the time."

## How to pick the right kettlebells for you

Before you buy your own kettlebells, it's a good idea to test out different weights at a gym, Martin said. This way, you can pick the ideal weights for your level of strength.

Brett Jones, the director of education at StrongFirst, a strength-training school with a certification program in kettlebell training, said that if you can buy only one weight, pick a kettlebell you can press overhead.

Just make sure it's not too heavy.

## 3 kettlebell exercises for beginners

You can use kettlebells for basic strength exercises — such as squats, rows and presses — as well as more "ballistic" movements, such as swings and snatches, which require swinging the weight with momentum.

Using the proper form is key to avoid getting injured during a kettlebell workout, especially when doing ballistic movements. If you can, work with an instructor trained in kettlebells to learn the different exercises, said Andrew Busch, an associate professor of health and human kinetics at Ohio Wesleyan University.

If that isn't an option, you can lift weights in front of mirrors or record yourself to check your form, Busch said.

For beginners, here are a few basic moves to try. Depending on the exercise, you should be able to do two to three rounds of six to 12 repetitions. These aren't ballistic movements; do the exercises slowly and steadily.

**Goblet squat:** Hold a kettlebell with two hands around the horns close to your chest. Tuck your upper arms to your sides. Squat while holding the weight upright.

**Single-arm suitcase reverse lunge:** Stand and place a kettlebell to your side. Pick up the weight with one hand, carrying it like a suitcase. Step backward on the same side you're holding the kettlebell. Slowly lunge and reset. Switch sides and repeat.

**Single-arm overhead press:** Grab the kettlebell so the weight is resting on the back of the forearm. Starting at the chest, press the weight above your head until your arm is straight in the air. Slowly lower the kettlebell, folding your arm into your chest.

The Washington Post

"In the beginning, you're going to be focusing on your form and how your body moves," Mayes said. "That matters before you start adding weight."

If you can invest in three or more kettlebells, pick a lighter weight you can press over your head, a medium weight for squats and a heavier weight for dead lifts, Ciaccia said.



## TELEVISION

## Q&amp;A

# Gaffiganian evolution

The Midwestern stand-up comedian gives 'The Skinny' on his comeback era and his physical transformation

BY NATE JACKSON  
Los Angeles Times

**J**im Gaffigan is experiencing a major glow-up lately. He's looking slim, trim and well-styled in a hip suit and glasses on a recent morning in a posh room at the Peninsula hotel in Beverly Hills. His vibe is a lot different from the hefty, pale, Midwestern everyman that a lot of people think of when they hear his name. But if you've tracked his recent trajectory, the recent evolution shouldn't come as a surprise. From touring with comedy megastar Jerry Seinfeld to portraying Tim Walz for five weeks on "Saturday Night Live," Gaffigan's fit physique and wry, clean humor are meeting the moment by popping up in places that bring together the biggest crowds to laugh as a family about topics we can all relate to on some level at a time when we need it most.

On Nov. 22, his 11th stand-up special, "The Skinny," premiered on Hulu as part of the new brand rollout dubbed "Hulu Laughing Now," featuring 12 new comedy specials per year on the streaming platform. We spoke to Gaffigan about the inspiration behind his new hourlong special, the pains of parenting teenagers and how growing his career while his body gets slimmer is only the beginning of his new chapter in comedy.

This interview was edited for length and clarity:

**Los Angeles Times: In your new special "The Skinny," obviously you talk about the fact that you've had a body transformation. What inspired you to make a change to become Slim Jim?**

**Gaffigan:** I wish there was some romantic story surrounding it, but it really came down to my doctor, who brought it up. [She said] "I've noticed you've gained a fair amount of weight." In the '90s, I was working out twice a day to be thin. And then once I had kids, I was desperately trying to find time to work out. And then it just got to a point where my knees didn't work. So [my doctor] said, "You can try these appetite suppressants." And I'm like, "yeah, sure!" but I didn't have an expectation it would work. Even when I was working out twice a day — I have a joke where I was like, "I need to work out a lot just to look like someone who doesn't work out." And so I was pleasantly surprised when it worked.

**What are some vices, especially being on the road as a comic, that you've had to give up?**

I can't tell you how much this drug curbs this insatiable eating I have, but it also curbs other things. So if I have one drink, then I'm like, I'm good, or if I have any kind of compulsive behavior, it kind of diminishes. I mean, I joke around in the special that I feel no joy, but it kind of

makes you behave like an adult, which is weird.

**Describe the process of whittling down the material for "The Skinny," and what do you hope that audiences will get to see from you in terms of what's going on with your life and your comedy?**

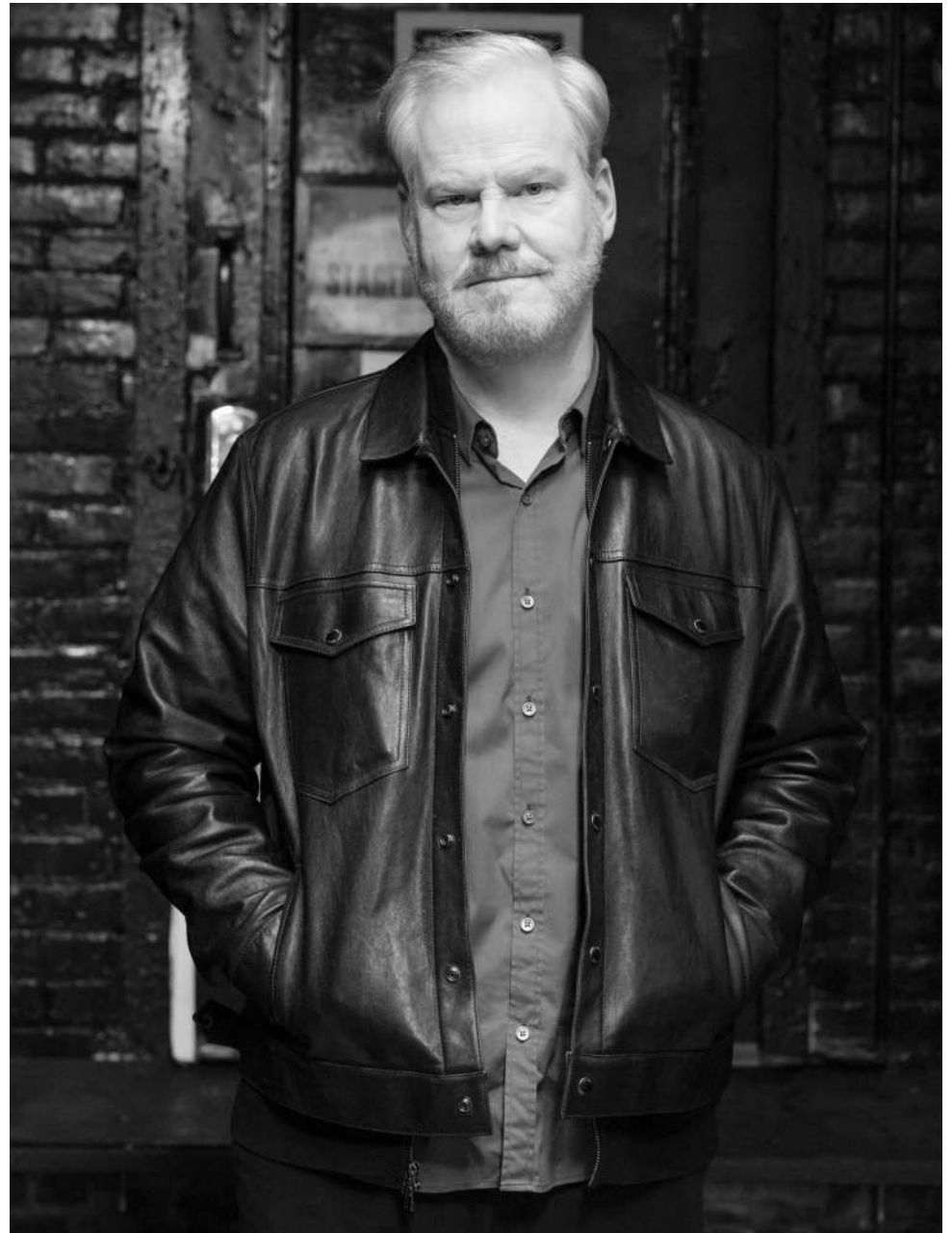
Stand-up has changed so much. The notion that people are putting out multiple specials didn't exist when I started with stand-up, but I think that people who consume a stand-up comedian's material, there's a familiarity, but it's like a friendship. You can't have the exact same conversation, even though we all have friends where it's like we're having the same conversation about high school; it has to be different. You both have to challenge each other. So there for me, working on the special or working on this new hour that I'm working on now, it's self assignment. So some of it, as any creative person, it's like, "what can I talk about that is embarrassing or is revealing?" I think that people that have tracked me along the way in my stand-up will be interested in my view on parenting. I've always had the view that I suck at it, but I have a greater empathy for what all parents are dealing with it. And I think also parents of this era, we've made mistakes. And it doesn't help with social media and the apps and screens. And that's something that's revealed in doing my stand-up and in reading some of the parenting books. I don't know if you have kids; do you have kids?

**No, I'm still happy.**

[Laughs] There's books that reveal the mistakes [we] have made. Parents of teenagers have this perspective. Adults have an impression of what their teenage years were like, and I'm providing this point of view of what it's like to live with these people. It's kind of a cliché, but raising teenagers is like raising a mentally ill person. It sounds harsh — we know there's a natural separation process where teenagers challenge things, but I love that I've gained this perspective of "was my dad a d—, or maybe I was a d—?" Maybe it's kind of basic, but that's something that's universal. We all went through being teenagers and not necessarily the conflict but the misunderstanding between the teenager and the parent, which I find fascinating.

**Do you think the stress of raising your own teenagers feels like payback for how you were as a teen?**

I would say I was a good teen. I was very hard working. I would say that my dad was unnecessarily annoyed by some of my behavior. And now I'm kind of like, "Oh, I get it. I totally get what his annoyance was." And these are your children, and you'd do anything for them. But there is a bafflement. I talk about it [in the special] where you have this sweet 12-year-old, and then they change. And I'm obviously using hyperbole and exaggeration, but there is a shift. And what's so great about touring with the material is



DISNEY/TNS

**Seven-time Grammy nominee Jim Gaffigan talks about everything from appetite suppressants to raising teenagers in "The Skinny," now streaming on Hulu.**

that it's a conversation, so the feedback from the audience can prove your premise or your theory. So even older parents, empty nesters, can say, "oh yeah, that's true." The hyperbolic, humorous statement you're making is only funny because it's grounded in a shared experience.

**One of the things that is unique about your comedy is that it's not about trying to say something necessarily outlandish. It's about bringing people together in a way by poking fun at everyone at the same time. How did you hone your comedic voice, and why do you think your brand of comedy is important these days, when so many comedians — or just comedy in general — are really dedicated to getting a reaction by saying something overtly controversial?**

A joke is a surprise and irreverence is kind of a shortcut to that surprise. And, by the way, we all love it, but I kind of nerd out [when talking about the idea that] there is an aftertaste to comedy. We all have that really kind of bitchy friend that makes us laugh, that is kind of a little mean, but then afterwards we feel a little guilty [because] I know they went too far, or, you know, I shouldn't have laughed at what they said. I believe there is an aftertaste, so you can take that short-term approach . . . I think some comedians just do what they have to do. Irreverence is also something where it's not in my wheelhouse; some comics are really good at it, and that is their thing . . . I believe you can be respectful and highlight some impor-

tant stories and also present the humor of it.

**Considering how long it's taken for you to build a career, it's cool to see you popping up on "SNL" as Tim Walz, touring with Jerry Seinfeld, appearing in movies. . . . This is a pretty big comeback era for you — you are smaller, but your career is getting bigger; does that feel weird?**

That's funny — yeah, doing those shows with Jerry, I never had an expectation that that would happen. Jerry has a clear and concise view and philosophy on stand-up and comedy that when you talk to him, you feel like you're talking to Aristotle. He's kind of like a stoic [who reminds you to have] control of your material. You don't get caught up in what the trend is of the moment. You work on evolving your act and your writing.

The "SNL" experience was so surreal, because I never auditioned for "SNL." I was presented an opportunity to audition to be a writer, but I was like, "I want to be an actor," so I was resistant. But the opportunity to be in that orbit of this last vestige of American live television that still exists with its impracticalities . . . there's no replicating it. What "SNL" has done for 50 years is insane. So even when we were there [filming] and I'm sitting in a room with Dana Carvey, or you look out and you see John Lovitz or Chris Rock, it's just bizarre. So gaining access to that is really an amazing thing.



## TELEVISION

# Skewering the Asian American stereotype

'Interior Chinatown' takes on Hollywood tropes, gives ethnic neighborhood fuller representation

By **TERRY TANG**  
Associated Press

**J**immy O. Yang once played "Chinese Teenager #1." He's now No. 1 on the call sheet in "Interior Chinatown" — despite playing downtrodden background actor Willis Wu in the new Hulu series.

There's no escaping the layers of meta around "Interior Chinatown," an adaptation of Charles Yu's award-winning satirical novel that jabs at how Asian American men have been treated by Hollywood — and in life — one trope at a time.

"I feel like I have gone through every single number on the call sheet now," Yang said. "And I've learned from a lot of other great No. 1s, you know? To carry yourself a certain way. It's not just about showing up when you work, but it's also about leading by example."

The dramedy, which premiered Nov. 19, is told from the view of Willis, a Chinatown restaurant server stuck in a police procedural show whose perspective starts to shift as he looks into the yearslong disappearance of his older brother. The 10-episode season has a mostly Asian cast including Ronny Chieng, Chloe Bennet, Archie Kao and Tzi Ma. There is also plenty of Asian talent behind the scenes, led by Yu, who serves as creator and executive producer.

The episodes are full of nods to cop dramas such as "Law & Order." They also evoke scenes from '80s and '90s U.S. action-comedies structured around one of the co-leads being Asian and knowing martial arts — think "Rush Hour" and "Martial Law." But it wasn't a youth spent watching these movies and shows that inspired Yu's book, which is structured like a screenplay.

"More what informed the book was the experiences of my parents, who are immigrants, and of their community and seeing how they and their friends had built lives here, were trying to be Americans, were succeeding at it in a lot of ways but still were feeling like outsiders — and wanting to just tell their story," Yu said.

Taika Waititi, the director of "Jojo Rabbit" and two "Thor" movies and the first person of Maori descent to win an Academy Award, also produces. He's no stranger to promoting underrepresented voices on television, having cocreated the Emmy-nominated "Reservation Dogs," the first series where every role on and off-screen was held by someone Indigenous. Growing up in New Zealand, he saw similarities in "Interior Chinatown" with how Indigenous Maori like him were treated even in daily interactions.

"I remember working in a convenience store and I was always out the back of the convenience store. There were people who got to come in — and I'd been working there for six months — and they went straight to work on the till," Waititi told The Associated Press. "One of the big draws to me was to be able to be involved in something that highlights those issues."

The series' episode titles reference different archetypes that have shadowed Asian American actors for decades. These include "delivery guy," "tech guy," "kung fu guy" and "Chinatown expert." There has been a reclaiming in recent years of "kung fu guy," particularly. Marvel's "Shang-Chi," the CW's "Kung Fu" and "Warrior" on Max all have protagonists with martial arts prowess who also deal with personal baggage. All three stories happen to take place in San Francisco's Chinatown.

The show's commentary on stereotyping seems more relevant in a postcoronavirus pandemic era, Ma said.

"In every major city, you know, the Chinatowns are going through hard times particularly after the pandemic," Ma said. "I hope that people who come to Chinatown realize that Chinatown isn't just a place for you to eat food. It's a community."

Chieng, who plays curmudgeonly restaurant server Fatty Choi, memorably stuck up for Chinatowns everywhere in 2016 when he used his "Daily Show" gig to put Fox News' Jesse Waters on blast for a racist segment about Manhattan's Chinatown.



