GAMES: Donkey Kong makes a marvelous return **Page 15**

MUSIC: Saadiq's year a series of highs **Page 28**

NFL: Hurts, Eagles insist their focus is on future **Page 48**

EUROPE & PACIFIC WEEKEND EDITION



MOVIE REVIEW
Marvel's reboot of 'The Fantastic Four' finally gets it right
Page 18

STARS AND STRIPES®
stripes.com

Volume 84 Edition 71 ©SS 2025 FRIDAY, JULY 25, 2025

平成12年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊(土日除く)
発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価￥100

$1.00



BRANDON RICKERT/U.S. Army

U.S. soldiers test microwave counter-drone devices April 30, during an exercise at Naval Station Leovigildo Gantioqui, Philippines. The system's creator, Epirus, signed a $43.5 million deal with the Army to develop a second-generation version expected to more than double the range, according to a July 17 statement.

Army aims to cook drones

New $43 million deal builds on vision to develop microwave weapons

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

A recently awarded Army contract aims to provide more weapons that use high-powered microwaves to help soldiers take down drone swarms in one swoop.

Los Angeles-based technology company Epirus will develop a microwave platform that is expected to more than double the range and power of a similar system currently being experimented with, the company said in a statement last week.

Microwave technology that the company pioneered can deliver a pulse to zap a drone's electronics in midair. The new $43.5 million deal with the Army is directed toward work on a second generation of the company's microwave platform.

"Drones are everywhere," Epirus CEO Andy Lowery said in the July 17 statement. "We've seen drone incursions over U.S. bases, incursions over our southern border. And swarm attacks are defining overseas conflicts."

The first microwave platform produced by the company has been "put through the wringer" and emerged from testing with favorable outcomes, Lowery added.

In May, the Army conducted a live-fire test of the Epirus system during an exercise in the Philippines.

"We were able to demonstrate that we can successfully defeat drone swarms in a tropical environment," Capt. Bray McCollum said in an Army statement at the time.

The Navy and Marine Corps also are carrying out similar tests.

SEE COOK ON PAGE 3

M18 pistol scrutinized after death of airman

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The top general for the Air Force Global Strike Command ordered a pause on using the M18 pistol after a fatal incident at a Wyoming Air Force base raised questions about the weapon's safety.

Gen. Thomas Bussiere ordered the halt Monday, one day after an airman at F.E. Warren Air Force Base was shot with an M18 and died, according to Air Force officials. The airman, who was an active-duty member of the 90th Security Forces Squadron, 90th Missile Wing, had not been named as of Wednesday.

The incident spurred multiple investigations into the death and into the safety of the M18 pistol, a spokesman for Air Force Global Strike Command said.

"Out of an abundance of caution and to ensure the safety and security of our personnel, the pause

SEE PISTOL ON PAGE 3



BOBBY TEICHMANN/U.S. Air Force

Combat-arms students learn how to properly handle M18 pistols at Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., on July 3.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	$3.551	$4.117	$4.466	$4.242
Change in price	-0.9 cents	-0.2 cents	-0.5 cents	+5.4 cents
Netherlands	..	$4.836	$5.424	$5.317
Change in price	..	+7.3 cents	+8.3 cents	+1.2 cents
U.K.	..	$4.129	$4.478	$4.254
Change in price	..	-0.2 cents	-0.5 cents	+5.4 cents
Azores	..	..	$4.324	..
Change in price	..	..	-0.5 cents	..
Turkey	..	..	$4.116	$3.892*
Change in price	..	..	-0.5 cents	+5.4 cents

Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective July 25. The change in price is from July 18.

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	..	$4.099	..	$3.879
Change in price	..	-1.0 cents	..	+5.0 cents
Okinawa	$3.289	..	..	$3.879
Change in price	-1.0 cents	..	..	+5.0 cents
South Korea	$3.219	..	$4.129	$3.909
Change in price	-1.0 cents	..	-1.0 cents	+6.0 cents
Guam	$3.239**	$3.809	$4.159	..
Change in price	-1.0 cents	No change	No change	..

*DieselEFD **Midgrade
Pacific prices for the week of July 25-31

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates

Euro costs (July 25)	0.83
British pound (July 25)	$1.32
Japanese yen (July 25)	142.00
South Korean won (July 25)	1334.00

Commercial rates

Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3744
Britain (Pound)	1.3554
Canada (Dollar)	1.3622
China (Yuan)	7.1595
Denmark (Krone)	6.3407
Egypt (Pound)	49.0300
Euro	0.8495
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8497
Hungary (Forint)	337.63
Israel (Shekel)	3.3427
Japan (Yen)	146.53
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3044
Norway (Krone)	10.1051
Philippines (Peso)	56.64
Poland (Zloty)	3.61
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7471
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2766
South Korea (Won)	1368.55
Switzerland (Franc)	0.7942
Thailand (Baht)	32.24
Turkey (NewLira)	40.4663

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

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	7.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.38
Federal funds market rate	4.33
3-month bill	4.36
30-year bond	4.94

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is compiled from weather.com

TODAY IN STRIPES

American Roundup 36
Classified 12
Comics 34,38-39
Crossword 34,38-39
Faces 35
Opinion 40
Sports 41-48

STARS AND STRIPES
However you read us, wherever you need us.

Mobile • Online • Print

EUROPE	ADVERTISING CustomerService@stripes.com	+49 (0) 0631.3615.9111 DSN: 314.583.9111
MIDDLE EAST	ADVERTISING CustomerService@stripes.com	+49 (0) 0631.3615.9111 DSN: 314.583.9111
PACIFIC	ADVERTISING PacificAdvertising@stripes.com	+81 (42) 552.2511 DSN: 315.227.7310

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

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

STARS AND STRIPES®
Mobile • Online • Print

MILITARY

Iran TV says its navy helo confronted US destroyer

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — An Iranian navy helicopter confronted a U.S. warship attempting to approach Iranian territorial waters in the Gulf of Oman on Wednesday, Iranian state TV reported.

The incident was the first direct encounter reported between Iranian and U.S. forces since the 12-day war between Iran and Israel, which also saw the U.S. B-2 bombers strike nuclear-related facilities in the Islamic Republic.

The report said Iranian forces dispatched the helicopter to confront a Navy destroyer identified as the USS Fitzgerald that approached the waters at around 10 a.m. local time.

The Iranian state TV said the helicopter flew directly over the U.S. ship and issued a warning to maintain distance. In what the report described as a tense exchange, the U.S. warship reportedly responded by threatening to target the Iranian aircraft if it did not leave the area.

U.S. Central Command disputed the account, calling the encounter a "safe and professional interaction" and that it had no impact on the USS Fitzgerald's mission.

It said "any reports claiming otherwise are falsehoods" and attempts by Iran to spread misinformation.

The Iranian state TV report said that in response to the threats from the U.S. vessel, Iranian air defense forces announced that the helicopter was under the full protection of Iran's integrated air defense system.

Eventually the Fitzgerald "retreated southward," the report said. It was not immediately clear how close the U.S. warship was to Iranian territorial waters.



JOHN BELLINO/U.S. Navy

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald sails off the coast of Hawaii during Exercise Rim of the Pacific 2024.

Pistol: Security forces airmen to be equipped with M4 rifles

FROM PAGE 1

will remain in place pending the completion of comprehensive investigations by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the [Global Safety Command] Safety office," said Charles "Moose" Hoffman, the command's spokesman. "During this period, security forces airmen will be equipped with the M4 rifle, ensuring no lapse in AFGSC's security posture."

The M18 is a compact semi-automatic 9mm pistol manufactured by Sig Sauer for the military and is based on its commercially available striker-fired P320 pistol models. The M18 and its full-size version the M17, which is also part of the P320 family, have been adopted by all the Pentagon's military services since Sig won a 2017 competition to build the Army's new modular pistols.

The M17 and M18 replaced the decades-old M9 pistol, which was manufactured by Beretta.

Sig's P320 models have been plagued in recent years with reports of so-called "uncommanded discharges," in which the pistol fires a round without its trigger being squeezed. The model has been banned by some law enforcement agencies and at some gun ranges over concerns about its safety. The Department of Homeland Security this month barred Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agents from carrying P320 models on duty over safety concerns. The Chicago Police Department last month banned its officers from using P320s.

Hoffman said Wednesday that it was not yet clear whether the F.E. Warren airman's death was the result of an uncommanded discharge, a negligent discharge — in which a firearm's operator accidentally fires the weapon — or a criminal act.

"While the investigations are underway, AFGSC is collaborating with the Air Force Security Forces Center and Headquarters Air Force Security Forces to conduct a thorough review of the M18 and develop appropriate corrective measures," he said. "Furthermore, security forces combat arms airmen at all AFGSC bases will conduct 100% inspections of the M18 handguns to identify any immediate safety concerns."

Sig Sauer has faced more than one dozen lawsuits in the past decade over P320 safety issues. Some of those lawsuits charge law enforcement officers and civilians were injured by uncommanded discharges by a P320, including some that were holstered. The manufacturer has long insisted the P320 is safe and cannot fire without its trigger being pulled.

On a website that Sig Sauer built amid the controversies around the pistol, P320truth.com, the company blames "uninformed, agenda-driven parties" for spreading "misinformation" about the firearm. The P320 "meets and exceeds" safety standards, according to Sig.

"The P320 cannot, under any circumstances, discharge without a trigger pull," according to P320truth.com. "This is verified through extensive testing by Sig Sauer, the U.S. military, elite law enforcement agencies, and independent laboratories."

Sig Sauer officials did not respond to a request for comment on the Global Strike Command pause.

Global Strike Command is one of the Air Force's largest commands with some 34,000 troops under its umbrella who operate strategic weapons and aircraft including the nation's Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles, its B-2 Spirit and B-52 Stratofortress nuclear-capable bombers and its conventional B-1B Lancer Bombers. Bussiere has led the command, which is headquartered at Barksdale Air Force Base, since December 2022.

In a memorandum announcing the hold on the M18, Bussiere wrote the pistol would not return to use in the command until the completion of the "comprehensive review" and the development of "appropriate corrective measures" or when the pistol's "safety measures are confirmed."



NATHAN LANGSTON/U.S. Air Force

Air Force Capt. Tyler Moore, 97th Operations Support Squadron C-17 Globemaster III aircraft evaluator pilot, fires a M18 pistol during the Combat Arms Training and Maintenance small arms course at Altus Air Force Base, Okla., in May.

Cook: Growing buzz in military over use of microwave technology

FROM PAGE 1

There has been growing buzz in the military about the potential for microwave technology to deal with the drone threat. While such aircraft are easily and cheaply mass-produced, taking them down can be expensive.

U.S. service members have an array of tools to deal with drones, including electronic jamming technology and expensive precision munitions fired directly at targets.

The advantage of Epirus' approach, the company says, is that it costs pennies per drone kill. Also, a soldier can use the system to take down an entire swarm at once rather than target drones individually.

It's unclear when the technology could be fully integrated into the military's counter-drone arsenal. However, despite its promise, it's still unlikely to be a cure-all, according to analysts.

During the Russia-Ukraine war, drone use has been constantly evolving as both sides learn and adopt countermeasures. For example, as jamming capabilities developed, tethered drones invulnerable to electronic attack were deployed as a workaround.

Microwave pulses could also be effective against tethered drones, since the pulse waves target the onboard electronics regardless of how the drone is controlled.

But just as free-flying drones also have become increasingly hardened against electronic jamming, adversaries would be expected to develop countermeasures to deal with the microwave threat, such as hardening internal electronics.

High-powered microwaves are "not a silver bullet," Neil Hart, a military analyst with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, wrote in May.

"(Microwave anti-drone weaponry) must be integrated into a layered approach that combines kinetic, electronic warfare and directed energy systems to maximize the adaptability of defenses against evolving threats."

MILITARY

Navy seeks bids for $250M sub base upgrades

Pier extension, electric work will help West Coast base handle future fleet

By Gary Warner
Stars and Stripes

The Navy plans to spend up to $250 million to extend and modernize a pier at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor to serve new ballistic missile and attack submarines coming into the fleet in the next decade.

The base, which is west of Seattle across Puget Sound, is homeport to the Navy's largest number of ballistic missile submarines, with eight of the boats based there. It is also homeport to two guided-missile submarines and two attack submarines.

A "request for information" posted on the Navy's procurement website is the first step in gauging interest from contractors to bid on the project eventually.

The work will enable the base to homeport more of the new Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines and Virginia-class attack submarines that the Navy has said will join the fleet in the next decade.

The Navy wants to extend a pier more than 500 feet and add structures, a crane, a tractor-trailer truck lane, improved lighting, higher voltage electrical transmission lines, reinforced pier supports and fuel pods, according to the posted solicitation.

Once companies are identified, the Navy will produce detailed plans, ask for formal bids, and begin work when a contractor is chosen.

The Bangor submarine base is part of the larger Naval Base Kitsap complex, with more than 70 tenant commands.

The project is the second major renovation announced at the sprawling 12,000-acre base that is home to more than 15,000 active-duty personnel, 20,000 civilian workers, and 18,000 dependents and retirees.

The Navy has already started work on a $145 million modernization of piers and electrical systems at Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton to prepare it to homeport the USS John F. Kennedy, the second Ford-class aircraft carrier being built in Newport News.

The carrier uses up to three times the electrical power when in port than the older Nimitz-class carriers.

Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton is now homeport to two Nimitz-class carriers — the USS Nimitz and USS Ronald Reagan.

Mark Cancian, a retired Marine colonel who is a senior adviser with the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank in Washington, D.C., said Navy ports have to prepare for a much larger fleet of submarines and ships in the decades ahead then they are handling today.



Ryan Riley/U.S. Navy

USS Maine, an Ohio-class nuclear ballistic missile submarine, transits Puget Sound near Seattle in March.

"We've bottomed out on our submarine inventory," he said. "We can't build them fast enough to replace the ones being decommissioned."

Cancian said the Navy needs to use the time to modernize its bases for when the delivery of new submarines catches up with the long-delayed ships.

"It is going to eventually turn around and the facilities to accommodate new and more complex submarines are going to be busy after 2040 or so," he said. "With the policy emphasis on the Indo-Pacific, there's a strong indicator of where a lot of the new submarines are going to go."

The Navy has been decommissioning Cold War-era Los Angeles-class nuclear attack submarines that have reached their 30-year expected lifespan. Of the 60 built between 1975 and 1995, only 20 remain in service. They are being replaced by Virginia-class nuclear attack submarines, with 24 built since 2003.

The Navy also has three Seawolf-class nuclear attack submarines from a short-lived program at the end of the 1990s.

Rear Adm. Todd Weeks, the Navy's lead officer for submarine development, told Congress in April that the USS District of Columbia, the first of the new Columbia-class of ballistic missile submarines, is 18 months behind schedule, with a delivery date in 2029.

Weeks said the next ships in the class — to be named USS Wisconsin and USS Groton — will be delivered in 2032 and 2034, respectively.

"We are taking action right now to accelerate and recover as much schedule as we possibly can," Weeks told lawmakers.

The Navy now has 14 Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines, each capable of firing 24 Trident II D5 missiles with up to eight individually targeted nuclear warheads on each missile.

It has also converted four older Ohio-class submarines to launch guided Tomahawk cruise missiles instead of ballistic missiles. A three-year overhaul of the Navy's oldest submarine, the USS Ohio, delivered to the Navy in 1981, was recently completed at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard at Naval Base Kitsap.

The Ohio-class submarines are the seaborne leg of the U.S. nuclear weapons triad, which includes land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles and Air Force manned bombers.

Fort Hood soldier guilty of murder in death of mother of his child

By Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes

A jury has found a Fort Hood soldier guilty of murder in the shooting death of a fellow soldier who was the mother of his child, according to court documents.

Army Cpl. Nakealon Mosley, 28, was an automated logistics specialist assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division, when on Sept. 4, 2021, he shot Sgt. Francine Martinez, 24, outside of a nightclub in Killeen, Texas, according to court records. Martinez died in the hospital nearly two weeks later.

Mosley's jury trial began in February and was paused until this week while an appeals court weighed in on a legal issue that arose during the trial, according to online court records. The trial resumed Monday with the jury hearing closing arguments and then reaching its verdict.



Mosley

Mosley, who enlisted in 2016, is now in Bell County jail. Sentencing is scheduled for Sept. 9, according to court records. An attorney listed for Mosley did not respond Wednesday to a request for comment.

In the days before the shooting, Martinez had filed a petition to establish paternity for the couple's child, according to Bell County court records. The case was closed Sept. 22, 2021.

Both soldiers had previously served at Fort Carson, Colo., before arriving to Fort Hood, according to their service records. Martinez was a cannoneer with the 1st Calvary Division. She enlisted in April 2018 and served one deployment to Afghanistan, according to Fort Hood.

Witnesses of the shooting told Killeen police officers that Mosley and Martinez had been romantically involved in the past and had a child together, according to an arrest affidavit for Mosley.

The two soldiers ran into each other at a Killeen nightclub on Sept. 4, which led to an argument in the parking lot, according to the affidavit.

As Martinez left in one vehicle, Mosley followed in a separate vehicle and fired gunshots at Martinez's vehicle, police said.

Another former soldier, Demetrius Lavar Jones Jr., 26, is also charged with murder in connection to Martinez's death, according to court and military records. Jones served from 2018 to 2021 as a cavalry scout and left the service as a private.

Jones, who was Mosley's roommate at the time of the shooting, was at the nightclub with Mosley and both men were in the vehicle at the time of the shooting, according to an affidavit for Jones' arrest. He has been in Bell County Jail since Nov. 15, 2024, and has pleaded not guilty. His jury trial is scheduled to begin Sept. 15, according to court records.

"We understand the gravity of the allegations against our client and the profound impact this case has had on the Fort [Hood] community and beyond," Ben Michael, founding partner for Michael and Associates, which is representing Jones, said last year in a news release. "However, Mr. Jones remains adamant that he was not present at the time of the incident and that the real shooter is using him as a scapegoat in an attempt to establish reasonable doubt."

The firm on Wednesday declined to comment on Mosley's conviction.

MILITARY

CV-22 Ospreys make precautionary landings

By Brian McElhiney and Keishi Koja
Stars and Stripes

Two U.S. Air Force CV-22 Ospreys made precautionary landings at civilian airports in northern Japan over the past week, according to the Air Force and Japanese officials.

A tiltrotor aircraft from the 353rd Special Operations Wing at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, landed at 9:45 a.m. Thursday at Iwate Hanamaki Airport in Hanamaki, wing spokesman 1st Lt. Cullen Drenkhahn said by email that day. No injuries or damage were reported, and commercial flights were not affected.

"The landing was executed safely and in accordance with policies," he wrote. "An assessment is ongoing to gather additional information."

The wing's Ospreys are assigned to the 21st Special Operations Squadron at Yokota Air Base, an airlift hub in western Tokyo.

Another Yokota-based Osprey landed at 3:55 p.m. on July 18 at Odate-Noshiro Airport in Kitaakita city, according to a news release that day on Akita prefecture's website. No injuries or commercial flights delays were reported. The aircraft departed for Misawa Air Base at 10:55 p.m. the same day.

The Tohoku Defense Bureau told the prefecture that the pilot landed the Osprey in response to an inflight warning indicator, according to an updated statement on the website Tuesday.



Jarrett Smith/U.S. Air Force

An Air Force Osprey participates in a festival at Yokota Air Base, Japan.

Drenkhahn did not respond to questions about the July 18 incident.

Akita prefecture wrote the defense bureau Tuesday seeking a explanation for the landing from the Air Force and for faster notifications of future landings, a spokesman with the prefecture's international division said by phone Thursday.

Some Japanese government officials speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

The Osprey is a tiltrotor aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter but flies like a fixed-wing plane.

The United States and Japan grounded their tiltrotor fleets for nearly three months following the Nov. 29, 2023, crash of a CV-22B Osprey assigned to Air Force Special Operations Command near Yakushima, an island south of Kyushu, that killed eight airmen.

An investigation determined the crash was caused by a catastrophic mechanical failure, compounded by what officials described as a "lack of urgency" by the crew in addressing an engine issue.

U.S. tiltrotors were briefly grounded again on Dec. 6 after a CV-22B Osprey from Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., lost an engine but landed safely following gearbox-related warning indications.

Fast-attack submarine Indiana shifts homeport to Pearl Harbor

By Wyatt Olson
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The fast-attack submarine USS Indiana arrived Tuesday at its new homeport in Pearl Harbor, becoming the third Virginia-class boat to join Submarine Squadron 7.

Indiana's previous homeport was Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn.

"We look forward to working with Submarine Squadron 7 and our Pearl Harbor partners to prepare Indiana — the 'Battle Bass' — for any tasking, at any time, in defense of our nation," Cmdr. Kyle Johnson, the vessel's commander, said in a Tuesday news release.

Commissioned in 2018, the Indiana carries a crew of about 14 officers and 120 sailors.



Scott Barnes/U.S. Navy

The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Indiana arrives at its new homeport, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, Tuesday.

The sub completed its most recent six-month deployment to the U.S. European Command area of responsibility on March 27, according to the release.

Submarine Squadron 7 supports three Virginia-class subs, including USS Missouri and USS Colorado, as well as four Los Angeles-class subs: USS Charlotte, USS Tucson, USS Columbia and USS Toledo, which homeported in Pearl Harbor earlier this month.

Submarine Squadron 1 supports six Virginia-class subs also homeported at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

They are USS Hawaii, USS North Carolina, USS Mississippi, USS Illinois, USS Vermont and USS Montana.

The Navy is in the process of replacing its aging Los Angeles-class subs with the Virginia-class.

Virginia-class subs are designed for a greater range of missions, with an emphasis on littoral operations, according to a Navy fact sheet.

They support a host of missions, including anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface ship warfare, strike warfare, surveillance and reconnaissance.

The subs are designed so that their torpedo rooms can be reconfigured to hold a large number of special operations forces and their equipment during extended deployments.

Their weaponry includes Tomahawk cruise missiles and MK48 torpedoes, which can be tethered to the sub by a thin wire used to direct and redirect their course.

6 Army units tapped for fall rotations in Europe and Middle East

By Matthew Adams
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Six Army units will deploy to Europe and the Middle East in the fall as part of regular unit rotations, the Army announced.

The 4th Combat Aviation Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division from Fort Carson, Colo., will deploy to U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, to replace the 101st Airborne Division Combat Aviation Brigade, which is based at Fort Campbell, Ky. The 4th Sustainment Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division from Fort Carson will also deploy to U.S. Central Command to replace the 17th Sustainment Brigade, which is a unit of the Nevada Army National Guard.

Several units are also deploying to Europe. In 2014, the U.S. launched Operation Atlantic Resolve after Russia's initial invasion of Ukraine when it annexed the Crimean Peninsula. The operation — meant to bolster NATO's eastern flank and dissuade Russian forces from entering the alliance's territory — grew larger after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The 3rd Division Artillery of the 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Stewart, Ga., will deploy to Europe to replace the 1st Division Artillery of the 1st Armored Division, which is based at Fort Bliss, Texas, to support the U.S. commitment to NATO.

The 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Stewart will deploy to Europe to replace the 1st Armored Division Combat Aviation Brigade, which is based at Fort Bliss.

The 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas, will deploy to Europe to replace the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team of the 3rd Infantry Division, which is based at Fort Stewart.

The 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kan., will deploy to Europe to replace the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Armored Division, which is based at Fort Bliss.

Army veteran gets 5 years in prison for stealing soldiers' identities, stalking

By Lara Korte
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. Army veteran in Philadelphia was sentenced to more than five years in prison after federal authorities say he stole the personal information of his fellow service members and used it to harass and stalk them over past grievances.

U.S. attorneys in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania say Alpha Omega Mayhue, 40, worked with unnamed co-conspirators to impersonate his victims and make unauthorized transactions at banks, credit unions, the Federal Trade Commission and elsewhere.

He terminated their military and disability benefits, rerouted direct deposits, changed account information and reported their debit cards as stolen, the Justice Department said in a statement.

In one case, Mayhue cyberstalked a service member, claiming he was surveiling her and making sexual threats.

Mayhue was indicted last year by federal authorities on charges that included conspiracy to commit identity theft, seven counts of misusing a social security number, seven counts of aggravated identity theft and 21 counts of making false statements.

The sentence handed down in Philadelphia on Monday requires Mayhue to serve 65 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release. He will also be required to pay a $3,100 special assessment for stealing the personal information.

PACIFIC

S. Korean firm to repair US Army Chinooks

By David Choi
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The U.S. and South Korean militaries have agreed to allow a South Korean defense firm to service the T-55 engines on U.S. Army Chinook helicopters.

The allies agreed in principle to contract with a commercial firm to maintain, repair and overhaul the T-55s, according to a news release Tuesday from the South's Ministry of National Defense.

The release does not identify the firm, but Hanwha, a major South Korean defense contractor, is the only company with the infrastructure and technical expertise to repair the T-55, a Hanwha spokesman said Wednesday.

The firm has serviced more than 5,700 aircraft engines, including those found in the roughly 40 South Korean army Chinooks, the spokesman said.



Jiwon Yun/U.S. Army

A CH-47 Chinook assigned to the 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, takes flight in Paju, South Korea, in March.

Hanwha in April completed a seven-month overhaul of the dry cargo ship USNS Wally Schirra at a Geoje Island shipyard, the company said in March. The job involved more than 300 repairs, according to a Hanwha news release.

The Wally Schirra overhaul was the first contract under a five-year agreement allowing Hanwha to bid for Navy work.

The agreement on Chinook repairs will maintain U.S. combat readiness in an era of regional disputes and supply chain issues, according to the ministry release.

The maintenance, repair and overhaul pilot project is part of a DOD plan to solve the problem of sending U.S. military assets from the Indo-Pacific region to the continental United States for repair.

Allowing companies operating from five allied countries in the Indo-Pacific to service these U.S. assets would create a logistical network that cuts costs and time, according to a DOD news release July 18, 2024.

The fuselages of the U.S. and South Korean Chinooks differ, but the engines are identical, said the Hanwha spokesman.

"As Korea's only dedicated aircraft engine company, we will leverage our 46 years of technical expertise not only to strengthen the [South Korea]-U.S. alliance but also to expand our presence in the global MRO market and secure future growth opportunities," the spokesman said.

No further details, such as an estimated cost or timeline of the project, was available due to the agreement just being reached, the spokesman said. Some South Korean business officials customarily speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

U.S. military officials in March visited Hanwha's aerospace plant in Changwon, roughly 180 miles southeast of Seoul, where they inspected the company's capabilities and security protocols, senior manager Baek Il-seong told news reporters at the site April 24.

The company seeks to expand its services to the U.S. military by repairing the AH-64 Apache and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, both of which are employed by the South Korean army, Baek said at the time.

US, Australian troops lead logistics push during drills

By Seth Robson
Stars and Stripes

BRISBANE, Australia — American and Australian troops are spearheading a large-scale logistics operation to feed, fuel and arm more than 35,000 service members across the southern continent as the allies seek to counter growing Chinese military power.

The effort is part of the largest-ever iteration of Talisman Sabre, biennial joint training between the United States and Australia. This year's drills began July 13 and run through Aug. 4, involving forces from 19 nations.

Approximately 850 logistics personnel from all service branches are rotating into Australia for the exercise, Maj. Adan Cazarez, a spokesman for the Hawaii-based 8th Theater Sustainment Command, said by email Tuesday. They are working alongside counterparts from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom.

As part of growing trilateral cooperation, naval officers from the U.S., Australia and Japan signed a logistics agreement aboard the amphibious assault ship USS America during a July 11 port call in Brisbane. The pact allows for quicker missile reloads and more flexible refueling, according to a Navy news release that day.

Australia is also ramping up its domestic missile production in partnership with U.S. defense contractor Lockheed Martin under the AUKUS security agreement with the U.S. and U.K.

This year marks the first major movement of prepositioned U.S. equipment from South Australia to the country's northeast, Cazarez said. He declined to discuss specifics of the equipment for security reasons.

American and Australian troops at Brisbane's Gallipoli Barracks are managing the logistics operation, said Brig. Gen. Dawn Johnson, who leads the 143rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), a U.S. Army Reserve unit headquartered in Orlando, Fla.

"This is our first exposure to this," the Iraq War veteran said of her unit's work with the Australians.

"This is going to be an enduring mission for the 143rd," she said, standing beside trucks in a motor pool at the barracks Tuesday. The sustainment command includes 8,000 soldiers across 10 U.S. states.

Australia's vast and rugged interior presents unique logistical challenges, including long supply routes stretching hundreds of miles, potential encounters with wandering livestock, and "road trains" — massive multi-trailer trucks. For Americans, there's also the adjustment of driving on the left side of the road.

All these factors compound difficulties for young military drivers, Johnson said.

"What we see are young people not driving so much," she said, adding that many soldiers are more accustomed to hailing rides via mobile apps.



Seth Robson/Stars and Stripes

U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Dawn Johnson and Australian army Brig. Gen. Andrew Harrison-Wyatt discuss Talisman Sabre logistics at Gallipoli Barracks in Brisbane, Australia, on Tuesday.

It's only the second time that the combined sustainment outfit has operated during Talisman Sabre, said Australian army Brig. Gen. Andrew Harrison-Wyatt, an Iraq and Afghanistan veteran who oversees joint logistics from the Australian military.

The logistics task force includes Australian government civilians and more than 1,000 contractors handling transportation, maintenance and fuel supply, he said Tuesday at the barracks.

Supplies are being moved using a variety of military aircraft — including C-17 Globemaster IIIs, C-130J Super Hercules and MV-22 Ospreys — along with amphibious vessels, Harrison-Wyatt said. Logistics hubs stretch more than 2,000 miles across the continent.

"Rather than two separate forces it's a combined joint force fully integrated from the top down," Harrison-Wyatt said.

He added that the partnership continues to grow and the next Talisman Sabre in 2027 will be even bigger and more complex.

2 soldiers get 30 days' leave for intercepting N. Korean man inside DMZ

By Yoojin Lee and David Choi
Stars and Stripes

Two of the 10 South Korean soldiers who helped secure a North Korean man inside the Demilitarized Zone earlier this month were granted 30 days of leave, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Wednesday.

All 10 troops will receive commendations for their actions on July 3, when a North Korean man crossed the midwestern section of the heavily fortified border dividing the Korean Peninsula, a Joint Chiefs spokeswoman said by phone Thursday.

The group included two conscripts, who received the additional leave, and eight officers and noncommissioned officers, she said.

South Korean forces deployed to intercept the man, who identified himself as a civilian, the South's military said at the time. He was removed from the DMZ and remains under investigation.

Under South Korean law, all able-bodied adult males are required to serve in the military or in certain government agencies for at least 18 months. Conscripts are typically granted about 20 days of leave during their service but may earn additional time off for merit-based accomplishments.

In a similar case in 2017, two South Korean and four American soldiers received the U.S. Army Commendation Medal after rescuing a North Korean defector under gunfire.

South Korean officials customarily speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

NATION

House votes to subpoena for Epstein files

By Stephen Groves and Matt Brown
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A House subcommittee on Wednesday voted to subpoena the Department of Justice for files in the sex trafficking investigation into Jeffrey Epstein after Democrats successfully goaded GOP lawmakers to defy President Donald Trump and Republican leadership to support the action.

The vote showed the intensifying push for disclosures in the Epstein investigation even as House Speaker Mike Johnson — caught between demands from Trump and clamoring from his own members for the House to act — was sending lawmakers home a day early for its August recess. The House Committee on Oversight also issued a subpoena Wednesday for Ghislaine Maxwell, a convicted sex offender and girlfriend of the late Epstein, to testify before committee officials in August.

Meanwhile, Democrats on a subcommittee of the powerful House Oversight Committee made a motion for the subpoena Wednesday afternoon. Three Republicans on the panel voted with Democrats for the subpoena, sending it through on an 8-2 vote tally.

The Republican subcommittee chairman, Rep. Clay Higgins of Louisiana, said that work was beginning to draft the subpoena but did not give a timeline for when it would be issued.

"I've never handled a subpoena like this. This is some fascinating stuff," said Higgins, who voted against the motion.

Democrats cheered the action as proof that their push for disclosures in the Epstein investigation was growing stronger. The committee agreed to redact information on victims, yet Democrats successfully blocked a push by Republicans to only subpoena information that was deemed to be "credible" — language that Trump has also used when discussing what he would support releasing.

"Democrats are focused on transparency and are pushing back against the corruption against Donald Trump. What is Donald Trump hiding that he won't release the Epstein files?" said Rep. Robert Garcia, the top Democrat on the oversight committee.



J. Scott Applewhite/AP

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., joined at right by Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-Calif., chair of the House Democratic Caucus, talks to reporters about the decision by Speaker Mike Johnson to leave Washington early as Republicans clash over the Jeffrey Epstein files at the Capitol on Wednesday.