Hulu/AP photos

**"Interior Chinatown" is told from the perspective of downtrodden background actor Willis Wu (Jimmy O. Yang), left, a Chinatown restaurant server stuck in a police procedural show whose perspective starts to shift as he looks into the yearslong disappearance of his older brother. Ronny Chieng, right, plays curmudgeonly restaurant server Fatty Choi.**

(The Malaysian-born comedian says that takedown helped get him his part in "Crazy Rich Asians," alongside Yang. Unlike the characters in "Interior Chinatown," he says, he has since been very fortunate. In fact, he didn't even have to read for Yu and other producers.)

A third of "Interior Chinatown's" main cast has been in projects set in a Chinatown, which Yu says affirms the story's examination of how Hollywood limits the range of roles available to Asian Americans.

"You don't have to look too far down the IMDb listings of some of our cast who are really successful actors, but a few years ago could have easily been — you know, Jimmy likes to still tell the story of how he was 'Chinese Teenager (#1)' on Chloe's show, 'Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.,' which is 10 years ago," Yu said.

Bennet, who is half Chinese and half white, has spoken out before about struggling to be considered for roles when she used her actual surname, Wang. For so long, Bennet felt like her whiteness was what people saw at work and her "Asian-ness" was always reserved for home," the former "Agents of



**Chloe Bennet, Sullivan Jones, Yang and Lisa Gilroy in a scene from "Interior Chinatown." One of the Asian American archetypes that the series explores is "tech guy."**

S.H.I.E.L.D." star told the AP. So, just walking onto the "Interior Chinatown" set was emotional.

"I'm viewed as white and so I've never really been a part of something where being Asian was so much at the forefront on- and off-screen," Bennet said. "And so being surrounded by our incredible crew, who was also very diverse, was something I didn't realize I'd seen and that it was the immediate power of representation. I felt so much

more comfortable."

Yang, though, was too embarrassed to tell his frequent scene partner about his nameless part on her show.

"The journey that Willis was going through was the journey that I went through. I just have to zoom back 10 years," said Yang, who also has his own production company. "I had a phase where I was fighting for the same kind of roles. ... Even I had to fight to get Chinese Teenager #1."

**"The journey that Willis was going through was the journey that I went through. I just have to zoom back 10 years. I had a phase where I was fighting for the same kind of roles. ... Even I had to fight to get Chinese Teenager #1."**

Jimmy O. Yang  
Willis Wu in "Interior Chinatown"



## MUSIC



Josh Wool

Andrew Bird and Madison Cunningham have released “Cunningham Bird,” a track-by-track reimagining of 1973’s “Buckingham Nicks,” by Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks.

# Covering a lost classic

## Why Andrew Bird and Madison Cunningham reimagined the ‘Buckingham Nicks’ LP

BY PETER LARSEN

*The Orange County Register*

From the moment Andrew Bird and Madison Cunningham started to sing and play at the Troubadour in West Hollywood one night at the end of September, the audience listened in rapt attention.

The occasion? One of the first full performances of the two singer-songwriters’ new collaboration, the album “Cunningham Bird,” a track-by-track reimagining of “Buckingham Nicks,” the 1973 debut of Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham.

“Buckingham Nicks” earned the on-and-off lovers an invitation to join Fleetwood Mac, with whom Buckingham and Nicks found massive fame almost overnight in the mid-’70s. Today, the album is long out of print, almost impossible to find outside of unofficial videos on YouTube.

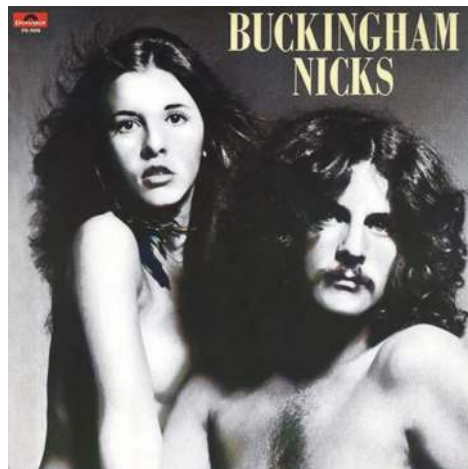
The original record delivered a dozen diverse songs, most of which stand the test of time. In the hands of Cunningham and Bird, it’s arguably even more beautiful as new arrangements, harmonies and instrumentation deliver gorgeous takes on



“Cunningham Bird,” left, and “Buckingham Nicks.” A friend suggested that Bird and Cunningham cover the 1973 album, which is out of print and not on streaming services.

forgotten would-be classics.

Bird and Cunningham traded verses and harmonies while playing acoustic guitars — and Bird also at times whistling and playing violin. They were backed by drummer Griffin Goldsmith from Dawes and keyboardist Mike Viola, who also produced the album.



The Troubadour audience hardly moved as the album flowed from song to song. When Cunningham and the others paused for a few seconds of silence near the end of “Crystal,” a fan broke the silence, shouting, “Oh my God!” at the beauty of the music. Cunningham smiled slightly before she started to sing again, playing uncom-

mon patterns on her guitar, and with Bird whistling melody lines, they finished the song to cheers and applause.

A few days after that show, Bird talked about how he and Cunningham arrived at this unusual album, how they went about making these songs their own, and what kind of reaction they’ve received from Buckingham and Nicks for the project.

“I was just looking simply for a reason to do more live shows with Madison,” Bird says. “I just wanted to do a little tour where we play each other’s songs. And then it was suggested by a friend, they pointed out this ‘Buckingham Nicks’ album, and said, ‘You know, someone should really cover this album.’

“He explained why, you know, that it’s out of print,” he says. “It’s difficult to hear it and it’s a great album. And it all lined up.

“It just filtered into place,” he adds. “We needed something to hang it on, to filter it through our own sensibilities. And it really surprised us how much we found in there,

**SEE CLASSIC ON PAGE 17**



# MUSIC REVIEWS

## Classic: Bird says he wasn't very familiar with record; Cunningham didn't know it at all

FROM PAGE 16

as far as like it's just a fascinating sort of lost relic."

### 'We're not a cover band'

Bird says that he wasn't particularly familiar with the record. Cunningham didn't know it at all.

"It's really a character study of two people that many people are very familiar with for everything that happened after this album," Bird says. "And you hear in this album, if you do a deep dive, what's to come, the good and the bad. You hear both of their distinct personalities and the worldviews often clashing at that young age.

"So we just had a lot of fun making it," he says.

On stage at the Troubadour, Bird had acknowledged the changes he and Cunningham had made in the original songs.

"I was looking out there, thinking I bet there are some outposts there going, 'Hmm, I'm not so sure about these arrangements,'" he told the audience. "We're doing this with total respect for the music. We're just not a cover band. We've got to do it our way."

The original album arrived in 1973, Bird notes, "at that inflection point of the end of the hippie era, beginning of this sort of prog rock god. It very much is in that realm, but there's a little bit of, like, Cat Stevens feel to it as well.

"It's very dense, and I identify with that from my own early albums," he says. "When you're in your 20s, you just don't know what you're not supposed to do. You try to throw everything you're inspired by into one album.

"The overall production style, there's kind of an early '70s haze-like drug den vibe to it," Bird says. "Fleetwood Mac cleaned it up a lot. But we also ripped up the shag rug carpeting on this one and revealed the hardwood floors underneath, I guess."

Having not grown up with "Buckingham Nicks," Bird and Cunningham respected it without the reverence that might have made it difficult to reconstruct.

"We cleaned it up a bit in some ways rhythmically but also added our own harmonic ideas, and messed with some of the perspective on who's singing what and to whom, gender-wise. Because we both believe, like, what's the point of covering a whole album if you're going to feel beholden to it?"

### 'An interesting pair'

Bird, who has never met Buckingham or Nicks, came to admire them more from his deep dive into the album.

"They're an interesting pair," he says. "He's obviously known as a great guitar player, like virtuosic, and you hear it on this. I identify with the kind of focus it takes to be able to play your instrument that well, but then also write a fairly simple song that connects with people.

"Usually one excludes the other to some degree," Bird says. "Like the amount of focus it takes to be a master of your instrument, sometimes you can't see the whole picture when you're trying to write a song. It's kind of rare that those two come together so well.

"It's just an interesting story," he says of "Buckingham Nicks." "She was, I think, cleaning houses to support him so he could stay home and practice. Then he gets offered the gig with Fleetwood Mac, and he said, 'We're a package. You've got to take Stevie too.' She goes on to become the most successful of them all. The most iconic."

Why "Buckingham Nicks" went out of print decades ago and has never even been released on CD remains a mystery.

"It's all there on this album," Bird says of its creators' talents. "I don't know why it's out of print. I think it didn't do particularly well at the time. And maybe it's how a lot of people feel about the first thing they do. But who knows? It's a mystery."

The "Cunningham Bird" album, however, is not a mystery to Buckingham and Nicks, Bird says.

"They are aware of it, and no cease and desist yet," he says, laughing. "But yeah, they've been cool. Lindsey's camp has been very receptive and encouraging. And Stevie's has been ... encouraging enough."

### 'Not the last of it'

The Troubadour show on Sept. 30 came a few weeks before the Oct. 18 release of "Cunningham Bird." The group had premiered the album live at the Newport Folk Festival in July and played only a handful of other shows with it.

Bird says initial nerves about how it would be received, especially given no one had heard the whole album before the live shows, eased as soon as he and Cunningham saw the audience response.

"The reception has been really good," he says.

"When you hear of someone not doing their original songs and covering something else, there's a slight stigma against it. It would have been normal before the late '60s and '70s of the singer-songwriter era, where it's like you want your singer-songwriters to have lived what they're singing.

"I don't know," Bird continues. "It's just sometimes that leads to a kind of stagnancy of, 'This is classic and should not be touched.' Whereas folk tradition, jazz tradition, there's jazz standards, there's old ballads that get done and redone hundreds and hundreds of times. Like, why shouldn't this stuff be allowed to live in a living tradition?"

As a performer, Bird says he grows stronger through covering other artists.

"Usually what excites me about covering a song is the thought that I could turn people onto something that they haven't heard," he says.

"Or maybe — it's not the case with this (album) — the original version doesn't quite capture the potential of how great the song is.

"A lot of people cover very well-known songs and they do a note for note, and I just don't get that," Bird says. "To me, it's a chance to turn my own audience on to something I think is cool.

"And what I get out of it is I learn, without the pressure of it coming from your own head, you learn about how you sing," he says. "It just brings out different things in your voice."

A live video stream of the Troubadour show arrived Wednesday on Nugs.net. The HD video stream costs \$9.99 and will be available to play or replay on demand through Dec. 1.

Other than that, Bird says there aren't many future shows planned, though he hopes he and Cunningham continue to have scattered opportunities to play the album live in the future.

"Depending on how the album's received, it could be kind of a perennial thing," he says. "You know, 'Cunningham Bird' do 'Buckingham Nicks' at such and such festival. But Madison's off recording her new album now and I'm writing now, and we'll see what comes up. It's not the last of it. It'll definitely be more."

**Lindsey's camp has been very receptive and encouraging. And Stevie's has been ... encouraging enough."**

**Andrew Bird**

on Buckingham and Nicks' reactions to "Cunningham Bird"

## Kendrick Lamar

GNX (Interscope)

With his surprise-dropped "GNX," Kendrick Lamar roars from zero to 60 faster than a turbocharged '87 Buick, faster than you can shout "Mustaaaaard." And waaaaay faster than you can decode the dense biblical centerpiece "Re-incarnated."



Keeping the same energy of his landmark Pop Out concert five months ago, Lamar surrounds himself with up-and-coming Los Angeles artists — from AzChike to Peysoh — and raps over thumping New West Coast soundscapes shaped by his longtime producer Soundwave, along with Jack Antonoff and a garageful of other beat mechanics. He's once again "possessed by a spirit," sprinkling 2Pac, Biggie and Nas references throughout and maintaining a me-against-the-world antipathy that includes but extends well beyond a certain Canadian: "I just strangled me a GOAT" and "now it's plural."

Lil Wayne, Snoop Dogg, Andrew Schulz, and even Fox's Super Bowl broadcast can't escape K-Dot's chaotic crosshairs. Here's hoping the chorus of "tv off" — an urgent call to "turn this TV off" repeated eight times — confuses the masses during his New Orleans halftime show.

This is Lamar leaning into the same creativity-juicing pride, self-righteous anger and supreme confidence that fueled the Grammy-nominated "Not Like Us" and won his Drake feud. And yet, as with his first-ever hit "Swimming Pools (Drank)," even the most club-ready braggadocio songs — and there are plenty — are slapped with a caution sticker. Introspection is baked into Lamar's art. In "man at the garden," he's surveying his kingdom and glory and declares that while "I deserve it all," "dangerously / nothing changed with me / still got pain in me."

At age 37, Lamar remains in peak form (that breath control!) and stands alone in the rap world as a star who bridges generations without chasing trends. He generates his own gravity in the hip-hop universe. Pulling samples from the early '80s — Debbie Deb, Luther Vandross, Whodini — he's able to switch cadences and lyrical perspectives mid-song without ever losing the listener.

Whatever comes next, the Pulitzer Prize winner has written another thrilling chapter in what remains the most fascinating longform story in hip-hop: an ambitious and searingly talented poet from Compton working through his — and the world's — contradictions on the biggest stage, forever discomfited by his crown.

— Ryan Pearson  
Associated Press

## Father John Misty

Mahashmashana (Sub Pop)

The title of Father John Misty's sixth studio album, "Mahashmashana," is a reference to cremation, and the first song proposes "a corpse dance." Religious overtones mix with the undercurrent of a midlife crisis atop his folk chamber pop. And for those despairing recent events, some lyrics seem topical.

"It's always the darkest right before the end," Misty sings on "Screamland," a power ballad full of desperation and overdriven amplifiers. His advice: "Stay young, get numb, keep dreaming."

"Screamland" is one of eight songs on "Mahashmashana," Misty's jaundiced, smart, cynical, droll, druggy, opaque, arch, theatrical take on life — and death.

Misty, the stage name for Josh Tillman, describes himself in one song as a windbag. While that's a bit harsh, the album will delight those who enjoy listening to music with a dictionary.

"Shaken like a pawl fly / obscene as a lick," Misty sings on the title cut. "Panoply," "panopticon" and "the Anthropocene" also receive mentions.

Misty frames his wordsmithery in cinematic rock noir arrangements as dense as the lyrics. A marvelous string section underpins the lush sound, darting and swooping amid thundering drums and a pounding piano. Tempos tend toward slow, matching Misty's melodrama. But "She Cleans Up" is delightfully jagged art rock, with slashing guitars and sax, and "I Guess Time Just Makes Fools of Us All" pairs a sweet groove and sour outlook. Characters come and go on the latter tune, but through nine verses the song repeatedly reaches the same rueful conclusion.

The title cut runs even longer, needing nearly 10 minutes for descriptions, such as courtiers "resplendent in donor class panache." It's a love story.

On "Mahashmashana," Misty wrestles with a reality that is confounding, off-kilter, even crazy, knowing that it won't end well. Root for him.

— Steven Wine  
Associated Press





## VIDEO GAMES

## Is a functioning democracy a fantasy?

Metaphor: ReFantazio asks question within turn-based role-playing game structure

BY GENE PARK  
The Washington Post

Every election, we're told we have to fight for democracy, how it's the great "experiment," almost like a mantra.

Is a civil, functioning democracy as much a fantasy as a world of magic, elves and fairies? This is the troubling question that drives this year's smartest, most exciting video game, *Metaphor: ReFantazio*, from the developer Atlus and famed *Persona* director Katsura Hashino.

In *Metaphor*, player protagonist Will (or whatever you wish to be called) carries around his favorite novel everywhere, doting over it like a priest with prayer beads. The book describes a "fantasy" world — illustrated much like our own, with cars and skyscrapers — where "no soul is born into discrimination," people choose political leaders based on votes and "taking power or wealth by force is seen as the most shameful of transgressions." Our fairy partner Gallica reads a few sentences and is taken aback at far-fetched concepts like equality.



Hashino

"It's strange to feel envious of a fictional world," she remarks, speaking sideways to an audience seeking escape. But *Metaphor* is no mere escapist fantasy, nor is it nihilistic, unproductive political satire. Instead, it is an earnest plea for the audience to turn envy into action, anchored firmly in the harsh realities of governance over conflicting priorities and interests.