Earlier Wednesday, Johnson had said there was no need to vote on a separate piece of bipartisan legislation calling for the release of the Epstein files this week because the Trump administration is "already doing everything within their power to release them."

In addition, Attorney General Pam Bondi was facing Democratic calls to testify before Congress following a newspaper's revelation that she told Trump that his name appeared in the files of the Epstein investigation.

The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday that Bondi told Trump his name was among many high-profile figures mentioned in the files, which the Justice Department this month said it would not be releasing despite a clamor from online sleuths, conspiracy theorists and members of Trump's base.

Trump's personal ties to Epstein are well-established and his name is already known to have been included in records related to the wealthy financier, who killed himself in jail in 2019 as he awaited trial on sex trafficking charges.

Sen. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., responded to the report by calling on Bondi and FBI Director Kash Patel to appear before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"We need to bring Bondi and Patel into the Judiciary Committee to testify about this now," Schiff said in a video posted on X.

Democrats have delighted in pressing Republicans to support the release of the files. Their efforts halted the GOP's legislative agenda for the week and turned attention to an issue that Trump has unsuccessfully implored his supporters to forget about.

"They're fleeing our work, our job and sending us back home because they don't want to vote to release these files. This is something that they ran on. This is something that they talked about: the importance of transparency, holding pedophiles accountable," said Rep. Summer Lee, the Pennsylvania Democrat who pushed for the subpoena.

Democratic leaders are hoping to make the issue about much more than just Epstein, who died in his New York jail cell six years ago while he awaited trial on sex trafficking charges.

"Why haven't Republicans released the Epstein files to the American people? It's reasonable to conclude that Republicans are continuing to protect the lifestyles of the rich and the shameless, even if that includes pedophiles," said House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries at a news conference. "So it's all connected."

DOJ to meet with Maxwell

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Justice Department officials were set to meet on Thursday with Ghislaine Maxwell, the imprisoned girlfriend of financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, according to a person familiar with the matter.

The meeting in Florida, which Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said on Tuesday he was working to arrange, is part of an ongoing Justice Department effort to cast itself as transparent following fierce backlash from parts of President Donald Trump's base over an earlier refusal to release additional records in the Epstein investigation.

In a social media post Tuesday, Blanche said that Trump "has told us to release all credible evidence" and that if Maxwell has information about anyone who has committed crimes against victims, the FBI and the Justice Department "will hear what she has to say."

A Justice Department spokesman did not immediately return a message seeking comment on Thursday. The person who confirmed the meeting insisted on anonymity to describe a closed-door encounter.

A lawyer for Maxwell confirmed on Tuesday there were discussions with the government and said Maxwell "will always testify truthfully."

The House Committee on Oversight issued a subpoena on Wednesday for Maxwell to testify before committee officials in August.

Maxwell is serving a 20-year sentence and is housed at a low-security federal prison in Tallahassee, Fla.

She was sentenced three years ago after being convicted of helping Epstein sexually abuse underage girls.

Man accused of attempting to assassinate Trump to represent himself

Associated Press

FORT PIERCE, Fla. — A man charged with trying to assassinate President Donald Trump last year in South Florida can represent himself during his trial, a federal judge ruled Thursday.

U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon signed off on Ryan Routh's request to represent himself during his trial but said court-appointed attorneys need to remain as standby counsel. Earlier in the week, the federal public defenders had asked to be taken off the case, saying Routh had refused repeated attempts to meet with them.



Routh

Routh, 59, is scheduled to stand trial in September, a year after prosecutors say a U.S. Secret Service agent thwarted his attempt to shoot Trump as he played golf. Routh has pleaded not guilty to charges of attempting to assassinate a major presidential candidate, assaulting a federal officer and several firearm violations.

The judge told Routh earlier this month that she doesn't intend to delay the Sept. 8 start date of his trial, even if she lets him represent himself. Routh, who has described the extent of his education as two years of college after earning his GED certificate, told Cannon that he understood and would be ready.

In a June 29 letter to Cannon, Routh said that he and his attorneys were "a million miles apart" and that they were refusing to answer his questions. He also suggested in the same letter that he could be used in a prisoner exchange with Iran, China, North Korea or Russia.

"I could die being of some use and save all this court mess, but no one acts; perhaps you have the power to trade me away," Routh wrote.

On Wednesday, the federal public defender's office filed a motion for termination of appointment of counsel, saying "the attorney-client relationship is irreconcilably broken." Attorneys said Routh refused to meet with them for a scheduled in-person meeting Tuesday morning at the federal detention center in Miami. They said Routh has refused six attempts to meet with their team.

"It is clear that Mr. Routh wishes to represent himself, and he is within his Constitutional rights to make such a demand," the motion said.

NATION

Columbia to pay over $220M to restore funding

BY CAROLYN THOMPSON
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Columbia University announced Wednesday it has reached a deal with the Trump administration to pay more than $220 million to the federal government to restore federal research money that was canceled in the name of combating antisemitism on campus.

Under the agreement, the Ivy League school will pay a $200 million settlement over three years, the university said. It will also pay $21 million to resolve alleged civil rights violations against Jewish employees that occurred following the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel, the White House said.

"This agreement marks an important step forward after a period of sustained federal scrutiny and institutional uncertainty," acting University President Claire Shipman said.

The school had been threatened with the potential loss of billions of dollars in government support, including more than $400 million in grants canceled earlier this year. The administration pulled the funding because of what it described as the university's failure to squelch antisemitism on campus during the Israel-Hamas war.

Columbia has since agreed to a series of demands laid out by the Republican administration, including overhauling the university's student disciplinary process and applying a contentious, federally endorsed definition of antisemitism not only to teaching but to a disciplinary committee that has been investigating students critical of Israel.

Wednesday's agreement — which does not include an admission of wrongdoing — codifies those reforms while preserving the university's autonomy, Shipman said.

Education Secretary Linda McMahon called the deal "a seismic shift in our nation's fight to hold institutions that accept American taxpayer dollars accountable for antisemitic discrimination and harassment."

"Columbia's reforms are a roadmap for elite universities that wish to regain the confidence of the American public by renewing their commitment to truth-seeking, merit, and civil debate," McMahon said in a statement.

As part of the agreement, Columbia agreed to a series of changes previously announced in March, including reviewing its Middle East curriculum to make sure it was "comprehensive and balanced" and appointing new faculty to its Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies. It also promised to end programs "that promote unlawful efforts to achieve race-based outcomes, quotes, diversity targets or similar efforts."

The university will also have to issue a report to a monitor assuring that its programs "do not promote unlawful DEI goals."

In a post Wednesday on his Truth Social platform, President Donald Trump said Columbia had "committed to ending their ridiculous DEI policies, admitting students based ONLY on MERIT, and protecting the Civil Liberties of their students on campus."

He also warned, without being specific, "Numerous other Higher Education Institutions that have hurt so many, and been so unfair and unjust, and have wrongly spent federal money, much of it from our government, are upcoming."



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Hannah Liu, 26, of Washington, holds up a sign in support of birthright citizenship, May 15, outside of the Supreme Court in Washington.

Court upholds block on Trump's effort to end birthright citizenship

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court in San Francisco ruled Wednesday that President Donald Trump's order seeking to end birthright citizenship is unconstitutional, affirming a lower-court decision that blocked its enforcement nationwide.

The ruling from a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals comes after Trump's plan was also blocked by a federal judge in New Hampshire. It marks the first time an appeals court has weighed in and brings the issue one step closer to coming back quickly before the Supreme Court.

The 9th Circuit decision keeps a block on the Trump administration enforcing the order that would deny citizenship to children born to people who are in the United States illegally or temporarily.

"The district court correctly concluded that the Executive Order's proposed interpretation, denying citizenship to many persons born in the United States, is unconstitutional. We fully agree," the majority wrote.

The 2-1 ruling keeps in place a decision from U.S. District Judge John C. Coughenour in Seattle, who blocked Trump's effort to end birthright citizenship and decried what he described as the administration's attempt to ignore the Constitution for political gain. Coughenour was the first to block the order.

The White House and Justice Department did not respond to messages seeking comment.

The Supreme Court has since restricted the power of lower court judges to issue orders that affect the whole country, known as nationwide injunctions.

But the 9th Circuit majority found that the case fell under one of the exceptions left open by the justices. The case was filed by a group of states who argued that they need a nationwide order to prevent the problems that would be caused by birthright citizenship only being the law in half of the country.

"We conclude that the district court did not abuse its discretion in issuing a universal injunction in order to give the States complete relief," Judge Michael Hawkins and Ronald Gould, both appointed by President Bill Clinton, wrote.

Judge Patrick Bumatay, who was appointed by Trump, dissented. He found that the states don't have the legal right or standing to sue.

"We should approach any request for universal relief with good faith skepticism, mindful that the invocation of 'complete relief' isn't a backdoor to universal injunctions," he wrote.

The Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment says that all people born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to U.S. jurisdiction, are citizens.

Justice Department attorneys argue that the phrase "subject to United States jurisdiction" in the amendment means that citizenship isn't automatically conferred to children based on their birth location alone.

ICE barred from immediately taking Abrego Garcia into custody

Associated Press

A federal judge in Maryland has prohibited the Trump administration from taking Kilmar Abrego Garcia into immediate immigration custody if he's released from jail in Tennessee while awaiting trial on human smuggling charges, according to an order issued Wednesday.

U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis ordered the U.S. government to provide notice of three business days if Immigration and Customs Enforcement intends to initiate deportation proceedings against him.

The judge also ordered the government to restore the federal supervision that Abrego Garcia was under before he was wrongfully deported to his native El Salvador in March. That supervision had allowed Abrego Garcia to live and work in Maryland for years, while he periodically checked in with ICE.

"Defendants have done little to assure the Court that absent intervention, Abrego Garcia's due process rights will be protected," Xinis wrote in her order.

Abrego Garcia became a prominent face in the debate over President Donald Trump's immigration policies following his wrongful expulsion to El Salvador in March.

Trump's administration violated a U.S. immigration judge's order in 2019 that shields Abrego Garcia from deportation to El Salvador because he likely faces threats of gang violence there.

Abrego Garcia's criminal attorneys in the Tennessee case want him released from jail to await trial, but only if he won't be taken into ICE custody and deported. A federal judge in that criminal case on Wednesday affirmed that Abrego Garcia is eligible for release. U.S. District Judge Waverly Crenshaw ruled that appropriate release conditions will mitigate any risk of flight or any danger to the community.

Crenshaw then sent the case back to U.S. Magistrate Judge Barbara Holmes, who originally held that Abrego Garcia is eligible for release last month. Holmes has held off on ordering his release at the request of Abrego Garcia's own lawyers. On Wednesday, she signed yet another order putting off his release from jail, this time for 30 days.

U.S. officials have said they'll try to deport Abrego Garcia to a country that isn't El Salvador, such as Mexico or South Sudan, before his trial starts in January because they allege he's a danger to the community.

NATION

Colo. officials say measles outbreak is over

By Devi Shastri
Associated Press

Health officials in Colorado say the state's measles outbreak is over, and the U.S. added just 10 confirmed cases nationally in the last week.

Wednesday's national case count stood at 1,319, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Earlier this month, the U.S. passed the total count for 2019, when the country almost lost its status of having eliminated measles.

A vast majority of this year's cases are from Texas, where a major outbreak raged through the late winter and spring. Other states with active outbreaks — which the CDC defines as three or more related cases — include Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Utah.

There have been three deaths in the U.S. this year, and all were unvaccinated: two elementary school-aged children in West Texas and an adult in New Mexico.

North America has three other large outbreaks. The longest, in Ontario, Canada, has resulted in 2,276 cases from mid-October through July 15. The province logged its first death June 5 in a baby who got congenital measles but also had other preexisting conditions.

Another outbreak in Alberta, Canada, has sickened 1,472 as of Tuesday. And the Mexican state of Chihuahua had 3,296 measles cases and 10 deaths as of Tuesday, according to data from the state health ministry.

Measles is caused by a highly contagious virus that's airborne and spreads easily when an infected person breathes, sneezes or coughs. It is preventable through vaccines and has been considered eliminated from the U.S. since 2000.

Texas did not add any cases in the last week, coming in at 762 measles cases Tuesday across 36 counties, most of them in West Texas.

Throughout the outbreak, 99 people have been hospitalized. State health officials estimated less than 1% of cases — fewer than 10 — were actively infectious as of Tuesday.



NICK OXFORD/AP

A Muscogee Nation Supreme Court ruling gives tribal citizenship to Rhonda Grayson and Jeff Kennedy.

Muscogee Nation court rules that Freedmen are citizens

Associated Press

The Muscogee Nation Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that two descendants of people once enslaved by the tribe are entitled to tribal citizenship.

The court found that the tribal nation's citizenship board violated an 1866 treaty when it denied the applications of Rhonda Grayson and Jeffrey Kennedy in 2019 because they could not identify a lineal descendant of the tribe.

"Are we, as a Nation, bound to treaty promises made so many years ago? Today, we answer in the affirmative, because this is what Mvskoke law demands," the court wrote in its opinion.

The Muscogee Nation is one of five tribes in Oklahoma that once practiced slavery, and in that 1866 treaty with the U.S. government, the tribe both abolished it and granted citizenship to the formerly enslaved. But in 1979, the tribal nation adopted a constitution that restricted membership to the descendants of people listed as "Muscogee (Creek) Indians by blood" on the Dawes Rolls, a census of members of the five tribes created around 1900.

When the Dawes Rolls were created, people were listed on two separate rolls: those who were Muscogee and those who were identified by the U.S. government as Freedmen. In its ruling Wednesday, the court remanded the matter back to the Muscogee Nation's citizenship board and directed it to apply the Treaty of 1866 to Grayson and Kennedy's applications, as well as any future applicants who can trace an ancestor to either roll.

The decision could create a path to tribal citizenship for thousands of new members who are not Muscogee by blood.

The ruling is a long-awaited affirmation of their ancestors and their rightful place in the Muscogee Nation, said Rhonda Grayson.

"While this victory honors our past, it also offers a meaningful opportunity for healing and reconciliation. It's time now to come together, rebuild trust, and move forward as one united Nation, ensuring future generations never again face exclusion or erasure," she said in a statement to The Associated Press.

"When I heard the ruling, I felt generations of my family exhale at once," Kennedy added in a statement. "Our ancestors signed that treaty in good faith, and today the Court finally honored their word."

The court also found that any reference of "by blood" in the Muscogee Nation's constitution is unlawful, which could mean the tribe will have to overhaul parts of the governing document. One provision of the constitution requires that citizens be at least one quarter Muscogee "by blood" to run for office.

Kohberger sentenced to life for murdering four Idaho students

Associated Press

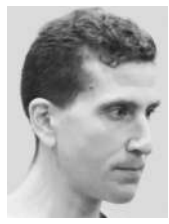
BOISE, Idaho — Bryan Kohberger, the masked man who sneaked into a rental home near the University of Idaho campus and stabbed four students to death in late 2022, faced their families in court Wednesday before he was sentenced to life in prison.

The families did not get any answers about why he did it or how he came to target the home on King Road in the rural college town of Moscow. But Kohberger, 30, was sentenced to life in prison without parole for murdering Madison Mogen, Xana Kernodle, Kaylee Goncalves and Ethan Chapin.

He pleaded guilty earlier this month in a deal to avoid the death penalty. He declined to speak in court.

The victims' loved ones shared emotional statements, with some expressing sadness, anger or even forgiveness.

Mogen, Kernodle, Goncalves and Chapin were found stabbed to death on Nov. 13, 2022. The crime horrified the city, which hadn't seen a homicide in about five years, and prompted a massive search for the perpetrator.



Kohberger

Kohberger, a graduate student in criminology at nearby Washington State University, was arrested in Pennsylvania, where his parents lived, roughly six weeks later.

A Q-tip from the garbage at his parents' house and genetic genealogy were used to match Kohberger's DNA to material recovered from a knife sheath found at the home, investigators said. They used surveillance camera footage to help locate a white sedan that was seen repeatedly driving past the home on the night of the killings.

Kohberger's attorneys got the trial moved to Boise after expressing concerns that the court wouldn't be able to find enough unbiased jurors in Moscow. But Judge Stephen Hippler rejected their efforts to get the death penalty taken off the table and to strike critical evidence — including the DNA — from being admitted in trial.

In exchange for Kohberger admitting guilt and waiving his right to appeal, prosecutors agreed not to seek his execution. Both sides recommended that he serve four consecutive life sentences without parole.

The victim's families were split on how they felt about the plea deal.

It's unclear why Kohberger killed the four students and spared two roommates who were home at the time.

Doctor pleads guilty to selling ketamine to Perry in weeks before actor's death

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A doctor who was a primary target in the sweeping investigation of actor Matthew Perry's overdose death pleaded guilty Wednesday to supplying the "Friends" star with ketamine despite knowing he was a struggling addict.

Dr. Salvador Plasencia became the fourth of the five people charged in connection with Perry's death to plead guilty. He and a woman prosecutors say was a major ketamine dealer faced the most serious charges after Perry was found dead in the hot tub of his Los Angeles home on Oct. 28, 2023.

Plasencia stood next to his lawyer and said "guilty" four times for four different counts before Judge Sherilyn Peace Garnett in federal court in Los Angeles.

Plasencia, 43, was to have gone on trial in August until the doctor agreed last month to plead guilty to four counts of distribution of ketamine, according to the document filed in federal court. The charges can carry up to 40 years in prison. He is likely to be sentenced to much less, but there is no guarantee in his agreement.



Plasencia

He spoke only to answer the judge's questions. When asked if his lawyers had considered all the possibilities of pleas and sentencing in the case, Plasencia replied, "They've considered everything."

"Dr. Plasencia is profoundly remorseful for the treatment decisions he made while providing ketamine to Matthew Perry," the doctor's attorney, Debra White, said in an emailed statement after the hearing. "He is fully accepting responsibility by pleading guilty to drug distribution. Dr. Plasencia intends to voluntarily surrender his medical license, acknowledging his failure to protect Mr. Perry, a patient who was especially vulnerable due to addiction."

In exchange for the guilty pleas, prosecutors have agreed to drop three additional counts of distribution of ketamine and two counts of falsifying records.

Prosecutors outlined the charges in court before the plea, and said that he did not sell Perry the dose that killed the actor.

They described, and Plasencia admitted, that Perry froze up and his blood pressure spiked when the doctor gave him one injection, but Plasencia still left more ketamine for Perry's assistant to inject.

NATION

Thai, Cambodian forces' border clashes escalate

Thailand seals land crossings, reports civilian casualties

By Jintamas Saksornchai
Associated Press

BANGKOK — Thai and Cambodian soldiers clashed in several areas along their border Thursday in a major escalation of their conflict that left at least 12 people dead, mostly civilians. The two sides fired small arms, artillery and rockets, and Thailand also launched airstrikes.

Fighting took place in at least six areas along the border, Thai Defense Ministry spokesperson Surasant Kongsiri said. The trigger for the clashes was a mine explosion along the border Wednesday that wounded five Thai soldiers and led Bangkok to withdraw its ambassador to Cambodia and expel Cambodia's.

The fighting was a rare example of open military conflict between member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation. However, it is not unprecedented, as Thailand has tangled with Cambodia before over the border, and has had sporadic skirmishes with western neighbor Myanmar.

Thailand and Cambodia blamed each other for the fighting Thursday, and alleged that civilians were being targeted.

Public Health Minister Somsak Thepsuthin said a soldier, and 11 Thai civilians, including children eight and 15 years old, were killed in the fighting, and that two dozen more people were injured. He said his agency condemned the attacks on civilians and a hospital, calling them violations of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions.

Thailand's Acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai said four provinces were affected by the fighting, and the Interior Ministry had been ordered to evacuate people at least 30 miles from the border for their safety.

Cambodia released no details on deaths or injuries on its side.

Thai Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nikorndej Balankura said that the Thai government was "prepared to intensify our self-defense measures if Cambodia persists in its armed aggression and violations upon Thailand's sovereignty."

In the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh, Defense Ministry spokesperson Lt. Gen. Maly Socheata said his country employed armed force because "it has no choice but to defend its territory against Thai threats. The most important purpose is to defend itself, and the attacks are focused on the military places, not on any other place."

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet wrote to the U.N. Security Council asking for an urgent meeting "to stop Thailand's aggression." None was immediately scheduled.

The Southeast Asian neighbors have longstanding border disputes that periodically flare along their 500-mile frontier and usually result in brief confrontations, only sometimes involving the use of weapons. The last time a major armed confrontation over the issue took place was in 2011, causing 20 deaths.

But relations have deteriorated sharply since a confrontation in May that killed a Cambodian soldier, and Thursday's clashes were far bigger in scale and intensity than usual.

The first clash Thursday morning happened in an area near the ancient Ta Muen Thom temple along the border of Thailand's Surin province and Cambodia's Oddar Meanchey province.



Sunny Chittawil / AP

Thai people who fled clashes Thursday between Thai and Cambodian soldiers take shelter in Surin province, northeastern Thailand.

Zelenskyy moves to appease protesters

By Illia Novikov
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Opponents of a new law they say strips Ukraine's anti-corruption watchdogs of their independence called for a third straight day of street protests across the country Thursday, despite President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's attempts to defuse the tension with promises of legislative safeguards.

After meeting with the heads of Ukraine's key anti-corruption and security agencies, Zelenskyy promised to act on their recommendations by presenting a bill to Parliament that strengthens the rule of law.

"And very importantly: all the norms for the independence of anti-corruption institutions will be in place," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address Wednesday.

Zelenskyy acknowledged the controversy triggered by the new corruption law, which also drew rebukes from European Union officials and international rights groups.

However, he didn't promise to revoke the law that he approved.



Dan Bashakov / AP

Thousands of people protest a law targeting anti-corruption institutions near the President's Office in Kyiv, Ukraine, Wednesday.

The legislation that was adopted this week, despite pleas for Zelenskyy to veto it, tightened government oversight of two key anti-corruption agencies. Critics said the step could significantly weaken the independence of those agencies and give Zelenskyy's circle greater influence over investigations.

The protests haven't called for Zelenskyy's ouster. But the first major anti-government demonstrations since the war began come at a tough time for Ukraine in its three-year battle to thwart Russia's invasion. Russia's bigger army is accelerating its efforts to pierce Ukraine's front-line defenses and is escalating its bombardment of Ukrainian cities.

Zelenskyy had insisted earlier Wednesday that the new legal framework was needed to crack down harder on corruption. Fighting entrenched corruption is crucial for Ukraine's aspirations to join the EU and maintain access to billions of dollars in Western aid in the war.

Meanwhile, Russian planes dropped two powerful glide bombs on the center of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, Thursday morning, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. At least 16 people were injured, he said.

The southern Ukrainian city of Odesa and Cherkasy in central Ukraine were also hit overnight, authorities said. The drone and missile strikes on the cities injured 11 people, and damaged historic landmarks and residential buildings, officials said.

Ukraine has sought to step up its own long-range drone attacks on Russia, using domestic technology and manufacturing.

An overnight Ukrainian drone attack on the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi killed two women and injured 11 other people, local authorities said Thursday.

US OKs sale of $322M in weapons to Ukraine

Associated Press

The State Department said Wednesday that it has approved $322 million in proposed weapons sales to Ukraine to enhance its air defense capabilities and provide armored combat vehicles, coming as the country works to fend off escalating Russian attacks.

The potential sales, which the department said were notified to Congress, include $150 million for the supply, maintenance, repair and overhaul of U.S. armored vehicles, and $172 million for surface-to-air missile systems.

The approvals come weeks after Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth directed a pause on other weapons shipments to Ukraine to allow the Pentagon to assess its weapons stockpiles, in a move that caught the White House by surprise.

President Donald Trump then made an abrupt change in posture, pledging publicly earlier this month to continue to send weapons to Ukraine.

Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the U.S. has provided more than $67 billion in weapons and security assistance to Kyiv.

WORLD

Former US Embassy guard in Norway accused of espionage

Associated Press

OSLO, Norway — A former security guard at the U.S. Embassy in Norway has been indicted by prosecutors there on suspicion of espionage after he allegedly spied for Russia and Iran, state broadcaster NRK said Wednesday.

The Norwegian man, whose name has not been made public, was arrested last November on suspicion of having damaged national security. He is accused of handing over details about the embassy's diplomats, its floor plans and security routines, among other things, NRK reported.

His defense attorney, Inger Zadig, said her client acknowledges the indictment's facts but denies any criminal guilt.

"At its core, this case concerns legal interpretation — specifically, whether, and to what extent, the information in question was 'classified' under the law, and whether it was capable of harming fundamental national interests," she wrote in an email to The Associated Press. "If not, then sharing the information is not a criminal offense. Our client did not hold a security clearance, and his access to information that could threaten vital national interests was more or less non-existent. These issues will be thoroughly addressed in court."

The broadcaster reported that America's ties to Israel and the war in Gaza prompted the man to contact Russia and Iran.

The defendant faces up to 21 years in prison, NRK reported.

The U.S. Embassy and the prosecutor's office did not respond to AP's requests for comment.

At the time of his arrest, the man had been studying for a bachelor's degree in security and preparedness at Norway's Arctic University, UiT.

It is a second such case at UiT in recent years, according to NRK.

One of the people the West swapped with Russia in a major prisoner exchange last year was a UiT guest researcher who claimed to be a Brazilian named José Assis Giammaria, arrested on espionage allegations in 2022. The police revealed him to be Russian, Mikhail Valeryevich Mikushin. Last year, the Norwegian government said it was considering a plan to build a fence along all or part of its border with Russia.

Macrons file lawsuit in US over claim wife is a man

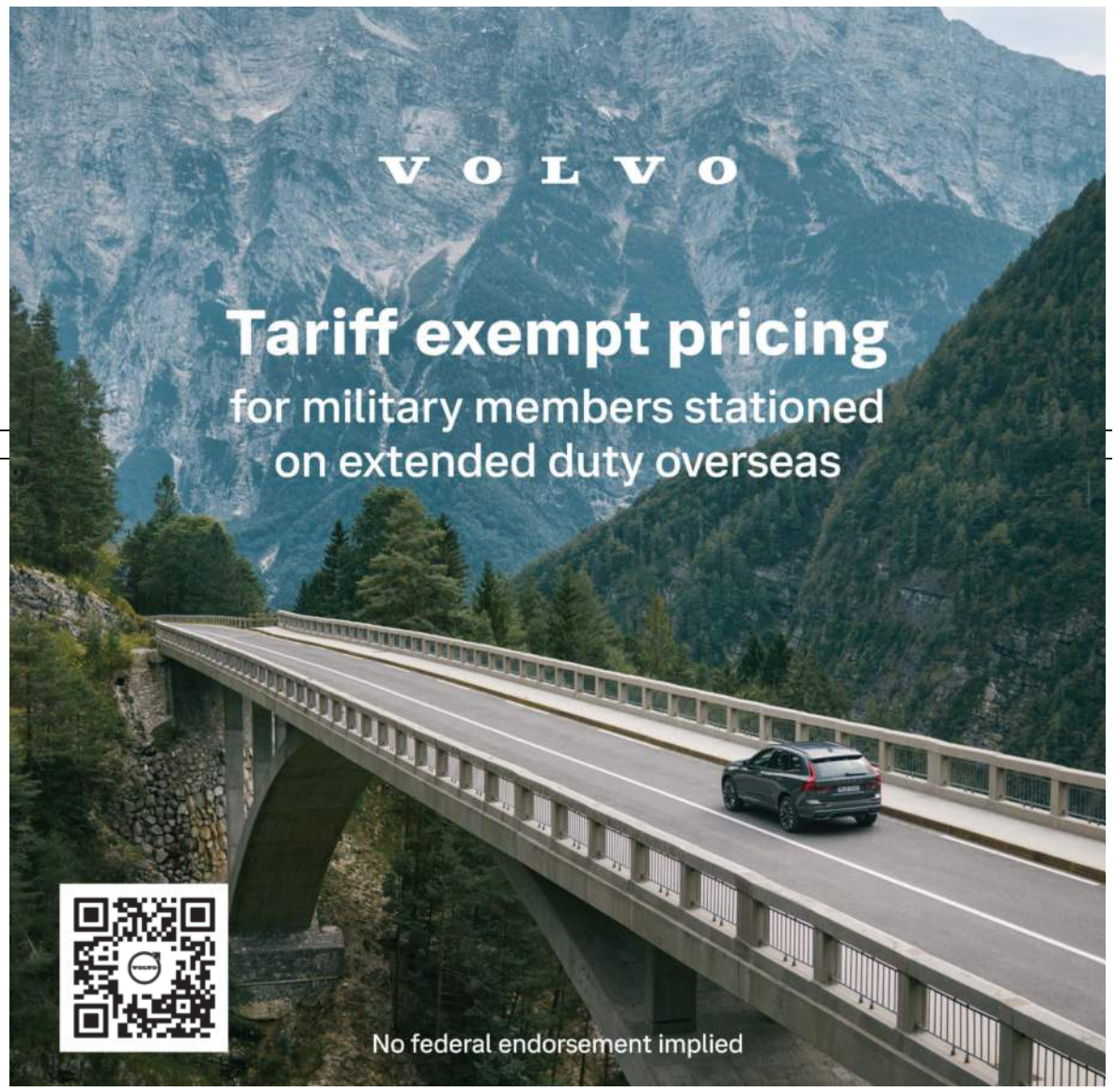
Associated Press

PARIS — A lawyer for France's first couple said they'll be seeking "substantial" damages from U.S. conservative influencer Candace Owens if she persists claiming that President Emmanuel Macron's wife, Brigitte, is a man. The lawyer, Tom Clare, said in an interview with CNN that a defamation suit filed Wednesday for the Macrons in a Delaware court was "really a last resort" after a fruitless yearlong effort to engage with Owens and requests that she "do the right thing: tell the truth, stop spreading these lies."

"Each time we've done that, she mocked the Macrons, she mocked our efforts to set the record straight," Clare said. "Enough is enough, it was time to hold her accountable."

The 219-page complaint against Owens lays out "extensive evidence" that Brigitte Macron "was born a woman, she's always been a woman," the couple's attorney said. In Paris, the presidential office had no immediate comment.

The Macrons have for years been dogged by theories that Brigitte was born as a man named Jean-Michel Trogneux. Jean-Michel Trogneux is, in fact, Brigitte's brother.



Drop off your docs
and we'll do the rest.

H&R BLOCK®

Getting your refund is more important than ever.

- Leave your docs with us.
- Your tax pro will call with any questions.
- Review and approve your return online.

Questions? Call us.

H&R Block
Kaiserstrasse 65
67661 Kaiserslautern-Einsiedlerhof
0631-3554711 & 0631-30396446
elmer.stokes@hrblock.com

H&R Block
Kennedy Allee 28
55774 Baumholder
06783-981041 (Main Office)
elmer.stokes@hrblock.com

H&R Block - On Post
BLDG 8243
Smith Barracks Baumholder
0160-5456538 (Business Cell Phone)
elmer.stokes@hrblock.com

H&R Block - AAFES Main Exchange
BLDG 2903
Panzer Kaserne Böblingen
07031-6314800
elmer.stokes@hrblock.com

Refund Transfer is an optional tax refund-related product provided by Pathward, N.A., Member FDIC. Refund Transfer is a bank deposit product, not a loan. You can file your return and receive your refund without applying for a Refund Transfer. Payments you authorize from the account associated with your Refund Transfer will reduce the net proceeds of your refund sent to you. Fees apply. A qualifying expected tax refund and e-filing are required. Other restrictions apply; see terms and conditions for details. H&R Block Main License Number: FRA2. OBTP# B13696 ©2023 HRB Tax Group, Inc.

WORLD

Iran ready to begin nuclear talks but only if trust can be rebuilt

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran is ready to engage in talks on its nuclear program with the United States, but only if Washington takes meaningful steps to rebuild trust, Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said Thursday.

Iran is set to meet Friday in Istanbul with Britain, France and Germany, known as the E3 nations, and the European Union's deputy foreign policy commissioner.

They will be the first talks since Iran's 12-day war with Israel in June, which involved U.S. B-52 bombers striking nuclear-related facilities in Iran.

Gharibabadi said in a social media post Thursday that to enter negotiations, Iran sought "several key principles" to be upheld.

He said these included "rebuilding Iran's trust — as Iran has absolutely no trust in the United States — avoiding the use of talks as a platform for hidden agendas such as military action, though Iran remains fully prepared for any scenario; respecting and recognizing Iran's rights under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including enrichment in line with its legitimate needs; and the lifting of sanctions."

Friday's talks will be held at the deputy ministerial level, with Iran sending Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-e Ravanchi. A similar meeting was held in Istanbul in May.

The stakes are high. European leaders have threatened to trigger a "snapback" mechanism included in a 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, which would reimpose sanctions that were lifted in exchange for Iran accepting restrictions and monitoring of its nuclear program.

Iranian officials have warned that a move to reimpose sanctions would have consequences.