*Metaphor* begins with a king's assassination that creates a power void, yet it doesn't result in the usual bloody game of thrones. His death instead triggers a series of events that forces the entire kingdom to adopt a democratic form of government, superseding his family lineage. It's the populace, not blood or power, that will determine the leader. And Will, rebel and friend to the king's cursed and comatose son, is roped in as a nominee. *Metaphor* is about the struggles of becoming president, or something like it. After all, the entire game is a metaphor.

Complicating matters, Will is a member of the most marginalized race of people, the elda. In *Metaphor*, nine tribes of people are identified by their appearances and characteristics. Paripus, people with puppy dog ears and tails, are considered vagrants, while the horned clemar people populate the upper echelon. The game's "United Kingdom" is splintered by class struggles kindled by those in power.

In development for around seven years, *Metaphor* was released just weeks before the close of the U.S. election. The timing felt deliberate, but it's pure coincidence, director Hashino assured.

Like Will, Hashino carried books around for inspiration. Hashino's *Persona*



Sega photos

Public debate and speechmaking raise character aspects such as "tolerance" and "eloquence" as the player bids for the public's favor in *Metaphor: ReFantazio*, a traditional turn-based role-playing game that examines the challenges of meeting the democratic ideal.

games are stylish, modern role-playing adventures starring Japanese high school students, so fantasy was new territory. He reread the usual fantasy staples by J.R.R. Tolkien. Crucially, he also read Plato and Socrates to absorb their views of a utopian world, as well as the works of Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler. Finally, he revisited "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious" by Carl Jung, which heavily inspired the *Persona* series and the Archetype superpowers in *Metaphor*.

Will and his diverse followers inhabit Archetypes, which function as role-playing classes. Leon Strohl, an orphaned noble clemar, wields the warrior Archetype. These superpowers are awakened through metaphorical scenes depicting each character ripping a microphone out of their chest: literally speaking from their heart. Each scene comes after a moment of self-discovery fueled by moments of desperation. Will, Leon and the others all overcome their anxieties, the central emotional theme.

Hashino's stories focus on the self and how we relate to others. In *Metaphor*, he widens his lens to the broader populace, the strangers whose choices touch our lives. Hashino says the game is about the balance of turning one's anxieties inward or projecting them onto others, authority figures such as politicians and religious leaders.

"If the striking of that balance is off, things could get out of control," Hashino said. "We wanted to see how that balance between taking things on yourself and relying on others to face fear and anxiety could affect a story."

Don't get it twisted: This isn't a video game of discourse; it's a traditional turn-based role-playing game that plays with *Dungeons & Dragons* fantasy archetypes. Will and his party still have to do battle with monsters, particularly mysterious,

hideous invaders known only as "humans." Yes, *Metaphor* is very playful with metaphors. You even have to fight other political candidates. The central villain, Louis, is a charismatic general who hopes to unite all races under the banner of strength, a variation of Will's goals.

"They're looking at the same materials but come to very different interpretations," Hashino said.

Even the game's music, composed by *Persona*'s jazz master Shoji Meguro, serves its themes of unity. Atlus hired a Buddhist monk to chant lyrics to the game's music, all written in Esperanto, the 19th-century invention intended to be a universal second language for the world. It is democracy and unity literally (not metaphorically) chanted as a mantra.

A nominee representing the race with the longest lifespans fights for "those too old to work." He's essentially attempting to create Social Security. As the game progresses, the real conflict becomes the fight to represent every tribe and their diverse interests.

"I don't imagine this would turn out well in the real world," laments the noble boy Leon after reading Will's novel. "In public opinion, tribal perspective always divides us."

Leon's words recall the recent debates summed up in the 2022 book "The Great Experiment: Why Diverse Democracies Fall Apart and How They Can Endure," by Yascha Mounk. Mounk covers how democracies have a history of religious and ethnic exclusion, how history's most diverse societies operated under empires or monarchies and how open elections invite demagoguery and demonization. *Metaphor* is keenly aware of this struggle.

"If everybody's free to do what they want, they'll work out their own reasons to be prejudiced," says the dog-eared Fidelio after reading another passage from Will's

novel, his cynicism forged through oppression.

Like *Metaphor*, the novel's idealism is meant as a flint for hope — a recurrent theme for Hashino. I asked him, "Why is it so important that this story was about hope, about fighting for a future we can only imagine?"

Hashino paused and put his head down in silence. He finally said, "To be honest, you asked a question that really hits the core. I've done many interviews, and I haven't had a question like this."

"Hope is progressing toward something undefined and undetermined by you or anyone else," Hashino said after a few minutes. "I feel that is at the essence of all things."

"Through this game, I wanted to make sure people aren't confined in this story and world, 'wasting time' on a game. I want them to take something away from the experience, something that would help them reflect on their daily lives. ... There are so many creations in the world that stimulate or move people. That in itself affects reality."

Without the dream of a better future, how could it ever come to pass? Will's friend and elven warrior knight Eiselin Hulkenberg says as much after she reads Will's novel. Astonished at the book's romanticism, she muses, "It takes power to walk the path of our dearest hopes."

It is the mantra of the activist, to become a prisoner of hope. In this way, *Metaphor* is the perfect work to ponder and play amid the din of electoral bickering and consternation. It also helps that it's a video game narrative filled with thrilling twists, betrayals and romance. Democracy can be more than just a fantasy story — and building it can be just as exciting.

Platforms: PC, PlayStations 4 and 5, Xbox X/S

Online: [metaphor.atlus.com](http://metaphor.atlus.com)







## FACES

# 'Beatles '64' gets personal with Fab Four

Documentary captures iconic band relaxing, goofing around as they visit America in 1964

By MARK KENNEDY  
Associated Press

Likely most people have seen iconic footage of the Beatles performing on "The Ed Sullivan Show." But how many have seen Paul McCartney during that same U.S. trip feeding seagulls off his hotel balcony?

That moment — as well as George Harrison and John Lennon goofing around by exchanging their jackets — are part of the Disney+ documentary "Beatles '64," an intimate look at the English band's first trip to America that uses rare and newly restored footage. It streams Friday.

"It's so fun to be the fly on the wall in those really intimate moments," says Margaret Bodde, who produced alongside Martin Scorsese. "It's just this incredible gift of time and technology to be able to see it now with the decades of time stripped away so that you really feel like you're there."

"Beatles '64" leans into footage of the 14-day trip filmed by documentarians Albert and David Maysles, who left behind 11 hours of the Fab Four goofing around in New York's Plaza hotel or traveling. It was restored by Park Road

Post in New Zealand.

"It's beautiful, although it's black and white and it's not wide-screen," says director David Tedeschi. "It's like it was shot yesterday and it captures the youth of the four Beatles and the fans."

The footage is augmented by interviews with the two surviving members of the band and people whose lives were impacted, including some of the women who as teens stood outside their hotel hoping to catch a glimpse of the Beatles.

"It was like a crazy love," fan Vickie Brenna-Costa recalls in the documentary. "I can't really understand it now. But then, it was natural."

The film shows the four heartthrobs flirting and dancing at the Peppermint Lounge disco, Harrison noodling with a Woody Guthrie riff on his guitar and tells the story of Ronnie Spector sneaking the band out a hotel back exit and up to Harlem to eat barbecue.

The documentary coincides with the release of a box set of vinyl albums collecting the band's seven U.S. albums released in '64 and early '65 — "Meet The Beatles!," "The Beatles' Second Al-



The Beatles — from left, John Lennon, George Harrison, Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney — appear in Liverpool, England, on July 10, 1964, for the premiere of their movie "A Hard Day's Night."

bum," "A Hard Day's Night" (the movie soundtrack), "Something New," "The Beatles' Story," "Beatles '65" and "The Early Beatles." They had been out of print on vinyl since 1995.

The Beatles' U.S. visit in 1964 also included concerts at Carnegie Hall, a gig at the Washington Coliseum in Washington, D.C., and a visit to Miami, where the band met Muhammad Ali. The documentary shows members of the band reading newspaper coverage of themselves.

Viewers may learn that the Beatles — now revered — were often met with ridicule or rudeness from the older generation. At the British Embassy in New York, the four were treated as lower class,

while renowned broadcaster Eric Sevareid, doing a piece for CBS, compared the reaction to the Beatles to the German measles.

"You're nothing but four Elvis Presleys," one reporter told them during a press conference, to which the boys good-naturedly started gyrating as Ringo Starr screamed "It's not true!"

"Why the establishment was against them is sort of a mystery to me," says Tedeschi. "I think older people believed that music would go back to the big bands."

Musicians like Sananda Maitreya, Ron Isley and Smokey Robinson also discuss the Fab Four and what they took from Black music. There also are interviews with residents of Harlem, critic

Joe Queennan and filmmaker David Lynch, who saw the Beatles play the Washington Coliseum.

"Beatles '64" tries to explain why young people were so besotted by John, Paul, George and Ringo. Their visit came just months after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and Tedeschi argues Beatlemania was a salve for a nation in mourning.

"Part of it is I think that the light was just off. They were depressed. Everything was dark. And 'I Want to Hold Your Hand' lit them up," says Tedeschi.

As McCartney says in the documentary: "Maybe America needed something like the Beatles to lift it out of mourning and just sort of say 'Life goes on.'"

## Game, set, match: Graziadei 1st 'Bachelor' to finish on top on 'Dancing with the Stars'

TNS

America's "best bachelor" is also its favorite dancer.

Joey Graziadei, who starred on ABC's "The Bachelor" in the beginning of 2024, won the prized Mirrorball trophy on Tuesday night's season finale of "Dancing with the Stars."

It's another feather in the former tennis instructor's cap, who has developed a reputation online for being funny, sweet and show an affinity for shirtless TV scenes. It makes him the first "Bachelor" in franchise history to win the ballroom dancing show — a handful of "Bachelorettes" have previously taken home the honor (Hannah Brown in 2019 and Kaitlyn Bristowe in 2020).

Graziadei and his dance partner, Jenna Johnson, beat out competitors including Olympian gymnast Stephen Nedoroscik, Olympian rugby player Iona Maher, Super Bowl wide receiver Danny Amendola and actress Chan-

andler Kinney in the final rounds of the season.

In a package reflecting on his time on the series, Graziadei said he felt he was "completely in over my head" when he started training and wasn't sure he deserved to be in the competition. "The Bachelor" Season 28 star, who was the first contestant from the franchise to win "DWTS," said he went from being nervous in Week 1 to "confident and excited" by the final dance.

As is usually the case with "Dancing with the Stars" contestants, he said the competition was "the most difficult thing" he ever had to do.

"The mental side of this competition has been hands down the most challenging thing I have done," he said. "I have to go learn routines and perform them well in front of people within a week. The actual stress of that is crazy."

Graziadei told Us Weekly that he "blacked out" upon winning and only remembers Johnson "screaming really, really loud."



ABC

"Bachelor" alum Joey Graziadei, left, and his pro dancing partner, Jenna Johnson, hold their Mirrorball trophies Tuesday after being voted winners of "Dancing with the Stars."

Graziadei said that he's "going to take a break from reality TV for a little bit" after back-to-back stints on the two ABC series.

Graziadei said "The Bachelor" and "DWTS" were both "amazing." "I obviously got an amazing fiancée and now have a Mirrorball, so it was a great year for me," he added, referring to his engagement to Kelsey Anderson.

## The Weeknd announces album coming Jan. 24

Pop-soul singer the Weeknd announced Wednesday that his new LP, "Hurry Up Tomorrow," will be released Jan. 24.

"Hurry Up Tomorrow" is the follow-up to 2022's "Dawn FM" and completes a trilogy, the Weeknd says, that began with "After Hours" in 2020. The album will also come a year and a half after the conclusion of "The Idol," the HBO series that starred the Weeknd (born Abel Tesfaye) as a cult-leader-like pop star.

The Weeknd has released three singles from "Hurry Up Tomorrow": "Dancing in the Flames," "Timeless" and "São Paulo." "Timeless," which features Playboi Carti, is currently at No. 14 on Billboard's Hot 100; "Dancing in the Flames" sits at No. 55.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Man awarded \$13M after wrongful imprisonment

**MA** FRAMINGHAM — For the nearly three decades that he was behind bars, Michael Sullivan's mother and four siblings died, his girlfriend moved on with her life and he was badly beaten in several prison attacks.

All for a murder he long insisted he never committed.

Earlier this month, the 64-year-old Sullivan got a degree of justice when a Massachusetts jury ruled that he was innocent of the 1986 murder and robbery of Wilfred McGrath. He was awarded \$13 million — though state regulations cap rewards at \$1 million for wrongful convictions. The jury also found a state police chemist falsely testified at the trial though his testimony isn't what guaranteed Sullivan's conviction.

"The most important thing is finding me innocent of the murder, expunging it from my record," said Sullivan, speaking at the Framingham, Mass., office of his lead attorney Michael Heineman. "The money, of course, will be very helpful to me."

A spokesman for the Massachusetts attorney general said, "We respect the jury's verdict and are evaluating whether an appeal is appropriate."

## Officials: Man tried to fly with meth-caked clothing

**CA** LOS ANGELES — A 31-year-old man was arrested at Los Angeles International Airport after trying to check two suitcases filled with clothing caked in methamphetamine — including a cow pajama onesie, federal prosecutors announced Tuesday.

Authorities say Raj Matharu, of Northridge, checked two bags before his Nov. 6 flight to Sydney. But screening officers who X-rayed the pink and gray suitcases noticed an anomaly and flagged them for a second inspection.

Inside the suitcases, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers found "white or light-colored clothing items dried stiff and covered in a white residue," according to a criminal complaint filed in the Central District of California. The residue — which was found on items including socks, boxers, tank tops, sweatpants, jeans, hoodies, underwear and a pair of cow onesie pajamas — tested positive for methamphetamine, federal prosecutors say.

All the light-colored clothing in the suitcases was caked in the residue, while other clothing items were not, authorities said. Investigators estimate more than 30 pounds of methamphetamine solution had been soaked into the items.

## Prosecutors: Group stole items, sold them abroad

**NY** NEW YORK — A shoplifting ring that stole nearly \$2 million in clothes and



THOMAS WELLS, NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI DAILY JOURNAL/AP

## Warming up to a ride

Tyler Banks, 11, enjoys a late afternoon bike ride along Bickerstaff Road in Tupelo, Miss. on Sunday, as temperatures remained in low 70s.

beauty products from Macy's and other well-known stores in the U.S. and then resold them in New York City and the Dominican Republic has been busted, law enforcement officials announced Tuesday.

Five New Yorkers have been charged with felony possession of stolen property, conspiracy and other related crimes, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said.

The group's leaders, married couple Cristopher Guzman and Yvelisse Guzman Batista, directed shoplifting crews to steal specific merchandise as they hit multiple stores in New York, New Jersey, Maryland and elsewhere along the East Coast, she said. They also paid truck drivers to divert products bound for retailers from manufacturer warehouses directly to locations under their control.

The group, operating out of a home in Queens, then resold the merchandise online as well as at a brick-and-mortar boutique called Yvelisse Fashion in Santiago, a city in the Dominican Republic.

Vince Scala, a lawyer for the couple and two of the other defendants, said his clients pleaded not guilty at their arraignment Saturday. They were released pending their next court date in January.

## Ruling moves state closer to legalizing medical pot

**NE** OMAHA — Three weeks after Nebraska voters overwhelmingly approved medical marijuana the state moved a step closer to allowing it Tuesday when a judge ruled that

the petitions that put the question on the ballot were valid.

The decision by Lancaster County District Judge Susan Strong was a victory for advocates of medical marijuana, but opponents are likely to appeal it to the state Supreme Court.

"To prevail in this action, the plaintiff and Secretary had to show that more than 3,463 signatures on the Legalization Petition and 3,357 signatures on the Regulatory Petition are invalid. The Plaintiff and Secretary are well short," Strong wrote. Fewer than 1,000 signatures on each petition were shown to be invalid.