The road ahead remains uncertain.

While European officials say they want to avoid further conflict and are open to a negotiated solution, they have warned that time is running out.

Report: Taliban tortured, threatened returned Afghans

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — The Taliban have tortured and threatened Afghans forcibly returned from Iran and Pakistan because of their identity or personal history, a U.N. report said Thursday.

Pakistan and Iran are expelling millions of Afghans who they say are living in their countries illegally. Afghan authorities have urged nationals to return, pledging amnesty for anyone who left after the Taliban seized power in 2021. But rights groups and the U.N. have repeatedly warned that some of those returning are at risk of persecution because of their gender, links to the former Western-backed administration or profession.

Thursday's report from the U.N. mission in Afghanistan said some people have experienced serious human rights violations, while others have gone into hiding or relocated for fear of Taliban reprisal.

The violations include torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest, and threats to personal security at the hands of the Taliban, according to the report. A former government official told the U.N. mission that, after his return to Afghanistan in 2023, he was detained and severely tortured with sticks and cables.

Afghans who left their homeland in the millions over the decades are either being pushed out in expulsion campaigns, or face an uncertain future because of reduced support for refugees.



STARS AND STRIPES
SERVICE DIRECTORY
The Daily Guide to Navigating The Military Business Market

Transportation 944

VEHICLE SHIPPING SERVICES

- International Shipping
- Import & Export
- Inland trucking *(U.S. & Europe)*
- Door to door pick-up/delivery service
- Customs clearance
- All Risk Marine Insurance
- Auto Insurance *(Germany only)*

For Further Information Please Contact

	GERMANY	UNITED KINGDOM	U.S.A
Phone:	+49-(0)6134-2592730	+44-(0)1638-515714	+1-972-602-1670 Ext. 1701
Toll-free:	0800-CARSHIP (Germany only)		+1-800-264-8167 (US only)
E-Mail:	info@transglobal-logistics.de	enquiries@carshipuk.co.uk	info@tgal.us
WEB:	www.transglobal-logistics.de	www.carshipuk.co.uk	www.tgal.us

For 2nd POV Shipments - Offices / Agencies near Military Installations

Trans Global LOGISTICS EUROPE GMBH



Are you in the picture?



Reading **Stars and Stripes** gives you a better handle on issues that affect you most.
No one covers the bases the way we do.

STARS AND STRIPES
However you read us, wherever you need us.

WEEKEND



Saadiq keeps year rolling with tour

Music, Pages 28-29



Adam Sandler stars in "Happy Gilmore 2."

Netflix

Back in the swing

Decades after the original, Adam Sandler's hockey player returns to the links in 'Happy Gilmore 2'

Movies, Pages 16-17

Video games — 15 Travel & Food — 21-25 Television — 30-31 Health — 32 Crossword — 34

Freshening your devices

Tips and tricks for cleaning phones, earbuds, computers and peripherals

BY KELVIN CHAN
Associated Press





iStock photos

A soft and lint-free cleaning cloth and cotton swabs are some of the tools you should have on hand when cleaning tech.

Smartphones, laptops, headphones and other electronic devices are essential for work and play. But all that time spent typing, scrolling or listening also means our devices gradually accumulate grime that needs to be cleaned off.

You might not give much thought to cleaning your devices but there are reasons you should, says Logitech, which makes keyboards, webcams and other computer peripherals.

"Regular cleaning and proper maintenance not only keeps your gadgets looking pristine, and wins you hygiene points, it also helps them perform better and last longer," the company says. "In the case of devices like earbuds, the accumulated bacteria and debris may even cause health issues or discomfort."

Here are some pointers on cleaning your tech:

Getting started

Always check if the manufacturer has any specific guidelines for cleaning.

Assemble some basic equipment and material for cleaning, which should include a soft and lint-free cleaning cloth, like a microfiber cloth; cotton swabs; a soft-bristled brush like a toothbrush, paintbrush or makeup brush; compressed air and isopropyl alcohol.

Isopropyl, or rubbing alcohol, is a nontoxic cleaning solvent that's antiseptic and antibacterial. It's popular for cleaning electronics because it doesn't leave any residue and dries quickly. But you might want to wear gloves to avoid skin irritation. Drip some of it on a cloth instead of pouring it directly onto your device. Also heed some of the more specific warnings below.

Water and mild soap can be useful for cleaning dirty surfaces, but isopropyl alcohol is recommended for cleaning the internals of a device, said Alex Diaz-Kokaisl, senior technical writer at electronics repair company iFixit.

"While there isn't a hard-and-fast rule for cleaning electronics, we generally use high-concentration isopropyl alcohol (more than 90%) because it evaporates quickly," he said. "The faster a liquid evaporates, the less likely it is to affect any components that conduct electricity."

For whatever device you're cleaning, disconnect or power it off first. Remove any cases, plugs, covers and accessories.

Computers and laptops

When using a computer, the keyboard and mouse are the parts that are touched most often and therefore need the most frequent cleaning. And all those crevices between a keyboard's keys are sure to catch crumbs.

To remove any loose debris, iFixit's official in-house cleaning guide recommends using a can of compressed air. If possible, hold the keyboard upside down so the debris falls out.

If you don't have compressed air, Logitech suggests using a hair dryer on the cold air setting. Some social media users also recommend a hand-held balloon pump.

Next, dampen a cleaning cloth with water and gently wipe down the keyboard and mouse.

Logitech says you can also use rubbing alcohol but recommends you test it first on an inconspicuous spot to make sure it doesn't cause discoloration or scrub the lettering off the keys.

Antibacterial baby wipes can also work on devices like a mouse, Diaz-Kokaisl said.

"There shouldn't be enough liquid to seep through cracks in the shell, and their residue typically evaporates faster than just using soap and water," he said.

For laptop screens or external monitors, use a dry microfiber cloth to gently wipe away fingerprint smudges.

If there are more stubborn spots — like food stains or sneezy spatters — dampen the cloth with distilled water or a 50/50 solution of distilled water and vinegar.

Computer maker Lenovo says the "gentle acidity of vinegar can help break down oils and fingerprints." Avoid using household glass cleaners, which can contain ammonia that could damage the screen. The same goes for paper towels, which can scratch the screen. HP also warns against using rubbing alcohol.

AirPods and earphones

Earbuds need regular cleaning to remove any earwax, natural skin oils or other grungy buildup.

If the earbuds have silicon tips, remove them. Cleaning procedures vary depending on your brand and model. Logitech and Bose recommend using soapy water. But Sony warns against water or wet wipes because they can speed deterioration, and, instead, advises using a dry cloth.

Use a cotton swab to wipe the earbud nozzles clean.

Owners of Apple AirPods need to follow a much more elaborate procedure to clean the mesh. You'll need a child's toothbrush, two small cups, a paper towel, distilled water, as well as micellar water — typically used as a facial cleanser.

Pour some micellar water into a cup, dip the toothbrush, brush the AirPod's various mesh parts and then blot them dry with the paper. Repeat twice. Then repeat that procedure but using the distilled water to rinse off the micellar water. Finally, let the AirPods dry for at least two hours.

To clean the rest of the AirPod's body, use a damp cloth. And don't forget about the charging case. Apple recommends brushing out any debris, and then wiping it with a dry cloth. If needed, dampen it with isopropyl alcohol.

What about over-the-ear headphones? Bose says you should wipe them down at least once a week, especially after working out, to remove any dirt and bacteria hiding in the nooks and crannies. Remove the pads and use a cloth dampened with soapy water to clean them.

Smartphones

Apple has issued specific instructions on its website for cleaning various iPhone models. Samsung has posted similar guidelines for its Galaxy lineup.

They both advise using a soft, lint-free cloth, such as a lens cleaning cloth, to gently wipe the outside of the phone. Apple warns against using any cleaning products, which could erode the oil-repellent coating that most iPhones come with.

Both companies say it's OK to use disinfectants such as rubbing alcohol to gently clean the exterior, but avoid bleach or hydrogen peroxide.

Hozo Design's laser level takes guesswork out of hanging things

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Hanging pictures should generally be easy, but often when you are trying to hang multiple frames at a specific angle or in a particular pattern, the results aren't what you want. With the M-Cube 02 Anti-Gravity Laser Level Pro, you'll wonder: Where has a tool like this been all my life? And, from now on you'll never hang anything that is not level.

Hozo Design calls the M-Cube 02 Anti-Gravity Laser Level Pro "the world's first anti-gravity laser level, combining innovation with unmatched versatility." Included in the Premium Combo are the M-Cube main unit, M-Cube 02 module and a few other accessories. This all adds up to a professional laser-guided tool with an angle accuracy of ±0.1 degrees, allowing you to hang small items in a full gallery effortlessly and with perfect alignment. At the same time, exact measurements are displayed in real time.



HOZO DESIGN/TNS

Hozo Design's M-Cube 02 Anti-Gravity Laser Level Pro has lasers that can extend at any angle.

The M-Cube 02 has a powerful vacuum adhesion system. This allows the device to temporarily attach itself to most surfaces with a washable suction pad simply by pressing a button. When the job is completed, and you release the tool of its suction, there is no evidence left behind. A warning will alert you if the pressure is not being held, and it will release.

It is designed to attach to various surfaces, including wood, wood paneling, plaster, wallpaper, particleboard, stone and ceilings. A GripMate is included for surfaces that aren't smooth.

Once attached to a surface, it requires a quick calibration. And then, with its easy 360-degree rotation, the lasers can extend at any angle, horizontal, vertical or diagonal.

Measurements are done from the center of the M-Cube. A pinhole finder accessory can be placed at the exact spot on the wall of your starting point, and then the M-Cube can be attached over it. There are also built-in levels for placement accuracy.

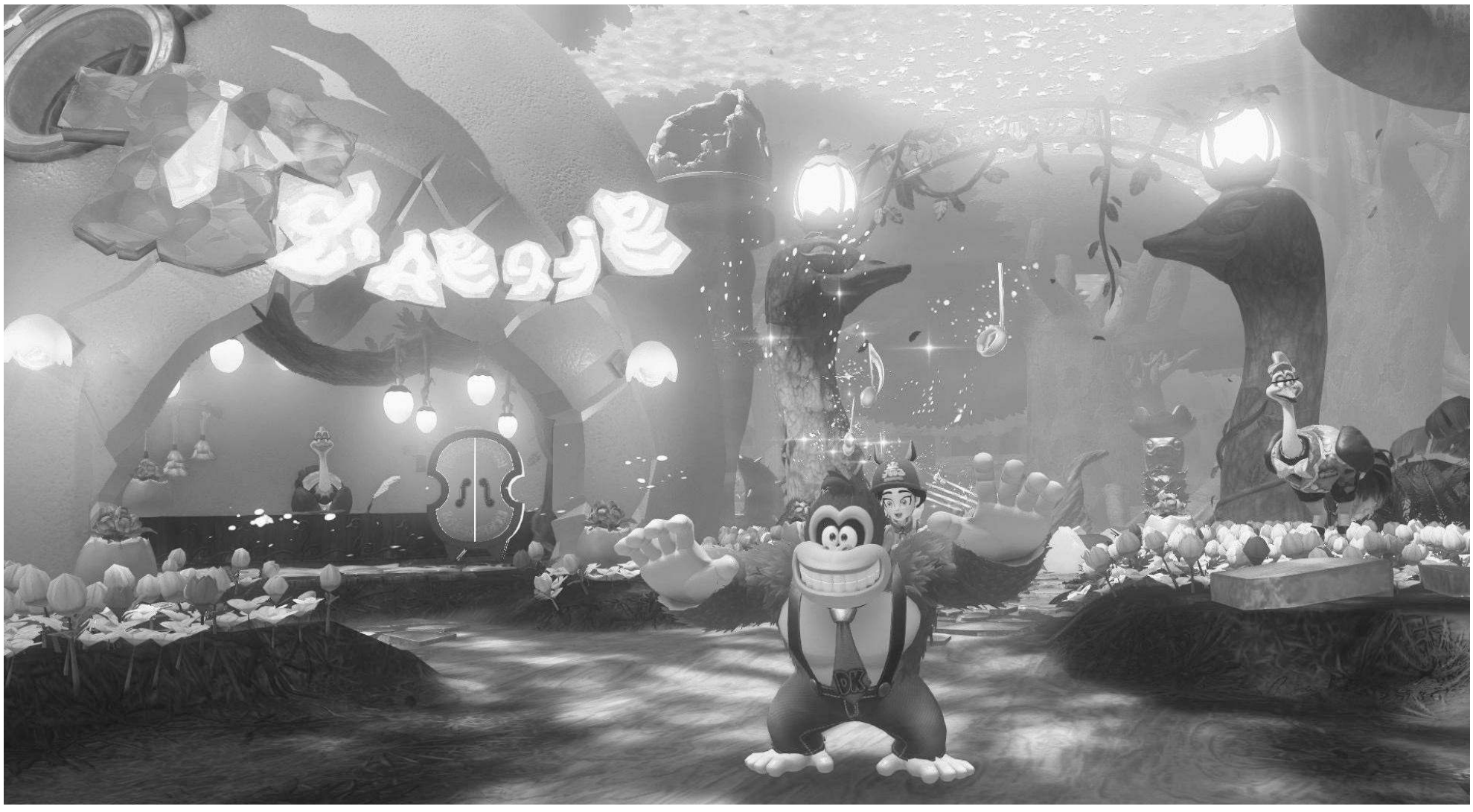
The laser measures the level and distance together. A touchscreen display, which you can also control with the control knob, shows the results, which can be displayed in either standard U.S. measurements or metric units.

The module can be removed from the M-Cube and used as an independent handheld tool. The companion Meazor app can also be used for displaying settings and results. Results from the M-Cube can also be uploaded to the app.

The internal 2600 mAh rechargeable battery is rated to last for 12 hours of continuous use before requiring a USB-C charge. It measures 4.1 inches by 4.1 inches by 2.1 inches and weighs approximately 1 pound.

Online: hozodesign.com/products/m-cube-02-laser-level-pro ; $309 for the Premium Combo but a 10% discount can be applied at checkout

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Nintendo

Numerous types of collectibles feed into Donkey Kong Bananza's compelling upgrade system, allowing for new and improved abilities, buffs to Donkey Kong's transformation powers and clothes that encourage more variety in play.

A smashing grab bag of classic ideas

Donkey Kong Bananza features new destructible environments, elements inspired by previous Mario, Zelda titles

BY GENE PARK
The Washington Post

Donkey Kong Bananza, the first big adventure for the new Nintendo Switch 2 console, is also one of the best Nintendo games in recent years, evolving ideas from Mario and Zelda games in service of the company's first big star.

The most memorable Nintendo titles introduce a clever twist on gameplay. The big new idea for Donkey Kong Bananza is the best kind: a technical, visual marvel that offers new ways to interact with the game. The terrain is destructible at the player's whim, as punching the ground, walls and cliffsides produces a fireworks display of debris. Mr. Kong is now a mythical hero from a Jimi Hendrix verse, able to chop down mountains with his hands.

Bananza is the first Donkey Kong game developed internally by Nintendo in more than two decades, now staffed by the team that created the award-winning 2017 Switch title Super Mario Odyssey. This game adopts Mario's trademark powers of transformation. Instead of wearing different superpowered hats, Kong can transform into different animal "bananza" forms that allow him to fly (ostrich), punch through steel (ape) and sprint across thin ice weightlessly (zebra). While these powers run on a limited meter, a few sections allow extended use of them. The game soars when it demands usage of every single form, becoming a symphony of mechanics and player response.

The story is simple, as all Nintendo stories are: While working in the mines for gold bananas, Donkey Kong stumbles upon a little girl named Pauline trapped beneath the surface. She wishes to return to the surface to explore her dream of being a singer and enlists Mr. Kong to help navigate various layers of the underworld. We're told we must journey to the planet's core for answers. Each layer presents a different video game world: The first layer is a breezy tropical lagoon area, complete with a subterranean sun, while deeper layers include typical video game ecosystems like ice worlds and volcanoes. Each "layer" has set boundaries, so players can't punch across the planet indefinitely.

Kong may not wear many hats, but he can wear a variety of pants and ties that enhance his robust tree of abilities, all of which can be obtained through various collectibles in the game. Shopping for Pauline's clothes also yields special powers, creating unique "builds" of the duo to navigate the game's various environmental puzzles. The sartorial focus alongside Pauline's bouncing tunes can remind you of Nintendo's Splatoon series and its contemporary sense of fashion and style.



All of this pairs nicely with the Z-axis focus of challenges by digging up and down through the dirt, echoing the vertical puzzle designs of 2023's Zelda game Tears of the Kingdom. Bananza even includes tucked-away challenge rooms that resemble the "shrines" of the most recent Zelda games. These minilevels contribute to the perfect pacing of this game. If one layer is packed with puzzles, the next layer will let you loosen up and brawl with some baddies, or maybe solve a slower-paced navigation puzzle. It all ends in the strongest final act in a Nintendo game in a long time, as well as a jam-packed and challenging postgame that will keep you playing long after the credits roll.

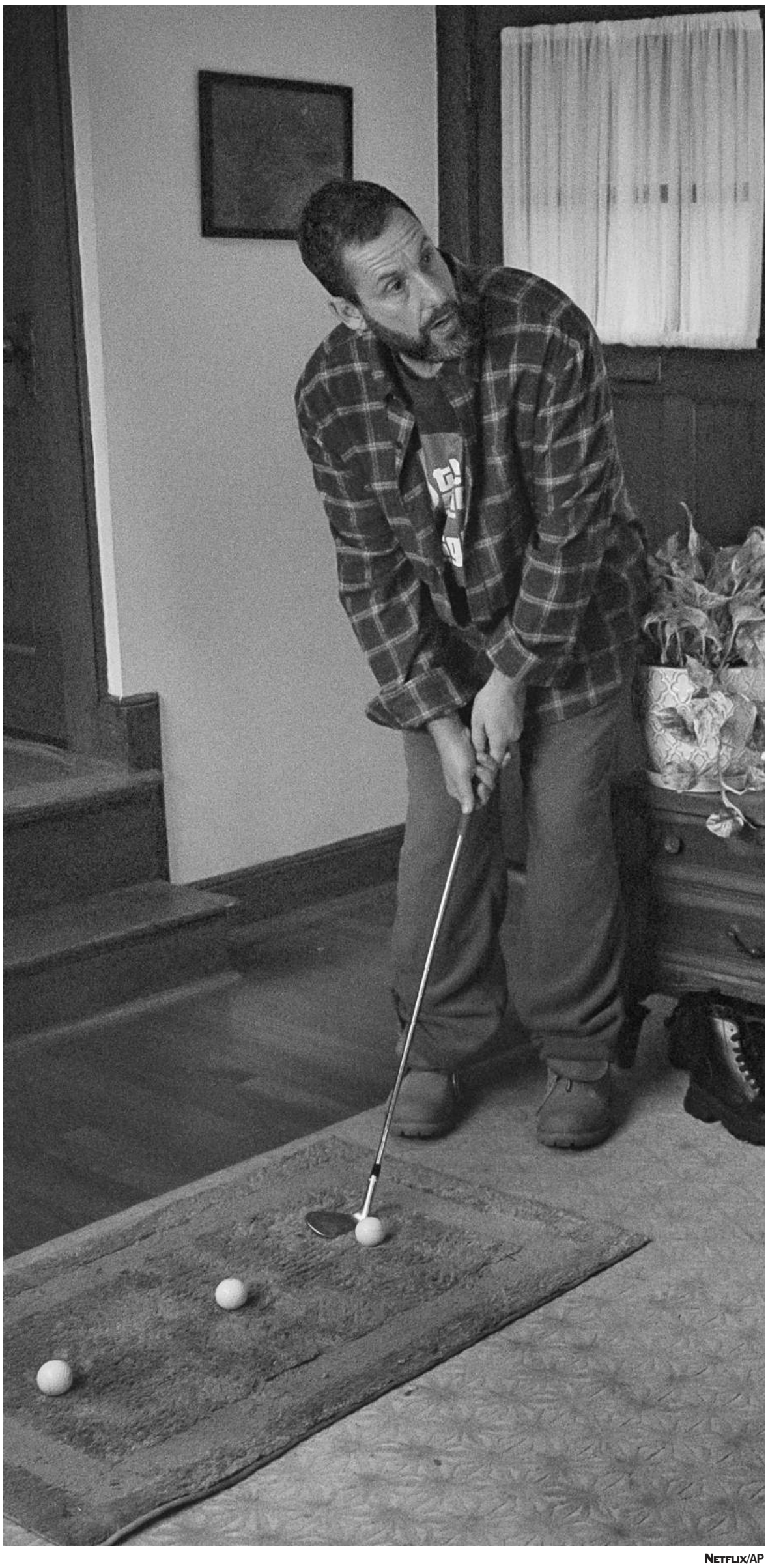
Punching across the various worlds rarely gets old, as each punch hits your ears with a satisfying smack, like slapping skin. An intuitive control system allows for boundless, groundless vertical movement through the worlds. Breaking apart gold and rock may cause the game to stutter for microseconds due to the technical strain on the Switch 2, but quick performance hiccups never get in the way of the action, happening only during spectacular explosions outside of gameplay and while using the game's expansive map feature. The game will "remember" the state of destruction left by each player until leaving the world, forcing it to process a massive and unpredictable amount of data. The Switch 2 admirably handles the strain.

The only disappointment, perhaps, is that it is so adherent to Nintendo's past games. The separate puzzle challenges are unsurprisingly akin to the warp pipe rooms found all the way back in the first Super Mario Bros. game. Bananza does, however, make many of those past accomplishments even more accessible and breezy to play. Mario Odyssey is often criticized as having too many things to collect (a legacy started by the Rare Studio-developed Donkey Kong 64 with more than 3,000 collectibles). Bananza entices you to collect only if you want to maximize Kong's abilities, not all of which are needed to finish the game. And the puzzle "shrines" here offer a variety of actions: Some are quick and easy combat scenarios and others are more precarious platforming challenges.

Donkey Kong Bananza is a perfect crystallization of Nintendo's game design philosophy. With Donkey Kong Bananza as the debut big adventure for the new console and its increased computational power, Nintendo wants this belief to punch through: Technology for the sake of play, not just for visual pleasure, is king.

Platform: Nintendo Switch 2

Online: nintendo.com/us/gaming-systems/switch-2/featured-games/donkey-kong-bananza/



NETFLIX/AP

Adam Sandler, left, in a scene from "Happy Gilmore 2," now on Netflix. In the sequel to the 1996 film, Gilmore is a decorated retired golfer who, after a tragic incident, falls on hard times but is lured back into golf. This time, though, he's motivated to protect the sport.

Happy to be back

Writers Sandler, Herlihy revisit 'Happy Gilmore,' a cult comedy that eschewed a sequel for years

BY JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

The film "Happy Gilmore" was born on the range.

When Adam Sandler was a kid growing up in New Hampshire, his father was an avid golfer. He'd often take his son along to hit balls at the driving range. But Sandler was uninterested in the sport, and usually got antsy.

"Why don't you bring a friend?" his dad told him. So Sandler took his buddy, Kyle McDonough, a star hockey player who'd later turn professional.

"He never played before but he was cracking the ball so far," Sandler recalls. "So when I started becoming a comedian and me and (Tim) Herlihy were writing stuff and stand-up and talking about movies, I started thinking about a guy who could hit it really big and had a hockey player mentality."

"Happy Gilmore," released in 1996, was Sander and Herlihy's second movie, following "Billy Madison." Sandler was just exiting "Saturday Night Live." Herlihy was Sandler's roommate at New York University and became a lawyer before Sandler got him to stick to writing comedy. (You might remember the "Herlihy Boy" sketch.)

"We had just done our first movie, 'Billy Madison,' and we put every idea we ever had for a movie in that movie," Herlihy says. "So when they said we could do another movie, it was like, 'What are we going to do this movie about?'"

"Happy Gilmore," released in February 1996, became one of the most beloved comedies of the '90s and codified the hockey-style swing as a mainstay on golf courses.

"A hop, skip and a hit," as Sandler says.

The movie also made comic heroes of Bob Barker, Christopher McDonald and Carl Weathers, and made lines like "Are you too good for your home?" plausible things to ask golf balls.

Like most cult comedies, "Happy Gilmore" didn't start out an obvious instant classic, though.

"A one-joke 'Caddyshack' for the blitzed and jaded," EW wrote.

"To describe Happy's antics as boorish is putting it mildly," The New York Times wrote.

"'Happy Gilmore' tells the story of a violent sociopath," Roger Ebert wrote. He called it "the latest in the dumber and dumbest sweepstakes."

"Happy Gilmore" was a box-office success, grossing $39 million in the U.S. and Canada. And through worn-out DVDs and regular TV reruns, it became a favorite to generations of golfers and a staple of goofy '90s comedy.

"I can't even tell you how many times I've seen that movie," says the actor-filmmaker Benny Safdie, who co-directed Sandler in "Uncut Gems." "It was on an endless loop. I had the DVD and I just kept watching it. I can close my eyes and see the movie end to end. It's one of my favorite movies."

Now, nearly three decades later, and after years of batting away pleas for a sequel, Sandler has finally put Happy's Bruins jersey back on. "Happy Gilmore 2," now on Netflix, is arguably the most anticipated streaming release of the summer.

Avoiding a comedy sequel curse

Sandler was well aware of the checkered history of comedy sequels. Movies like "Zoolander 2" and "Anchorman 2" have struggled to recapture the free-wheeling spirit of the originals. The movie Sandler counts as his favorite, "Caddyshack" — so much so that he was initially hesitant to make a golf comedy — spawned 1988's woebegone "Caddyshack II."

"If someone brought it up to us, we were like, 'Yeah, no, we're not going to do that,'" Sandler said in a recent interview alongside Herlihy. "There was no moment we went 'Aha.' It just kind of happened. The last couple years, we were talking about Happy and how it might be funny if he was down and out."

In "Happy Gilmore 2," co-written by Sandler and Herlihy, Happy is a decorated retired golfer with four sons and a

SEE SANDLER ON PAGE 17

WEEKEND: MOVIES

One of sports movies' finest villains

Christopher McDonald's Shooter McGavin returns in all his evil, bombastic glory in 'Happy Gilmore 2'

BY TIMOTHY BELLA
The Washington Post

Christopher McDonald does not deliver threats in rhymes. He does not tell fans to go back to their shanties. He would never say he eats "pieces of s— like you for breakfast." (He'd prefer to have a green smoothie with protein powder, spinach and fruit.)

He is not, in other words, Shooter McGavin.

But also, kind of, isn't he?

Almost 30 years after he first played the role, McDonald is picking out his beige polo and getting his 9-iron ready for his return as the rival to Adam Sandler's failed hockey-player-turned-links-champion in "Happy Gilmore 2," now on Netflix. The warmly remembered, thoroughly silly 1996 sports comedy helped lay the groundwork for Sandler's stratospheric career — and made McDonald's face synonymous with his character, the kind of guy who'll let someone know he's a jerk by asking for a Diet Pepsi. (In the words of McGavin: "Choke on that, bay-bay!")

It almost didn't happen. By the time he was 40, McDonald was already considered one of Hollywood's most dependable heels — the strikingly handsome dude with the mug you wanted to repeatedly punch who was churning out scene-stealing performances in films like "Thelma and Louise." But he turned down the part in "Happy Gilmore" not once but twice in 1995. It's not that he didn't believe in the script or Sandler, then a recent Saturday Night Live alum. But after more than three months filming the science fiction thriller "Unforgettable," McDonald was burned out and didn't want to be an absentee dad to wife Lupe and their kids.

"It's exceptionally difficult to do that and to leave your partner with that kind of responsibility," McDonald, now 70, says in a video conversation in early July. "So, I just said no to Adam."

Then, McDonald played a hell of a round of golf and immediately wondered if Sandler and the producers still needed him on the green.

"I was feeling my oats," he says. He agreed to do the film when he and his family got housing near the set in Vancouver for the summer. "They paid me to play golf," he says, "and I'm still pinching myself."

For years, McDonald hoped the industry's opinion of him would shift from supporting actor to leading-man material, saying in 2000, "I've been one away from something huge for the longest time." But in a career in film and television that's included more than 100 projects over nearly a half-century, McDonald has had something huge all along in McGavin, the finger-gun-blasting, sweater-draped, privileged doofus who has earned his place among the greatest sports villains in cinematic history.

"That was my one away, probably, because I can't walk down the street without getting, 'Shooter! Shooter! Shooter!'" McDonald says. Once, a guy recognized McDonald as Shooter as he was relieving himself at a urinal at a Buffalo Bills game. "Shooter is the gift that keeps on giving."

Being a compelling jerk on screen — and McDonald has played more than a few of them — is an art. Just ask Sandler.

"Chris was the real deal — more than us comedians — and he took it serious. We were kind of like, 'Here comes the real actor,'" Sandler says of McDonald's original performance as McGavin. "He took every costume serious, every scene meant a lot to him, and he thought through everything."

The news of the "Happy Gilmore" sequel follows McDonald's standout role as casino CEO Marty Ghilain in the HBO Max comedy "Hacks," which earned him an Emmy nomination in 2022. Together, the projects have brought about a period of appreciation for the performer, from peers and fans of a character actor whom everyone loves to hate.



Netflix

Old rivals Shooter McGavin (Christopher McDonald) and Happy Gilmore (Adam Sandler) come face to face in "Happy Gilmore 2."

"He understands how to elevate something that isn't overdone, but it lets the audience know that it's a comedy and he's playing a despicable villain," says John Slattery, who performed alongside McDonald in the Broadway revival of "The Front Page" in 2016. "He's in on the joke — and he's everything you want in an actor like that."

Julie Bowen agrees, noting how McDonald could have played McGavin as a cartoon character who "could just be nothing but smarm and a big smear of gross."

"But there's something about the way Chris plays it that's right behind the eyes. When he says, 'I eat pieces of s— like you for breakfast,' he doesn't just scowl. There's a drop in his face and this look of, 'Oh no, I didn't mean that,'" says Bowen, who is reprising her role as Virginia Venit in the sequel.

McDonald unleashed his inner blowhard in "Thelma and Louise" as Darryl Dickinson, the patronizing, chauvinistic husband who desperately struggled for any sense of control.

While he maintains he never tried to be a career villain, audiences and studios saw him as the actor who could find humanity in the bad guy.

"You can never judge your character, and you can never say, 'Well, this guy's a major a-hole.' You just say, 'This is how he thinks, and we're going to push that to the limit and see how far we can get,'" McDonald says. "I guess I get typecasted a bit because people love the way I play the jerks and the bad guys."

Sandler: Like the original, the sequel includes many cameos

FROM PAGE 16

daughter (played by Sandler's daughter, Sunny Sandler). But after a tragic incident and falling on hard times, he's lured back into golf. This time, though, Happy is an insider, motivated to protect the sport. Safdie co-stars as the founder of Maxi Golf, a new circuslike tour with long hitters.

"We thought it could be fun to write something like that," Sandler says. "It kind of connected to our lives and this age, and wanting to make a full-on comedy. There's nothing better than dropping a comedy and trying to make people laugh, to us. It feels like why we originally got into this business."

Big, broad comedies have grown almost extinct in the decades since "Happy Gilmore." Returning to that style of comedy was, for Sandler and Herlihy, the best reason to make the sequel. For the 58-year-old friends and regular collaborators, it was a chance to riff like they used to.

"We were outlining the story together and then we were like, 'We should watch the first one again, man,'" Sandler says. "We're going off of our memory of so many things, hanging out with Carl Weathers and Bob Barker and all that stuff. Then we watched it and we were like, 'Oh, yeah.' It was a tone."

"It made a little more sense than 'Billy Madison,'" Herlihy says, "but we weren't afraid to swing, swing, swing."

A supporting cast of PGA winners

Cameos, of course, were a major part of "Happy Gilmore." (The Barker scene was originally written for Ed McMahon.) In the years since, many of the faces of the original have died, including Barker, Weathers, Frances Bay, the hulking Richard Kiel and Joe Flaherty, who played the heckler. Even the golf ball-stealing alligator, Morris, has passed on.

"Happy Gilmore 2," unusually elegiac for a proudly silly comedy, nods to all of them.

For the sequel, many others, like Travis Kelce, Bad Bunny and Margaret Qualley, were lining up to be a part of it. So were pro golfers. Just about all the big names in golf, including several legends, appear.

The day after winning Sunday's British Open, Scottie Scheffler flew to New York for the premiere.

Over the years, Herlihy and Sandler have seen a lot of them try "the Happy Gilmore."

"I feel like when these golfers try to do it, these pros, they're 5% thinking, 'Maybe this will work,'" says Herlihy, laughing.

"I played with Bryson (DeChambeau) like a week ago and when he did it, it was ridiculous," Sandler adds. "He literally blasted it 360 and just kept walking. I was like, 'Did he just smash the Happy Gilmore and not even think about it?'"