A spokesperson for the Nebraska attorney general said the office's lawyers were reviewing the ruling and considering whether to file an appeal.

More than two-thirds of Nebraska voters supported legalization at the polls Nov. 5. The results are scheduled to be certified Dec. 2.

## Ruling restores tribe's hunting and fishing rights

**OR** LINCOLN CITY — Drumming made the floor vibrate and singing filled the conference room of the Chinook Winds Casino Resort in Lincoln City, on the Oregon coast, as hundreds in tribal regalia danced in a circle.

For the last 47 years, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians have held an annual powwow to celebrate regaining federal recognition. This month's event, however, was especially significant: It came

just two weeks after a federal court lifted restrictions on the tribe's rights to hunt, fish and gather — restrictions tribal leaders had opposed for decades.

The Siletz is a confederation of over two dozen bands and tribes whose traditional homelands spanned western Oregon, as well as parts of northern California and southwestern Washington state. The federal government in the 1850s forced them onto a reservation on the Oregon coast, where they were confederated together as a single, federally recognized tribe despite their different backgrounds and languages.

In the 1950s and '60s, Congress revoked recognition of over 100 tribes, including the Siletz, under a policy known as "termination." Affected tribes lost millions of acres of land as well as federal funding and services.

## Last 2 communities reach deals with teachers

**MA** BOSTON — Two Massachusetts communities reached deals with their striking teachers union Tuesday, ending the last of three teachers strikes in communities north of Boston.

The Marblehead School Committee and the Marblehead Education Association announced that they reached tentative agreements and that employees would return to work and schools would reopen on Wednesday, which was an early release day for students ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday.

In Beverly, School Committee

Chair Rachael Abell said Tuesday that the committee and the Beverly Teachers Association had reached a tentative agreement that allowed students to return to school on Wednesday.

The unions voted Nov. 7 to authorize the strikes, which will force schools to hold classes during vacations and weekends to meet the required 180 days of classroom learning required by state law. Teacher strikes are illegal in Massachusetts.

## Confiscated-booze auction is a product of new law

**KY** FRANKFORT — Looking for hard-to-find bottles of Kentucky bourbon to toast the holidays or add to a collection? Get your bids ready as the Bluegrass State launches its first online auction of confiscated alcohol.

Whiskeys up for sale include two bottles of Old Rip Van Winkle, a Blanton's Single Barrel Gold in box with Japanese markings and a bottle of Four Roses Small Batch Barrel Strength 2011.

The sale is the result of a new Kentucky law, which allows alcohol confiscated from closed criminal investigations by the state's alcoholic beverage control agency to be auctioned.

Online bidding opened Wednesday and closes at midnight on Dec. 11. Proceeds will support programs promoting responsible alcohol use by adults and awareness programs for youths.

From wire reports



Bizarro

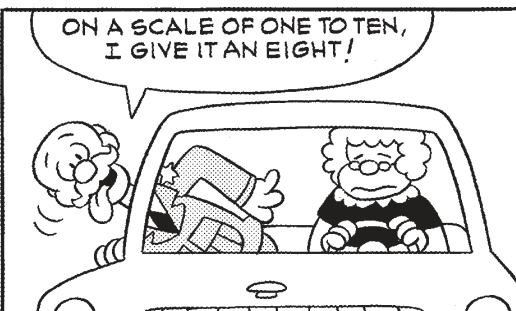
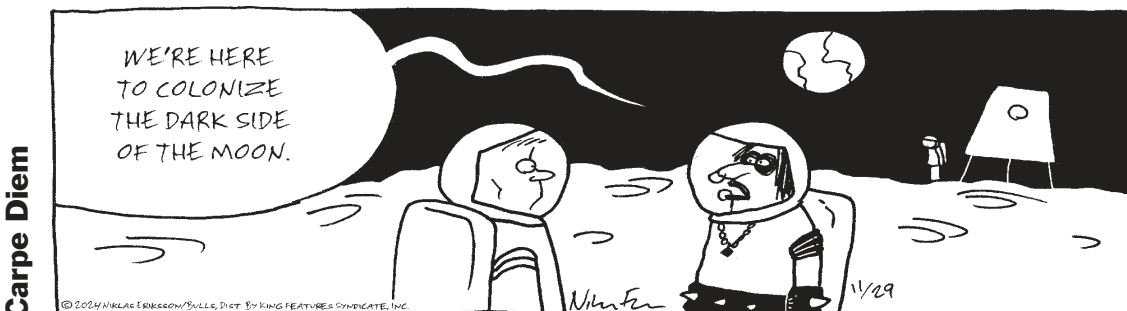
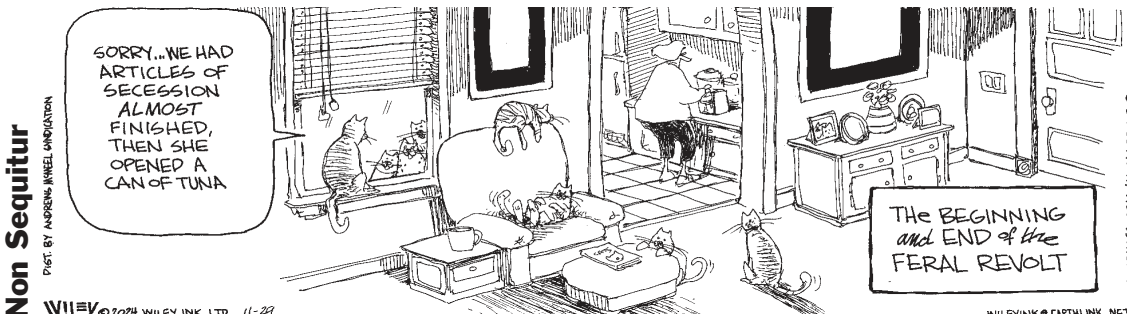
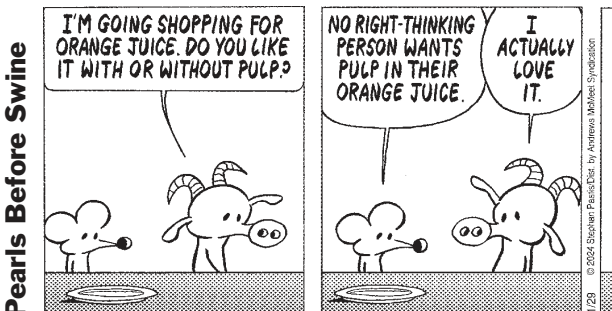
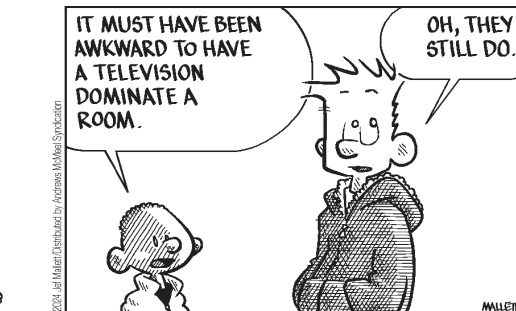
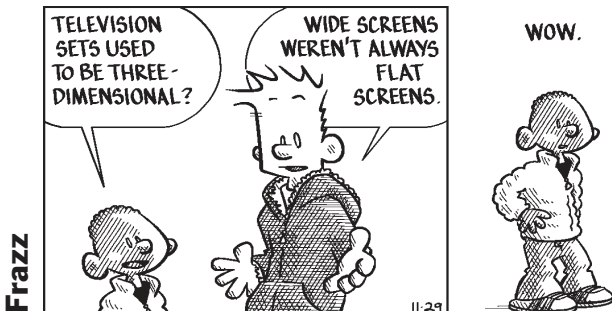


Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
		18						19				
20	21				22	23						
24				25					26	27	28	
29				30					31			
32			33						34			
			35					36				
37	38	39					40					
41					42	43				44	45	
46					47					48		
49					50					51		



ACROSS

- 1 Karaoke prop, for short
- 4 Comedian Fey
- 8 Andy's boy
- 12 "CSI" find
- 13 PC picture
- 14 Scoundrels
- 15 Pulitzer-winning poet Carl
- 17 Field yield
- 18 Greek war god
- 19 Strapping
- 20 Egypt's Anwar
- 22 H.S. lab class
- 24 Landed
- 25 Bunker
- 29 "Today" rival, briefly
- 30 Tie the knot
- 31 Outback bird
- 32 Desert formation
- 34 "Frozen" reindeer
- 35 Has a bug
- 36 Secluded spots
- 37 Disney deer
- 40 Fly high
- 41 United — Emirates
- 42 Snack made with leftover Thanksgiving turkey
- 46 Playwright Simon
- 47 Lawyer Clooney
- 48 Time line period

- 49 Big wind
- 50 Lacking pep
- 51 Heat source

DOWN

- 1 ER workers
- 2 — tizzy
- 3 Celine Dion, by birth
- 4 Nepal's neighbor
- 5 Hosp. areas
- 6 Hide-hair insert
- 7 "Hulk" director Lee
- 8 Supernatural
- 9 Henry VIII's Catherine
- 10 Fan fave
- 11 Glimpse
- 16 "Phooey!"
- 19 Physique
- 20 Droops
- 21 Mater lead-in
- 22 Rural buildings
- 23 Concerning
- 25 Biblical king
- 26 Daydreams
- 27 "So be it"
- 28 Bits of wit
- 30 1502, to Caesar
- 33 Tinker
- 34 Cabbage salad
- 36 Pious
- 37 Firecracker sound
- 38 Bailiwick
- 39 Postal delivery
- 40 Hose woe
- 42 Bando of baseball
- 43 "I love," in Latin
- 44 French vineyard
- 45 Chinese dynasty

Answer to Previous Puzzle

M	O	P	S		P	E	G		O	A	F	S		
A	M	E	N		R	O	I		R	I	B	S		
R	A	N	I		I	N	G		B	R	I	E		
C	R	A	F	T	S		G	R	I	M				
				F	A	M	I	L	Y	T	I	M	E	
S	M	E	L	T		B	E	E		L	I	L		
M	A	L	E		V	I	D		S	E	M	I		
O	L	E		P	E	Z		T	A	S	E	S		
G	I	V	E	T	H	A	N	K	S					
				A	C	A	I		Y	O	H	O	H	O
A	L	T	O		C	E	L		I	V	A	N		
N	O	E	L		L	O	O		M	I	K	E		
N	U	D	E		E	E	N		I	D	E	S		

11-29

CRYPTOQUIP

YDF IPPUHF MHRXXZ ORVF  
 YDF VFIHHPB YP WP WFY  
 IDFIUFV PCY AZ R VPIYPG.  
 HY MFX Y GFRXXZ IGCOAZ.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I WOULD THINK A SONGBIRD'S FAVORITE PART OF A THANKSGIVING MEAL MUST BE THE TWEET POTATOES.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals C



Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

Grid for Eugene Sheffer Crossword with numbers 1-56 indicating starting positions for words.

ACROSS

- 1 Frog's relative
5 "Hey, you!"
9 Levy
12 Sweet sandwich
13 Penne — Vodka
14 Leb. neighbor
15 Andean land
16 Indigent
17 JFK info
18 Neatnik's nightmare
19 Suitable
20 Hee-haw
21 Nonclerical
23 "Girls" aier
25 Actress Lansbury
28 Tranquil
32 Distributed, as cards
34 High signs?
36 San Diego team
37 Monk's title
38 Mil. morale booster

- 53 Property claim
54 Blasting stick
55 Russian ruler
56 Differently

- 22 Wedding setting
24 Test versions
25 Wood-shaping tool
26 Opposite of paleo-
27 Wander about
29 Earth Day mo.
30 Golf peg
31 Sheeran and Harris
35 Mid-calf pants
36 Golf club choice
39 Spurn, as a lover
40 "So be it"
41 Word of warning
43 Poet Teasdale
45 Playwright Simon
46 Currier's partner
47 Emmy-winning Daly
49 Diner order

DOWN

- 1 First-rate
2 Baseball's Hershiser
3 Sleek, in car lingo
4 What a spy might lead
5 Tropical fruit
6 Sty chow
7 Sleepy mammals
8 Sailor
9 Wedding cake layer
10 Hammett pooch
11 Picture of health?
20 Actor's stand-in

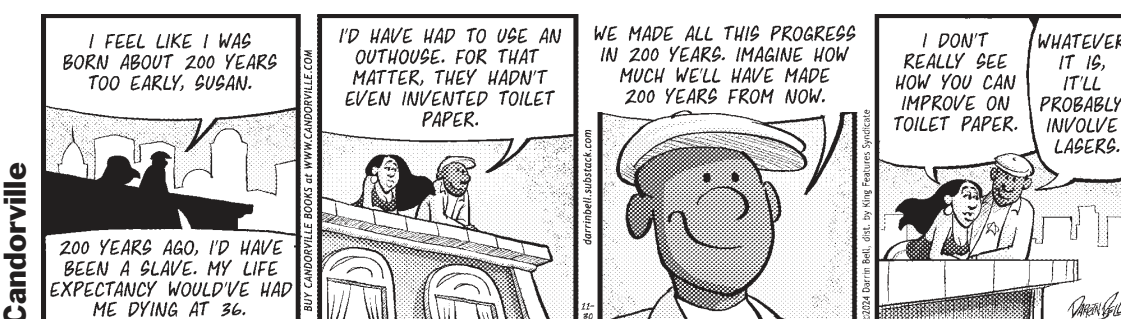
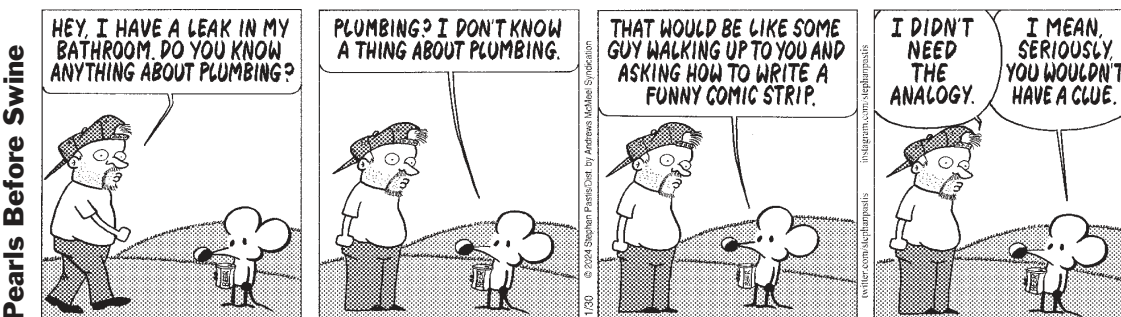
Answer to Previous Puzzle

Completed crossword grid with words filled in.

11-30

CRYPTOQUIP

PFYEO, GFSHIU KSKYL LUFL
ILKFCI FYT UFXDVBNKBI
FLLKYT HP LUKO PPKG GHCK
TFYEHYN: XKFL DFGGI.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE COOKIE FINALLY MADE THE DECISION TO GO GET CHECKED OUT BY A DOCTOR. IT FELT REALLY CRUMBY.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals H





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Jacqueline Smith

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## OPINION

## Diplomacy finally gets a win in the Middle East

BY DAVID IGNATIUS

*The Washington Post*

After months of frustrating Middle East peace negotiations, the Biden administration has brokered a ceasefire in Lebanon that will give that shattered country its first chance in decades to regain real sovereignty over its territory — and might open the way for broader diplomatic gains in the region.

The cease-fire agreement marked a victory for Israel over Hezbollah, Iran's fiercest proxy. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu boasted in a triumphal statement on Tuesday that his country had killed "thousands" of Hezbollah fighters, "pushed them decades back" and, in assassinating Hassan Nasrallah, the group's leader, had "eliminated... the axis of the axis."

President Joe Biden, who had all but disappeared from the international stage, announced the pact from the Rose Garden. It marks a precious success for the administration's diplomacy after a year of fruitless attempts to reach a truce in Gaza. The Lebanon deal was a product of classic shuttle diplomacy by White House emissary Amos Hochstein, who has been traveling between Beirut and Jerusalem for months.