It's possible that "the Happy Gilmore" will even outlive the movies. There's a good chance that, even as you read this, somewhere some kid is trying it, hoping to get a laugh and maybe get it on the fairway, too.

"When we were putting it together, I called my dad and asked him if it was legal. He was like, 'I don't see why not,'" Sandler remembers. "Then there are some people who look at it and go: 'It does help you swing hard. It gives you more momentum. You turn your hips faster. Maybe it's a good thing.'"

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW



MARVEL STUDIOS, DISNEY/AP photos

Reed Richards/Mister Fantastic (Pedro Pascal), and Sue Storm/Invisible Woman (Vanessa Kirby) become parents in "The Fantastic Four: First Steps," now in select on-base theaters.

'Fantastic Four' finally fantastic

Family-focused Marvel reboot 'First Steps' is heartfelt, action-packed and just plain fun

BY DOMINIC BAEZ
The Seattle Times

Ironically enough, the Fantastic Four have never had a fantastic movie. The 2005 "Fantastic Four" was ... fine. The 2007 "Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer" wasn't even that. And the less said about the 2015 reboot, mystifyingly styled "FANT4STIC," the better. But that losing streak ends with "The Fantastic Four: First Steps," proof proper that a movie about Marvel's First Family can indeed be fantastic.

The latest reboot, directed by Matt Shakman from a script by Josh Friedman, Eric Pearson, Jeff Kaplan and Ian Springer, drops us onto Earth-828 (as compared to the mainline Earth-616), an alternate, retro-futuristic 1960s planet where our heroes are praised (and marketed) the world over. (So much branding, so much merch.) Much like with the new "Superman," there's no real origin story being told here (one quick, well-done montage aside). Rather, these heroes — Reed Richards/Mister Fantastic (Pedro Pascal); Sue Storm/Invisible Woman (Vanessa Kirby), Reed's wife; Johnny Storm/Human Torch (Joseph Quinn), Sue's brother; and Ben Grimm/The Thing (Ebon Moss-Bachrach), Reed's best friend — are known quantities in this world; anything you don't know, you'll pick up along the way. (For those unaware, the group — all astronauts, brilliant in their own way — gained their powers while exposed to cosmic radiation during a space mission.)

"First Steps," like the latest Marvel Cinematic Universe film "Thuderbolts*," takes a fairly grounded approach to its storytelling. Yes, the heroes have superpowers, there's an underground city beneath the streets of New York and the world is facing total annihilation by Galactus, World-Devourer (Ralph Ineson), but the core of "First Steps" is family and what you'll do to protect yours.



Robot helper H.E.R.B.I.E., left, and The Thing, portrayed by Ebon Moss-Bachrach.



Julia Garner as the Silver Surfer announces that death is coming for all.

That latter part comes into stark relief when Sue becomes pregnant. (The baby-proofing sequence is delightful, thanks in large part to H.E.R.B.I.E., Reed's goofy little helper robot that steals every scene it's in.)

"Nothing is going to change," Reed says. But that's the thing: Everything changes, especially once Galactus' herald, the Silver Surfer (Julia Garner), announces to the world that death is coming for them all.

But while the story is as grounded as any comic book adaptation can be, the action is Marvel-sized — to excellent effect. The combat sequences pack a nice punch, particularly Johnny's fire-based abilities and Sue's force fields. (Ben mostly just breaks things, while Reed more often shows off his genius-level intellect than his ability to stretch his body to ridiculous proportions.)

And there's a charming appeal to the retro-futuristic aesthetic of "First Steps," with old-timey TVs and blackboards living alongside teleportation machines and flying cars. It's a nice contrast to the powerhouse CG effects, with highlights including Johnny absorbing the flames from a raging fire and the Silver Surfer's ability to phase through matter.

But what makes "First Steps" stand out is how much it leans into the human (and generally very dorky) side of the Fantastic Four. Yes, they can save the day, but they cook together, banter, raise each other up. They're a family first and foremost, and you never forget that, even when lines like "The wormhole is bending the beam!" are being shouted.

Some very minor quibbles aside (wonky CGI at times, a couple of sequences that go on just a touch too long), "First Steps" — the beginning of the MCU's Phase Six — is the movie this family of heroes deserves. It's heartfelt, action-packed and just plain fun (and comes with an intriguing midcredit scene you don't want to miss). Fantastic indeed.

"The Fantastic Four: First Steps" is rated PG-13 for action/violence and some language. Running time: 115 minutes. Now in select on-base theaters.

What others are saying

"Fantastic Four: First Steps" feels like a palate cleanser, a refreshing reset on the bloat that has come to define the Marvel machine, especially in the years past "Endgame." It's right-sized, with clearly identifiable characters and stakes, and it doesn't feel like a chore or an assignment. It's a self-contained ride, and while it might not reach the level of fantastic, it feels like the right movie for right now.
— Adam Graham/The Detroit News

After opening in medias res via a TV special celebrating the Fantastic Four's many victories, "First Steps" quickly puts the family in family film, with Vanessa Kirby's Sue Storm contemplating a home pregnancy test — one of the more prosaic technological anachronisms in this alternate early 1960s, which also has flying cars and faster-than-light travel. "Nothing will change," says her spouse, Reed "Mr. Fantastic" Richards, because even supergeniuses can be hella dumb. That's our movie: What to Expect When You're Expecting a Violet, Planet-Devouring God.
— Chris Klimek/The Washington Post

[The movie] takes place in the mid-1960s, albeit a sleekly otherworldly jet age streamlining of that time. Result? Extras in fedoras share crowd scenes with a Manhattan skyline dotted with familiar landmarks like the Chrysler Building, alongside some casually wondrous "Jetsons"-esque skyscrapers and design flourishes. Typically a production designer working in the Marvel movie universe doesn't stand a chance against the digital compositing and effects work and the general wash of green-screenery. "The Fantastic Four" is different. Production designer Kasra Farahani's amusing visual swagger complements the film's dueling interests: a little fun over here, the usual threats of global extinction over there.
— Michael Phillips/Chicago Tribune

While the 1960s style and Space Age Googie architecture sure is neat, this period setting is also necessary for telling a plausible story that combines mass communication and collective action. If the message in "First Steps" is an allegory for what's needed to save our own world — unified action against climate change — what we need is a united media landscape, where every person is watching the same news broadcasts at the same time, where facts are agreed upon and not contested, the message consistent and uniform. Which is to say, it's nothing like the world we inhabit now, which has already been fractured beyond belief.
— Katie Walsh/Tribune News Service

Galactus, a planet-eating tyrant, is no slouch. A mechanical colossus, he sits on an enormous throne in space. Sensing enormous power in Sue's unborn child, he offers to spare Earth for the baby.

What follows casts motherhood — its empowerments and sacrifices — onto a cosmic plane. There's a nifty chase sequence in space that plays out during contractions. The two "Incredibles" movies covered some similar ground, in both retro design and stretchy parent and superhuman baby, with notably more zip and comic verve. That's part of the trouble of not getting a proper movie for so long: Better films have already come along inspired by the '60s comic.
— Jake Coyle/AP

COMMENTARY



Netflix

In the animated film "KPop Demon Hunters," K-pop superstars Rumi, Mira and Zoey use their secret identities as demon hunters to protect their fans from an ever-present supernatural threat. Their biggest enemy yet is an irresistible rival boy band of demons in disguise.

A love letter to fans of TWICE, Teddy Park

Why animated Netflix film 'KPop Demon Hunters,' directed by Maggie Kang, is the pop-culture event of the summer

BY NICOLE PASIA AND ANGELA LIM
The Seattle Times

Every summer, a pop-culture phenomenon seems to take over social media or claim a spot on your next Spotify Wrapped. This summer is no different thanks to "KPop Demon Hunters," an animated Netflix movie that follows Rumi, Mira and Zoey — K-pop superstars by day, fierce demon hunters by night.

K-pop has been making waves around the world for decades, from when Seo Taiji and Boys kick-started the genre in the 1990s to the more recent global success of groups like BTS, BLACKPINK and TWICE. But layering the vibrant world of K-pop stars with a fantasy demon-hunting story? It's a fresh take capturing the attention of stans and nonfans alike.

"KPop Demon Hunters," which premiered on June 20, was the most-watched film on Netflix in 22 countries — including the U.S. and South Korea — just one day after release. More recently, the movie's soundtrack rose to the No. 3 spot on the Billboard 200 chart during the week of July 12. Seattle Times features staff reporter Angela Lim, who was first introduced to K-pop in the late 2000s through viral songs from the likes of 2NE1 and Girls' Generation, and features engagement reporter Nicole Pasia, a seasoned fan of many K-pop groups since early 2020, watched the film and share what makes it "golden" in their books:

First impressions

Pasia: When I first heard about "KPop Demon Hunters," I was skeptical. Was it possible to fit a high-fantasy storyline into the world of K-pop while passing the authenticity litmus test for fans? I was half-expecting a low-budget film with sporadic references to BTS and rabid fan culture. Instead, I was met with vibrant characters, breathtaking animations and a soundtrack fit for a K-pop awards show.

Lim: I also had my reservations, but those quickly dissipated once I discovered the care and precision put into this film. Its world feels intentional and especially familiar to K-pop fans. When I watched the trailer in May, I was pleasantly surprised to see TWICE members Jihyo, Jeongyeon and Chaeyoung tease their version of "Takedown," one of the original songs produced for the film. Several more key names in the Korean music industry — dance crew Jam Republic, producer Teddy Park (BLACKPINK, BigBang, 2NE1), songwriter EJAE (Red Velvet, TWICE, aespa; she also sings as Rumi) — created the choreography and soundtrack. The film's main characters were also based on various K-pop girl groups, boy groups, actors and models.

Pasia: Hearing that director Maggie Kang drew on her Korean roots and die-hard love for K-pop and worked on the project for nine years, one can see the parallels between her journey and those of real K-pop trainees who sometimes spend years preparing for their debut. Colorful animations and detailed action sequences frame the story's lore: Demon-hunting warriors called Hunters used their voices to seal demons away behind a magical barrier and prevent them from feeding human souls to their leader, Gwi-Ma. Generations of Hunters perform as K-pop groups to reinforce the barrier, called the Honmoon, leading up to present-day Hunters, known to the world as the global superstar group Huntr/x (pronounced "Huntrix"). Together, the trio faces its biggest threat yet — the Saja Boys, an infectious K-pop boy group that are demons in disguise.

Lim: And the Saja Boys' name is fitting. Nods to Korean folk tales and culture were woven into the film. "Saja" means "lion," but it can also refer to the "jeoseung saja," which closely resembles the grim reaper. The five members also wear a black hanbok — a traditional garment — and gat, or a wide-brimmed hat widely worn by men during the Joseon period.

The must-hear soundtrack

Lim: The soundtrack exudes elements of mainstream K-pop music: a combination of English and Korean lines and diverse genres from bubblegum pop to ballads, EDM and trap. Singing is Huntr/x's superpower and how the Saja Boys steal their fans. The seven original songs also teeter between catchy, cheesy musings ("Soda Pop") and introspective moments of acceptance ("What It Sounds Like").

Pasia: It's hard to believe they fit in such a diverse soundtrack in just 95 minutes. Each song perfectly anchored the plot, from the powerful girl-punk anthem "How It's Done" serving as an epic introduction to the Hunters' double lives, to the emotional ballad "Free" reflecting Rumi and Jinu's (the demon leader of the Saja Boys) most vulnerable moments as they battle with feelings of guilt and fear.

Lim: The film's most-streamed track, "Golden," topped Spotify's Daily Top Songs Global Chart on July 10 ("Your Idol" by the Saja Boys trailed at No. 2 on the U.S. chart. Life indeed imitates art). The empowering pop anthem with piercing high notes succinctly narrates the Huntr/x members' journeys. In three minutes, viewers can glean that Mira felt like the black sheep or "problem child" of her family; that Zoey struggled to "play both sides" and feel comfortable in her Korean American identity; and that Rumi, a half-demon, just wants to stop hiding and live like she's "born to be." It's their victory lap toward creating the "Golden Honmoon," envisioning a world shielded from demons.

A peek into the K-pop world

Pasia: For me, the authentic worldbuilding helped me focus on the film's storyline: a heartwarming account about friendship and self-acceptance, suffused with plenty of humor. When Jinu discovers Rumi's secret identity, we all enjoyed their banter while secretly rooting for romantic sparks to fly. Their relationship is perfectly punctuated with inside references to K-pop culture: Love ballad "Love, Maybe" plays during Rumi and Jinu's first meeting in a perfect re-creation of the scene from popular K-drama "Business Proposal" (in which Jinu's voice actor, Ahn Hyo-seop, plays the male lead).

Lim: I loved "Business Proposal" and have been waiting for another drama from Ahn — but his voice acting debut will suffice for now (he recently posted a cover of "Free" on Instagram, reminding fans of his old K-pop trainee days). I appreciate that "KPop Demon Hunters" gives viewers a peek into idols' busy day-to-day promotion schedules — all while humanizing its artists. Huntr/x members, for example, write their own lyrics, have creative control and aren't afraid to show emotion through exaggerated, comical facial expressions.

A global hit

Pasia: Fan theories and speculations about a sequel have stormed social media. At the end of the day, "KPop Demon Hunters" lives up to the hype, but goes beyond that — it's a love letter to fans and a message to accept and celebrate our true selves, as imperfect as they may be.

Lim: Non-K-pop fans shouldn't worry about learning vocabulary or even listening to K-pop before watching "KPop Demon Hunters." The film is dubbed in more than 30 languages, with the songs rewritten, sung and localized. Like the K-pop sound that has gone global with groups selling out arenas and stadiums, so has this film. "KPop Demon Hunters" would thrive as a worldwide theatrical release.

Nontoxic ways to clean your home

DIY products can get the job done as well as commercial ones, sans the health risks

By Michael J. Coren
The Washington Post



Michael J. Coren/The Washington Post

Commercial household cleaners often contain potent chemicals, some of which can cause health issues even at infinitesimal doses.

Without much thought, Americans have built up potent arsenals in their homes worthy of a chemical weapons treaty.

I'm talking, of course, about your cleaning cabinet.

When I investigated mine recently, I found mixtures containing ethoxylated alcohols and quaternary ammonium compounds, also known as "quats."

While regulators consider these products safe, some ingredients are also irritants, or even toxic, at high doses. Worse, quats and other common ingredients such as fragrances (often undisclosed trade secrets) are getting a second look as potentially harmful for the environment and us.

It seemed like too much firepower for wiping down my kitchen countertop. So I set myself a challenge: Find DIY cleaning formulas that use nothing but common, safe ingredients in my pantry. I would not compromise on effectiveness nor pay luxury prices — preferably, I'd pay much less. And, ideally, they should smell nice.

The internet is full of misleading claims and dubious advice about cleaning products. But I brushed up on my organic chemistry classes, sought counsel from researchers and ran grueling tests on mysterious messes in my toddler-ravaged home.

I was able to replace almost all my cleaning chemicals with a couple of homemade, nontoxic solutions. A few ingredients proved key: vinegar, castile soap, baking soda — with a little extra scrubbing among them. While I've kept commercial products in reserve for the nastiest jobs, my home cleaning routine is now mostly a DIY affair.

Here's how you can clean up your home while protecting your health and the environment:

Reassessing the chemicals in our cabinets

Cleaning once meant soap and a wet rag. But millions of Americans now blast away any speck of dirt and sterilize surfaces until they resemble the lifeless surface of the moon.

That's just fine with the $50 billion U.S. household cleaning products industry, which didn't grow rich selling vinegar and baking soda. The industry has spent decades developing powerful, proprietary chemical combinations, said Darren Williams, a chemist leading the Cleaning Research Group at Sam Houston State University. Hence the exotic ingredients in its bottles.

That isn't inherently dangerous.

"Most of these [cleaning products] are formulated to be used in household situations on a periodic basis," Williams said. "Incidental contact is not going to be a problem."

But enough exceptions exist to give one pause. Endocrine disruptors such as phthalates — chemicals that mimic hormones in our body by interfering with everything from reproduction to brain development, even at infinitesimal doses — are still found in many cleaning products. Microplastics, added to cleaners for their abrasive properties, have invaded the environment and our internal organs.

Even ostensibly safe cleaning chemicals have been found to be not so safe after all: 2-butoxyethanol, nonylphenol ethoxylate and chlorinated phenols have been yanked from common cleaners after their carcinogenic, endocrine-disrupting or environmental risks came to light. The overuse of antibacterial chemicals may also be promoting bacteria resistant to the best drugs we have against them.

Then there's indoor air. The average American spends 90% of their time indoors — breathing the residue of our cleaning products.

"There is a whole lot more of most chemical compounds indoors than there are outdoors," said Delphine Farmer, an atmospheric chemist at Colorado State University, who led one of the most comprehensive set of experiments of chemical exposures in homes. "There are questions lingering about what the health effects are."

Theoretically, regulators sort this out before products hit the market, a philosophy known as the precautionary principle. In the European Union, for example, regulators follow a "no data, no market" rule. The United States takes a more laissez-faire approach.

Products must still demonstrate a reasonable expectation of safety, while offering a balance between risk and performance.

"The American system certainly allows for that nuance, and it allows for personal decision," Farmer said. "That's a good thing. But that only works if we give people the information that they need to have to make a good decision ... and I don't think we do."

The problem, she said, is that we lack data on the nearly endless number of chemical reactions as cleaning products in our home interact with surfaces, off-gassing building materials, air pollution and each other.

"That's a very new topic," she said. "I don't know that we have enough information to really give a good holistic idea of what the trade-offs are."

So if U.S. regulators weren't willing to practice the precautionary principle, I could do so at home.

The DIY chemistry of clean

Virtually all cleaning requires just a few chemical reactions.

First, you need a surfactant. Any soap will form a sticky bridge between water and oil. By suspending oil and grease in water, it allows dirt to be easily lifted from surfaces with a damp rag.

Then it helps to have a solvent. Think how water dissolves sugar in simple syrup. Alcohol or aromatic terpenes — such as d-limonene, derived from citrus peels — do the same for oils, food bits and even the lipid membranes of bacteria and viruses. That makes messes easier to wipe away.

Vinegar, while technically more of an acid than a solvent, helps clear away mineral, inorganic crud. (Note to the wise: Don't use on natural stone or you'll end up with etching, and never, ever mix with bleach: You will create chlorine gas, which can burn your lungs.)

Finally, for tough jobs, an abrasive such as baking soda comes in handy. To impart a citrus smell, a drop or two of essential oils or just plain lemon juice does the job.

My new cleaning regimen

When I surveyed my home, 90% of the work came down to two jobs: cleaning surfaces such as counters and floors, and cleaning glass on windows and mirrors.

For the first, Alicia McCarthy, a research scientist with the Toxics Use Reduction Institute (TURI; turi.org) at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell, cooked up an elegant recipe for a multi-surface cleaner: 2 cups water, 2 tablespoons castile soap and ½ teaspoon baking soda. A couple of drops of citrus oil are optional.

TURI says the recipe performs as well as Formula 409 All Purpose Cleaner, at a fraction of the price, without quats and other potential nasties. As advertised, it worked well on my countertops and the inside of my microwave.

Next, I needed to wipe toddler nose smudges off my windows. Never fond of Windex, I turned to a second TURI-vetted formula: a simple mix of 1 cup vinegar and 1 cup water. (You can add rubbing alcohol to speed evaporation and reduce streaks.) I ended up with spotless glass panes — at least until the kids got home again.

I had to invest a bit more elbow grease and time. Allowing homemade recipes to sit on surfaces a little longer compensated for the less powerful solvents. But I came away convinced that DIY recipes could handle almost all my cleaning needs.

TURI has compiled a longer list of household solutions. Next for me to try: bathroom and toilet bowl cleaner, dishwasher rinse aids, floor polish and more.

Generally speaking, McCarthy said, avoid mixing vinegar and baking soda, as the chemical reaction cancels out their cleaning power. And stick to well-vetted recipes — mixing two innocuous chemicals can result in dangerous compounds. If using essential oils, a few drops are more than enough.

For off-the-shelf solutions, many "natural" or "green" products are as effective as conventional ones, McCarthy said. While those eco-terms aren't regulated, you can look up products on the Environmental Protection Agency's Safer Choice and certified disinfectants lists. You can also check third-party certifications such as Green Seal and UL Ecologo.

Additional options include appliances like hand-held steam cleaners (starting around $40) and electrolyzed water, a disinfectant solution created by sending an electrical current through diluted salt water.

I've now replaced more than a dozen cleaning products with just two DIY spray bottles. While I'm not throwing out all the conventional products just yet, I may go years before using them again.

For everyday cleaning, I'll breathe a little easier with soap, water, vinegar and a little scrubbing.

Go left, young man: Driving in UK, Ireland

Renting a car in Britain and Ireland can be a smart move — especially in Ireland, which lacks an extensive rail network. While Great Britain's trains go to most places of tourist interest — and just about everything's reachable by bus in both countries — the bucolic landscape you'll see here is most easily experienced by car. Behind the wheel you're totally free, going where you want, when you want.

Driving in the British Isles is wonderful — once you remember to stay on the left and after you've mastered the roundabouts. But be warned: Every year I get some emails from traveling readers advising me that, for them, trying to drive in Great Britain and Ireland was a nerve-wracking and regrettable mistake.

Of course, in Britain and Ireland you'll be driving on the left-hand side of the road. Why that side? Originally, it was in order for you to drive defensively ... with your "sword hand" on the inside to protect you against unknown oncoming horsemen.

Many Yankee drivers find the hardest part isn't driving on the left, but steering from the right. Your instinct is to put yourself on the left side of your lane, which means you may spend your first day or two constantly drifting off the road to the left. It can help to remember that the driver always stays close to the center line.



Rick Steves

Not only will you be driving on the left, but you'll be using roundabouts, where traffic continually flows in a circle around a center island. These work well if you follow the golden rule: Traffic in roundabouts always has the right-of-way, while entering vehicles yield.

For some drivers, roundabouts are high-pressure traffic circles that require a snap decision about something you don't completely understand: your exit. To replace the stress with giggles, make it standard operating procedure to take a 360-degree, case-out-your-options exploratory circuit. Discuss the exits with your navigator, go around again if necessary, and then confidently wing off on the exit of your choice.

Whenever possible, avoid driving in cities. London even assesses a congestion charge — about $20 per day — to drive in the city center. It's best and less stressful to begin your driving experience away from big cities, so try renting your car in a smaller town. A pleasant scenario for a Britain itinerary would be to start your trip in a small town such as Bath, rent a car when leaving Bath, explore Britain at your leisure by car, then drop off the car in York, and take the train into London, where you can rely on the excellent public transportation system.



PAT O'CONNOR/Rick Steves' Europe

Signs give non-British/Irish drivers coming off the ferry a key reminder.

Outside of the big cities and the motorways (freeways), British and Irish roads tend to be narrow. Adjust your perceptions of personal vehicular space. It's not "my side of the road" or "your side of the road." It's just "the road" — and it's shared as a cooperative adventure. In towns, you may have to cross over the center line just to get past parked cars. Sometimes both directions of traffic can pass parked cars simultaneously, but frequently you'll have to take turns — follow the locals' lead and drive defensively. On rural roads, locals are usually courteous, pulling over against a hedgerow and blinking their headlights for you to pass while they wait. Return the favor when you're closer to a wide spot in the road.

Do some homework before getting behind the wheel. Consider supplementing online/GPS maps with a detailed Ordnance Survey road atlas.

In Ireland, the speed limit is in kilometers per hour, road signs are usually bilingual (but not always — géill slí means "yield") and roads are more likely to be bumpy and poorly maintained.

Even if you don't drive, as a pedestrian you'll have to remember that traffic comes from the opposite direction — so look both ways before crossing any street.

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

Vibrant cities keep it fresh for residents with new opportunities

On July 5 of this year, Paris opened recreational facilities sure to make a visit during the season of sweltering summer heat a much more attractive proposition. The project to make the Seine swimmable, begun in earnest back in 2015 with the goal of having the waters clean for the staging of the 2024 Summer Olympics, became a reality with the official opening of three sites that will remain open to the public through Aug. 31. The water quality is monitored to ensure that a dip in the river, a practice barred for more than a century, poses little health risk. Online: tinyurl.com/3tpar7mc



Karen Bradbury

This is the wonder of visiting one of Europe's great capital cities: they're ever changing and constantly offering new opportunities to residents and tourists alike. Here's a look at just a few newly or soon-to-open leisure-time opportunities bound to make a return to a city known and loved feel as fresh and exciting as ever:

London: Many museums have vast holdings, yet woefully tight exhibition space. Seeking to tackle this problem is the V&A East Storehouse, opened at East Bank, a new cultural quarter in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, in May. The facility housing the massive collection of Victoria and Albert Museum in London aims to make visitors feel as if they've been granted a backstage pass to view the approximately 1.25 million objects the institution possesses. In addition to the Collections Hall filled with treasures and curiosities from around the world are six large-scale objects including a gilded wooden ceiling from a 15th-century palace in Spain and a gigantic stage cloth featuring an image from one of Picasso's paintings. The facility's "Order an Object" service allows interested parties to search through the V&A's online collection and book an appointment for a personal viewing of up to five objects. The V&A East Storehouse is open daily and admission is free. Online: vam.ac.uk/east



THOMAS PADILLA/AP

Swimmers cool off July 5 in the Seine river in Paris at the Bras Marie safe bathing site.

Prague: The public's appreciation of his music made Prague a favorite city of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; a museum that opened in December 2024 explores the musical genius' connection with its people and places. The Mozart Interactive Museum is described as an interactive exhibition area using cutting-edge technology to immerse visitors in the composer's life, times and music. Experiences awaiting visitors include taking a harpsichord lesson from Mozart's father or conducting the premiere of the Don Giovanni opera in Prague. The museum located at Karmelitská 267/33, Praha 1 is open daily; adult admission costs 390 Czech Koruna (about $18.34). Online: mozartmuseum.cz/en/home

Berlin: In May of this year, sampling the scrumptiousness of Berlin's street food scene got that much easier with the launching of the KERB Food Hall in Potsdamer Platz. An idea born in London more than a decade ago is being applied to a centrally-located food hall supporting local talent and independent traders. A corner of what was once the IMAX cinema in the Sony Centre is now a place for sampling the fare of some dozen vendors, with tastes inspired by Japan, Korea, Mexico and beyond in the mix. Also debuting within this space is Pick & Cheese, a conveyor belt from which guests can choose from more than 20 cheeses made in small dairies in Germany and accompaniments ranging from chutneys to biscuits to sauerkraut. Online: kerbberlin.de

Lisbon: Mournful and expressive, Fado is a musical genre closely intertwined with Portuguese culture and identity. With the opening of Ah Amália – Living Experience, one of Fado's most iconic singers now has a museum highlighting her life and times. Amália Rodrigues, born to humble roots on July 23, 1920, rose to fame early and became a leading figure and global ambassador for the genre. The first immersive museum dedicated to a Portuguese personality features high-tech and interactive content spread across eight rooms; the highlight of a visit is the chance to watch Amália perform as a life-size hologram. The museum at 8 Marvila-Lisbon is open daily; adult admission costs 20 euros. Online: ah-amalia.pt/en

Budapest: Long before the internet revolutionized trip planning, frequent travelers landing in a new town would reach for a hard copy of Time Out, a magazine featuring descriptions and reviews of landmarks, bars, restaurants and the cultural scene. What began in London in 1968 is now a brand operating in 333 cities in 59 countries, and also has evolved as Time Out Markets, aimed at bringing culinary and cultural experiences together under one roof. In addition to Europe's Time Out Markets found in Lisbon and Porto, Portugal, and Barcelona, Budapest is set to get its own version this fall. Occupying space in what was once a department store, the venue at Corvin Palace on Blaha Lujza Square will offer 12 kitchens, four bars, event space and seating for some 800 guests. Online: timeout.com/time-out-market-budapest

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Kandel's 'fun forest' favors the bold

Adventure park gives kids and adults a chance to climb beyond their comfort zones

By Lara Korte
Associated Press

For those looking to take their summer fun to new heights, the Fun Forest Adventure Park in Kandel, Germany, offers a mix of risk-taking and relaxation.

The park, located just outside Karlsruhe and about an hour's drive from Kaiserslautern, has 17 acres of climbing, rope courses and zip-lining with varying degrees of difficulty.

I have a rudimentary knowledge of climbing basics. Aside from all the trees I climbed as a child, I've dabbled a bit in rock climbing as an adult and I'm familiar with the ways of ropes and carabiners. I figured, how hard could a "fun forest" be?

But as I stood there in the briefing room, fully geared up in harnesses and a helmet and trying to make sense of an instructional video, I feared I might be in over my head.

I reserved three hours of climbing time online in advance. I was reassured by Google reviews that said the staff spoke English. When I arrived, however, the teenage front desk worker, who helped me into my harness, told me the briefing would be in German.

The 10-minute video included the basics of climbing and what I can only assume were jokes, based on the light chuckles of the other climbers. The staff then led us out to a small training course, where we put our learned skills to the test.

Here is where, I will say, the English-speaking staff did swoop in to save the day. They politely helped me figure out the system of carabiners and pulleys hanging from my harness, and were patient as I fumbled through my first attempts at latching onto the safety wires affixed to the trees.

I found, after a few minutes, that the system was actually simple. The carabiners have a locking mechanism that ensures climbers are attached to some kind of safety wire as they move through the courses.

The park offers 16 courses of varying difficulties. The first levels, open to kids as young as 3, are colorful, low-to-the-ground obstacle courses that allow children to move through with assistance. They resemble a typical playground.

The higher levels, for 14 and above, are suspended about 20 feet off the ground.

For most courses, I started at the bottom of a tree. After clipping into the safety wire, I climbed a ladder and traveled between platforms by using ropes, bridges and swings.

One course might require you to gingerly balance on a suspended log, while another involved precarious stepping between wooden blocks.

There was another with a kind of skateboard rigged with pulleys and rope where climbers could glide between trees, like some kind of Tony Hawk/Tarzan hybrid. All of the courses ended with a zip line to the ground.



PHOTOS BY LARA KORTE/Stars and Stripes

Climbers traverse a shaky rope bridge and scale a ladder at the Fun Forest in Kandel. The adventure park offers 16 climbing routes of varying difficulty, featuring bridges, zip lines and rope swings.



Climbers prepare to embark on a course at the Fun Forest adventure park on July 5.

I went on a Saturday and found little waiting on the courses. There were a lot of families, but I did spot several groups of adults on the advanced courses.

Some courses took 10 minutes while others took up to an hour, based on the signs marking each start. For a few more euros, you can sign up for the profipaket (professional packet), which buys you four hours in the park and access to the most advanced courses. Those are suspended at roughly 40-50 feet up in the treetops. I was satisfied with my climbing experience after two hours. The thick forest had shielded me from the bright July sun, keeping me pleasantly cool. I did worry about the famous German ticks, but the spray I applied kept them away.

Fun Forest Adventure Park Kandel

Address: Badallee, 76870 Kandel, Germany
Cost: 27 euros for adults, 24 euros for 14 years and older, 21 euros for ages 7-13 and 11 euros for ages 3-7.
Hours: Daily during the summer, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.
Information: Online: kandel.funforest.de

Lara Korte



Families can relax on the sprawling deck in the adventure park, which also has a small café offering food, coffee and beer.

For height-averse folks or parents who prefer to observe, there's a sprawling deck where patrons can sit and enjoy a cider or currywurst.

I capped off my day with some french fries and a "cola lite" before heading home.

@lara_korte
korte.lara@stripes.com

Come for pinsa, stay for pasta

The noodle dishes, not pizza, are standouts at Al Platano eatery in Kirchheimbolanden

BY MATT WAGNER
Stars and Stripes

I did a double take at the sight of one of the menu items at Al Platano, an eatery across from the former train station in Kirchheimbolanden, Germany. Pinsa? Do you mean pizza?

No, it was indeed pinsa, which originated in Rome and differs from pizza mainly in the dough.

The pinsa uses wheat, rice and soy flour. The dough is leavened for up to 72 hours, making it lighter and more digestible.

While some version of flatbread has existed for centuries, pinsa was coined in 2001 by Italian entrepreneur Corrado Di Marco. It derives its name from the Latin word "pinsere," meaning "to press" or "to crush."

As someone whose favorite part of a pizza is the crust, I didn't need the menu's closing invitation to try one.

On a Friday evening in early July, I met a colleague at Al Platano, about 25 miles from Kaiserslautern. We sat outside under the plane trees for which the restaurant is named rather than in the dining room, which had ample space.

Al Platano has mostly Italian fare as well as a few German favorites such as schnitzel. Yet we came laser-focused on the pinsas as appetizers and a pair of pasta dishes for the main course.

My colleague selected the Pinsa Papa, topped with mozzarella and Gorgonzola cheese, pepperoni and olives. I went with the Pinsa Speciale, topped with mozzarella, fresh mushrooms, salami, pepperoni and ham.