Biden said his administration is still working for a truce in Gaza, with Turkey joining Egypt and Qatar as a mediating partner. And the president added a tantalizing comment that his team "remains ready to conclude" a deal for normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, which would be a diplomatic crown jewel for Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Biden said such a deal might include a "credible pathway" to a Palestinian state, language that has long been a dealbreaker for Netanyahu.

The war in Gaza grinds on, and Netanyahu said Israel "will complete the task of obliterating Hamas." Netanyahu's big problem in Gaza is that he lacks a clear plan for the day after fighting stops. Gaza is a lawless, chaotic mess, and reestablishing order there will take many months of patient effort by the United States, Israel and moderate Arabs after the conflict ends.

The "day after" plan for Lebanon announced on Tuesday is for the Lebanese Armed Forces to take control of Hezbollah's former sanctuaries in South Lebanon over the next 60 days as Israeli forces depart. The LAF, as the forces are known, is one of Lebanon's few functioning national institutions, melding Shiites, Sunnis, Christians and Druze. If the army can deploy successfully and maintain unity, it would begin to rebuild that devastated country after decades of war.

"This is the moment for Lebanon to reestablish sovereignty over its territory," a senior administration official said in explaining the deal. The official declined to answer a question about whether Syria might be willing to help block future delivery of weapons to Hezbollah, as Lebanese sources have hinted. The official said that was a topic for "another call, another conversation."

Lebanese sources said the breakthrough in Hochstein's negotiation was a clause that gives both sides the right to self-defense if the terms are broken. Lebanon had rejected an earlier plan for a U.S. side letter granting Is-

rael that right. If Hezbollah reenters South Lebanon and is preparing an attack, the breach would be referred first to a monitoring committee chaired by the United States. The LAF would have first responsibility, but Israel would then be free to intervene.

Iran wasn't a direct party to the negotiations. But a senior Gulf official told me that "of course there was some back channeling with Iran" about the ceasefire involving its proxy. A second senior administration official said the United States and Iran exchanged regular messages and that "if Iran were dead-set against this, it wouldn't have happened."

Israel has a huge stake in the LAF's success, though Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders might not appreciate it. Lebanon squandered its sovereignty decades ago when it allowed militias to use its territory to attack Israel — first the Palestine Liberation Organization and then Hezbollah. Both amounted to states within the state, crippling the Lebanese government.

Israel's assault on Hezbollah has included more than 8,000 separate attacks since Sept. 23, according to a website prepared by faculty members of the American University of Beirut. Hezbollah, for its part, launched repeated attacks against Israeli targets. Both sides ended with a crescendo of violence on Tuesday, with Hezbollah firing a volley of rockets on at least five Israeli targets and Israel striking sites in Beirut.

The Middle East remains a cockpit of war. But after so many months of fighting, and U.S. diplomatic frustration, Tuesday's news offered hope that this nightmare is beginning to end.

## What if most Americans aren't bitterly divided?

BY JONAH GOLDBERG

*Tribune Content Agency*

Among elites across the ideological spectrum, there's one point of unifying agreement: Americans are bitterly divided. What if that's wrong? What if elites are the ones who are bitterly divided while most Americans are fairly unified?

History rarely lines up perfectly with the calendar (the "sixties" didn't really start until the decade was almost over). But politically, the 21st century neatly began in 2000, when the election ended in a tie and the color coding of electoral maps became enshrined as a kind permanent tribal color war of "red vs. blue."

Elite understanding of politics has been stuck in this framework ever since. Politicians and voters have leaned into this alleged political reality, making it seem all the more real in the process. I loathe the phrase "perception is reality," but in politics it has the reifying power of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Like rival noble families in medieval Europe, elites have been vying for power and dominance on the arrogant assumption that their subjects share their concern for who rules rather than what the rulers can deliver.

In 2018, the group More in Common published a massive report on the "Hidden Tribes" of American politics. The wealthiest and whitest groups were "Devoted Conservatives" (6%) and "Progressive Activists" (8%). These tribes dominate the media, the parties and higher education, and they dictate the competing narratives of red vs. blue, particularly on cable news and social media. Meanwhile the overwhelming majority of Americans resided in, or were adjacent to, the "ex-

hausted majority."

These people, however, "have no narrative," as David Brooks wrote at the time. "They have no coherent philosophic worldview to organize their thinking and compel action."

Lacking a narrative might seem like a very postmodern problem, but in a postmodern elite culture, postmodern problems are real problems.

It's worth noting that Red vs. Blue America didn't emerge ex nihilo. The 1990s were a time when the economy and government seemed to be working, at home and abroad. As a result, elites leaned into the narcissism of small differences to gain political and cultural advantage. They remain obsessed with competing, often apocalyptic, narratives.

That leaves out most Americans. The gladiatorial combatants of cable news, editorial pages and academia, and their superfan spectators, can afford these fights. Members of the exhausted majority are more interested in mere competence. I think that's the hidden unity elites are missing.

This is why we keep throwing incumbent parties out of power: they get elected promising competence but get derailed — or seduced — by fan service to, or trolling of, the elites who dominate the national conversation.

There's a difference between competence and expertise. One of the most profound political changes in recent years has been the separation of notions of credentialed expertise from real world competence. This isn't a new theme in American life, but the pandemic and the lurch toward identity politics amplified distrust of experts in unprecedented ways.

This is a particular problem for the left be-

cause it is far more invested in credentialism than the right. Indeed, some progressives are suddenly realizing they invested too much in the *authority* of experts and too little in the *ability* of experts to provide what people want from government, affordable housing, decent education, low crime, etc.

One of the reasons progressives find President-elect Donald Trump so offensive is his absolute inability to speak the language of expertise — which is full of coded elite shibboleths. But Trump veritably shouts the language of competence.

I don't mean he is actually competent at governing. But he is effectively blunt about calling leaders, experts and elites — of both parties — stupid, ineffective, weak and incompetent. He lost in 2020 because voters didn't believe he was actually good at governing. He won in 2024 because the exhausted majority concluded the Biden administration was bad at it. Nostalgia for the low-inflation pre-pandemic economy was enough to convince voters that Trumpian drama is the tolerable price to pay for a good economy.

The genius of Trump's most effective ad — "Kamala is for they/them, President Trump is for you" — was that it was simultaneously culture war red meat and an argument that Harris was more concerned about boutique elite concerns than everyday ones. If Trump can deliver competent government, he could make the Republican Party the majority party for a generation. For myriad reasons, that's an if so big it's visible from space. But the opportunity is there — and has been there all along.

Jonah Goldberg is editor-in-chief of The Dispatch and the host of The Remnant podcast.



# SCOREBOARD

## DEALS

### Wednesday's transactions

#### BASEBALL

##### Major League Baseball

**MLB** — Suspended SS Jose Hernandez without pay for the 2025 Arizona Complex League season after testing positive for Boldenone and Nandrolone, performance enhancing substances.

#### American League

**LOS ANGELES ANGELS** — Agreed to terms with with LHP Yusei Kikuchi on a three-year contract.

#### National League

**NEW YORK METS** — Agreed to terms with LHP Genesis Cabrera on a minor league contract.

**WASHINGTON NATIONALS** — Activated RHP Cade Cavalli.

#### BASKETBALL

##### National Basketball Association

**SACRAMENTO KINGS** — Signed forward Jae Crowder to a rest-of-season contract.

#### FOOTBALL

##### National Football League

**BALTIMORE RAVENS** — Designated DL Michael Pierce to return from injured reserve.

**BUFFALO BILLS** — Designated DL DeWayne Carter and OL Tyler Grable to return from injured reserve.

**CAROLINA PANTHERS** — Designated DB Nick Scott to return from injured reserve.

**CLEVELAND BROWNS** — Designated DB Myles Harden to return from injured reserve. Claimed DL James Houston off waivers from the Detroit Lions. Claimed DE Cameron Thomas off waivers from the Kansas City Chiefs. Waived DE Elerson Smith.

**DALLAS COWBOYS** — Activated WR Brandin Cooks from injured reserve. Placed CB Caelen Carson and T Asim Richards on injured reserve. Signed TE Princeton Fant to the active roster from the practice squad.

**DENVER BRONCOS** — Signed LB Zach Cunningham to the active roster from the practice squad. Signed OL Calvin Throckington to the practice squad.

**DETROIT LIONS** — Placed WR Kalif Raymond on injured reserve. Signed WR Maurice Alexander and LB David Long from the practice squad to the active roster.

**HOUSTON TEXANS** — Signed DL Tommy Togiai to the active roster. Signed DB Russ Yeast to the practice squad. Placed DB Ka'Dar Hollman on injured reserve.

**LOS ANGELES CHARGERS** — Claimed S Marcus Maye off waivers from the Miami Dolphins. Placed CB Eli Apple on injured reserve.

**LOS ANGELES RAMS** — Designated TE Tyler Higbee to return from injured reserve.

**MINNESOTA VIKINGS** — Signed QB Daniel Jones to the practice squad. Signed LS Jake McQuaide from the practice squad to the active roster. Signed TE Nick Muse to the practice squad. Waived OLB Gabriel Murphy.

**NEW YORK GIANTS** — Signed LB Tomon Fox to the active roster from the practice squad. Placed DL Armon Watts on injured reserve.

**NEW YORK JETS** — Designated G Xavier Newman-Johnson to return from injured reserve.

**PHILADELPHIA EAGLES** — Signed WR Kyle Phillips to the practice squad.

**PITTSBURGH STEELERS** — Designated DL Montravius Adams to return from injured reserve.

**SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS** — Signed OL Cameron Erving to the practice squad.

**SEATTLE SEAHAWKS** — Placed OL Anthony Bradford on injured reserve. Signed LB Patrick O'Connell from the practice squad to the active roster. Designated LB Uchenna Nwosi and OL Stone Forsythe to return from injured reserve.

**TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS** — Designated LB Markees Watts to return from injured reserve.

**TENNESSEE TITANS** — Designated DB Chidobe Awuzie to return from the practice squad.

#### HOCKEY

##### National Hockey League

**CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS** — Traded F Ryder Rolston to the Nashville Predators in exchange for future considerations.

**COLORADO AVALANCHE** — Recalled C Ivan Ivan from Colorado (AHL). Called up RW Nikolai Kovalenko from Colorado. Promoted LW Chase Bradley.

**DETROIT RED WINGS** — Recalled G Ville Husso from Grand Rapids (AHL).

**NASHVILLE PREDATORS** — Recalled D Adam Wilsby and Nick Blankenburg from Milwaukee (AHL). Placed RW Michael McCarron on injured reserve.

**PITTSBURGH PENGUINS** — Activated C Blake Lizotte from injured reserve.

**TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS** — Assigned D Dakota Mermis to Toronto (AHL) on a conditioning loan.

#### SOCCER

##### Major League Soccer

**COLORADO RAPIDS** — Exercised contract options on Ds Nate Jones, Keegan Rosenberry, MF Oliver Larraz, and F Calvin Harris. Declined options for G Ethan Bandré, Ds Lailas Abubakar, Sebastian Anderson, Michael Edwards, and F Rémi Cabral.

F Jonathan Lewis is out of contract. D Miguel Navarro is on loan with Club Atlético Talleres for the remainder of the year.

**COLUMBUS CREW** — Exercised the options for Gs Nicholas Hagen, Abraham Romero and Patrick Schulte; MF AZ Jackson; and Fs Christian Ramirez and Jacen Russell-Rowe.

**LAFc** — Exercised contract options on F Adrian Wibowo, Ds Sergi Palencia and Eddie Segura, and Gs Hugo Lloris and David Ochoa. Declined contract options on Fs Carlos Vela, Kei Kamara, and Luis Müller, MF Tommy Musto, and Ds Marlon and Diego Rosales. Ds Aaron Long and Jesus Murillo and MFs Ilie Sánchez and Erik Dueñas are out of contract.

**MINNESOTA UNITED** — Exercised the contract options for Gs Alec Smir and Dayne St. Clair, Ds Morris Duggan, Anthony Markanich Jr. and Devin Padelford, MFs Hassani Dotson, Bongokuhle Hlongwane and Sam Shashoua, and F Tani Oluwaseyi. Declined contract options for G Clint Irwin, Ds Hugo Bacharach and Derek Dodson, MFs Moses Nyeman and Wil Trapp, and F Patrick Weah. MF Franco Frangapani is out of contract and D Zarek Valentin retired.

**REAL SALT LAKE** — Announced MF Mailkel Chang, GK Tomas Gomez, DF Marcelo Silva are out of contract. Declined contract options on DF Kevin Bonilla, DF Erik Holt, FW Bertin Jacquesson, FW Benji Michel, DF Jaziel Orozco, FW Ilijah Paul, DF Delentz Pierre, FW Rubio Rubin. Exercised contract options on GK Gavin Beavers, DF Javain Brown, MF Noel Caliskan, FW Anderson Julio, DF Philip Quinton, DF Tommy Silva.

## COLLEGE BASKETBALL

### Wednesday's men's scores

#### EAST

Brown 77, Stony Brook 54  
Marshall 82, SC State 53  
Maryland 91, Bucknell 67  
Oklahoma 79, Providence 77  
Princeton 99, Nazareth 63  
Rhode Island 81, Detroit 75  
Robert Morris 72, Canisius 64  
Syracuse 82, Cornell 72  
UMBC 92, Morgan St. 69  
UMass 62, Harvard 54  
Vermont 78, Plattsburgh 55  
Villanova 72, Rider 48

#### SOUTH

Alabama 95, Rutgers 90  
Appalachian St. 66, Sam Houston St. 63  
Auburn 90, Memphis 76  
Belmont 89, Tulane 66  
Chattanooga 84, Bryant 76  
Colgate 72, UNC-Wilmington 59  
Coll. of Charleston 79, N. Kentucky 64  
ETSU 75, Charlotte 55  
Gardner-Webb 79, Bethune-Cookman 64  
Georgia St. 74, Tulsa 71  
Georgia Tech 91, Charleston Southern 67  
Incarnate Word 86, W. Illinois 75  
Louisiana Tech 78, E. Kentucky 69  
Michigan St. 94, North Carolina 91, OT  
N. Dakota St. 73, West Georgia 61  
NJIT 78, Morehead St. 69  
North Alabama 100, Dalton State 69  
S. Illinois 81, Florida Tech 54  
Samford 84, Utah Valley St. 76  
South Carolina 70, Virginia Tech 60  
Tennessee 78, UT Martin 35  
Tennessee Tech 90, Presbyterian 75  
Texas-Arlington 68, Austin Peay 58  
UCF 84, Milwaukee 76  
UTSA 76, Merrimack 74  
Winthrop 99, Averett 56

#### MIDWEST

Cincinnati 77, Alabama St. 59  
Iowa St. 99, Colorado 71  
Louisville 89, Indiana 61  
Marquette 94, Stonehill 59  
Michigan 78, Xavier 53  
Missouri 81, Lindenwood (Mo.) 61  
Nebraska 96, South Dakota 79  
Richmond 73, Ball St. 60  
SE Louisiana 76, North Dakota 60  
Saint Louis 93, Mass.-Lowell 90  
Texas A&M 77, Creighton 73  
Valparaiso 87, N. Illinois 82  
W. Michigan 73, Youngstown St. 62

#### SOUTHWEST

Baylor 91, New Orleans 60  
N. Arizona 74, Houston Christian 71  
Texas Southern 80, Texas A&M Kingsville 72  
UALR 78, Md.-Eastern Shore 59  
UTEP 64, UNC-Greensboro 58

#### FAR WEST

Arizona 104, Davidson 71  
California 81, Mercyhurst 55  
Hawaii 67, Hawaii Pacific 63  
Loyola Marymount 73, Wyoming 70  
Montana 83, CS Northridge 75  
Oregon 78, San Diego St. 68  
Pacific 83, Ark.-Pine Bluff 71  
SMU 77, Washington St. 60  
Sacramento St. 63, Air Force 61  
San Diego 69, Marian 64  
San Jose St. 82, Long Beach St. 66  
Washington St. 84, Fresno St. 73  
West Virginia 86, Gonzaga 78, OT

### Men's Top 25 schedule

#### Saturday's games

No. 1 Kansas (5-0) vs. Furman (6-0)

No. 2 UConn (4-0) vs. Md.-Eastern Shore (2-6)  
No. 10 Marquette (6-0) vs. W. Carolina (2-2)  
No. 15 Wisconsin (7-0) vs. Chicago St. (0-7)

### Wednesday's women's scores

#### EAST

Brown 77, Stony Brook 54  
Marshall 82, SC State 53  
Maryland 91, Bucknell 67  
Oklahoma 79, Providence 77  
Princeton 99, Nazareth 63  
Rhode Island 81, Detroit 75  
Robert Morris 72, Canisius 64  
Syracuse 82, Cornell 72  
UMBC 92, Morgan St. 69  
UMass 62, Harvard 54  
Vermont 78, Plattsburgh 55  
Villanova 72, Rider 48

#### SOUTH

Appalachian St. 66, Sam Houston St. 63  
Auburn 90, Memphis 76  
Belmont 89, Tulane 66  
Chattanooga 84, Bryant 76  
Colgate 72, UNC-Wilmington 59  
Coll. of Charleston 79, N. Kentucky 64  
ETSU 75, Charlotte 55  
Gardner-Webb 79, Bethune-Cookman 64  
Georgia St. 74, Tulsa 71  
Georgia Tech 91, Charleston Southern 67  
Incarnate Word 86, W. Illinois 75  
Louisiana Tech 78, E. Kentucky 69  
Michigan St. 94, North Carolina 91, OT  
N. Dakota St. 73, West Georgia 61  
NJIT 78, Morehead St. 69  
North Alabama 100, Dalton State 69  
S. Illinois 81, Florida Tech 54  
Samford 84, Utah Valley St. 76  
South Carolina 70, Virginia Tech 60  
Tennessee 78, UT Martin 35  
Tennessee Tech 90, Presbyterian 75  
Texas-Arlington 68, Austin Peay 58  
UCF 84, Milwaukee 76  
UTSA 76, Merrimack 74  
Winthrop 99, Averett 56

#### MIDWEST

Cincinnati 77, Alabama St. 59  
Iowa St. 99, Colorado 71  
Louisville 89, Indiana 61  
Marquette 94, Stonehill 59  
Michigan 78, Xavier 53  
Missouri 81, Lindenwood (Mo.) 61  
Nebraska 96, South Dakota 79  
Richmond 73, Ball St. 60  
SE Louisiana 76, North Dakota 60  
Saint Louis 93, Mass.-Lowell 90  
Texas A&M 77, Creighton 73  
Valparaiso 87, N. Illinois 82  
W. Michigan 73, Youngstown St. 62

#### SOUTHWEST

Baylor 91, New Orleans 60  
N. Arizona 74, Houston Christian 71  
Texas Southern 80, Texas A&M Kingsville 72  
UALR 78, Md.-Eastern Shore 59  
UTEP 64, UNC-Greensboro 58

#### FAR WEST

Arizona 104, Davidson 71  
California 81, Mercyhurst 55  
Hawaii 67, Hawaii Pacific 63  
Loyola Marymount 73, Wyoming 70  
Montana 83, CS Northridge 75  
Oregon 78, San Diego St. 68  
Pacific 83, Ark.-Pine Bluff 71  
SMU 77, Washington St. 60  
Sacramento St. 63, Air Force 61  
San Diego 69, Marian 64  
San Jose St. 82, Long Beach St. 66  
Washington St. 84, Fresno St. 73  
West Virginia 86, Gonzaga 78, OT

## COLLEGE SOCCER

### NCAA D-I women's tournament

#### Third Round

##### Sunday, Nov. 24

No. 2 Wake Forest 2, No. 3 Ohio St. 0  
No. 2 North Carolina 3, No. 6 Minnesota 0  
No. 4 Penn St. 3, No. 8 Vanderbilt 1  
No. 4 Notre Dame 2, No. 1 Mississippi St. 0  
No. 1 Duke 2, No. 5 Michigan St. 0  
No. 2 Arkansas 1, No. 3 Stanford 1, Stanford advances 4-2 on penalty kicks  
No. 1 USC 3, No. 5 Wisconsin 1  
No. 7 Virginia Tech 1, No. 3 Iowa 0

#### Quarterfinals Nov. 29 - Nov. 30

No. 1 Duke vs. No. 7 Virginia Tech  
No. 1 USC vs. No. 2 Wake Forest  
No. 2 North Carolina vs. No. 4 Penn St.  
No. 3 Stanford vs. No. 4 Notre Dame

### NCAA D-I men's tournament

#### Third Round Nov. 30 - Dec. 1

No. 1 Ohio St. vs. No. 16 Stanford  
No. 3 Denver vs. No. 14 Indiana  
No. 9 Clemson vs. No. 8 Wake Forest  
No. 11 Virginia vs. UMass  
No. 5 Dayton vs. No. 12 SMU  
Vermont vs. San Diego  
No. 13 Marshall vs. NC State  
Kansas City vs. No. 2 Pittsburgh

## PRO SOCCER

### MLS playoffs

#### Conference Finals

##### Saturday, Nov. 30

**Western Conference:** Seattle vs. L.A. Galaxy  
**Eastern Conference:** New York Red Bulls vs. Orlando City

#### MLS Cup

##### Saturday, Dec. 7

Conference champions

## PRO HOCKEY

### NHL

#### Eastern Conference Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Toronto	22	13	7	2	28	65	57
Florida	23	13	9	1	27	80	77
Boston	24	11	10	3	25	57	75
Tampa Bay	21	11	8	2	24	80	66
Buffalo	22	11	10	1	23	69	66
Detroit	22	10	10	2	22	55	66
Ottawa	22	10	11	1	21	70	71
Montreal	22	8	11	3	19	62	83

#### Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Carolina	22	16	5	1	33	88	58
New Jersey	25	15	8	2	32	84	65
Washington	22	15	6	1	31	90	60
N.Y. Rangers	21	12	8	1	25	70	59
Philadelphia	23	10	10	3	23	67	80
Columbus	21	9	9	3	21	73	76
N.Y. Islanders	23	8	10	5	21	59	70
Pittsburgh	24	8	12	4	20	64	97

#### Western Conference Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Winnipeg	23	18	5	0	36	90	56
Minnesota	22	14	4	4	32	71	54
Dallas	21	13	8	0	26	72	56
Colorado	23	13	10	0	26	77	84
St. Louis	24	11	12	1	23	61	76
Utah	22	9	10	3	21	60	69
Chicago	22	8	12	2	18	56	65
Nashville	23	7	12	4	18	54	73

#### Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	23	14	6	3	31	87	70
Calgary	23	12	7	4	28	62	63
Los Angeles	23	12	8	3	27	69	65
Vancouver	21	11	7	3	25	67	67
Edmonton	22	11	9	2	24	64	69
Seattle	23	11	11	1	23	64	64
Anaheim	21	9	9	3	21	55	62
San Jose	25	7	13	5	19	66	89

**Note:** Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

#### Tuesday's games

Utah 3, Montreal 2, OT  
Vancouver 2, Boston 0

#### Wednesday's games

Minnesota 1, Buffalo 0  
Carolina 4, N.Y. Rangers 3  
St. Louis 3, New Jersey 0  
Pittsburgh 5, Vancouver 4  
Boston 6, N.Y. Islanders 3  
Florida 5, Toronto 1  
Washington 5, Tampa Bay 4  
Montreal 4, Columbus 3, OT  
Detroit 2, Calgary 1, OT  
Philadelphia 3, Nashville 2, OT  
Chicago 6, Dallas 2  
Los Angeles 4, Winnipeg 1  
Anaheim 5, Seattle 2  
Ottawa 4, San Jose 3  
Colorado 2, Vegas 1, SO

#### Thursday's games

No games scheduled

#### Friday's games

N.Y. Rangers at Philadelphia  
Chicago at Minnesota  
Calgary at Columbus  
Florida at Carolina  
N.Y. Islanders at Washington  
New Jersey at Detroit  
Tampa Bay at Nashville  
Vancouver at Buffalo  
Los Angeles at Anaheim  
Seattle at San Jose  
Pittsburgh at Boston  
Winnipeg at Vegas  
Colorado at Dallas  
Edmonton at Utah

#### Saturday's games

Montreal at N.Y. Rangers  
Carolina at Florida  
Calgary at Pittsburgh  
Ottawa at Los Angeles  
Philadelphia at St. Louis  
Toronto at Tampa Bay  
Washington at New Jersey  
Buffalo at N.Y. Islanders  
Nashville at Minnesota  
Edmonton at Colorado  
San Jose at Seattle  
Utah at Vegas

#### Sunday's games

Vancouver at Detroit  
Montreal at Boston  
Columbus at Chicago  
Winnipeg at Dallas  
Ottawa at Anaheim

#### Monday's games

New Jersey at N.Y. Rangers  
Chicago at Toronto  
Dallas at Utah

## COLLEGE FOOTBALL

### Schedule

#### Thursday, Nov. 28

##### SOUTH

Tuskegee (0-1) at Alabama St. (6-5)  
Memphis (9-2) at Tulane (9-2)

#### Friday, Nov. 29

##### SOUTH

Navy (7-3) at East Carolina (7-4)  
Texas State (6-5) at South Alabama (6-5)  
Mississippi St. (2-9) at Mississippi (8-3)  
Alabama A&M (6-5) at Florida A&M (6-5)  
Georgia Tech (7-4) at Georgia (9-2)  
Utah (4-7) at UCF (4-7)

##### MIDWEST

Minnesota (6-5) at Wisconsin (5-6)  
Miami (Ohio) (7-4) at Bowling Green (7-4)  
Ball St. (3-8) at Ohio (8-3)  
Nebraska (6-5) at Iowa (7-4)



## NBA

## AROUND THE NBA

# Finding a way through tough patch

Spurs, Magic have fought through adversity while other teams search for answers

By TIM REYNOLDS  
Associated Press

Adversity finds every team in the NBA at some point. Somebody is going to get injured or sick, guaranteed. How those stretches are handled can make or break a season.

Orlando and San Antonio are finding a way right now.

New Orleans and Philadelphia are among the teams that aren't.

The Magic have gone 10-1 in their last 11 games, all without an injured Paolo Banchero — the team's best player and an All-Star last season. They are behind only Cleveland and Boston, another pair of teams that haven't let injury issues keep them from sizzling starts, in the Eastern Conference. The Spurs have gone 8-6 since Gregg Popovich had a stroke that left assistant coach Mitch Johnson serving as acting coach.

Those two teams might be the best examples early on of how not to let adversity impede winning.

"Mitch is really smart, great teammate in the coaches room," said Golden State coach Steve Kerr, a close friend of Popovich and someone who spent time with Johnson through USA Basketball in recent summers — including camps in Las Vegas before the 2023 World Cup and this year's Paris Olympics. "He was a big part of all of our conversations pre- and post-practice. He's a really good coach, good guy. I know Pop loves him and feels very strongly what a good coach he is."

It's showing. The last time the Spurs — who have also been without starting forward Jeremy Sochan in recent weeks and played a couple games without star center Victor Wembanyama — had a better record through 17 games was in the 2017-18 season.

Johnson has done an impressive job of holding things together through a tough time.

"You look across the league, there's a lot of injuries and guys out, so it's just something where you're trying to prepare everybody and it's the next man up," Johnson said. "But it's nice to see everybody embrace that, not only for themselves but for their teammates."

The Magic, predictably, went through a struggle phase after Banchero got hurt: They started 0-4 without him. And then Franz Wagner — who should be headed to San Francisco for the All-Star Game — took an enormous leap forward, averaging 27.6 points in 11 games through Monday.

"I think he's found another level of confidence, and we need it,"



DARREN ABATE/AP

Mitch Johnson, right, speaks with Victor Wembanyama, center, and Stephon Castle. The Spurs have gone 8-6 since Gregg Popovich had a stroke that left assistant coach Johnson serving as acting coach.



PHELAN M. EBENHACK/AP

Magic forward Franz Wagner is defended by the 76ers' Caleb Martin during a recent game. Wagner has helped Orlando deal with the loss of All-Star Paolo Banchero, averaging 27.6 points in his last 11 games.

Jonathan Isaac said. "You know, obviously with Paolo going down, he's stepped up and he recognizes what this team needs. We need him to be aggressive and just score the basketball. I think he's just stepped into that role, and he's been dominant, he's been confident, and doing his thing."

The Magic have made playing without a star look easy. It's not. Take the Phoenix Suns — they're 9-2 with Kevin Durant, 1-6 without him. Durant returned Tuesday

from a calf strain, and the Suns beat the Los Angeles Lakers. They lost Wednesday to the Nets.

Memphis is an example of weathering the storm: The Grizzlies went 5-3 in Ja Morant's eight-game absence that ended Monday night.

The Pelicans aren't missing just one big name. They've been decimated by injuries: Dejounte Murray missed his 17th game Monday night with a broken left hand and three other Pelicans — Zion Williamson, CJ McCollum and Herb

Jones — have all missed at least 12 games while being hurt. It's why New Orleans is 4-14, one of the worst starts in the league.

"We're going to figure it out, and fight and claw like we normally do," Pelicans forward Trey Murphy said.

The 76ers say they'll do the same, but they've been missing plenty of their best fighters — with Joel Embiid, Tyrese Maxey, Paul George and Kyle Lowry among those all missing time because of injury.

The result is a 3-14 start, the second-worst record in the NBA. The only silver lining for Philadelphia right now is that it's in the East, where only four teams have winning records right now.

"We're 16 games in. It's a long season," Maxey said before Wednesday's loss. "Either we're going to lay down and let teams come in here and have field days against us, or we're going to go out there and play with some pride and go out there and win some games."

"We get it," he added. "I got hurt. Jo got hurt. Kyle got hurt. P got hurt. Guys are in and out of the lineup. Yes, we understand that. That's not ideal. But all of us can do one thing every single night, 1 through 15, go out there, know the game plan and play extremely hard, every single night."

Such is the adversity part. The Spurs and Magic seem to have figured it out. The Pelicans and 76ers are among those still searching for answers.

## Scoreboard

## Eastern Conference

## Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	15	3	.833	—
New York	10	8	.556	5
Brooklyn	9	10	.474	6½
Toronto	5	14	.263	10½
Philadelphia	3	14	.176	11½

## Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	13	7	.650	—
Miami	8	8	.500	3
Atlanta	8	11	.421	4½
Charlotte	6	12	.333	6
Washington	2	15	.118	9½

## Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	17	2	.895	—
Milwaukee	9	9	.500	7½
Indiana	9	10	.474	8
Chicago	8	12	.400	9½
Detroit	8	12	.400	9½

## Western Conference

## Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	14	6	.700	—
Memphis	12	7	.632	1½
Dallas	11	8	.579	2½
San Antonio	10	9	.526	3½
New Orleans	4	15	.211	9½

## Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	14	4	.778	—
Denver	10	7	.588	3½
Minnesota	8	10	.444	6
Portland	7	12	.368	7½
Utah	4	14	.222	10

## Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	12	6	.667	—
L.A. Lakers	11	7	.611	1
L.A. Clippers	12	8	.600	1
Phoenix	10	8	.556	2
Sacramento	9	10	.474	3½

## Tuesday's games

Chicago 127, Washington 108  
Milwaukee 106, Miami 103  
Houston 117, Minnesota 111, OT  
San Antonio 128, Utah 115  
Phoenix 127, L.A. Lakers 100

## Wednesday's games

L.A. Clippers 121, Washington 96  
Orlando 133, Chicago 119  
Miami 98, Charlotte 94  
Indiana 121, Portland 114  
Atlanta 135, Cleveland 124  
Houston 122, Philadelphia 115, OT  
Dallas 129, New York 114  
Toronto 119, New Orleans 93  
Memphis 131, Detroit 111  
Sacramento 115, Minnesota 104  
L.A. Lakers 119, San Antonio 101  
Denver 122, Utah 103  
Brooklyn 127, Phoenix 117  
Oklahoma City 105, Golden State 101

## Thursday's games

No games scheduled.