When the pies were placed in front of us, my first thought was that they were just oval-shaped pizzas.

But the first bite let me know the menu's description was right. The airy dough avoided becoming soggy from the toppings, especially with mine.

The meats also were a delight. My colleague said the pepperoni had some kick to it, while I inhaled the mixture of pepperoni, salami and ham.

Unfortunately, the pinsas had two negatives, the first of which was flavorless vegetable toppings. My colleague and I had each other taste the olives and mushrooms to make sure we weren't imagining it.

AFTER HOURS GERMANY

Al Platano

Address: Bahnhofstrasse 6, Kirchheimbolanden, Germany
Hours: Sunday through Tuesday and Thursday through Friday, 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 5:30-10 p.m.; Saturday, 5:30-10 p.m.
Prices: Appetizers range from 7 to 13.90 euros; pinsas start at 7.50 euros and go up to 17.50 euros; main dishes range from 10.50 euros to 27.50 euros.
Information: +49 63527195646, Online: al-platano.de

Matt Wagner

The other issue probably is a deal-breaker for most folks: the sauce. It was as though the tomato base — be it paste, sauce or fresh tomatoes — had been placed on the dough without any herbs or spices. I found it rather bland.

With the mixed bag of the pinsas behind us, we tackled the main noodle dishes. These meals left little doubt about their quality right from the get-go.

My colleague ordered the pappardelle al pepe, or noodles with steak strips in a cognac-pepper cream sauce. Her reaction of pure satisfaction said everything, and she immediately gave me some to try.

Within seconds, I understood why. The steak was juicy and well-seasoned and paired perfectly with the pasta and the sauce. I could tell the restaurant makes its own noodles, which were chewy and held the sauce well.

I was slightly jealous of her choice until I started on my tortelli, a pasta stuffed with ricotta and spinach in a Gorgonzola cream sauce with pear slices and walnuts.

The combination of the ingredients was divine. The restaurant didn't skimp on the tortelli stuffing, and the sauce was extremely rich and creamy. Along with some nutty flavor, the walnuts' crunchy texture was a nice addition to the dish.

And surprisingly, the sweetness of the pear blended well with everything.

Overall, Al Platano felt like a neighborhood hangout with a relaxing atmosphere. By the end of the evening, the cook and the staff came out to talk to customers, some of whom seemed like regulars. It made you feel like you were at home.

While the pinsas brought us there, the noodle dishes are the reason to return. With a few tweaks to the pinsa sauce, Al Platano could give pizza places a run for their money.

wagner.mathew@stripes.com
@MWagsStripes



PHOTOS BY MATT WAGNER/Stars and Stripes

Al Platano's Pinsa Speciale, foreground, features tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese, pepperoni, salami, ham and mushrooms. The Pinsa Papa has mozzarella and Gorgonzola cheeses, pepperoni and black olives.



Al Platano is an Italian German restaurant in Kirchheimbolanden, Germany. It is across from the city's former train station.



This half of the indoor dining space at Al Platano can hold more than 20 people. While reservations are suggested, walk-ins are accepted.



The pappardelle al pepe at Al Platano consists of homemade noodles, juicy, well-seasoned steak strips and a cognac-pepper sauce.



Al Platano offers tortelli filled with ricotta and spinach and covered in an extremely rich Gorgonzola cream sauce. The dish also comes with walnuts and pear slices.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY JEREMY STILLWAGNER/Stars and Stripes

Yoh performs a takedown on Sho during a New Japan Pro Wresting match at Korakuen Hall in Tokyo on July 6. Wrestlers lean into exaggerated personas to whip up the crowd.

A chokehold on nationwide fame

New Japan Pro Wrestling thrills fans with year-round events

BY JEREMY STILLWAGNER
Stars and Stripes

Despite its name, New Japan Pro Wrestling is the country's longest-running and largest professional wrestling franchise, offering fans year-round opportunities to catch live events.

The franchise hosts matches across Japan, with Tokyo-area venues ranging from 2,000-seat Korakuen Hall to the Tokyo Dome, which can accommodate more than 50,000 spectators. The scale of the presentation tends to match the venue's size, with larger spaces often featuring more elaborate productions.

New Japan Pro Wrestling maintains an active touring schedule, with upcoming events listed on its website, www.njpw1972.com, up to six months in advance. Ticketing information is typically posted two to three months before each event.

At an early July event at Korakuen Hall, fans — some wearing masks and shirts featuring their favorite wrestlers — cheered loudly throughout the evening. Devoted spectators are known for their passionate support, especially when popular fighters like Tiger Mask and Desperado make surprise appearances.

The matches feature dynamic and theatrical action, including wrestlers using referees as human shields, throwing opponents over the ropes and out of the ring, and introducing unauthorized weapons into the fray.

In some cases, a wrestler may intervene in a match to assist a teammate, escalating tensions and intensifying the crowd's reaction.

Wrestlers lean heavily into their personas, emphasizing everything from dramatic entrances to exaggerated fighting styles. Fans respond with enthusiastic cheers for heroes and boos for heels, feeding the high-energy atmosphere.

Ticket prices typically range from 5,500 yen (about $37) to 25,000 yen, depending on seating and event scale. The full event schedule and ticketing information can be found on the New Japan Pro Wrestling website.

stillwagner.jeremy@stripes.com
@JeremyS_Stripes



Hiroshi Tanahahsi engages with the crowd as Tiger Mask prepares for the match July 6.



Tiger Mask greets his fans July 6.

On the QT

Directions: Matches take place at venues across Japan, including the Korakuen Hall and Tokyo Dome, Hiroshima Sun Plaza Hall and Kitagas Arena Sapporo 46.
Times: Events are scheduled year-round. Visit www.njpw1972.com for an up-to-date schedule.
Costs: Tickets for most events range from 5,500 yen to 25,000 yen.
Food: Snacks and refreshments are typically available at all venues.
Information: www.njpw1972.com

Jeremy Stillwagner

Sweet arrival

Randy's Donuts brings iconic California treat to fashionable Tokyo neighborhood

BY JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

Randy's Donuts, a Los Angeles-based chain more popular in some quarters than Krispy Kreme, has at last landed in Tokyo.

Randy's opened in May in the trendy Daikanyama section of Shibuya with a wide selection of delicious treats for sweet-toothed individuals. My family and I braved the long afternoon line for about 30 minutes on a sunny day.

Indoor and outdoor seating is available for 40, but we opted for takeout to avoid the crush. Kiosks provide numbered tickets for efficient service.

American flair spreads across the dining area's walls, including photos of celebrity patrons. One such image depicts Robert Downey Jr. in an Iron Man suit sitting inside a Randy's location.

Four menu categories and more than 40 types of doughnuts are available. Most selections exceed the size of a doughnut at many shops in Japan. The Texas glazed yeast, for example, measures 6 inches wide and appears on the premium menu at 550 yen, or about $3.80.

The cinnamon roll and apple fritter are a couple of my favorites. They compare in size to the Texas glazed and are baked soft and chewy.

From the classic menu come glazed and cake varieties, some with sprinkles, for 360 yen. The deluxe menu offers flavored cake and yeast doughnuts, such as a cinnamon and sugar twist, for 480 yen.

Other selections available on the fancy menu include a Japanese-influenced yeast doughnut with matcha icing, a new strawberry version and a maple long john with custard cream.

Randy's Rounds is a mixed set of four doughnuts in a large plastic cup for 620 yen.

Beverages include coffee, several flavors of tea, boba or tapioca pearl teas, milkshakes, smoothies, sodas and juices, starting at 450 yen.

I splurged and left with more than two dozen treats, including an acai berry smoothie, a piña colada lemonade and a strawberry milkshake. Randy's T-shirts, hats, totes and other souvenirs are also available.

The sugar indulgence led to a full week of required fitness, but it was well worth it.

king.juan@stripes.com
@juanking_17

AFTER HOURS JAPAN

Randy's Donuts

Location: Tokyo-to, Shibuya-ku, Daikanyama Log Road Daikanyama building L2.
Hours: Open daily, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Prices: Expect to pay between 360 yen and 550 yen, including tax, for a single doughnut. A dozen will cost 5,000 yen.
Dress: Casual
Directions: About a four-minute walk from Daikanyama Station on the Toyoko Line.
Information: Online: randysdonuts.jp; Credit cards accepted. Numbered tickets may be distributed at alternate times depending on the amount of business.

Juan King



PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

Randy's Donuts opened in May 2025 in Tokyo with a wide selection of delicious treats.



The s'mores yeast doughnut is one of Randy's fancier options.



A customer checks out options June 28 at Randy's Donuts in Tokyo. Four menu categories and more than 40 varieties are available.

Summer berry bars with or without lemon glaze are easier than pie

BY GRETCHEN MCKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Summer heat often makes baking less than desirable, so if you're going to heat up the kitchen to make dessert, you gotta make it worth every bead of sweat that collects on your forehead.

These berry crumb bars are worth it and then some. Built on a shortbread-like crust and topped with gooey seasonal fruit, they offer all the great taste of a summer pie, but are so much easier to make since you don't have to bother with mixing and rolling out dough.

While a food processor or KitchenAid mixer will certainly speed things along, all you really need to cut in the butter that helps create the crumbly bottom layer is a fork or pastry cutter and some good old-fashioned elbow grease.

I used a mix of blueberries and strawberries because the two fruits have such complementary flavors and are always easy to find, often on sale. Also, two contrasting colors are always more visually appealing in a dessert than one.

Be sure to allow the bars to cool completely on a wire rack before slicing into squares or they will crumble. The original recipe finished the bars with a simple lemon glaze, but I served them without.

Lemon Strawberry Crumb Bars

Ingredients
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup unsalted butter, very cold and cubed
1 large egg
1 large egg yolk
1 cup packed light or dark brown sugar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 cups chopped strawberries
2 cups blueberries
⅓ cup granulated sugar
1½ tablespoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon lemon zest
For optional glaze
1 cup confectioners' sugar, sifted
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (about 1 lemon)

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line the bottom and sides of a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on the sides to lift the finished bars out. Set aside.

Make the crumble mixture for the crust and topping: Whisk flour, baking powder and salt together in a large bowl.

Add cubed butter and using a pastry cutter or two forks, cut in the butter until all the flour is coated and resembles pea-sized crumbles. (I whisked the ingredients together in a food processor.)

Whisk egg, egg yolk, brown sugar and vanilla together in a small bowl. Pour over the flour/butter mixture and gently mix together until the mixture resembles moist, crumbly sand.

You will have about 6 cups of the crust/crumble mixture. Set 2 cups aside.

Pour the remaining crumble mixture into the prepared pan and flatten down with your hands or a flat spatula to form an even crust. It will be a little crumbly — that's OK. Set aside.

Make filling: In large bowl, mix strawberries, blueberries, granulated sugar, cornstarch and lemon zest together. Spoon evenly over crust.

Crumble the remaining butter/flour mixture on top and gently press down so it's snug on the strawberry layer.

Bake for 45-50 minutes or until the top is lightly browned and the strawberry filling is bubbling on the sides. (My bars took about 55 minutes.)

Remove from the oven and place the pan on a wire rack. Allow to cool.

If adding a glaze, whisk the glaze ingredients together and drizzle on top of the bars (or on individual squares).

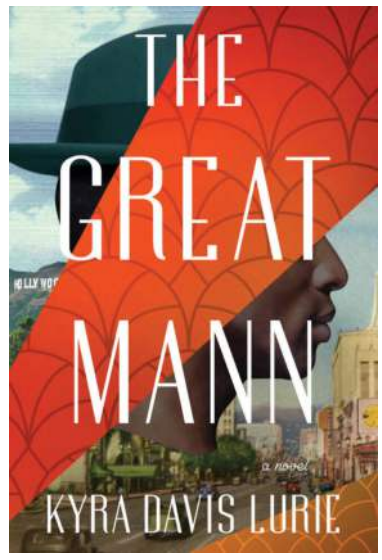
Lift the cooled bars out using the overhang on the sides. Cut into squares.

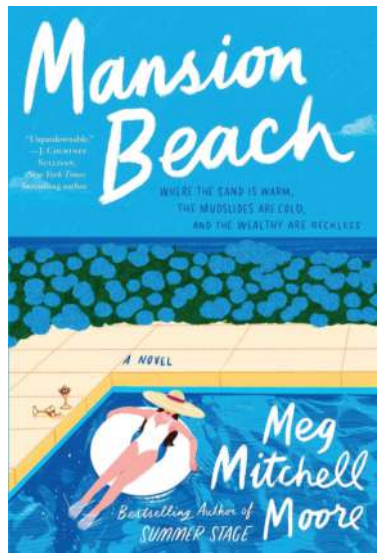
Cover and store leftover bars at room temperature for up to 2 days, in the refrigerator for up to 1 week and in freezer for up to 3 months (in even layers between sheets of parchment). To serve frozen bars, thaw overnight in the refrigerator, then bring to room temperature.

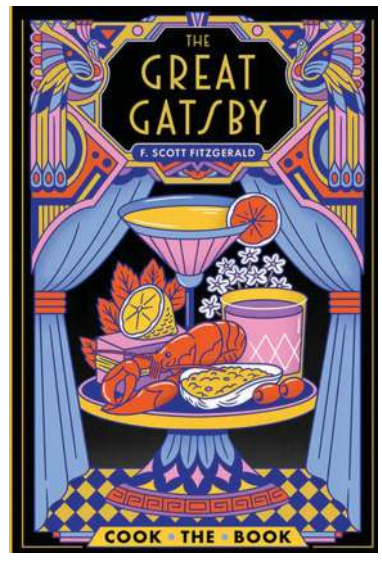
Serves 16.

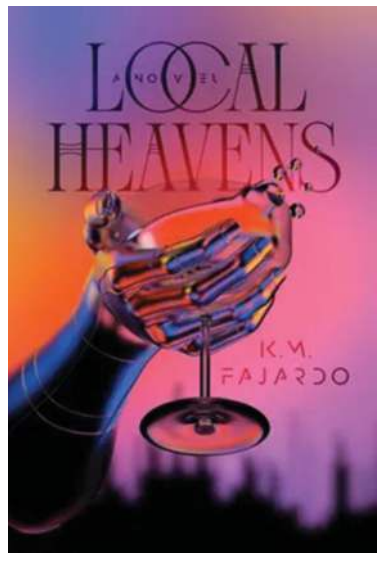
‘Gatsby’ with a twist

Authors put new spins on American classic now in public domain









By Chris Hewitt
The Minnesota Star Tribune

“Can’t repeat the past? Why, of course you can!” is a line famously spoken by the title character in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “The Great Gatsby.” This year, writers are repeating the past — a lot — with new takes on the American author’s classic novel.

Perhaps because it’s the 100th anniversary of the novel and perhaps because it’s in the public domain and anyone who wants to borrow from it can do so without impunity, there is a great deal of “Great Gatsby” right now.

Here are a few brand-new takes on “The Great Gatsby” that are hitting shelves:

Make it Black

Kyra Davis Lurie draws on multiple elements in “The Great Mann,” which was inspired by a radio report as well as “Gatsby.” Part of the backbone of her story is the historical fact of the Sugar Hill neighborhood of Los Angeles — where wealthy Black people had homes (including “Gone with the Wind” Oscar winner Hattie McDaniel). First, it was challenged in courts by white neighbors and then obliterated, like St. Paul’s Rondo, for a highway.

But you don’t have to look far to find the “Gatsby” influence in the tale of a naive young man named Charlie (instead of Nick Carraway) who falls under the spell of an enigmatic and fabulously wealthy contemporary named James “Reaper” Mann. Set two decades after “Gatsby,” in 1945, “Mann” (Crown, 320 pages) also explores Charlie’s experiences with segregation when he fought in World War II.

Make it female

The three main male characters in Fitzgerald’s novel all become women in Meg Mitchell Moore’s “Mansion Beach” (“the beach read of the summer,” crows novelist Elin Hilderbrand), and the action shifts a little north, from New York to Rhode Island.

Nicola Carr, the Carraway stand-in, is hoping for a restful summer but she keeps getting distracted by the loud parties thrown by her neighbor, fashion entrepreneur Juliana George (think: Jay Gatsby). A regular at those parties is Taylor (Tom) Buchanan, the villain of “Mansion Beach” (William Morrow, 336 pages), who will stop at nothing in her search for success.

That seems like plenty of drama, but the odd cover copy also seems to promise something out of a disaster movie, or at least a good reason not to wear those white suits Robert Redford sported in the first “Gatsby” movie. The cover describes the novel’s setting as a place “where the sand is warm, the mudslides are cold, and the wealthy are reckless.”

Make it delicious

If your re-reading of “Gatsby” wouldn’t be complete without heiress Daisy Buchanan’s supposed recipe for a julep cocktail, this is the one for you. In addition to the text of Fitzgerald’s book, this edition, subtitled “The Complete Novel with 15 Recipes Inspired by the Roaring ’20s” (Chronicle Books, 158 pages), includes food you can pair with the book. That includes two deviled egg makeovers that were inspired by Fitzgerald’s original, fictitious, setting of West Egg. Publishers of the book, which hits stores Aug. 19, also promise directions for making one of those precarious-looking champagne towers that always topple onto the mother of the bride in rom-coms.

Make it cyberpunk

K.M. Fajardo’s “Local Heavens” (Bindery Books, 455 pages) even takes Fitzgerald’s exact character names for its narrative, which is set five decades in the future, when technology has made further inroads on our humanity. Nick Carraway, who is of Filipino heritage in this retelling (as is Fajardo), falls under the spell of Jay Gatsby, a new millionaire with a mysterious past. The result is what the author calls a “queer, cyberpunk” take on the classic.

The wrinkle in Fajardo’s book, due in October, is that Carraway is at least partly successful in avoiding Gatsby’s toxic glamour. In fact, he’s been hired to investigate Gatsby’s nefarious business dealings. In addition to the character names, Fajardo even borrowed her title from a “Gatsby” quotation: “Something in his leisurely movements and the secure position of his feet upon the lawn suggested that it was Mr. Gatsby himself, come out to determine what share was his of our local heavens.”

Make it about Nick

“Nick,” Michael Farris Smith’s novel that tells Carraway’s story in the years leading up to “Gatsby,” came out four years ago. “The Duke of Buccleuch: Nick Carraway Writes ‘The Great Gatsby,’” takes a similar tack, picking up immediately after the events of “The Great Gatsby.”

In A S Lorde’s “Buccleuch” (Seagoat, 214 pages), we meet Nick as he wrestles with what happened in West Egg while also wrestling his recollections into shape as what we know will become “The Great Gatsby.” Basically, Nick is Fitzgerald. Lorde’s novel is set in St. Paul, Minn., Fitzgerald’s old stomping grounds, during the two years when Carraway completes his take on the Fitzgerald novel’s cataclysmic events.

A shipwreck just the first hurdle in ‘A Marriage at Sea’

By Chris Hewitt
The Minnesota Star Tribune

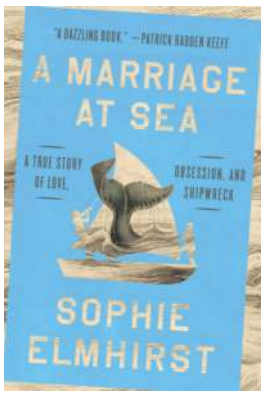
Sure, you can survive a shipwreck, but have you ever tried surviving a marriage?

That’s what Sophie Elmhirst contemplates in her riveting, feisty “A Marriage at Sea.”

It’s a narrative nonfiction look at Maurice and Maralyn Bailey, an English couple who embarked on an oceanic life in 1972, were rammed into by a whale on their way to the Galapagos Islands and then had to endure months in an inflatable life raft, with few provisions and no company but each other and the occasional turtle.

The story is a jaw-dropper, which Elmhirst relates with the help of excerpts from their accounts, lists of the few items they salvaged from their sunken sailboat (radio not included — they chose to sail without one) and interviews with others who knew the couple.

But, as harrowing and gripping as the Baileys’ story is, the real star of this book is its dazzling writer.



Elmhirst succeeds at everything she attempts. Her take on the couple’s plight is often poetic, like this description of the Pacific:

“It can seem like a desert, this ocean, featureless and empty. But deep down, there is landscape, peaks and valleys, whole mountain ranges. There are whales sleeping vertically with their calves, or clicking messages to each other as they search for squid. Baby turtles swim out into the open ocean, their flippers pumping back and forth.”

But it’s not just a book of lovely musings about nature. Elmhirst also has a skilled journalist’s abilities to spot telling details (get this: Maralyn couldn’t swim) and to get right to the point, as in this moment shortly after the wreck:

“Maurice, who knew more about the winds and currents, didn’t tell her how unlikely it was that they’d be blown in the right direction. He found himself wondering if they had enough gas in the canister to kill themselves.”

Sometimes, it’s almost like Elmhirst is the couple’s therapist:

“Usually, the stars lend perspective, a leavening sense of one’s own insignificance. Maurice looked up and saw only himself, only his flaws; the hope that he might become someone better.”

As that bit of analysis hints, Maralyn dealt better with the shipwreck than her husband did, and “even in their arguments, she could find light, sensing that they were developing a deeper respect for each other’s opinions.”

As Elmhirst describes it, Maralyn’s resourceful optimism and Maurice’s gloom and doom were a pairing that worked at sea, maybe even better than it had on land. And this is the real meat of the book: curiosity about how an experience so horrifying that it would have, at best, severely strained most marriages somehow strengthened the Baileys’. Like “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf,” except without all the yelling and drinking, “A Marriage at Sea” is a clear-eyed, insightful anatomy of a marriage.

Just about every moment in “A Marriage at Sea” is full of drama and tension but even the few respites when lives are not at stake — a pre-voyage dinner with friends, for instance, or Maurice’s solitary trip to a bar — are compelling, so deep is Elmhirst’s understanding of these two people.

Which is why she deserves the mic drop here: “Somewhere, deep within, unspoken, we must know, we do know, that we’ll all have our time adrift. For what else is a marriage, really, if not being stuck on a small raft with someone and trying to survive?”

10 essential Ozzy Osbourne songs

By Mikael Wood
Los Angeles Times

A balladeer in the body of a headbanger, Ozzy Osbourne brought soul and emotion to the heavy metal genre he helped invent as the frontman of Black Sabbath and which he turned into a global force as an outrage-courting solo act. Osbourne, who died Tuesday at 76 — just weeks after he gave what he billed as his final performance in his hometown of Birmingham, England — sold tens of millions of albums, was twice inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and late in life found an unlikely second career as a pioneering reality TV star.

Here, in the order they were released, are 10 of his essential songs:



AP

Singer Ozzy Osbourne performs during halftime of an NFL game in Inglewood, Calif., on Sept. 8, 2022. Osbourne, the godfather of heavy metal, died just 17 days after playing his final show with Black Sabbath. He was 76.

Black Sabbath, 'Paranoid' (1970)

As heavy as Black Sabbath was, the band could be remarkably light on its feet, as in their zippy breakout single, which hit No. 4 on the U.K. pop chart. "Paranoid" is narrated by a depressed young man who "can't see the things that make true happiness," as Osbourne sings against Tony Iommi's chugging guitar riff. Yet the song keeps hurtling forward with a dogged determination. Sabbath closed with "Paranoid" — current stream count on Spotify: 1.3 billion — at this month's farewell concert.

Black Sabbath, 'War Pigs' (1970)

An antiwar protest song as pointed as John Fogerty's "Fortunate Son," "War Pigs" couches its musings on the mendacity of Vietnam's architects in images of witches and sorcerers poisoning brainwashed minds. The disgust in Osbourne's sneering vocal is still palpable.

Black Sabbath, 'Iron Man' (1970)

Leave it to Osbourne to find the empathy in this bludgeoning yet weirdly tender account of a guy who travels through time to save humanity only to be "turned to steel in the great magnetic field" on his return trip. "Nobody wants him / They just turn their heads," he sings, "Nobody helps him / Now he has his revenge."

Black Sabbath, 'Sweet Leaf' (1971)

A love song addressed to weed? Osbourne stretches the bit about as far as it can go as Iommi cranks out the sludgy lick that would later be sampled prominently by the Beastie Boys in their "Rhymin & Stealin."

Black Sabbath, 'Changes' (1972)

Osbourne's most touching vocal performance came in this woebegone piano ballad from Black Sabbath's fourth album; he sings with so much agony about a romantic breakup that the song doesn't even bother with guitar or drums. In 2003, Osbourne recut "Changes" as a duet with his then-19-year-old daughter Kelly; a decade later, the soul singer Charles Bradley recorded a wrenching cover not long before he died.

'Crazy Train' (1980)

Osbourne got the boot from Black Sabbath in 1979 after his bandmates tired of his drug and alcohol abuse. Yet Osbourne quickly rebounded as a solo act, scoring a Top 10 rock radio hit on his first try with "Crazy Train," which he wrote and recorded with guitarist Randy Rhoads, who'd left Quiet Riot to join Osbourne's band. Lyrically, "Crazy Train" contemplates the "millions of people living as foes" amid the Cold War — a dark theme that somehow led to Osbourne's most euphoric song.

'Mr. Crowley' (1980)

To follow up "Crazy Train," Osbourne and Rhoads — who would tragically die in a plane crash in 1982 while on tour with Osbourne — revived Black Sabbath's preoccupation with the occult for this midtempo jam about the self-styled prophet Aleister Crowley.

'No More Tears' (1991)

Unlike many heavy-metal elders, Osbourne stayed relevant into the grunge era with hits like the bleakly hypnotic title track from his quadruple-platinum "No More Tears" LP, which showcased his close collaboration with guitarist Zakk Wylde.

'Mama, I'm Coming Home' (1991)

"No More Tears" yielded another staple of early-'90s MTV in this soaring power ballad that Osbourne and Wylde wrote with Lemmy Kilmister of Motörhead.

Post Malone, 'Take What You Want' (2019)

At 70, Osbourne surprised many with his robust vocal cameo in this trap-metal pileup from Post Malone's smash "Hollywood's Bleeding" LP. (The song also featured Travis Scott.) Osbourne's collaboration with producer Andrew Watt on "Take What You Want" led to Osbourne's recruiting Watt to oversee his final two solo albums: 2020's "Ordinary Man" and 2022's Grammy-winning "Patient Number 9."

Q&A

Reaching for the high notes

Raphael Saadiq talks upcoming one-man show, Beyoncé's work ethic and his work on 'Sinners'

BY JONATHAN LANDRUM JR.
Associated Press

Raphael Saadiq has always admired the boldness of stand-up icons like Dave Chappelle and Eddie Murphy, who commanded the stage alone with only their stories.

Now, the three-time Grammy winner is taking a similar leap, stepping into the spotlight solo for his own one-man show. The intimate No Bandwidth tour will pull back the curtain on Saadiq's life and music, weaving never-before-told stories with performances spanning Tony! Toni! Toné!, Lucy Pearl and his solo catalog.

The tour kicks off in Sacramento, Calif., on Sept. 7 and is expected to run into mid-October. It'll mark a return to the stage that began with a recent limited four-city sneak peek in New York, Los Angeles and his hometown of Oakland.

It's been a high note kind of year for Saadiq, who won a Grammy for his work on Beyoncé's "Cowboy Carter," wrote "I Lied to You" for Ryan Coogler's "Sinners" and is preparing the rerelease of his 2004 solo album "Ray Ray" through his Vinyl Club, a membership that reissues his catalog.

In a recent interview with The Associated Press, Saadiq reflected on it all, including who he thinks should headline the Super Bowl halftime show and how he's honoring the legacy of his late brother, D'Wayne Wiggins, who died in March.

The Associated Press: Does doing the one-man show feel like you're taking a risk or more of a spiritual enlightenment?

Saadiq: I felt like it was more of a spiritual type of quest, and I thought it was a risk. But I like taking risks. I'm totally confident about being on the stage, but I definitely got to give props to people who do one-man shows. Comedians have a glass of water and a stool. I've always wanted to do that.

What inspired you?

I was really inspired by Mike Tyson's "Undisputed Truth." I watched Mike's show. It wasn't like I looked at it and said, "I could do it if Mike Tyson did it." Mike Tyson's one-man show made it look difficult, but it was so good. It pulled me into Mike's life. Then that's when I said, "I want to do a one-man show." It took this long, so it was therapy to do it.

You were recruited by Ludwig Göransson — who scored "Sinners" — to write the film's pivotal track, "I Lied to You." What did you pull away from that experience?

Being that I score film already, what you learn is when you work with people like Ludwig and Ryan is the art of storytelling through music and visuals. You got to love the process. Working with Ryan and Ludwig, you're listening to two perspectives. One person scores, one person writes and shoots. It's like having a super team with those two guys. Adding me to the equation, it should only get better.

Ludwig is an amazing composer, guitar player, producer. Ryan's from my hometown. He's a good dude. Solid, great storyteller, and you want to show up for a movie that's deeply rooted in blues and gospel and tradition because this is going to go for generations for other people to see what this music was about. I was honored that I could contribute.

You worked on "Cowboy Carter" tracks like "Texas Hold 'Em," "Bodyguard" and "16 Carriages." How was being a part of the album's process and seeing Beyoncé in full work mode?

It was amazing, lucky, fun. Besides the whole country thing, just being a part of Beyoncé's critical thinking, it was great for me. I never meet too many people that can work harder than me. That's somebody who can. I was excited about the energy of her whole team. It would be like playing football for the Jacksonville Jaguars as a receiver and you get traded to the Kansas City Chiefs and got Patrick Mahomes throwing to you. That's how I felt. You just knew you was in a new camp and everybody on the team is like "Let's get ready to go."

What stood out to you about Beyoncé being such a hard worker?

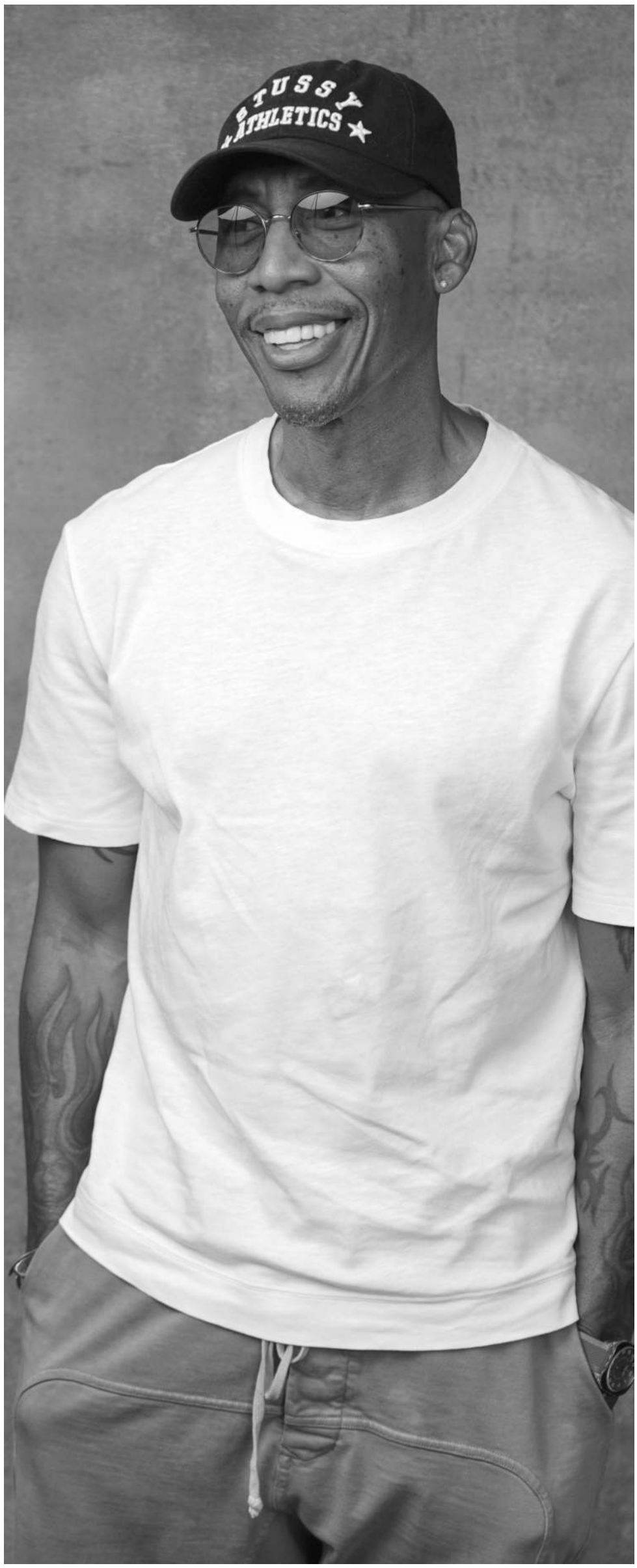
I watched her organize the storyboard. The vision board is nuts. Her vision board is crazy. When I saw her vision board, it blew me back. Then I saw the show before doing my one-man show too.

You need a challenge. You need to go be courageous. You need to, like, you need to make some new challenges for yourself. That's what I always wanted to do.

You curated and performed a Bay Area tribute melody with a 14-piece band for the NBA All-Star Game in February. Next year's Super Bowl will be played there in Santa Clara. Who do you think should be the halftime performer?

As far as power, it's got to be some Metallica things happening. In a stadium, you're supposed to be a power band, and they got the biggest records that would resonate all over TV. I would say Metallica, to be honest. I wouldn't even say

SEE REACHING ON PAGE 29



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

Raphael Saadiq, photographed on June 30 in Los Angeles, is taking his one-man show on the road for the No Bandwidth tour starting in September.

WEEKEND: MUSIC

REVIEW



Alex G

Headlights (RCA)

Fame is a double-edged sword. Though it comes with obvious perks — money, opportunity, praise — it can also prompt a kind of existential reckoning. Now what? Is this all there is? Am I changed because of it and, if so, for better or for worse?

This is the kind of wrestling Alex Giannascoli, better known as the influential indie rocker Alex G, performs on "Headlights," his 10th album and first on a major label. "Has your wish come true?" he asks, perhaps of himself, on the aptly titled "Is It Still You In There?"

Although he achieved quiet success early in his career — collaborating with Frank Ocean on his critically acclaimed 2016 album "Blonde" and joining the R&B superstar on tour — Alex G has, until recently, been more frequently labeled a cult indie figure than a household name.

But the 32-year-old has risen to prominence in recent years, particularly after his 2022 album, "God Save the Animals," which marked a distinct shift from his austere, lo-fi sound to more robust production and instrumentation. He has since collaborated with the pop star Halsey on her latest record and scored filmmaker Jane Schoenbrun's A24 horror hit, "I Saw the TV Glow."

That trajectory informs Giannascoli's contemplative poignancy on "Headlights," releasing Friday. "Some things I do for love / Some things I do for money / It ain't like I don't want it / It ain't like I'm above it," he admits on the "Beam Me Up," his whirring guitars strumming mesmerizingly against airy background vocals.

Many of his lyrics here, like in the past, are poetically inscrutable. But there are also moments of explicit frankness about ambition, self-doubt, transition and success. "Hoping I can make it through to April / On whatever's left of all this label cash / No I never thought I was the real thing," he croons on "Real Thing," as a pan flute synthesizer whistles underneath him.

With "Headlights," Giannascoli continues further down his "God Save the Animals" sonic pivot to higher fidelity — perhaps to be expected on an album coming from a major label like RCA Records — recording in studios in lieu of his home for a more ornate sound.

Think dreamy synths and reverb-soaked riffs. Subdued lyrics and a distorted guitar solo almost turn "Louisiana" into a shoegaze track. "Louisiana / Wild and Free / The only one who wanted me," he repeats with distorted vocals.

If there is a central message to "Headlights," it appears on the song "Bounce Boy." "I'm up in the clouds and I pray," he sings with pitched-up vocals, one of his signature effects. "Say goodbye / To the life / That you knew for so long."

For better or for worse, there is no turning back.

— Krysta Fauria
Associated Press

Jane's Addiction joins long tradition of band lawsuits

By Maria Sherman and Andrew Dalton
Associated Press

Bands behaving badly? It's only rock 'n' roll.

Members of alternative rock band Jane's Addiction filed dueling lawsuits last week over singer Perry Farrell's onstage scuffle with guitarist Dave Navarro at a Boston concert last year, a fracas that prompted the cancellation of the rest of their reunion tour and a planned album.

They join a long, storied tradition of bandmates suing one another, taking interpersonal and legal troubles from the recording studio to the courtroom. Here's a look at a few very famous cases.

Jane's Addiction

What happened: Navarro, drummer Stephen Perkins and bassist Eric Avery sued Farrell in Los Angeles Superior Court seeking at least $10 million, alleging that Farrell's behavior on their recent tour had ranged from erratic to out of control, culminating in an assault where Farrell punched Navarro both onstage and backstage.

How it was resolved: It hasn't been; it's just getting started. Farrell and his wife, Etty Lau Farrell, sued the three bandmates in the same court Wednesday, blaming them for the conflict and the violence.



Evan Agostini, Invision/AP

Former Creedence Clearwater Revival frontman John Fogerty, shown this year, was involved in lawsuits with his ex-bandmates for more than 20 years.

The Beach Boys

What happened: How much time do you have? The late, great Brian Wilson, the Beach Boys' leader, feuded with his cousin and bandmate Mike Love over songwriting credits dating back decades. Love had sued Wilson several times, beginning in the 1990s.

How it was resolved: Wilson often wasn't the victor — except in 2007, when U.S. District Judge Audrey Collins threw out one of Love's lawsuits against Wilson. In it, Love alleged that a free, 2004 promotional CD of re-recorded Beach Boys songs cost him millions of dollars and violated Love and Wilson's partnership.

Oasis

What happened: The sibling rivalry between Oasis brothers Liam and Noel Gallagher is well established. Their brawls not only led to the band's dissolution in 2009, before their 2025 reunion, but also a legal upset. In 2011, Liam sued Noel for saying Liam's hangover caused the cancellation of a 2009 festival performance. He said in a statement that the lawsuit was not about money, but that he wanted an apology and for Oasis fans "to know the truth" — that laryngitis prevented him from performing.

How it was resolved: The lawsuit was dropped.

Creedence Clearwater Revival

What happened: The post-breakup decades of Creedence Clearwater Revival were marked by so much legal and personal infighting that you might think CCR stands for Conflict, Clash, Repeat. In 1996, singer-songwriter-guitarist John Fogerty sued ex-bandmates Doug Clifford and Stu Cook for performing under the name Creedence Clearwater Revisited. That case settled in 2001, but the bandmates sued Fogerty in 2014, alleging he was violating the settlement by continuing to publicly slag off the Revisited name. And they said Fogerty himself was now illegally using Creedence Clearwater Revival in concert advertising. Fogerty sued back in 2015, saying Cook and Clifford weren't paying him proper songwriting royalties for their performances.

How it was resolved: A federal court merged the two cases, and the resulting hybrid was settled under confidential terms in 2017.

Fleetwood Mac

What happened: Fleetwood Mac and feuds are practically synonymous. Breakups and divorces between members are essential to some of their best songs. The conflict resumed in the 2010s when the band kicked lead guitarist Lindsey Buckingham off their 2018 tour, and he sued. Buckingham claimed he was told five days after the group appeared at Radio City Music Hall that January that the band would tour without him. He says he would have been paid at least $12 million for his share of the proceeds.

How it was resolved: Later that year, Buckingham said they had settled the lawsuit.

Journey

What happened: At some point, two key members of Journey stopped believin' in each other. And all over an Amex. Longtime guitarist Neal Schon sued longtime keyboardist Jonathan Cain in 2022, saying Cain was refusing to let him use the band's American Express card. A counterclaim came from Cain, who said that Schon was running up enormous personal charges on the band's account.

How it was resolved: A judge in 2024 appointed a custodian over the band's financial decisions, specifically empowered to settle disagreements between Schon and Cain.

Hall & Oates

What happened: In 2023, Daryl Hall sued his longtime music partner John Oates, arguing that Oates' plan to sell his share of a joint venture would violate the terms of a business agreement the duo had forged long before. The move quickly prompted a judge to temporarily block the sale.

How it was resolved: The lawsuit and arbitration are ongoing.

The Beatles

What happened: Their artistic partnership had been over for months, but the Beatles had to break out the barristers to break up their business. Paul McCartney went to London's High Court of Justice in 1970 to dissolve the Fab Four's 1967 contractual partnership, which included the Apple record label. McCartney above all wanted to get rid of manager Allen Klein, whom John Lennon, George Harrison and Ringo Starr wanted to keep as overseer of their business. "The only way for me to save The Beatles and Apple," McCartney told British GQ in 2020, "was to sue the band."

How it was resolved: The court ruled in McCartney's favor and appointed a receiver to oversee their ventures in 1971. But negotiations and wrangling continued until a long-term solution that would become known as "The Beatles Agreement" was signed by all four members in 1974.

Reaching: Singer says late brother blazed a trail for him

FROM PAGE 28

myself in that. But I could definitely be a part of somethings for the Super Bowl. But if you want to bring the urban side, I would say Too Short. Those are biggest in the Bay for me.

How did the death of your brother D'Wayne shift the focus of your music?

It didn't really shift anything when I think about music. But the blessing in the music is we got a chance to tour all together before one of us was gone. We got together to talk and have some camaraderie ... and got the chance for all the fans to see us all together the way the group was really meant to be, because we spent a lot of years where we weren't together.

What did you learn from your brother personally and professionally that you are carrying forward?

One thing I took from my brother was the music. Period. He was the person who played guitar. Wake up with the guitar. Walking outside calling and trying to put bands together. I took that from him. Growing up in school, he left every school on fire for me. He blazed a trail for me, then I started blazing it for him. His two kids are like that with me. I'm blazing it for them.

But now they blazing it for me. My nephew (Dylan Wiggins) is working with Frank Ocean, The Weeknd. So many people, I can't keep up with them. Everything that's instilled in me and Dwayne is now instilled in Jaden (Wiggins). He's a beast. He plays bass and guitar. He's producing and playing with bands. I'm trying to keep everyone going forward, not backwards.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Ernest Kingsley Jr. plays the young adult version of George Washington "Wash" Black in the new eight-episode Hulu miniseries "Washington Black."



DISNEY/AP photos

Eddie Karanja, left, plays the young "Wash," who becomes an asistant to inventor Christopher "Titch" Wilde, played by Tom Ellis, right, in the show.

'Washington Black': the show that could

Like protagonist, a Black boy with a big heart and ambitions, the expansive Hulu series had to overcome many challenges

BY CRISTINA JALERU
Associated Press

It just seemed destined for a screen adaptation.

"Washington Black," the 2018 novel by Canadian writer Esi Edugyan, caught actor Sterling K. Brown's eye. As he put the wheels in motion, things just started to line up in a most un-Hollywood fashion — so much so that Brown started to believe strongly the project was meant to be.

"Sometimes you keep hitting barricades and obstacles and you're like, 'Well maybe I should step away.' No, things kept falling into line in such a lovely way that let me know that we were moving in the direction we were supposed to go," he recalls.

It felt appropriate that the universe wanted a coming-of-age story about a Black boy with big dreams, who goes from the Barbados plantation where he was born to finding freedom, love and friendship across the seas. The eight-episode miniseries is now streaming on Hulu.

Brown noted that, as a producer, he wants to put out tales that can benefit society.

"I think for me it's been the sort of fare that has been reserved for people that don't look like us so much," he says — so the opportunity to make it happen was "very exciting."

The idea of doing a show where a young person overcomes tumultuous circumstances through hope and joy enchanted him: "They were telling him, 'Maybe you should dream smaller.' He just kept going up. It's beautiful."

Adapting the book

The first stop was finding a writer, and Selwyn Seyfu Hinds fit the bill perfectly. His lyrical style and family background



Sterling K. Brown as Medwin Harris, a Black community leader who eventually becomes a father figure to "Wash" and a mentor to the young actors.

inspired Brown — who also acts in the show — to get him on board as one of the two showrunners. Born and raised in Guyana, Hinds moved to the United States as a teen with his family, and felt the story spoke to him personally.

"It's always been part of my desire as a writer to tell stories that connect the Caribbean to the overall diaspora," Hinds says.

The show follows 11-year-old George Washington "Wash" Black, born into slavery in Barbados on a plantation owned by the Wilde family in the 1830s. His quick mind, inquisitiveness and knack for science get the attention of Christopher "Titch" Wilde (Tom Ellis), an inventor, who enlists him as his assistant. A tragic turn of events forces them to run away together and takes them on adventures on the high seas, North America and ultimately the Arctic; the story stretches across almost a decade.

Adapting it into eight episodes required changes to the book, but they kept to the emotional core of the journey.

"It's big and expansive, not for its own sake, but because I think that thematically reflects the character's heart and the character's own ambitions," Hinds says.

The series, which filmed across locations in Nova Scotia, Canada; Virginia; Mexico; the U.S. Virgin Islands; and Iceland took nine months to complete.

Co-showrunner Kim Harrison is still incredulous at pulling off such a massive endeavor of juggling multiple locations, temperamental weather and stars' schedules.

"When you look back at the finished product, you're like, 'Wow, we did that,'" she says of the feat.

Two stars are born, with a mentor to boot

Among the many elements that had to work, the most crucial one, perhaps, was finding its young leads — one actor to play young Wash and another to play him as a young adult.

After months and months of auditions and thousands of tapes, they both revealed themselves in an undeniable way to the producers.

"They both carry the truth of the character in their eyes ... like they've got the same emotional expression and intelligence and empathy in their, in their eyes," Hinds says. He's speaking of Ernest Kingsley Jr. and Eddie Karanja, who was just 14 at the time.

Kingsley got the older part three months out of acting school in London; he was bowled over when he had to do a chemistry read with Brown, who stars as Medwin Harris, a Black community leader and father figure in the Nova Scotia years. Brown found himself impressed by the newcomer immediately.

"This kid embodies the hopefulness, the sort of Black boy joy that is the engine that drives the show," he recalls thinking during auditions.

Brown inadvertently became a mentor to the inexperienced actors on set because he wanted all of them to feel comfortable. He remembers how young actors feel unable to voice doubts or practical questions because everyone else seems to know what they're supposed to do.

"You just want to give them the space to share all of that so we can move through it together," he says.

He extended the same helping hand to Iola Evans, who plays older Wash's love interest, and Edward Bluemel, her suitor. Brown always made time in his busy schedule to visit the set to watch, listen and generally be a hype man.

Don't call him a baddie

Charles Dance, the inscrutable paterfamilias James Wilde, surprised everyone who'd seen him in "Game of Thrones."

Hinds recollects even Ellis, who plays Dance's character's son, gave a speech at the wrap party in Iceland saying how shockingly nice Dance was — he had been terrified before meeting him.

"So the fact that Charles is scary and intimidating just worked beautifully for us," laughs Hinds as Ellis channeled it into his performance.

Karanja says he even got a boost from Dance: "Charles was the warmest guy and he continued to give me confidence in myself as an actor."

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



MGM+/AP

Joe Freeman stars as Luke Ellis, a 14-year-old with special talents who is imprisoned with other gifted kids at "The Institute," where they are put to dark geopolitical uses.

'The Institute' gets King's thumbs-up

Eight-episode MGM+ series is faithful to author's 2019 book but does change setting to Maine, raises age of hero

By Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

Stephen King has a rule for anyone wanting to adapt one of his books for the big or small screen. It's basically the Hippocratic oath for intellectual property — first, do no harm.

"When you deviate from the story that I wrote, you do so at your own risk," he says in a recent interview from his home in Maine. "I know what I'm doing and I'm not sure that screenwriters always do or that producers and directors always do."

Not everyone has listened to King, who has enjoyed hit adaptations — "The Shawshank Redemption," "Stand By Me," "Misery," "It" and "The Shining" — as well as flops — "Salem's Lot," "Graveyard Shift" and "The Lawnmower Man."



King

The industrious novelist has lately watched as a wave of adaptations are crafted for theaters or streaming platforms, a list that includes "The Life of Chuck" and the upcoming "The Long Walk," "The Running Man" and "It: Welcome to Derry." It also includes the eight-episode series "The Institute," which debuted on MGM+ on Sunday.

It's about a secret government facility where kids with special talents — telekinesis and telepathy — are imprisoned and put to dark geopolitical uses. Their bedrooms are faithfully re-created and creepy posters — "Your Gift Is Important" and "I Choose to be Happy" — line the halls.

Does this small-screen adaptation of his 2019 book get King's approval?

"I'm talking to you, which is a pretty good sign," he says, laughing.

He even signed on as executive producer:

"When I write a book, it's a single-person sport, and when these people do a TV show or a movie, it becomes a team sport. So you expect some changes and, sometimes, man, they're really good."

What's 'The Institute' about'?

"The Institute" stars Mary-Louise Parker as a sinister scientist and Ben Barnes as a small-town cop on opposite sides as the group of children are kidnapped and exploited. The series is faithful to the book, but includes some changes, like setting it entirely in Maine and aging the hero up so as not to appear too sadistic.

That hero — 14-year-old Luke Ellis, played winningly by Joe Freeman — is the latest youngster with special powers that King has manifested, a line that stretches back to the heroine of "Carrie," Danny Torrance in "The Shining" and Charlie McGee in "Firestarter."



Parker

"I thought to myself, what would happen if a bunch of kids that had psychic powers could see enough of the future to tell when certain moments were going to come along?" he says. "But the kids would be wrecked by this process and they would be kept in a place where they could serve the greater good. It was a moral problem that I really liked."



Barnes

King has a special respect for young adults, who he says can be brave and behave nobly under pressure but who can also be mean and petty.

He says he was inspired by William Golding, who wrote the iconic "Lord of the Flies," a dystopian novel about a group of schoolboys who, while trying to survive on a remote island, unlock their own barbarism.

"He was talking to his wife before he wrote the book and he said, 'What would it be like if I wrote a story about boys and the way that boys really acted?' And so I tried to write a book about kids the way that kids really act," King says.

Executive producer and co-writer Benjamin Cavell says King resists the impulse to be overly involved in the process, instead identifying people he trusts to do right by the material.

"So much of the pleasure of King's writing is the access he gives his reader to the deepest, darkest, most private thoughts and dreams and desires of his characters; the adapter's task is to make all that external and cinematic," Cavell says.

'Monsters inside of us'

Jack Bender has become something of a King whisperer, helping adapt both King's "Mr. Mercedes" and "The Outsider" to the screen. This time, he helped direct and executive-produce "The Institute."

"I count my blessings to be in the position of someone he creatively trusts," Bender says. "He is a genius at tapping into the fears we all share of what's hiding under our beds. For me, both 'Mr. Mercedes' and 'The Institute' deal with those fears by focusing on the monsters inside of us human beings, not just outside in the world around us."

The first thing Bender and Cavell had to figure out was what form "The Institute" would take — a stand-alone film or a series.

"In the case of 'The Institute,' which was a 576-page novel packed with rich, fascinating characters that would need time to connect and be with each other, I didn't want to shrink it into a 110-minute movie that would've become the 'X-Kids,'" Bender says.

King says that while Hollywood has a seemingly insatiable appetite for his books, he hasn't gotten more cinematic as a writer — he always has been:

"I am one of the first writers that was actually influenced by television as well as movies. I grew up with the idea that things should be cinematic and that you should look at things in a visual way, a very sensory way."

King was also pleased that the adapters of "The Institute" made sure not to change the name of Barnes' small-town cop, Tim.

"I named him Tim because I read somewhere that no great thing was ever done by a man named Tim. And so I thought to myself, 'Yeah, well, OK, I'll call him Tim and he can do great things.'"

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Is Coca-Cola with cane sugar healthier?

Some nutritionists say using the substitute no better than high-fructose corn syrup



iStock

In the U.S., Coca-Cola is currently made with high-fructose corn syrup but in Mexico, it's made with cane sugar.

By Rachel Roubein and Caitlin Gilbert
The Washington Post

In late April, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. declared that "sugar is poison."

Roughly three months later, Kennedy praised Steak 'n Shake for announcing that the fast-food chain would start offering Coca-Cola with real cane sugar instead of high-fructose corn syrup. The soda company announced Tuesday it would roll out that version of its product in the United States this fall.

"MAHA is winning," Kennedy posted July 19 on X, referring to his "Make America Healthy Again" movement aimed at reducing chronic disease and childhood illness.

But studies do not show substantial benefits in using cane sugar as a substitute for high-fructose corn syrup, some nutrition experts said.

Kennedy has repeatedly blasted high-fructose corn syrup — a staple of sugary snacks and drinks including Coke — as a driver of obesity and diabetes. And research has established that added sugar in food does fuel those chronic diseases.

Cane sugar is also an unhealthy addition to drinks, the experts said.

"Replacing one sugar with another isn't going to have much of an effect on health," said Dariush Mozaffarian, director of the Food is Medicine Institute at Tufts University, who praised other Kennedy food priorities, such as reducing consumption of ultraprocessed foods.

The Department of Health and Human Services declined to comment. Some Kennedy allies defended his comments, saying they were not contradictory and instead highlighted concerns over a pesticide commonly sprayed on corn.

"Of course, Coca-Cola is not a healthy drink. Of course, it still has a ton of sugar and is nutritionally void," said Vani Hari, an author and activist known as the Food Babe.

But Kennedy is "looking at the bigger picture," Hari added. "He understands how food is produced in this country. He understands the downstream impacts on human health."

President Donald Trump, known for his love of Diet Coke, said last week that he had spoken to Coca-Cola about making its product in the United States with cane sugar, as it does in Mexico, and that the company agreed. At the time, Coca-Cola did not confirm the move, but the company said in a statement that it appreciated Trump's "enthusiasm" for its brand.

In its Tuesday earnings report, the company said the addition of a soda with cane sugar in the United States "is designed to complement the company's strong core portfolio and offer more choices across occasions and preferences."

Trump's preview of the decision revived a long-running debate over whether "Mexican Coke" made with cane sugar tastes better. Nutrition experts bristled at the focus on the type of sugar in the drink instead of whether people should be drinking it at all.

"To actually improve health, the administration should focus on less sugar, not different sugar," said Aviva Musicus, science director of the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest, which advocates for a healthy and safe food supply.

"Biochemically and physiologically, they're the same. They're sugars. Everybody should be eating less of them."

Marion Nestle
a retired professor of nutrition, food studies and public health at New York University

What does science say?

Cane sugar, derived from a sucrose-rich plant, and high-fructose corn syrup, made by breaking down corn starch and processing it, share similar compositions with slight differences in their makeup. The Food and Drug Administration says it is not aware of evidence showing a difference in the safety of foods containing the syrup versus other sweeteners such as sucrose, also known as table sugar, and honey.

Several nutritionists said they have not seen scientific evidence showing sucrose is healthier than high-fructose corn syrup in food. They pointed to a 2022 study indicating that both have similar effects on weight, blood pressure and body mass index.

"Biochemically and physiologically, they're the same," said Marion Nestle, a retired professor of nutrition, food studies and public health at New York University. "They're sugars. Everybody should be eating less of them."

More than three-quarters of children 5 years and older and more than half of adults consume more than the recommended limit of added sugars, according to U.S. data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Why corn syrup is being targeted

Kennedy has long targeted high-fructose corn syrup and touted "Mexican Coke" over the version manufactured in the United States.

"High-fructose corn syrup. That is poison. ... Clearly it is linked to the obesity epidemic. It's linked to the diabetes epidemic," Kennedy said on a 2023 episode of "The Breakfast Club," a radio show.

He added, "If you're going to drink Coca-Cola, drink a Mexican Coke because they don't have it in it."

But public health experts have long raised alarms about soda consumption in Mexico. According to one 2019 study, nearly a fifth of all deaths of Mexican adults due to diabetes, cardiovascular disease or obesity-related cancer were attributable to sugar-sweetened beverages. At one point, the drinks contributed to more than 40,000 excess deaths per year in Mexico.

A May report from the Trump administration's MAHA commission — which Kennedy chairs — said high-fructose corn syrup and other added sugars "may play a significant role in childhood obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD)."

In recent days, Coca-Cola has defended high-fructose corn syrup, saying the product is "safe" and contains "about the same number of calories per serving as table sugar."

But some MAHA proponents have urged the company to ditch corn syrup. Hari said she has been concerned about glyphosate, a pesticide that can be sprayed on corn, and potential links to cancer.

"Just to look at the molecule of high-fructose corn syrup versus cane sugar is shortsighted and not a comprehensive review of the actual impacts of making a substantial change like that in the supply chain," Hari said.

Kennedy has also raised concerns about glyphosate in the food supply more broadly.

Experts have been divided on the issue. The Environmental Protection Agency says the pesticide "is not likely to be carcinogenic to humans," but the International Agency for Research on Cancer classified it as "probably" carcinogenic to humans. Bayer, which has faced a blitz of lawsuits over its glyphosate-containing herbicide, has stood by the chemical's safety.

WEEKEND: FAMILY



iStock

Co-parenting within a community has many benefits, including more trusted adults for children to turn to.

More hands, not more rules

Instead of complicated how-to lists, parents might want to find communities

By Marina Lopes
The Washington Post

My friend Melissa has the voice of a principal you don't want to cross: calm, steady and, sometimes, dripping with disapproval.

One Wednesday night, I watched her use it on my son.

"Ollie. Down." He was scaling her mid-century modern table mid-game of tag, seconds from toppling a plant onto her Persian rug. In our house, that behavior might have earned a warning or maybe a plea to take the game to his room. But at Melissa's, it crossed a line, and he knew it.

Ollie inched his body down, each limb surrendering individually. Head hung, he braced for his scolding.

"The table is not for climbing," she said firmly. "If you do it again, I'll send you home."

Melissa and I parent differently. At her house, there are no gentle reminders. Rules are clear. Expectations are high. Compliments are rare. She's more likely to say "Do better" than "Great job." At karaoke, she has no problem telling her 7-year-old son he's off pitch and should try harder or sit down. I've even seen her return his drawings when she thinks he didn't put in effort. Her style would raise eyebrows among many parents. Still, several times a week, I send my children over to eat, to play and, occasionally, to get yelled at.

After years abroad, my husband and I were wary of raising our kids in the isolated bubble of an American nuclear family. In many of the countries where I worked as a foreign correspondent, there was always an auntie, a grandma or a neighbor hugging, guiding and yelling at kids who stepped out of line. In Singapore, grandparents are the primary caregivers for half of children by the time they're 18 months old. In contrast, just 4 percent of children in the United States are primarily cared for by their grandparents. In Mozambique, child care is often collective, with one adult watching over a street full of kids while others work. But back in the States, my husband and I, like 82 percent of Americans, lived alone, far from family, surrounded by neighbors we barely knew.

Inspired by the collective care I saw overseas, we decided to build a village of our own. So we moved in next door to our best friends: Melissa, Jeremy and their son, Jay. We shared school drop-offs, meals and playdates, but not parenting philosophies. At first, the differences jarred me. I would rush to comfort them after a scolding, or cut a playdate short and take them home. But to my surprise, my kids quickly learned to adapt. They learned that different adults have different expectations, and we learned to trust other grown-ups to show up for our kids, even when they didn't follow our script.

Parents say they want a village, but too often, we only want villagers who parent exactly like we do.

Maternal anxiety and parental loneliness have surged to record highs. A survey by Ohio State University's Wexner Medical Center found that 66 percent of parents feel isolated and 62 percent experience burnout.

Modern caregivers are swimming in expert-fed, algorithm-driven advice: gentle parenting, conscious parenting, positive parenting, attachment parenting — each with its own jargon and ever-longer list of rules.

Many of the principles, like naming emotions, praising effort over outcome and modeling regulation instead of punishing, stem from solid developmental research. But as the guidelines become more rigid and complex, the unintended consequence is often less help for parents who desperately need it.

"There are impossible rules," said Kimberly Bepler, a "grandmother doula" in Oregon who trains grandparents to support new parents. "You can't yell. You can't say no. You can't discipline harshly."

Bepler says today's parents are deeply committed to getting it "right." But many don't realize how many other adults it takes to raise a child without burning out. Increasingly, grandparents, teachers, even coaches are stepping back, not out of apathy but fear of saying the wrong thing, crossing a line or being shamed for parenting "incorrectly."

Sandy Wolfe got a crash course in millennial parenting at a playground when she warned her granddaughter to "be careful." Her daughter quickly corrected her: "We don't say that anymore. We ask, 'What's your plan here?'"

In a video that's now been viewed more than 11 million times, Wolfe's daughter walked her through the new parenting lexicon. "Good job" is now "good choice." "Stop hitting your sister" is replaced with "gentle hands." Even "I'm so proud of you" is now "You should be so proud of yourself."

The internet had opinions. Some applauded the gentle parenting framework. Others rolled their eyes and sided with the bewildered grandmother. But beneath the laughs is a deeper tension: What happens to the village when the parenting rule book gets too thick to follow?

Rebecca Parlakian, senior director of programs at the early childhood development organization Zero to Three, says the goal isn't to be perfect; it's to offer kids safe, loving, responsive care. "They can adapt to different caregiving styles, as long as those three things are there," she said.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Military kids need options other than homeschooling

Having raised three children from birth to adulthood during my husband's active duty service in the Navy, I know how difficult moving is for military children. Each of our three Navy brats experienced challenges integrating into different school curricula, landing back at the bottom in extracurricular activities, and fitting in — or not fitting in — with new social groups.

Recognizing these difficulties, President Donald Trump issued the "Educational Freedom and Opportunity" order in January, stating "the Secretary of Defense shall review any available mechanisms under which military-connected families may use funds from the Department of Defense to attend schools of their choice, including private, faith-based or public charter schools." The president ordered this to be done in time for the 2025-2026 school year.

In May, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth drilled down on one option not specifically mentioned in the order: homeschooling. He ordered the DoD to review resources for homeschooling military parents, stating, "Homeschooling offers an individualized approach for students and highlights the significant role parents play in the educational process." No other options were mentioned in Hegseth's memo.

Military children move three times more than civilian peers, and military parents homeschool at double the rate of civilians as a way of mitigating educational instability. It makes good sense for the DoD to offer them more support. However, homeschooling isn't for everyone, as demonstrated by the fact that more than 80% of military children attend public and DoD schools. Then why is the Pentagon focused on reviewing resources for homeschoolers? What about "private, faith-based or public charter schools"?

Studies show that military children of all ages are at substantially higher risk for negative psychological, social and behavioral health outcomes than their civilian peers, with military adolescents at highest risk especially of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. The reasons are complex, but frequent PCS moves are a primary culprit.

While homeschooling is an excellent alternative for families aiming to stabilize their children's educational curricula and maximize school success, it doesn't eliminate psychosocial risks for military children who must move, especially teens for whom strong peer friendships and non-parental adult mentor relationships (coaches, teachers, etc.) are crucial for good mental well-being. Homeschoolers admit that they must be proactive to offer their children adequate peer-to-peer social opportunities.

Parents may think that as long as they support their kids through each move, they'll be fine. In fact, research shows that friendship support, not family support, is the most important positive indicator of adolescent resilience, presently and later in life. Psychological experts conclude that deep, authentic adolescent friendships are crucial for adolescent development and lead to better outcomes in adulthood.

If military families must move, and moving puts military children at risk, there no perfect solutions. This may be true, but the DoD should consider every alternative to help military children find the educational stability they desperately need, such as K12 and Time4Learning homeschooling programs; charter and magnet schools that give priority enrollment to military children; state open enrollment programs; state funding programs for private school choice; federal vouchers; and Orion Military Scholars program, which helps military teens enroll in U.S. boarding schools for uninterrupted high school experiences.

True "educational freedom" doesn't exist for military families ordered to move. But with the new school year just around the corner, the DoD must act to make educational alternatives affordable, and finally give military families a choice in the matter.

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com." Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

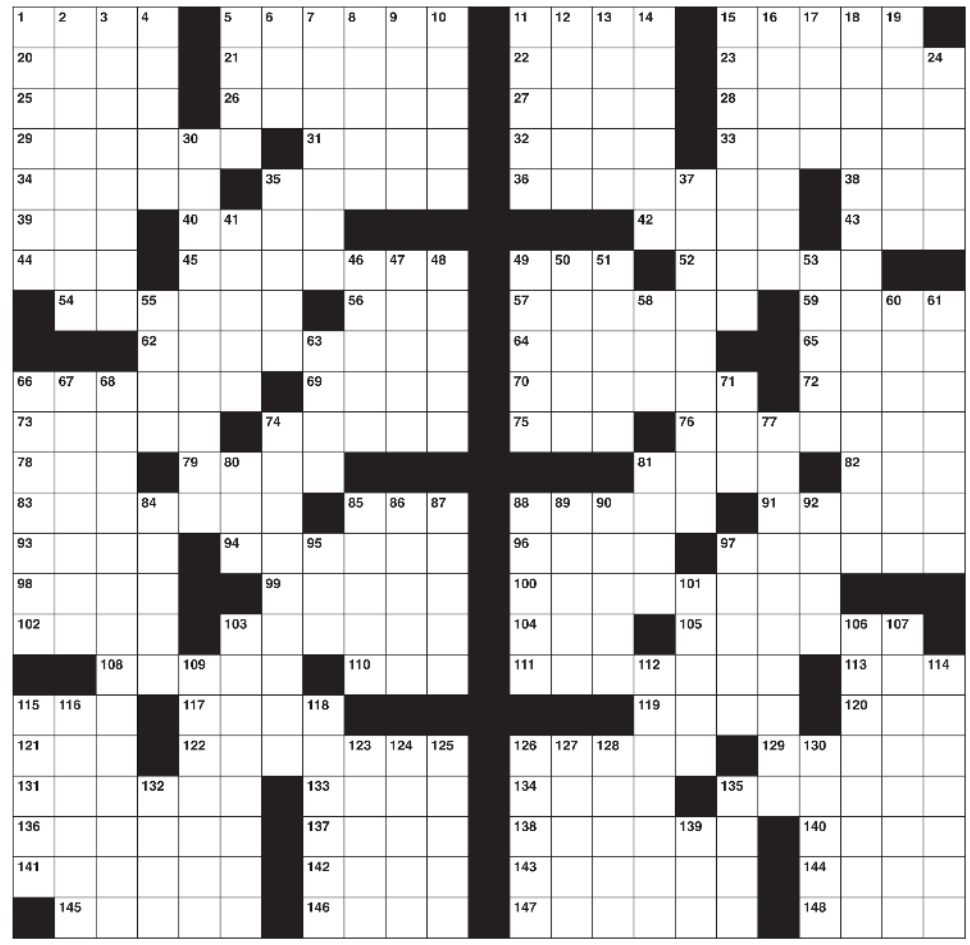
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

TUNNEL VISION

BY BRANDON KOPPY / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Brandon Koppy, of Dripping Springs, Texas, is a performance director for an ad agency. The big central wall of black squares splitting this puzzle's grid in two would usually be a crossword no-no, but there's a thematic reason for it here. — W.S.