## Friday's games

New York at Charlotte  
Cleveland at Atlanta  
New Orleans at Memphis  
L.A. Clippers at Minnesota  
Orlando at Brooklyn  
Boston at Chicago  
Detroit at Indiana  
Toronto at Miami  
Oklahoma City at L.A. Lakers  
Sacramento at Portland

## Saturday's games

Atlanta at Charlotte  
Philadelphia at Detroit  
Washington at Milwaukee  
Golden State at Phoenix  
Dallas at Utah

## Sunday's games

Orlando at Brooklyn  
Indiana at Memphis  
Boston at Cleveland  
Miami at Toronto  
New Orleans at New York  
Oklahoma City at Houston  
L.A. Lakers at Utah  
Dallas at Portland  
San Antonio at Sacramento  
Denver at L.A. Clippers

## Monday's games

New Orleans at Atlanta  
Miami at Boston  
Brooklyn at Chicago  
L.A. Lakers at Minnesota



# NBA/NFL

## T-wolves' Edwards calls his team 'soft' amid latest struggles

By PHIL ERVIN  
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — In his four-plus NBA seasons, Anthony Edwards has never been afraid to speak his mind.

But the Minnesota Timberwolves star was particularly candid in a profanity-laced explanation of his team's recent struggles following a 115-104 loss to the Sacramento Kings on Wednesday night.

"I think it's we soft as (heck) as a team, internally," Edwards said. "Not to the other team, but internally, we soft. We can't talk to each other. Just a bunch of little kids. Just like we playing with a bunch of little kids. Everybody, the whole team. We just can't talk to each other. And we've got to figure it out, because we can't go down this road."

Minnesota reached the 2024 Western Conference finals. But the Timberwolves have lost four in a row and seven of nine after starting 6-3 this season. A lineup that experienced a significant shakeup late in the offseason with the Karl-Anthony Towns trade still looks disjointed at times.

That includes blowing a 12-point fourth-quarter lead against Sacramento a day after losing 117-111 in overtime to Houston at home.

"We look like frontrunners for sure tonight," Edwards said Wednesday. "We was down, nobody wanted to say nothing. We got up and everybody (was) cheering and (hyped up). We get down again and don't nobody say nothing. That's the definition of a front-

runner. We as a team, including myself, we all was frontrunners tonight."

"Everybody right now is on different agendas," he added. "I think that's one of the main culprits of why we're losing."

Edwards, who led Minnesota with 29 points on 9-for-24 shooting, didn't only admonish his teammates after the game. More than once, he could be seen communicating demonstratively in the huddle with Julius Randle, Rudy Gobert and others.

Randle and guard Donte DiVincenzo were the top gets in the October trade that sent Karl-Anthony Towns to New York three weeks before the start of the season. Both have experienced up-and-down starts to their Twin Cities tenures.

Towns, meanwhile, has settled in comfortably with the Knicks.

Edwards said this isn't just about the new guys, though.

"I'm talking about the whole team," Edwards said. "However many of us it is, all 15, we go into our own shell and we're just growing away from each other. It's obvious. We can see it. I can see it, the team can see it, the coaches can see it."

So can the fans, who voiced their collective displeasure more than once Wednesday night.

"The fans (are) booing us," said Edwards, whose team is 8-10 heading into Friday's game against the Los Angeles Clippers. "That (stuff) is crazy, man. We're getting booed in our home arena. That's so (freaking) disrespectful, it's crazy."



REED HOFFMANN/AP

Chiefs wide receiver Richie James is tackled by the Raiders during the second half Dec. 25 in Kansas City, Mo. Las Vegas returns to Kansas City on Sunday for the first time since its surprising win last year.

## Chiefs host Raiders after last year's stunning loss

By DAVE SKRETTA  
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Chiefs know full well what happened the previous time the Raiders visited Arrowhead Stadium during the holidays.

It was Christmas Day last year, and then-interim Las Vegas coach Antonio Pierce and quarterback Aidan O'Connell did just enough — with their defense providing two touchdowns — to spring the 20-14 upset of the defending Super Bowl champions.

It almost seems as if the smell of their victory cigars lingers outside the visiting locker room to this day.

So Kansas City has a little extra motivation as their bitter, longtime AFC West rival arrives Friday for a rare post-Thanksgiving football feast. And they hope for a different kind of wake-up call—a blowout for a change for a team that has continually played games decided in the final minutes — that can jump-start their push toward the top seed in the AFC playoffs.

"Wins are hard to come by in this



Las Vegas Raiders (2-9)  
at Kansas City Chiefs (10-1)

AFN-Sports  
9 p.m. Friday CET  
5 a.m. Saturday JKT

right ACL in the playoffs, gets back on the field to help a pass rush that has struggled to get to the quarterback.

"We're getting healthier as an offense," quarterback Patrick Mahomes said, "and we're just getting more reps with guys, and as the season goes on you see what guys are best at. Not it's about building and continuing to build the rest of the season."

The Raiders (2-9) are certainly a work in progress.

O'Connell will be back under center after landing on the injured list with a broken thumb on his right hand Oct. 20. He takes over from Gardner Minshew, who broke his collarbone in last week's loss to the Broncos.

"It's challenging for our team right now with losing seven straight games," Pierce said, "but the opportunities are there. The want-to and desire — one thing about these guys is they love one another. They love the game. They're passionate about it. I think hopefully it shows up on film, the effort that they play with."

league," said Chiefs defensive tackle Chris Jones, who has been held without a sack for seven straight games. "I think overall as a team, we feel like there are still a lot of areas we can improve."

It helps Kansas City (10-1) that it's getting healthy at the right time.

This could be the week running back Isiah Pacheco returns after hurting his ankle and needing surgery also a Week 2 game against Cincinnati. It also could be the week defensive end Charles Omenihu, who has not played since tearing his



ELLEN SCHMIDT/AP

Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards, right, questions an official's call during the first half against the Sacramento Kings on Wednesday in Minneapolis. Minnesota has lost four in a row and seven of its last nine.

### NFL on AFN



L.A. Chargers (7-4)  
at Atlanta Falcons (6-5)  
AFN-Sports  
7 p.m. Sunday CET  
3 a.m. Monday JKT

L.A. Rams (5-6)  
at New Orleans Saints (4-7)  
AFN-Atlantic  
10 p.m. Sunday CET  
6 a.m. Monday JKT

Tampa Bay Buccaneers (5-6)  
at Carolina Panthers (3-8)  
AFN-Sports2  
10 p.m. Sunday CET  
6 a.m. Monday JKT



NFL

# Eagles big test for Ravens' Jackson

BY NOAH TRISTER  
Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — Lamar Jackson has almost never lost against the NFC.

This week, however, he faces a major challenge.

Baltimore's matchup with Philadelphia on Sunday pits the Ravens' top-ranked offense against the Eagles' No. 1-ranked defense. It might be the biggest test this season of Jackson's dominance against the NFC.

He's 23-1 as a starter against teams from that conference — but Philadelphia arrives in Baltimore this weekend with a seven-game winning streak and a formidable defensive front.

"This is a really good team we're playing," Ravens coach John Harbaugh said. "I think some people think that they might be the best team in the league, and that's the way they're playing."

The Eagles have faced some weaker opponents during this streak, but they also took care of Joe Burrow and Cincinnati in a 37-17 rout. And they beat Jayden Daniels and Washington before handling Matthew Stafford and the Rams 37-20 last weekend.

"They rely on their front, heavily. They've got great linebackers, who are very smart, who play very well together," Baltimore running back Derrick Henry said. "Good in the back end, as well. So, overall, great defense — the No. 1 defense in the league — so it shows on film."

Since Week 8, Philadelphia has scored 46 points off turnovers, the most in the NFL. It had five takeaways in a 34-6 win over Dallas ear-



ERIC THAYER/AP

**Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson is 23-1 in his career against NFC teams, but he will still be facing a major test against the Philadelphia Eagles, who come into Baltimore riding a seven-game win streak.**

lier this month in which the Cowboys managed only 146 total yards. The Eagles held the New York Giants to 119 yards in Week 7.

Stopping the Ravens is a much different task, particularly since Jackson has done a good job protecting the ball this season, throwing only three interceptions.

Philadelphia lost veteran defensive end Brandon Graham to a torn triceps, and cornerback Darious Slay (concussion) missed practice Wednesday. There's still plenty of healthy talent for a defense that features Jalen Carter, Josh Sweat, Zack Baun and Nakobe Dean.



**Philadelphia Eagles (9-2)  
at Baltimore Ravens (8-4)**  
AFN-Sports  
10:25 p.m. Sunday CET  
6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

"Jalen Carter is amazing. Those guys up front are doing an amazing job getting after the quarter-

back, causing disruption in the backfield," Jackson said. "An explosive defense, that's what I'm seeing — great corners, all-around defense, safeties. Pretty smooth."

Whatever the result, someone will probably exit this Baltimore-Philadelphia matchup feeling like it just made a major statement against one of the top teams in the league.

"Just worry about being who you are, stay true to yourself, going in like any other game," Jackson said. "Don't just put too much on your mind about the opponent. You have to focus on what's in front of you."

# Bills look forward to facing 49ers after bye

BY JOHN WAWROW  
Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Gratifying as it was for Sean McDermott to catch up with his family and get some rest during Buffalo's bye week, the Bills coach found comfort Wednesday returning to his weekly routine and familiar wardrobe — a gray T-shirt and sweatpants.

"When I'm not wearing those, I go to my closet and I don't know what to wear. I'm kind of like not myself," he said before pulling up his hoodie for emphasis to reveal the gray shirt he had on underneath. "So I was telling some of the guys this morning, 'It's good to be back.'"

Though there remain challenges ahead, these are upbeat times in Buffalo.

The Bills (9-2) are off to their best start since 1992. They remain in contention for the AFC's top seed by entering their break following a 30-21 win over Kansas City (10-1).



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON/AP

**Buffalo head coach Sean McDermott speaks at a news conference after the Bills beat the Chiefs 30-21 on Nov. 17 in Orchard Park, N.Y.**

And Buffalo is in position to clinch its fifth straight AFC East title as early as Sunday. To do so, the Bills would need Miami to lose to Green Bay on Thursday night, and to win their own game over San Francisco (5-6) on Sunday night.

Buffalo has won six straight since back-to-back losses at Balti-

more and Houston, and scored 30 or more points in five straight.

Refreshed as McDermott sounded and appeared, it didn't take long for him to revert to his game-at-a-time script when assessing what's on the line this weekend.

"We're mostly focused on our



**San Francisco 49ers (5-6)  
at Buffalo Bills (9-2)**  
AFN-Sports  
2 a.m. Monday CET  
10 a.m. Monday JKT

level of play this week against a good football team," he said.

McDermott has another positive going for him revolving around the bye week. The Bills are 8-0 coming out of their break since McDermott took over as coach in 2017.

"I don't really have the, hey, this is exactly what we do formula," McDermott said on whether he's changed his bye week approach. "It's more of us really just getting back to what we do, getting back to basics."

## Scoreboard

### American Conference

	East					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Buffalo	9	2	0	.818	320	214
Miami	5	6	0	.455	215	236
N.Y. Jets	3	8	0	.273	204	242
New England	3	9	0	.250	197	282

	South					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Houston	7	5	0	.583	285	268
Indianapolis	5	7	0	.417	242	274
Tennessee	3	8	0	.273	202	290
Jacksonville	2	9	0	.182	208	316

	North					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Pittsburgh	8	3	0	.727	252	186
Baltimore	8	4	0	.667	364	294
Cincinnati	4	7	0	.364	297	296
Cleveland	3	8	0	.273	186	267

	West					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Kansas City	10	1	0	.909	270	218
L.A. Chargers	7	4	0	.636	243	175
Denver	7	5	0	.583	264	202
Las Vegas	2	9	0	.182	206	314

### National Conference

	East					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Philadelphia	9	2	0	.818	296	199
Washington	7	5	0	.583	334	277
Dallas	4	7	0	.364	221	319
N.Y. Giants	2	9	0	.182	163	252

	South					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Atlanta	6	5	0	.545	244	274
Tampa Bay	5	6	0	.455	309	273
New Orleans	4	7	0	.364	262	260
Carolina	3	8	0	.273	194	340

	North					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Detroit	10	1	0	.909	360	183
Minnesota	9	2	0	.818	274	197
Green Bay	8	3	0	.727	288	223
Chicago	4	7	0	.364	221	217

	West					
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Arizona	6	5	0	.545	244	236
Seattle	6	5	0	.545	246	244
L.A. Rams	5	6	0	.455	233	276
San Francisco	5	6	0	.455	260	260

### Sunday, Nov. 24

Kansas City 30, Carolina 27  
Minnesota 30, Chicago 27  
Tennessee 32, Houston 27  
Detroit 24, Indianapolis 6  
Miami 34, New England 15  
Tampa Bay 30, N.Y. Giants 7  
Dallas 34, Washington 26  
Denver 29, Las Vegas 19  
Green Bay 38, San Francisco 10  
Seattle 16, Arizona 6  
Philadelphia 37, L.A. Rams 20

### Monday, Nov. 25

Baltimore 30, L.A. Chargers 23

### Thursday's games

Chicago at Detroit  
N.Y. Giants at Dallas  
Miami at Green Bay

### Friday's game

Las Vegas at Kansas City

### Sunday's games

Arizona at Minnesota  
Houston at Jacksonville  
Indianapolis at New England  
L.A. Chargers at Atlanta  
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati  
Seattle at N.Y. Jets  
Tennessee at Washington  
L.A. Rams at New Orleans  
Tampa Bay at Carolina  
Philadelphia at Baltimore  
San Francisco at Buffalo

### Monday's game

Cleveland at Denver

### Thursday, Dec. 5

Green Bay at Detroit

### Sunday, Dec. 8

Atlanta at Minnesota  
Carolina at Philadelphia  
Cleveland at Pittsburgh  
Jacksonville at Tennessee  
Las Vegas at Tampa Bay  
N.Y. Jets at Miami  
New Orleans at N.Y. Giants  
Seattle at Arizona  
Buffalo at L.A. Rams  
Chicago at San Francisco  
L.A. Chargers at Kansas City  
**Open:** Baltimore, Denver, Houston, Indianapolis, New England, Washington



## COLLEGE FOOTBALL



Texas kicker Justin Tucker (19) is lifted by teammates after kicking the winning 40-yard field goal as time expired against Texas A&M on Nov. 24, 2011, in College Station, Texas.

AP

## Rivalry: Last game in series before A&M left for SEC was instant classic

FROM PAGE 32

### The breakup

The split came amid a tumultuous period of conference realignment across the country that had Texas in the middle of it all.

The Big 12 had already lost Colorado to the Pac-12 and Nebraska to the Big Ten. Texas had also flirted with joining the Pac-12 and taking longtime rival Oklahoma and other Big 12 schools with it. Texas A&M meanwhile, briefly looked eastward toward the SEC.

The boat was still rocking a year later when Texas and ESPN effectively flipped it over with a 20-year, \$300 million deal to launch the now-defunct Longhorn Network. Big 12 rivals bitterly complained the swaggering Longhorns were stomping over the rest of the league.

The Aggies had enough. The two schools played in the same conference since 1915, but A&M saw a chance to strike out on its own. The SEC was the most powerful football conference in the country and promised more money and more respect and a big leap out of Texas' shadow.

When Texas A&M informed the Big 12 it was leaving, then-President R. Bowen Loftin called it a "100-year decision" the school had addressed "carefully and methodically."

Years later, he described a simple desire to get away from Texas.

"A&M had to do something, something bold and something that was really meant for A&M," Loftin told the Houston Chronicle in 2021. "Something that did not necessarily link us in the future to that school in Austin."

The result ripped apart a deeply-rooted state tradition. The game was as much of a Thanksgiving staple as turkey, stuffing and pecan pie.

"I went to Texas to play in the A&M game," said McCoy, whose family has deep roots in the rivalry. His older brother Colt was one of the greatest quarterbacks in Longhorns' program history.

"My dad was a (Texas) high school football coach. My grandparents, uncles, brother, everyone has a part," of the rivalry, McCoy said. "If you were a kid growing up in Texas, it meant a lot."