Note: This puzzle comes with eight bonus clues. Find their answers to reveal an apt alternative for traversing the grid. 1. Show how it's done 2. "Für Elise" composer 3. They can help with conflict resolution 4. Spy device in old cereal boxes 5. Bringing shame upon 6. Bass-heavy musical groups, maybe 7. Valedictorians have them 8. New bride, quaintly



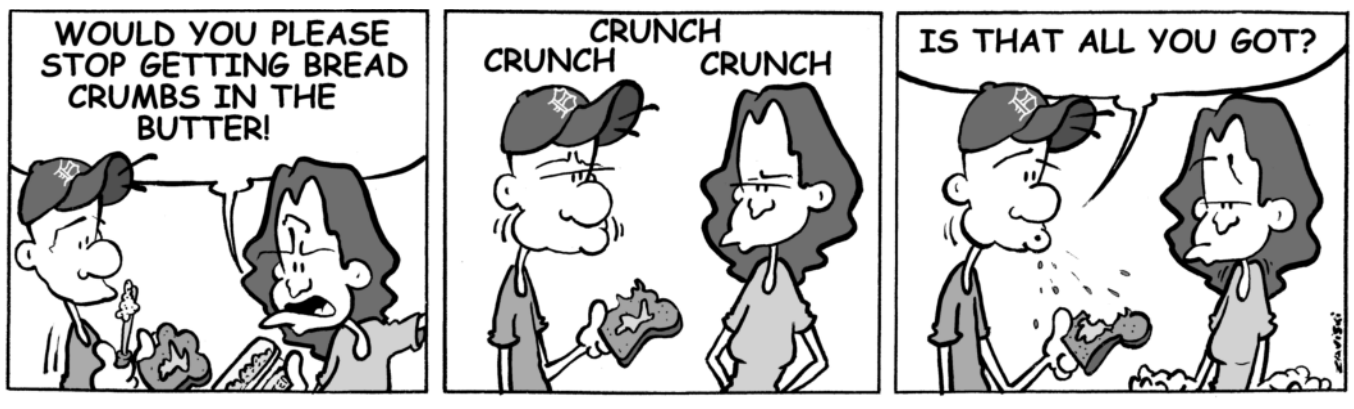
ACROSS

1 Cry from a guard tower
5 Imaginary fiends
11 Assign a number, maybe
15 Takes orders at a restaurant
20 Great Plains tribe
21 ''I'll be right with you''
22 Name that becomes a shape if you switch the second and fourth letters
23 They might leave you in stitches, for short
25 Not marbled, say
26 Electronic music genre
27 Pai gow game piece
28 Relieve
29 They have seniority
31 Bit of red in a salad
32 What accepts all cookies?
33 Bottom
34 Under, on a score
35 ____ of all
36 They might be padded
38 Gift in the 2000 movie ''The Gift''
39 Here, in Paris
40 Alternative fuel source
42 ____ Noël
43 Yoga sounds
44 '60s war zone
45 ''Wicked'' protagonist
49 180
52 Acknowledge silently
54 Leave be
55 The old you?
58 Bygone owner of Capitol Records
60 Tier
61 Like sperm whales, among all animals
63 Slurpable noodle
66 Looked high and low in
67 Polliwog
68 With 18-Down, classic 1967 song by a group whose name is a hint to solving the eight bonus clues
71 Biotech crop, in brief
74 ''Ah, thanks for explaining''
77 As an answer
80 Atlantic food fish
81 Breakfast brand
84 Fruit-shaped candies
85 Wide rift
86 Puccini opera set in Rome
87 Ancient symbols of life
88 Man's name that sounds like two consonants
89 Some luxury bags
90 ''Consequently . . .''
92 ____ noche (tonight: Sp.)
95 One of 12 for Jacob
97 Classic detergent brand
101 Use for sleeping, say
103 Stealthy aquatic hunter
106 Started broadcasting
107 Countrywide
109 ''Lip Gloss'' rapper, 2007
112 Stop being buds?
114 See 1-Down
115 Hosting site with a gallery of memes
116 Jersey boys?
118 Google action
123 Just not done
124 Birdlike
125 Beau ____
126 Bonnie with 13 Grammys
127 Beaming
128 AC____ (G.M. subsidiary)
130 Some saxes
132 Grab bag
135 ''We've all ____ there''
139 Thurman of film
56 Big hunk
57 Many idol worshipers
59 Cartoonist Silverstein
62 Took an hour off midday, say
64 Phrase cooed en español
65 Dry, as Spanish wine
66 Monk known as ''The Father of English History''
69 Geometric art style, familiarly
70 Going wrong
72 Two-stringed Chinese instrument
73 Gave a hoot
74 Gentleman's disagreement?
75 Website feed inits.
76 Basketball shooter's lament
78 Flattering lines
79 Subj. for John Maynard Keynes
81 Alma mater for John Maynard Keynes
82 Dot in la mer
83 It lets you move north
85 Windy City commuting org.
88 ''A picture is worth a thousand words,'' e.g.
91 Mulligans
93 Big name in streaming
94 Gossip about
96 Champion's memento
97 Hold a grudge against
98 North Carolina university
99 ''See if that's OK''
100 Chore-o-graph?
102 Significant start
103 Good person
104 Collectors' org.
105 Traded for cash
108 Letter-shaped opening
110 Postgrad degs.
111 1962 Paul Anka hit with the lyric ''Kiss me mucho''
113 Absorb, as a cost
115 ''____ bin ein Berliner''
117 Goddess of the rainbow
119 State bird of Minnesota
120 ____ degree
121 Give bad marks
122 Reason for a successful steal, maybe
126 Unstable noble gas
129 French composer Erik
131 Eeyore-esque
133 Black dialect, in brief
134 Seemingly forever
135 Roar
136 Soft palate appendages
137 Some M.L.B. highlights
138 Litigious threat
140 ''Bob's Burgers'' daughter
141 Group in charge
142 Puffer or blazer
143 Still looming, say
144 Shape that becomes a name if you switch the second and fourth letters
145 Wet bar?
146 Smooth with a whetstone
147 Like some bobsleighs
148 Hawk

DOWN

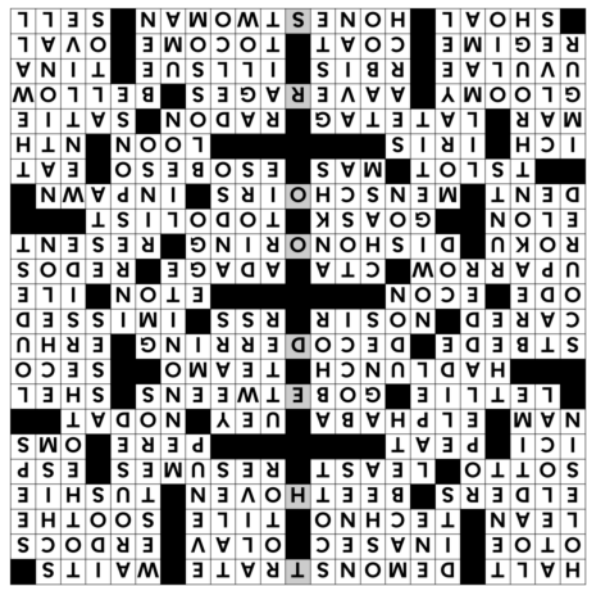
1 With 114-Down, some neighborhood bars . . . or what connect eight pairs of answers in this puzzle?
2 Shopped at a farmers' market, say
3 Concern for a web game developer
4 Guiding principle
5 Morse ''. . .''
6 Opposite of WSW
7 Play with a trio of witches
8 Actor ____ Jackson Jr.
9 State birds of Hawaii
10 Winfield ____, loser to Franklin Pierce for president in 1852
11 Chopper spinner
12 Still in the game
13 Pranksters may have tall ones
14 Tie
15 ''Game of Thrones'' land
16 Got going
17 Wedding exchange
18 See 68-Down
19 Deep split
24 Falls through the cracks, say
30 Strung rungs
35 Likely place for a hot mic
37 Certain religious pacifist
41 Gloss over, linguistically
46 French film director Varda
47 Italian lawn game
48 Just hate
49 Downright
50 Still-life vessels
51 Quite a while
53 Jacks and jennies

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

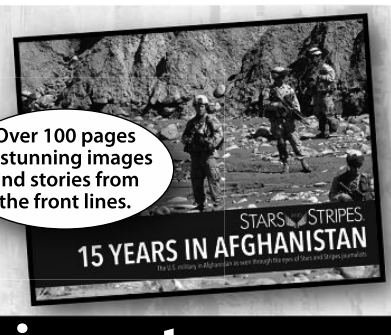


STARS AND STRIPES 15 YEARS IN AFGHANISTAN



The story of the U.S. military's role in Afghanistan, as seen through the eyes of Stars and Stripes journalists covering America's longest war.

Over 100 pages of stunning images and stories from the front lines.



Only $14.99 with Free Shipping

ORDER NOW at www.stripesstore.com

FACES

No change needed

Creator Mike Judge does allow characters to age in revival of 'King of the Hill,' but keeps setup simple

By Luaine Lee
Tribune News Service

The king is once more chugging over the hill as the animated sitcom "King of the Hill" is resurrected for its 14th season Aug. 4 on Hulu. The popular series, which ran on Fox and streams in syndication on various sites, is about a well-meaning and earnest blue-collar family in the fictional town of Arlen, Texas.

Mike Judge, famous for his "Beavis and Butt-Head" characters, created the series and plays the patriarch of the family, Hank Hill.

Judge says he got the idea for the series by watching his neighbors. "I think as far back as in college a good friend of mine and I used to sort of do a bit of two bubbas sitting around drinking beer and talking about what's in the news or whatever," he recalls.

"I had a paper route that was sort of in a blue-collar neighborhood with lots of Texas transplants, so early on I had these kinds of characters around me. But I think when I lived north of Dallas, I had really a pretty good neighborhood; everyone took care of each other, helped out with each other's lawns.

"Later on when I was back from New York, after 'Beavis and Butt-Head,' I had done a panel cartoon. I just had this image of four guys with beers standing out in front of the fence, kind of like I used to see when I'd look out my kitchen window.

"And I just drew them all saying, 'Yep, yep, yep.' And that's still basically the drawing you see at the beginning of the show, is those four guys and their beers. That was really the seed of the idea, I guess."

Unlike other cartoons, which often blast their way onto the flat screen, "King of the Hill" is about ordinary people doing everyday things.

"When I was first writing the pilot, I was just really thinking about the neighborhood I lived in in Dallas and what I did day-to-day," Judge says. "I would go to Home Depot all the time and work on my fence.

"So it's really just kind of trying to just look to real life for inspiration as much as possible instead of other TV and movie characters."

At first, Judge says he and co-writer Greg Daniels weren't sure how to depict the quirky family.

"We debated in the beginning about having them age, possibly, and then quickly decided not to. But I think some of the characters have evolved a little; especially, I think, Peggy became more interesting around the second season.

"At one point, there was a note from an executive, who's not there anymore, that we need more life-changing episodes. And they were trying to apply that theory that works on some shows about just constantly shocking the audience and having crazy things happen. I think you do that too much, and then you don't have anything left. I think part of the strength of the show is that we haven't changed that much," he says.

"I like shows like the old 'Bob Newhart Show,' where you can pretty much see something the first season or the last season in one of those episodes and really everybody stayed pretty consistent. I think that's one of our strengths."

But plunging into its 14th season after an extended hiatus calls for change. This time Hank and his wife, Peggy, are back in Arlen from years in Saudi Arabia where they secured their retirement nest egg. And their nonathletic son, Bobby, is now trying to negotiate life in Dallas as a chef.

Of course, the guys with their brews at that Tom Sawyer fence are back: Dale, Boomhauer and Bill. Most of the original cast returns headed by Judge, Kathy Najimy as Peggy and Pamela Adlon as Bobby.

Stand-up comic Ronny Chieng guests as Laotian neighbor Kahn Souphanousinphone, an arrogant and materialistic IT guy who thinks he's better than his working-class neighbors.

While Hank and Peggy have aged, Judge's technique for making them funny hasn't.

"It's usually putting Hank up against something really annoying and ridiculous in the modern world and just making it as annoying and ridiculous as possible," Judge says.

"Also, we've lined up all the characters and just had them really humiliated and embarrassed, putting them in humiliating situations, like when Hank was constipated, or when Peggy tried to join the beauty pageant. I think those are two formulas, if you can call them formulas.

"I try to not let the show get too political. To me, it's more social than political, I guess you'd say, because that's funnier."



HULU/TNS photos

Mike Judge is the creator and voice of the main character, Hank, in "King of the Hill."



The original characters will be back as "King of the Hill" returns to TV on Hulu on Aug. 4.

Hulk Hogan, icon in professional wrestling, dies at age 71

By Curt Anderson and Ed White
Associated Press

Hulk Hogan, a mustachioed, headscarf-wearing icon in professional wrestling who turned the sport into a massive business and cultural touchstone, died Thursday at age 71, Florida police said.

In Clearwater, Fla., authorities responded to a morning call about a cardiac arrest. Hogan was pronounced dead at a hospital, police said in a statement on Facebook.

Hogan, whose real name was Terry Bollea, was perhaps the biggest star in WWE's long history. He was the main draw for the first WrestleMania in 1985 and was a fixture for years, facing everyone from Andre The Giant and Randy Savage to The Rock and even company chairman Vince McMahon.



Hogan

He won at least six WWE championships and was inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame in 2005.

"Hulkamania," as the energy he created was called, started running wild in the mid-1980s and pushed professional wrestling into the mainstream. He was a flag-waving American hero with the horseshoe mustache, red and yellow gear and massive arms he called his "24-inch pythons."

In recent years, Hogan has waded further into politics. At the 2024 Republican National Convention, Hogan vociferously endorsed Donald Trump, a longtime acquaintance.

In 2016, a Florida jury awarded Hogan $115 million in his sex tape lawsuit against Gawker Media and then added $25 million in punitive damages. Hogan sued after Gawker in 2012 posted a video of him having sex with his former best friend's wife. He contended the post violated his privacy.

He was perhaps as known for his larger-than-life personality as he was his in-ring exploits.

He was beloved for his "promos," hype sessions he used to draw fans into matches.

Hogan crossed over into movies and television as well. He was Thunderlips in the movie "Rocky III" in 1982.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

'Imposter nurse' arrested for using 20 aliases

PA PITTSBURGH — A woman posing as a nurse is accused of using nearly two dozen aliases to illegally treat patients at multiple facilities in Pennsylvania, authorities said.

Shannon Nicole Womack, 39, was initially arrested in April after providing Pennsylvania State Police with false identification during a routine traffic stop on Interstate 79 in Cecil Township, CBS Pittsburgh reported.

An investigation later determined that around 20 aliases and seven different Social Security numbers were associated with Womack's name, police spokesperson Rocco Gagliardi said at a press conference.

Although Womack is not licensed to practice medicine in any U.S. state, she allegedly worked nursing shifts at facilities in Allegheny, Erie, Washington, Beaver, Bradford and Westmoreland counties, according to Pittsburgh's ABC affiliate WTAE.

Officials search for bear that attacked hiker

AK ANCHORAGE — A brown bear attacked a woman as she hiked on a popular trail in Alaska's Chugach Mountains, and officials are still looking for the animal, state police said.

Alaska State Troopers used a helicopter to evacuate the woman off the Basher Trail to a hospital, Anchorage Police spokesperson Christopher Barraza said. Her injuries are considered non-life-threatening, he said.

The woman, who has not been identified, called 911 and told the dispatcher that she had been mauled by a bear about 2 miles into the trail, Barraza said. She told officials she couldn't walk.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game blocked off the area and is searching for the bear, he said.

Remains of 31st victim from firestorm found

CA LOS ANGELES — A 19th victim of the Eaton fire was found in Altadena, officials said, bringing the total death toll to 31 more than six months after unprecedented wildfires swept through broad swaths of Los Angeles.

The remains were found on the 10 block of La Venezia Court and determined to be human, the medical examiner's office said in a statement.

Like all but one of the victims of the Eaton fire, this person died west of North Lake Avenue, which served as a dividing line between those who received evacuation alerts before the flames arrived and those who did not.

The Palisades and Eaton fires were among the most deadly and destructive fires in California history. In addition to the dozens of lives lost, more than 16,000 structures burned, the majority of which were homes.

8 kids taken to hospitals for seizure-like symptoms

MA CAMBRIDGE — Eight children at a church near Harvard University where a French youth choir was holding a concert suffered seizure-like symptoms and were taken to hospitals, possibly the result of fumes from cleaning supplies, officials said.

The children, described as preteens and early teens, were doing fine Wednesday and were all released from local hospitals, according to the Cambridge Fire Department. The Cambridge Fire Department's hazardous materials team determined fumes in the building could have come from cleaning supplies used shortly before the first complaint.

Crews first received a call about a child suffering from a seizure. When firefighters arrived, the child was sitting outside of the church but was not actively having a seizure, Fire Chief Thomas Cahill said.

"That quickly escalated into seven other people having seizure-like symptoms," Cahill told WCVB-TV.

Peacocks and peahens go missing from hotel

CA WALNUT GROVE — Dozens of peacocks and peahens known for wandering the grounds of a historic Art Deco hotel in the Sacramento Delta are missing, and the hotel staff said they believe the birds were stolen.

After a customer at the Ryde Hotel mentioned seeing two men grabbing one of the birds and putting it inside a cage on the bed of a pickup truck, the staff did a count and realized only four birds remained, David Nielsen, the hotel's general manager, said.

"We're not sure why anyone would do anything like this, but the staff is absolutely heartbroken," Nielsen said.

Authorities are investigating the case as a property crime. The male birds are valued at $2,000 each and the peahens at $1,000 each, said Sgt. Amar Gandhi, a spokesperson at the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office.

Heavy plane, drag from antlers led to crash

AK JUNEAU — A small plane that crashed in 2023 while carrying moose meat for hunters in remote western Alaska, killing the husband of former U.S. Rep. Mary Peltola, was overweight for takeoff and encountered drag from a set of antlers mounted outside, federal investigators said.

The National Transportation Safety Board, in its final report on the crash that killed Eugene Peltola Jr., who was the only person on board the aircraft, listed several factors among its probable cause findings. They included decisions by Peltola to fly the plane above its maximum takeoff weight and affix a set of moose antlers on the right wing strut that caused a drag, along with turbulent flight conditions in the area.

The agency said carrying antlers on the outside of a plane is a common practice in Alaska but requires formal approval from the Federal Aviation Administration, with a notation in the plane's logbooks. "There was no evidence that such approval had been granted for the accident airplane," the report states.

Deputy sued for illegally sharing info with agents

CO DENVER — Colorado's Democratic attorney general sued a sheriff's deputy for allegedly helping federal immigration agents find and arrest a college student who had an expired visa.

Attorney General Phil Weiser also disclosed that his office is investigating whether other law enforcement officers on a regional drug task force the deputy worked on have been sharing information to help federal agents make immigration arrests in violation of state law limiting cooperation in immigration enforcement. The federal government has sued Colorado over such laws.

On June 5, Mesa County Deputy Alexander Zwinck allegedly shared the driver's license, vehicle registration and insurance information of the 19-year-old nursing student in a Signal chat used by task force members, according to the lawsuit. The task force includes officers who work for federal Homeland Security Investigations, which can enforce immigration laws, the lawsuit said.

Over 120 defendants let go, unable to get attorney

MA BOSTON — More than 120 cases, including some for assault on family members and police, were dismissed in Boston, the latest fallout from a monthslong dispute over pay that has led public defenders to stop taking new clients.

At a mostly empty courtroom, Boston Municipal Court Chief Justice Tracy-Lee Lyons invoked the Lavallee protocol in dismissing case after case.

It requires cases be dropped if a defendant hasn't had an attorney for 45 days and released from custody if they haven't had one for seven days.

Democratic Gov. Maura Healey, speaking to reporters in Fall River, said the situation needed to be resolved.

"This is a public safety issue and also a due process issue as people need representation," she said. "I know the parties are talking. They have got to find a way to work this out. We need lawyers in court ... and certainly they need to be paid fairly."

From wire reports



ANDREW PARK, INVISION/AP

Comic book connoisseur

An attendee looks through comic books during preview night for Comic-Con International on Wednesday, in San Diego.

CELEBRATING 130 YEARS OF SERVICE
1895 2025

130 YEARS STRONG

SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE

MILITARY COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Since July 25, 1895, the Army & Air Force Exchange Service has proudly served Soldiers, Airmen, Guardians and their families. Marking 130 years on July 25, 2025, we continue to enhance their Quality of Life globally, from department stores to remote outposts, by providing essential tax-free shopping, exclusive services and a comforting taste of home.

MAKING MILITARY LIFE MORE CONVENIENT, ALL IN ONE PLACE

MILITARY-EXCLUSIVE PRICING
TAX-FREE SHOPPING
FREE SHIPPING ON ORDERS OVER $49
MEMBER-ONLY CREDIT OPTIONS
GAS
FOOD
SERVICES

WHERE HEROES SHOP:

HONORABLY DISCHARGED VETERANS CAN USE THEIR LIFELONG BENEFIT AT SHOPMYEXCHANGE.COM/VETS

YOUR EARNED BENEFIT NO SALES TAX
YOUR EARNED BENEFIT MILITARY EXCLUSIVE PRICING

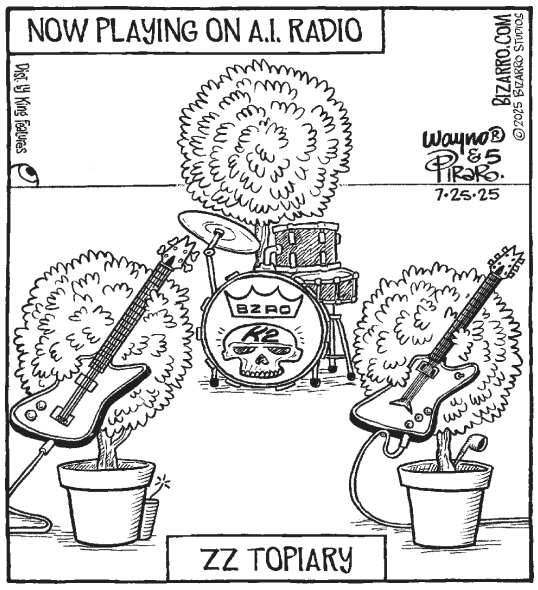
100%

OF EARNINGS SUPPORT THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

$15B+

IN VALUE FOR THE MILITARY COMMUNITY IN THE LAST 10 YEARS

Bizarro



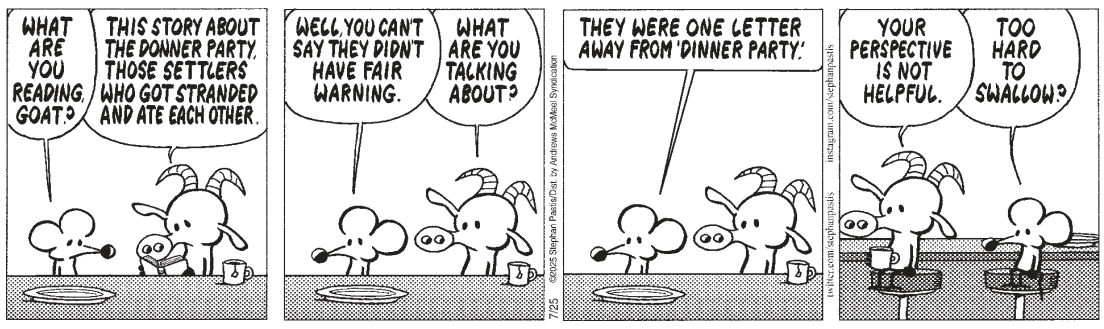
Loose Parts



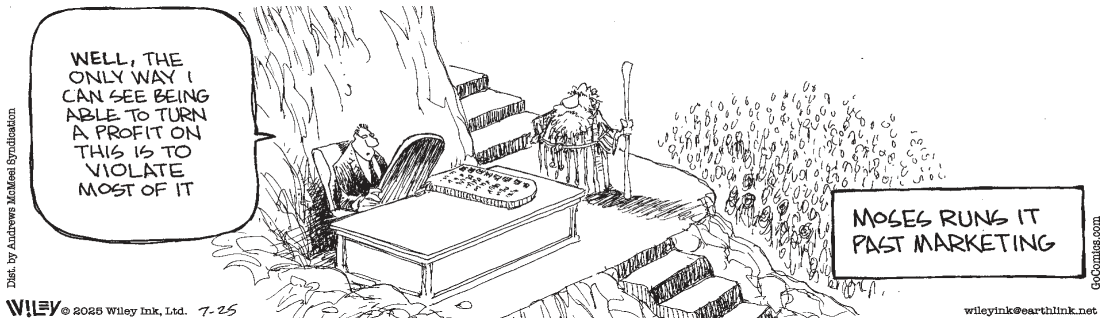
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



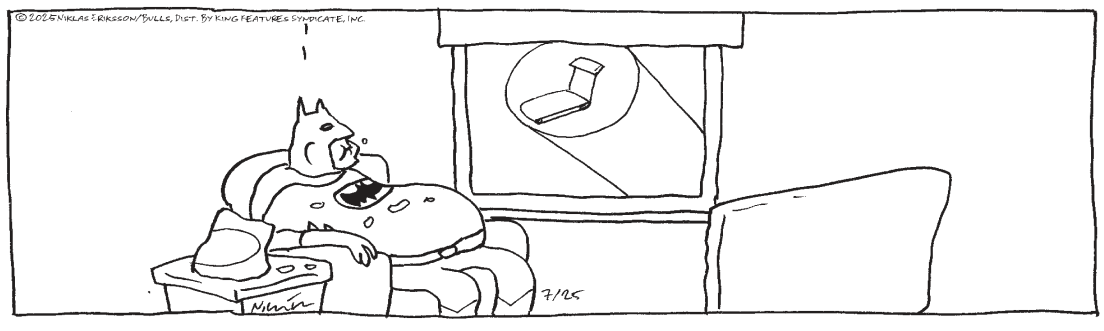
Non Sequitur



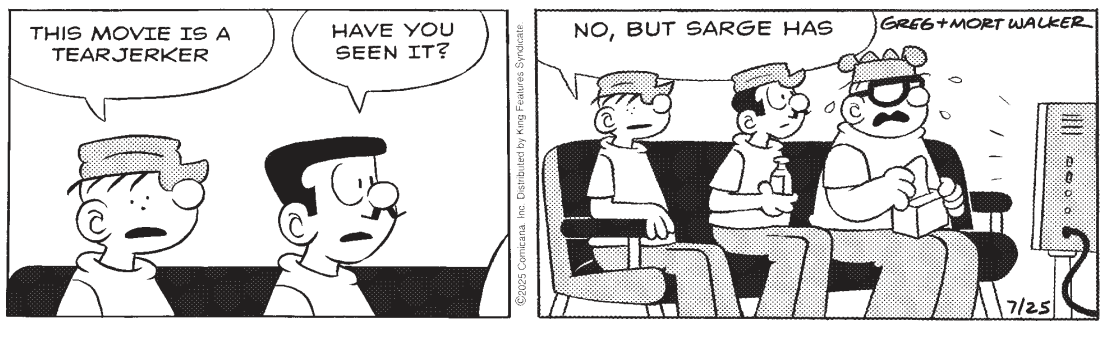
Wumo



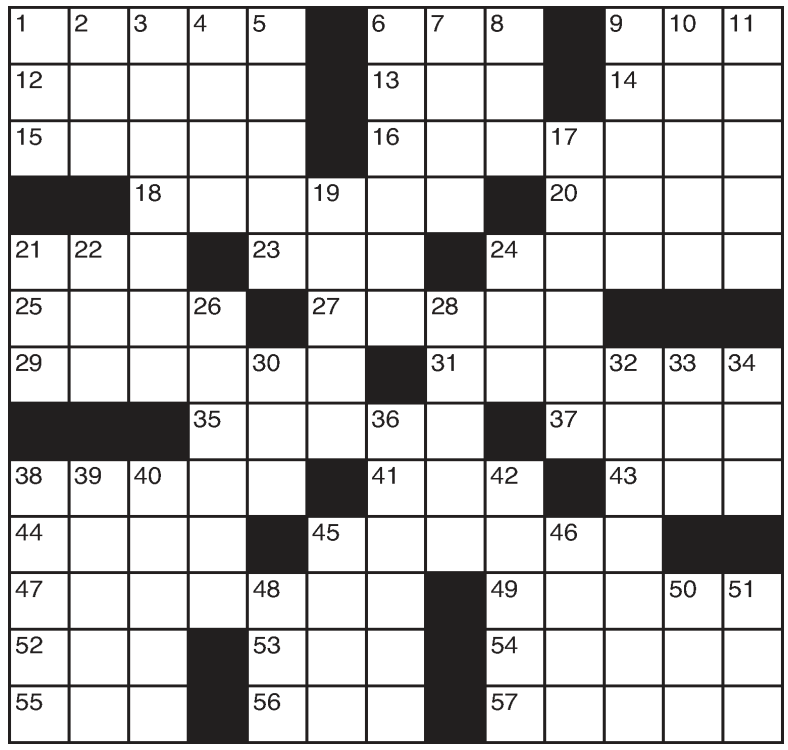
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

1 D-Day beach
6 Mormon church, for short
9 "Despicable Me" character
12 Egret's cousin
13 Hot tub reaction
14 Sesame product
15 Brick worker
16 Element #36
18 Prolific inventor
20 "— boy!"
21 Skillet
23 "Dig in!"
24 Obliterate
25 Yale students
27 Blue Grotto isle
29 Bike rider
31 "Is that so?"
35 Puccini work
37 Hastens
38 Actress Sonia
41 Have
43 Up to
44 Hindu deity
45 Pastry choice
47 Element #92
49 New England state
52 Mosquito barrier
53 Poetic tribute
54 Future seed
55 Numerical prefix
56 Composer Rorem
57 Nation on the Red Sea

DOWN

1 Resistance unit
2 — culpa
3 Element #33
4 Cobra feature
5 Sandy's owner
6 Sitting Bull's tribe
7 Mend socks
8 Bashful
9 Must, jocularly
10 Mob scenes
11 Arm bones
17 Outcast
19 "— bleu!"
21 Chest muscle
22 Gymnast — Raisman
24 Before
26 Campaign phrase
28 Shrimp's kin
30 Ecol. watchdog
32 Element #3
33 Maui memento
34 Designer monogram
36 Meandered
38 Main impact
39 Harder to find
40 Valuable violin
42 Spock portrayer
45 Ranch visitor
46 Goalie's goal
48 Bit of physics
50 Braves' div.
51 Still, in verse

Answer to Previous Puzzle

T	A	M	S	■	O	P	T	■	D	O	T	H
E	L	I	E	■	U	R	I	■	E	U	R	O
A	I	D	A	■	T	E	N	■	B	T	U	S
S	T	I	N	G	S	■	S	H	A	D	E	S
■	■	■	C	O	M	■	■	E	T	A	■	■
A	B	B	E	■	A	M	A	R	E	T	T	O
N	I	L	■	■	R	O	I	■	■	E	R	A
I	C	E	W	A	T	E	R	■	L	S	A	T
■	■	E	E	K	■	■	E	P	A	■	■	■
A	P	P	I	A	N	■	D	I	P	P	E	R
P	O	O	R	■	A	D	O	■	T	I	D	E
S	T	U	D	■	L	O	U	■	O	L	G	A
E	S	T	O	■	A	N	T	■	P	L	E	D