The Aggies left the Big 12 knowing a split could be coming, and said they told Texas they wanted to keep

playing. Texas said its nonconference schedule was already full for several years.

So as the Texas fight song says, "goodbye to A&M." For spite or schedule, a tradition was about to be lost.

"It was a travesty," said former Texas running back Ricky Williams, who won the Heisman Trophy in 1998 and set the NCAA career rushing record against the Aggies.

"I thought it was dumb to get rid of that game because to me that game is deeper, it's more powerful than conferences," Williams said.

### The last game

The 2011 game before the breakup was an instant classic. In a tense, back-and-forth matchup in front of a frenzied crowd in College Station, McCoy's frantic, 25-yard scramble through the heart of the defense set up Justin Tucker's 40-yard field goal as time expired.

Texas' 27-25 victory hung over the stunned home crowd that was unsure if it would ever be avenged.

"It parted like the Red Sea," McCoy said of the A&M defense. "Thank God we won that game ... I married into a family that, other than my wife, is all Aggies. I live it all the time."

### The reunion

There were passing mentions of resuming the rivalry over the years. Then in 2021, Texas and Oklahoma were officially invited to join the SEC.

Texas A&M, thinking it had permanently split from the Longhorns, was stunned. The loss in 2011 was like a kick in the teeth. Texas' move to the SEC was a gut punch.

Texas was initially approved for entry in 2025, then it was moved up to this year. The Aggies at least get home-field advantage and a nighttime kickoff at raucous Kyle Field for the reunion.

Former Texas A&M coach R.C. Slocum is ready for the reunion. He summed up what it should mean to the players who are part of it.

"I always told our guys that in the tall buildings in Dallas and Fort Worth, and Houston and San Antonio, and in the deer blinds out in West Texas, this will be the most talked about subject this week," he said.

"And when you get older and for the rest of your life, people are gonna be talking about this game. So, you need to make it turn out the way that you will enjoy talking about it."

# Broncos' focus only on Beavers

## Boise needs win to maintain CFP position

By JASON CHATRAW  
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — While No. 11 Boise State's spot in the Mountain West Conference title game has been secured, the team's fate in the College Football Playoff still hangs in the balance as the Broncos host scrappy Oregon State on Friday.

Boise State (10-1), hosting Oregon State for the first time since 2012, needs a strong showing to show the CFP committee that the Broncos are not only deserving of a spot in the playoff but also a first-round bye.

Oregon State appears primed to play the role of spoiler.

Fresh off a 41-38 upset over previously-ranked Washington State last week, the Beavers travel to Boise with a clearer understanding of who they are and with nothing to lose, according to first-year coach Trent Bray.

"There's not as many bodies available," Bray said, "but at the same time you know who those guys are a little bit more than you did early in the year or mid-year and we're just rolling with them."

The challenge for Oregon State will be dealing with the Boise State running back everyone knows in Heisman Trophy hopeful Ashton Jeanty.

Jeanty, who leads the nation in rushing with 2,062 yards, rushing TDs with 27 and all-purpose yards with 2,164, will yet again be the focal point of the opposing defense. The good news for the Broncos is that nobody has figured out a way to stop their star player.

But Boise State coach Spencer Danielson knows if his team doesn't play at its best, it could fall victim to an Oregon State team he believes is far better than its record indicates.

"Our guys watch the film and they're like, 'Coach, this is a really good football team,'" Danielson said. "So they see it. They see that we have a big test at hand. And so regardless of the rankings and what it is, we know we got to go earn the right to go play our best."

### Madsen vs. dueling QBs

When Boise State quarterback Maddux Madsen is at his best, the team's offense can be nearly unstoppable. When he's not, the Broncos become a vulnerable, one-dimensional team — even if that running game has arguably the best player in the country.

Madsen, who has passed for 2,361 yards and 19 TDs with a 62% completion rate, could have an op-



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Boise State QB Maddux Madsen, who has thrown for 2,361 yards and 19 TDs this season, could have opportunities to exploit the Oregon State pass defense.



Oregon State (5-6)  
at No. 11 Boise State (10-1)

AFN-Sports2  
6 p.m. Friday CET  
2 a.m. Saturday JKT

portunity to exploit an Oregon State pass defense that has been porous at times.

Oregon State, which named Ben Gulbranson the starter at the end of October, found some success mixing in dual-threat quarterback Gabarri Johnson last week against Washington State. Bray sounds like he intends to utilize both players against the Broncos.

"(Playing two quarterbacks) was definitely something specific for Washington State and things we saw that we could take advantage of," Bray said. "But that's something we want to do moving forward with with Gabarri because he has that type of ability that makes him hard to defend."

### Third-down excellence

Both teams are among college football's upper echelon when it comes to converting on third downs. Boise State ranks seventh with a 49.6 conversion percentage, while Oregon State is 23rd, converting 45.6% of the time. The Broncos are even better at home, converting more than 59% of their attempts there.



# COLLEGE FOOTBALL

## Volunteers see Vanderbilt matchup as playoff game

By TERESA M. WALKER  
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee coach Josh Heupel talked about what's at stake in the regular-season finale for his No. 7 Volunteers.

Junior running back Dylan Sampson isn't quite as reticent.

"It basically is a playoff game," Sampson said.

Yep. Tennessee (9-2, 5-2 Southeastern Conference; No. 8 CFP) has a lot on the line Saturday at in-state rival Vanderbilt. A win affects not only their position in the College Football Playoff bracket, but a big win could land them an on-campus game in December. The Vols routed UTEP 56-0 last week to wrap up an undefeated season at Neyland Stadium.

Heupel is more focused on Saturday's opponent.

Vanderbilt (6-5, 3-4) is not the same team Tennessee beat the

past five years. These Commodores knocked off then-No. 1 Alabama to start October and is 1-2 against top 10 teams, the two losses coming by a combined six points. They have lost two straight, including a 24-17 loss at LSU last week.

Beating Tennessee would clinch Vanderbilt's first winning record in the regular season since 2013.

"To to get ... a winning record would be a great foundational base thing we can build on here," said Vanderbilt senior safety CJ Taylor from McMinnville with relatives who played for Tennessee.

### This is personal

This rivalry means a lot to coach Clark Lea, a Nashville native who played for the Commodores without ever beating Tennessee. He's still looking for his first win in his fourth season coaching his alma mater. After churning over a big

hunk of his roster through the transfer portal this offseason, Lea knows rivalries can lose something with so many new players coming in. Not to him.

"Maybe it's a little old school, but that stuff still matters to me," Lea said.

### Defensive Tennessee

The Vols are the only SEC team to hold 10 of 11 opponents this season under 20 points and are fourth nationally giving up just 13.1 points per game. The Vols also rank sixth in total defense, allowing 284.3 yards per game, and have given up just one touchdown in the first quarter all season.

Limiting big plays is another strength.

The Vols have allowed only three plays of 40 yards or longer all season, tied with Indiana for third-fewest in the Bowl Subdivision.



No. 7 Tennessee (9-2)  
at Vanderbilt (6-5)  
AFN-Sports  
6 p.m. Saturday CET  
2 a.m. Sunday JKT



WADE PAYNE/AP

Tennessee's Dylan Sampson has rushed for 1,307 yards and an SEC-record 22 TDs this season.

Only Ohio State and Wisconsin have been better.

### Pavia effect

For all of Lea's changes at Vanderbilt, bringing in quarterback Diego Pavia was the biggest. The 2023 Conference USA Player of the Year came along with his coach at New Mexico State and offensive coordinator. It's a big reason why his transition to the SEC has been so smooth with Pavia seventh in the league with 16 touchdown passes. He's also sixth in the league responsible for 136 points and eighth averaging 245.5 yards total offense per game.

Pavia is best when he's slithering through cracks in defenses to keep drives alive and use up the

clock. But he showed off his arm with a 63-yard touchdown pass to Quincy Skinner Jr. on Vanderbilt's first offensive play against LSU.

### Watch out for Sampson

The running back just set the Tennessee record with his 22nd rushing touchdown this season, topping a mark that had stood for 95 years. That mark leads the SEC and is tied for second in the FBS. He also leads the SEC with 1,307 yards rushing.

# Mobile

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# Web

# STARS AND STRIPES

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## COLLEGE FOOTBALL

## Ohio St. yearns for revenge in The Game

No. 2 Buckeyes in prime position to break 3-game losing streak to rival Michigan

By MITCH STACY  
Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — A core of Ohio State upperclassmen who have never beaten Michigan couldn't walk away with that shame.

Receiver Emeka Egbuka, running back TreVeyon Henderson, defensive ends Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloua, and other NFL draft-eligible stars decided to come back for another chance to beat "That Team Up North" — as the Wolverines are known in Columbus — and compete for a conference title and a national championship.

Those players have lost to their despised rival three times.

No. 5 Michigan beat the No. 2 Buckeyes 42-27 at Ann Arbor in 2021. Ohio State was No. 2 again in 2022 when the No. 3 Wolverines humiliated the Buckeyes 45-23 at the Horseshoe.

Last year, Ohio State was No. 2 when quarterback Kyle McCord threw an interception in Michigan territory with 25 seconds left. The No. 3 Wolverines won the game 30-24 and, amid a sign-stealing scandal, went on to win the Big Ten championship game and a national title.

This time, the No. 2 Buckeyes (10-1, 7-1 Big Ten, No. 2 CFP) face an unranked Michigan team (6-5, 4-4) Saturday that has nothing to play for except extending its dominance over Ohio State, whose fans have not enjoyed a home win in the rivalry since 2018.



JAY LAPRETE/AP

Ohio State defensive lineman Jack Sawyer, center, celebrates his fumble recovery and touchdown against Purdue during the second half Nov. 9 in Columbus, Ohio.

"It'll be as hostile as it's ever been there this weekend," Wolverines coach Sherrone Moore said. "I think our guys embrace it."

The Buckeyes have everything on the line. A win will send Ohio State to the Big Ten championship for the first time since 2020 and a rematch with No. 1 Oregon, which last month dealt them their only loss in a 32-31 thriller.

A conference title also would give the Buckeyes a first-round

bye in the playoff.

Egbuka couldn't be more ready for this year edition of The Game.

"Just seeing all the hardships that people who I love have had to go through, including my teammates, my head coach, and (Michigan) fans being nasty to my parents as we're leaving the stadium," the fourth-year receiver said. "There's a lot of emotions I feel towards this moment, so I'm trying to harness those and just let

it all rip on the field on Saturday."

Sawyer grew up in suburban Columbus, so the fourth-year defensive lineman has lived the rivalry longer than most of his teammates.

"This is what we do it for right here," he said. "We want this one so bad."

### Good Will throwing

Ohio State quarterback Will Howard said before the season that



Michigan (6-5)  
at No. 2 Ohio State (10-1)  
AFN-Sports2  
6 p.m. Saturday CET  
2 a.m. Sunday JKT

he didn't think he had to be a hero. He just had to distribute the ball accurately to the Buckeyes' elite playmakers. He's done that at a historic rate.

The Kansas State transfer has a completion rate of at least 80% in six games this year. He completed his first 14 passes in a row against Indiana and finished with an 85% completion rate. His rate for the season is 74%, the best in the nation.

### Suddenly stingy

The Wolverines have played six straight quarters without giving up a touchdown, dating to the first half of their 20-15 loss at Indiana. The Buckeyes present their stiffest challenge yet.

"They don't like us, we don't like them," Michigan defensive back Quentin Johnson said. "Being able to go into Columbus and embrace that villain role, even embrace being the underdog in a moment like this, is something that is very motivating."

## Clemson, SC playing for biggest stakes in Palmetto Rivalry history

By PETE IACOBELLI  
Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — The Palmetto Rivalry between Clemson and South Carolina this year is for more than bragging rights, potentially much more.

The winner could find itself in the College Football Playoff.

The 12th-ranked Tigers (9-2, No. 12 CFP) and 16th-ranked Gamecocks (8-3, No. 15 CFP) are two of the hottest teams in the country. It's the first time both have been ranked in the season-ending rivalry game since 2013, and both hope a win means a berth in the expanded 12-team playoff.

South Carolina coach Shane Beamer hasn't said a word about it this week heading into the game at Death Valley on Saturday. He doesn't have to.

"They know," he said.

So do most college football fans following the weekly happenings that get teams in and out of conten-



No. 16 South Carolina (8-3)  
at No. 12 Clemson (9-2)  
AFN-Atlantic  
6 p.m. Saturday CET  
2 a.m. Sunday JKT

tion. Both Clemson and South Carolina are trending up since being written off earlier in the year.

The Tigers were considered finished when they fell to then-top-ranked Georgia 34-3 to start the season. But they've won nine of 10 games since to get themselves back in the mix.

The Gamecocks were 3-3 after back-to-back defeats to Ole Miss and Alabama in early October. South Carolina has rallied with

five straight victories, including three straight over ranked opponents in Texas A&M, Vanderbilt and Missouri.

The separate surges have thrown a much brighter spotlight on a game that's long been the most anticipated yearly sports event in the Palmetto State.

"They're our rival," Clemson receiver Antonio Williams said. "And they're in our way to get to the playoff. We've just got to handle business."

Gamecocks edge rusher Kyle Kennard desperately wants to beat his rival this week. But he does admire how both teams turned off the outside noise to persevere and create a game with perhaps the biggest implications in a rivalry begun in 1896.

"We want to put the best product out on the field each and every time out," said Kennard, who leads the SEC with 11½ sacks. "We've done a good job of that."



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

South Carolina head coach Shane Beamer celebrates the team's win over Vanderbilt on Nov. 9 in Nashville, Tenn.

### Chasing records

South Carolina is second in the Southeastern Conference with 39 sacks led by Kennard and freshman Dylan Stewart. Both are a strong performance away from toppling a couple of marks held by the Gamecocks' former No. 1 draft pick in defensive lineman Jadevon Clowney. Kennard is a sack and a half away from Clowney's mark of 13. Stewart, with 6½ sacks, is al-

so a sack and half shy of Clowney's freshman mark.

### Ranked matchup

South Carolina has had the edge over its rival when both teams are ranked, winning five of the past six, including a 31-13 victory in 2013, the last time both were in the Top 25. The Tigers' only win came in 2000 when Tommy Bowden's team beat the Gamecocks and coach Lou Holtz, 16-14.



# SPORTS



## Out for revenge

Buckeyes yearn to beat Wolverines in The Game » College football, Page 31

### COLLEGE FOOTBALL



# Holiday homecoming

Texas quarterback Case McCoy rushes for a first down, setting up a winning field goal, against Texas A&M on Nov. 24, 2011, in College Station, Texas. They finally meet again on Saturday, with a spot in the SEC championship game on the line.

AP

## Texas, Texas A&M reunite in SEC 13 years after bitter breakup tore apart tradition

BY JIM VERTUNO AND KRISTIE RIEKEN  
*Associated Press*

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — Texas and Texas A&M first met on the football field in 1894 in a rivalry that would cut across the state and through families for generations.

But a bitter breakup would eventually come between them.

In 2011, Texas A&M announced it was leaving Texas and the Big 12 behind to join the Southeastern Conference, determined to focus

only on a bright future, not dwell on a sentimental past.

Resentful finger pointing and hard feelings eventually gave way to shrugs of indifference and mutters of “good riddance.”

Thirteen years later, the family feud has reignited. Texas is playing in the SEC this season, and the No. 3 Longhorns and No. 20 Aggies finally meet again Saturday night in College Station with new intensity: A berth in the SEC championship game is on the line.

“I’ve missed this. It’s too good of a game not

to play,” said Dan Neil, a former Texas All-American offensive lineman who played in the rivalry from 1992-1996.

Neil called the breakup a “shame.” Former Texas quarterback Case McCoy, whose crazy-legs scramble set up the Longhorns’ game-winning field goal in 2011, was more blunt about the lost years of a treasured rivalry.

“I feel like it was stolen from the last generation of football players,” McCoy said.

**SEE REUNITE ON PAGE 29**



**No. 3 Texas (10-1)  
at No. 20 Texas A&M (8-3)**  
AFN-Sports  
1:30 a.m. Sunday CET  
9:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

## Spurs, Magic figure out adversity; other teams struggle » NBA, Page 26