7-25

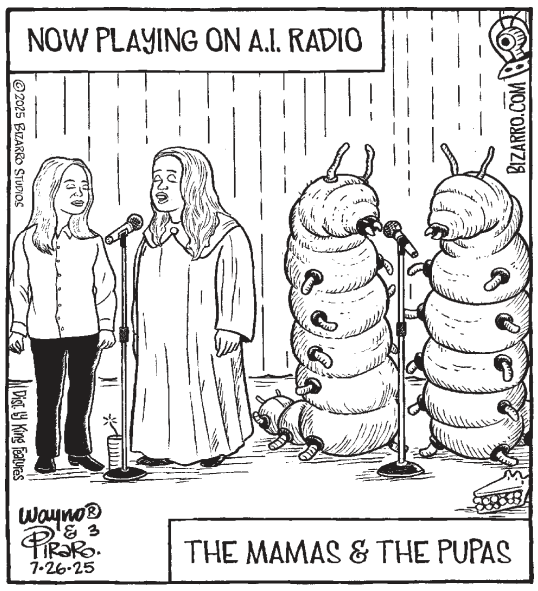
CRYPTOQUIP

Y M D X Y C M E C M K N Y M I N F Z P X E Z V O N E R Y E T B U C O I C V O F E B V X O M M D T C K R E R Y U O F V O Y E O I: T Y V N R Y P P Y V E N.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WANTING TO GENERATE SOME DIVIDENDS, THE LONG-BILLED WADING BIRDS INVESTED IN THE STORK MARKET.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals N

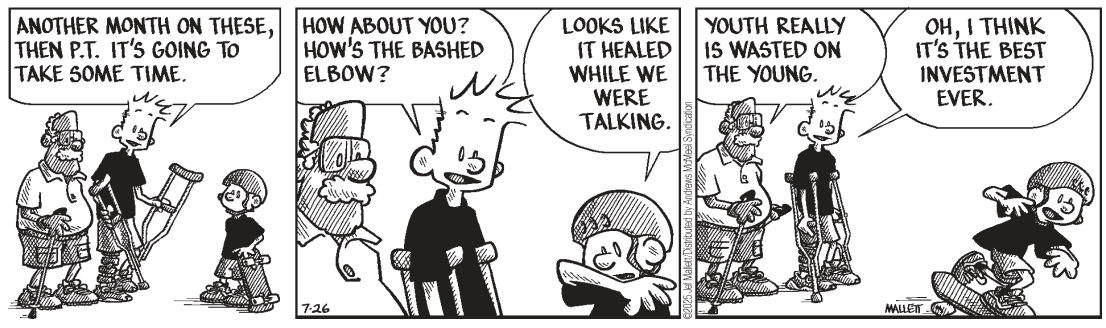
Bizarro



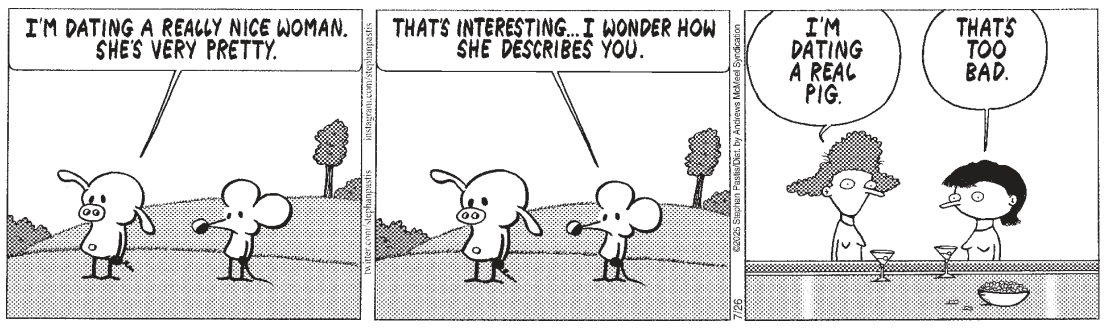
Loose Parts



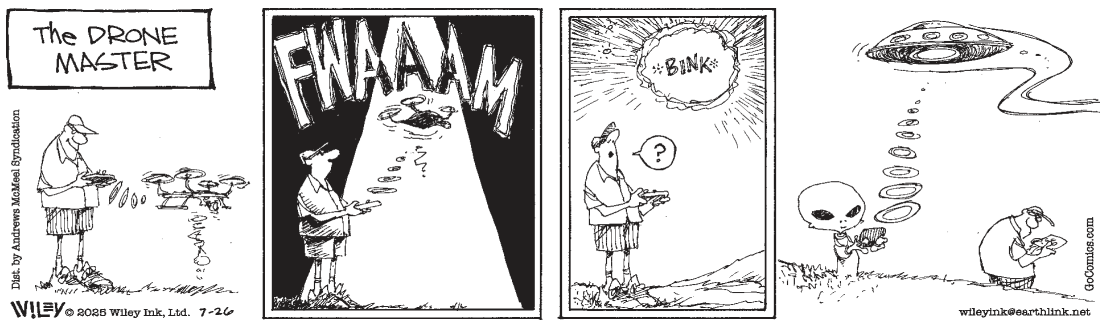
Frazz



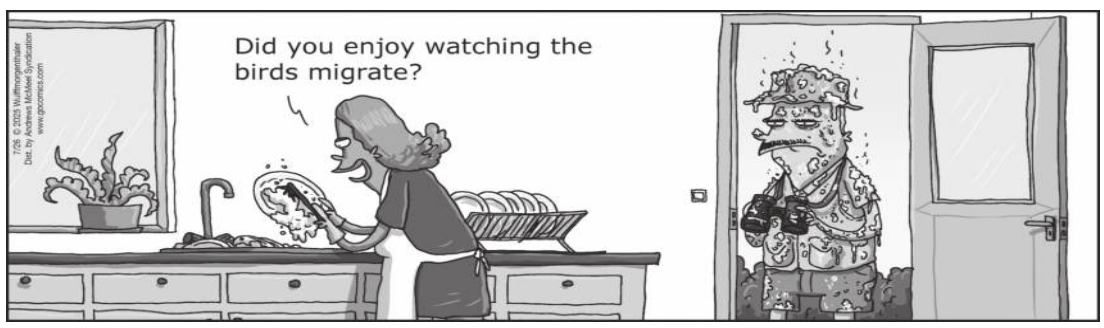
Pearls Before Swine



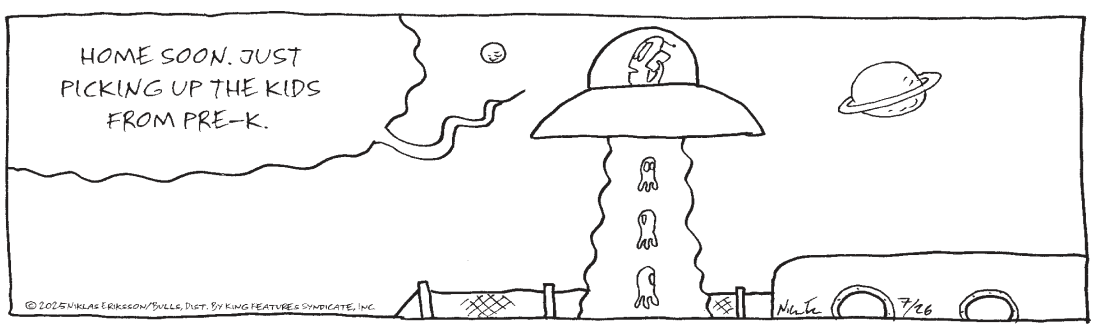
Non Sequitur



Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

■	1	2	3	4	5	■	6	7	8	9	10	■
11						■	12					13
14						■	15					
16			■	17		18			■	19		
20			21	■	22			■	23			
24				25	■	26		27				
■	■	■	28		29	■	30			■	■	■
31	32	33				34	■	35		36	37	38
39				■	40		41	■	42			
43			■	44				45	■	46		
47			48			■	49		50			
51						■	52					
■	53					■	54					■

ACROSS

1 Removes
6 Root
11 Christie sleuth
12 Greetings
14 "Raven" maiden
15 NFL all-time leading rusher — Smith
16 Request
17 French painter Edgar
19 R-V link
20 Cravats
22 Prune
23 Olympic skater Nathan
24 Result
26 Necklace ornament
28 "Blue Bloods" extra
30 Hide-hair insert
31 Hone
35 Skyy, for one
39 Charades player
40 Collar
42 Maxi's opposite
43 Miner's find
44 Whale's home
46 Mil. bigwig
47 Nastassja of "Tess"
49 Rue
51 Sign up
52 Designer Norma
53 Grand parties
54 Closes with a bang

DOWN

1 Bumps off
2 Made pig sounds
3 To and —
4 Nixon successor
5 Bridge material
6 Devalue
7 Shortens pants
8 Shade tree
9 Biblical prophet
10 Corrupt
11 Dish
13 Daredevil's feat
18 Republicans
21 Bolivian city
23 PC drive insert
25 Mom's mate
27 Calendar abbr.
29 Writing implements
31 Fire sign?
32 Employer's job
33 Egyptian deity
34 Dundee denial
36 Two-letter combination
37 Prepares to pray
38 "— a stinker?" (Bugs Bunny)
41 Hound sounds
44 Tex. neighbor
45 Patricia of "Hud"
48 Costa del —
50 "Today" rival, briefly

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

7-26

CRYPTOQUIP

EA X OKQ-AGGLKW YOEHHEVJ QEPW WPKYYKY FD AGP XV KBLPXMXJXVL KMKVL, HEJUL EL DFL GV X WFBKWG?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ANY PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURES THAT MOVIE DIRECTOR PENNY MIGHT HAVE CREATED: MARSHALL ARTS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: D equals P

STARS AND STRIPES

Max D. Lederer Jr., Publisher
Laura Law, Chief Operating Officer
Lt. Col. Daniel "DQ" Quinlan, Europe commander
John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
Lt. Col. Lucas Crouch, Pacific commander
John Albaugh, Pacific chief of staff

EDITORIAL

Sean Moores, Managing Editor for Presentation
moores.sean@stripes.com
Ann Pinson, Digital Managing Editor
pinson.ann@stripes.com

BUREAU STAFF

Europe/Mideast

Erik Slavin, Europe & Mideast Bureau Chief
slavin.erik@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9350; DSN (314)583.9350

Pacific

Aaron Kidd, Pacific Bureau Chief
kidd.aaron@stripes.com
+81.42.552.2511 ext. 88380; DSN (315)227.7380

Washington

Joseph Cacchioli, Washington Bureau Chief
cacchioli.joseph@stripes.com
(+1)(202)886-0033

Brian Bowers, Assistant Managing Editor, News
bowers.brian@stripes.com

CIRCULATION

Mideast

David Schultz, District Manager
schultz.david@stripes.com
xsscirculation@stripes.com
+49(0)152.5672.5036; DSN (314)583-9111

Europe

Carlo Aquino, Circulation Manager
aquino.carlo@stripes.com
memberservices@stripes.com
+49(0)631.3615.9136; DSN (314)583.9136

Pacific

Mari Mori, customerhelp@stripes.com
+81-3 6385.3171; DSN (315)227.7333

CONTACT US

Washington

tel: (+1)202.886.0003
633 3rd St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20001-3050

Reader letters

letters@stripes.com

Additional contacts

stripes.com/contactus

OMBUDSMAN

Jacqueline Smith

The Stars and Stripes ombudsman protects the free flow of news and information, reporting any attempts by the military or other authorities to undermine the newspaper's independence. The ombudsman also responds to concerns and questions from readers, and monitors coverage for fairness, accuracy, timeliness and balance. The ombudsman welcomes comments from readers, and can be contacted by email at ombudsman@stripes.com, or by phone at 202.886.0003.

Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) published daily (except Saturday, Sunday, 25 December and 1 January) for 50 cents (Monday through Thursday) and one dollar on Friday by Stars and Stripes Pacific, OPC 706 BOX 7, APO AP 96301-9001. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, OPC 706 BOX 7, AP 96301-9001.

The Stars and Stripes newspaper is authorized by the Department of Defense (DoD) for the overseas U.S. military community. As an authorized newspaper, Stars and Stripes publications may be distributed through official channels and use appropriated funds for distribution to remote locations where overseas DoD personnel are located. The content printed in this newspaper is not classified as command information and is neither endorsed by nor represents the official views of the U.S. government.

The appearance of advertising in this publication does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense, Stars and Stripes, and or services advertised. Products or services advertised shall be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user or patron.

© Stars and Stripes 2025

stripes.com

OPINION

Strategists focus on peace in Taiwan Strait

By David Ignatius
The Washington Post

ASPEN, Colo.

Catastrophic wars don't really catch us by surprise. We usually see them coming but don't act quickly or decisively enough to avert them. To try to avoid that mistake, several dozen top former defense- and foreign-policy officials gathered here last weekend to discuss the risk of war between the United States and China over Taiwan.

Sadly, senior Trump administration officials stayed away from a conversation they urgently need to join. The Defense Department issued a statement a few days before the gathering claiming that the host, the Aspen Strategy Group, promotes "the evils of globalism." Despite this, the bipartisan group had one of its most productive discussions in the 15 years that I've been a member.

The rough consensus was that the United States should seek a combination of "reassurance and deterrence" with China, said Anja Manuel, the group's executive director. That could include affirming to China that the U.S. opposes Taiwan's independence — but also strengthening U.S. military power in Asia to discourage any Chinese effort to control Taiwan by force. It's the right balance, I think.

For 41 years, the bipartisan group has been meeting each summer to discuss war and peace. Condoleezza Rice, former secretary of state and the organization's co-chair, reminded members that the group was founded to address disputes during the polarized early years of Ronald Reagan's presidency. "There was a lot of suspicion of Reagan by foreign policy experts," she noted. But frank discussion helped resolve differences.

The absence of senior Trump officials was unfortunate, but it didn't dampen the discussion. Attendees included two former secretaries of state, two former defense secretaries, one former treasury secretary and four former national security advisers — roughly evenly split between Republicans and Democrats — along with many other senior officials, China scholars and some foreign-policy journalists like me.

The meeting began with a haunting comparison of current U.S.-China tension with the collision between Britain and Germany that resulted in World War I. Yale historian Arne Westad explained the similarities: Germany in 1914 had an entangling alliance with a corrupt and fading Austria, a bit like China's bond now with Russia. Britain resented a rising Germany and feared threats to its dominance of the global order, again mirroring America and China. Misperceptions and mistakes led to an all-out conflict that left every combatant worse off.

There was a consensus among the group that President Xi Jinping is seeking military dominance in Asia — and that he's impatient to reimpose Beijing's control over Taiwan, which broke away from the mainland in 1949. Chinese threats about Taiwan have increased since Lai Ching-te, a vocal Taiwan advocate, was elected president in January 2024. One sign of Xi's restlessness was a statement last month by Wang Huning, the Politburo's top Taiwan expert, that reunification is "unstoppable" and that Beijing is determined to destroy Taiwanese separatism.

What might China do to advance its Taiwan agenda, given Xi's order to the Chinese military to be ready for war by 2027? R. Nicholas Burns, President Joe Biden's ambassador to China and the Aspen group's other co-chair, said the biggest danger might not be a "bolt out of the blue" attack but slow strangulation through a blockade, customs controls or other nonmilitary means — which might force the U.S. to act and begin a cycle of escalation.

President Donald Trump's views about Taiwan are unclear, and that worried the group. Some fear that in trying to make a broad trade agreement with Xi, Trump could put Taiwan on the table. Burns expressed the view of most attendees when he cautioned that the Taiwan issue "doesn't lend itself to a 'big deal' but to tough-minded, patient leadership that works with U.S. allies to deter China and to prevent a war."

If pursuing a grand bargain with Beijing is unwise, what's the best path forward? Here's where the "reassurance and deterrence" strategy comes in. A half-dozen attendees urged that the United States try to sustain the status quo by reminding Lai that it opposes independence — and sharing that message with Beijing.

Most group members favored more military and economic links with allies to dissuade China from attacking. Here, again, Trump's position is unclear.

The harder challenge is deterring Chinese "gray zone" tactics, short of all-out war, that squeeze Taiwan into submission. Graham Allison, a professor at the Harvard Kennedy School and a founding member of the Aspen group, stressed to me: "The focal threat isn't invasion but a quarantine that chokes the island by preventing import of food and energy and prevents export of computer chips and everything else."

Warning Beijing against any unilateral move to squeeze Taiwan will help, but the U.S. has often done that in the past. To give this message some teeth, some members thought the U.S. should counter Chinese cyber and information operations with similar operations of its own.

What makes Taiwan so important — and dangerous — is that it's ground zero in the battle for dominance in artificial intelligence. Taiwan's TSMC makes the most advanced computer chips in the world. China wants them. America can't afford to lose them. As the World War I analogy suggests, wars begin when countries feel their access to critical materials is threatened. Both Washington and Beijing are driven by that fear.

The world is afflicted with too many wars already, and we see their ruinous costs every day. But you don't avert future conflicts by ignoring them. You look them in the eye, so to speak — and focus planning to make war more costly and peace more essential. I hope the Trump administration will debate its Taiwan strategy as intensely as the Aspen group.

NIH budget cuts are a setback for American science

Bloomberg editorial board

White House budgets, generally speaking, aren't serious governing documents. Even so, they're a declaration of national priorities — and by that measure, the latest blueprint is deeply troubling. What sort of administration aspires to shrink its budget for scientific discovery by 40%?

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. recently testified before a House committee to defend cuts at the National Institutes of Health, the world's biggest funder of biomedical and behavioral research. The agency going forward "will focus on essential research at a more practical cost," the secretary said. His plan would end taxpayer support for "wasteful" academic areas, including certain gender-related topics.

It's fair for the administration to set its own research priorities. But one would expect such cuts to free up (if not increase) funding for other urgent concerns, including chronic disease. Confoundingly, Kennedy appears intent on shrinking the entire research enterprise, thereby jeopardizing the White House's stated goals of improving public health, maintaining global leadership in science and staying ahead of China, which is set on closing the gap.

His proposal also undermines the core principle that science is a vehicle for national progress. America's explicit commitment to support scientific research began in 1945. Inspired by wartime innovations, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked his top science adviser to develop a program that would advance medicine, boost the economy and develop a cadre of young researchers. The resulting framework established science as a "proper concern of government" and sought to reward academic inquiry with generous public funding.

For the better part of a century, this formula worked quite well. NIH grants have supported countless lifesaving advances, from cancer treatments and gene therapies to vaccines and diagnostic equipment. Almost a fifth of Nobel Prizes have been awarded to NIH scientists or grantees.

Yet several factors have sown doubt about this model in recent years. Reports that the NIH supported Chinese research on coronaviruses, a type of which caused the COVID-19 pandemic, inflamed the public and increased scrutiny over grants. Others raised doubts that elite universities — with their swelling administrative costs, staggering tuition rates and contentious ideological fixations — are prudent stewards of taxpayer dollars.

For these reasons, the White House isn't wrong to scrutinize how universities spend federal money. A reassessment of the NIH's decades-old grant framework would be salutary.

Alas, such reforms don't appear to be what Kennedy has in mind. Instead of limiting some costs to improve systems and expand funds for critical research, the health secretary is seeking to issue 15,000 fewer grants by next year. In so doing, he threatens to impede crucial medical studies, shrink the number of new drugs and put American scientists at a needless disadvantage — all while China lavishly invests in research facilities, improves clinical trials and streamlines regulatory approvals.

Congressional appropriations ultimately will determine what gets funded — and judging by recent hearings, lawmakers are deeply skeptical about Kennedy's budget. By expanding support for science and encouraging careful oversight, Congress can do its part to redirect the secretary's ambitions. It unfortunately bears emphasizing that diminishing science sends the wrong signal about America's trajectory, to its citizens and to the world.

SCOREBOARD/SOCCER

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

ATHLETICS — Designated 1B Logan Davidson for assignment. Optioned LHP Hogan Harris to Las Vegas (PCL). Selected the contract of LHP Ben Bowden from Las Vegas.

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Reinstated RHP Zach Eflin from the 15-day IL. Transferred C Maverick Handley from the 7-day IL to the 10-day IL. Optioned RHP Brandon Young to Norfolk (IL). Agreed to term with RHP Vinny Nittoli on a minor league contract. Sent LHP Keegan Akin on a rehab assignment to Norfolk.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Agreed to terms with RHP Gabe Davis, SS Kyle Lodise, SS Colby Shelton, RHP Landen Payne, RHP Riley Eikhoff, 3B Anthony DePino, SS Billy Carlson, RHP Daniel Wright, C Steven Lancia, LHP Andrew Sentlinger, UTL Kaleb Freeman, C Landon Hodge, RHP Blaine Wynk, OF Ely Brown, SS Matthew Boughton, RHP Caedmon Parker, C Rylan Galvan, OF Derek Cerda, RHP Max Banks, LHP Jackson Nove, OF Jaden Fauske, C James Taussig on minor league contracts.

DETROIT TIGERS — Designated CF Brewer Hicklen for assignment. Placed LHP Tarik Skubal on the paternity list. Selected the contract of RHP Troy Melton from Toledo (IL).

HOUSTON ASTROS — Sent 3B Luis Guillorme to Sugar Land (PCL) on a rehab assignment. Agreed to terms with SS Xavier Neyens, OFs Ethan Frey, Justin Thomas, Elijah Farley and Josh Wakefield, RHPs Nick Potter, Gabel Pentecost, Kellan Oakes and Aubrey Smith, INF Nick Monistre, C Jase Mitchell, 2B Kyle Walker and SS Zach Daudet.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Placed LF Nick Loftin on the 7-day IL. Recalled LF MJ Melendez from Omaha (IL). Agreed to terms with LHP Junior Suarez on a minor league contract.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Placed RHP David Festa on the 15-day IL retroactive to July 22. Recalled RHP Travis Adams from St. Paul (IL).

NEW YORK YANKEES — Sent RHP Luis Gil to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL) on a rehab assignment.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Reinstated 2B Coco Montes from Durham (IL).

TEXAS RANGERS — Agreed to terms with RHP AJ Russell on a minor league contract. Reinstated RHP Jon Gray from the 60-day IL. Designated RHP Luke Jackson for assignment.

National League

ATLANTA BRAVES — Recalled LHP Dylan Dodd from Gwinnett (IL). Recalled RHP Hunter Stratton from Gwinnett. Optioned RHP Wander Suero to Gwinnett. Optioned RHP Davis Daniel to Gwinnett.

CHICAGO CUBS — Agreed to terms with OF Ethan Conrad, OF Kane Kepley, RHP Dominick Reid, OF Kade Snell, LHP Pierce Coppola, RHP Jake Knapp, LHP Colton Book, C Justin Stransky and RHPs Eli Jerzembeck and Noah Edders on minor league contracts.

CINCINNATI REDS — Sent RHP Hunter Greene to ACL Reds on a rehab assignment.

COLORADO ROCKIES — Placed RHP Germán Márquez on the 15-day IL retroactive to July 21. Recalled RHP Tanner Gordon from Albuquerque (PCL).

NEW YORK METS — Reinstated RHP Jose Butto from the 15-day IL. Optioned RHP Justin Garza to Syracuse (IL).

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Agreed to terms wtij SS Gustavo Melendez, C Adonys Guzman, OF Nosh Tate, 2B Dylan Palmer, RHP Cameron Keshock, OF Eddie King Jr. , OF Canon Reeder, , RHP Brandon Cain. Agreed to terms with free agent RHP Draven Zeigler.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Designated RHP Erick Fedde for assignment. Recalled RHP Andre Granillo from Memphis (IL).

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Reinstated RHP Orlando Ribalta from the 15-day IL.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association

PHOENIX SUNS — Claimed G Jordan Goodwin off waivers from the L.A. Lakers.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS — Signed F David Jones Garcia to a two-way contract.

Women's National Basketball Association

DALLAS WINGS — Released G Grace Berger.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

ARIZONA CARDINALS — Placed DTs Bilal Nichols and Walter Nolen and LB B.J. Ojulari on the active/PUP list.

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Placed LB Jake Hummel on the active/NFI list.

BUFFALO BILLS — Placed WR Laviska Shenault on the active/NFI list.

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Signed CB Tre Swilling to the active roster. Waived QB Ethan Garbers.

CHICAGO BEARS — Released DB Tavarius Moore.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Claimed DE K.J. Henry off waivers from the Philadelphia Eagles. Placed DT Michael Hall and QB Deshaun Watson on the active/PUP list. Placed WR David Bell on the active/NFI list. Waived WR Jaelen Gill.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Placed Trey Hendrickson on the reserve/did not report list.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Activated LB Quay Walker and DB Micah Robinson from active/PUP list.

HOUSTON TEXANS — Placed RB Joe Mixon and CB Alijah Huzzie on the active/NFI list. Placed DE Denico Autry and Derek Barnett, OT Trent Brown, C Eli Cox, WR Tank Dell, DTs Folorunso Fatukasi and Kurt Hinish, LB K.C. Ossai, RBs Dameon Pierce and J.J. Taylor and S Jimmie Ward on the active/PUP list. Signed CB Arthur Maulet to the active roster. Waived CB Keydrain Calligan.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Reverted OT Savion Washington to the reserve/PUP list.

LOS ANGELES RAMS — Placed WR Tru Edwards and TE Mark Redman on the active/PUP list.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Activated DB Carlton Davis, LB Jahlani Tavai and WR Jeremiah Webb to the active roster.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Signed S Julian Blackmon to a one-year contract.

NEW YORK GIANTS — Reverted DB Anthony Johnson to the reserve/PUP list.

NEW YORK JETS — Signed OL Samuel Jackson to the active roster. Activated LB Aaron Smith from the active/NFI list.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Placed LB Nakobe Dean on the active/PUP list. Signed DT Joe Evans to the active roster. Waived/injured G Marcus Tate.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Placed DT Johnathan Hankins of the active/NFI list.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Placed OLB Lorenzo Carter on the reserve/retired list. Placed QB Will Levis on injured reserve. Signed DL Timmy Horne and RB Jermar Jefferson to the active roster.

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Placed WR Terry McLaurin on the reserve/did not report list. Placed G Sam Cosmi on the active/PUP list. Signed WR Tay Martin to the active roster.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING — Signed F Ethan Czata to a three-year, entry-level contract.

SOCCER
Major League Soccer

ATLANTA UNITED — Acquired up to $800,000 in general allocation money from CF Montreal in exchange for D Efraín Morales.

COLORADO RAPIDS — Transferred D Chidozie Awaziem to FC Nantes (France's Ligue 1).

COLUMBUS CREW — Transferred MF Aziel Jackson to Jagiellonia Białystok (Polish Ekstraklasa) in exchange for an undisclosed fee and an additional conditional performance-based incentives.

MINNESOTA UNITED — Loaned G Wessel Speel to Shelbourne FC (Ireland's Premier Division) for the remainder of the 2025 season.

NEW YORK RED BULLS — Acquired MF Gustav Berggren from Rakow Czestochowa (Ekstraklasa) in exchange for an undisclosed transfer fee, and signed him to an MLS contract through 2028 with an option for 2029.

AP SPORTLIGHT

July 25

1941 — Lefty Grove of the Boston Red Sox wins his 300th and last game, beating the Cleveland Indians 10-6.

1976 — In Montreal, Edwin Moses of the United States sets an Olympic record in the 400 hurdles with a time of 47.63.

2007 — Michael Rasmussen, the leader of the Tour de France, is removed from the race by his Rabobank team after winning the 16th stage. Rasmussen is sent home for violating (the team's) internal rules. The Danish cyclist missed random drug tests May 8 and June 28, saying he was in Mexico.

2010 — Alberto Contador wins the Tour de France for the third time in four years. Contador holds off a next-to-last day challenge from Andy Schleck of Luxembourg, his runner-up for a second consecutive year.

2010 — Jamie McMurray's victory in the Brickyard 400 gives owner Chip Ganassi the first team triple crown in American auto racing: winning the Daytona 500, Indianapolis 500 and the Brickyard 400 in the same year. McMurray won the season-opening Daytona 500 in February, and Ganassi IndyCar series driver Dario Franchitti won the Indy 500 in May.

2011 — The NFL Players Association executive board and 32 team reps vote unanimously to approve the terms of a deal to the end the 4½-month lockout. The final pact is for 10 years, without an opt-out clause.

2011 — Taylor Hoagland hits a two-run home run, Valerie Arioto and Megan Langenfeld have RBI singles and the United States beats rival Japan 6-4 to win its fifth straight World Cup of Softball championship.

2012 — Triple jumper Voula Papachristou is kicked off Greece's Olympic team by the Hellenic Olympic Committee for her comments on Twitter mocking African immigrants and expressing support for a far-right political party.

2015 — Maya Moore scores a record 30 points to lead the West to a 117-112 victory over the East in the WNBA All-Star Game. The league's reigning MVP scores eight straight points in the final 2 minutes to turn a one-point deficit into a 113-106 advantage.

2021 — USA's men's basketball lose to France 83-76 ending their 25-game Olympic winning streak.

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	16	6	.727	—
Atlanta	14	10	.583	3
Indiana	12	12	.500	5
Washington	11	12	.478	5½
Chicago	7	16	.304	9½
Connecticut	3	19	.136	13

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	21	4	.840	—
Phoenix	15	8	.652	5
Seattle	14	10	.583	6½
Las Vegas	12	11	.522	8
Golden State	10	12	.455	9½
Los Angeles	9	14	.391	11
Dallas	7	17	.292	13½

Tuesday's games

Los Angeles 93, Washington 86
Minnesota 91, Chicago 68
New York 98, Indiana 84
Dallas 87, Seattle 63
Las Vegas 87, Atlanta 72

Wednesday's game

Atlanta 90, Phoenix 79

Thursday's games

Las Vegas at Indiana
Los Angeles at Connecticut
Seattle at Chicago

Friday's games

Las Vegas at Minnesota
Phoenix at New York
Dallas at Golden State

Saturday's games

Los Angeles at New York
Seattle at Washington

Sunday's games

Golden State at Connecticut
Indiana at Chicago
Las Vegas at Dallas
Phoenix at Washington
Atlanta at Minnesota

PRO SOCCER

MLS

Western Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego FC	13	7	4	43	47	32
Vancouver	12	5	6	42	39	26
Minn. United	11	5	8	41	40	27
Seattle	10	6	7	37	37	33
LAFC	10	5	6	36	39	27
Portland	9	7	7	34	32	32
Colorado	8	10	6	30	30	36
Austin FC	8	8	6	30	17	24
San Jose	7	9	8	29	46	42
Real Salt Lake	8	11	4	28	24	29
Houston	7	11	6	27	30	39
FC Dallas	6	10	7	25	32	41
Sporting KC	6	11	6	24	36	42
St Louis City	4	13	6	18	23	38
LA Galaxy	3	14	7	16	28	48

Eastern Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Cincinnati	15	6	3	48	39	31
Nashville	14	5	5	47	42	25
Philadelphia	14	5	5	47	40	23
Columbus	12	4	8	44	40	33
Inter Miami CF	12	4	5	41	49	34
Orlando City	10	6	8	38	43	32
Charlotte FC	11	11	2	35	41	39
NYC FC	10	8	5	35	30	26
New York	9	9	6	33	39	35
Chicago	9	9	5	32	44	40
New England	6	10	7	25	30	32
Toronto FC	5	12	6	21	25	30
Atlanta	4	11	8	20	27	43
D.C. United	4	13	7	19	20	45
CF Montréal	3	15	6	15	20	45

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday's games

Orlando City at Columbus
CF Montréal at New England
New York City FC at FC Dallas
LA Galaxy at Houston
Portland at Los Angeles FC
Nashville at San Diego FC

Saturday's games

Cincinnati at Miami
Seattle at Atlanta
Toronto FC at Charlotte FC
Austin FC at D.C. United
Colorado at Philadelphia
New York at Chicago
Minnesota at St Louis City
San Jose at Real Salt Lake
Sporting Kansas City at Vancouver



ERIC GAY/AP

Liga MX All-Star Gustavo Ferraris, left, moves the ball past MLS All-Star Obed Vargas, right, during the MLS All-Star Game in Austin, Texas on Wednesday.

MLS stars beat Liga MX despite Messi sitting out

BY MARK ROSNER
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Sam Surridge, Tai Baribo and Brian White scored goals and Major League Soccer defeated Liga MX of Mexico 3-1 in the MLS All-Star Game on Wednesday night playing without Lionel Messi.

Messi and his Inter Miami teammate, Jordi Alba, both face possible league suspensions for their team's next match against Cincinnati on Saturday for missing the All-Star Game.

"Messi's the greatest," MLS coach Nico Estévez said. "Playing with him and coaching him would be something amazing. But we have to show respect for the guys that showed up today. They did great. It's a special week, a unique event. Not everyone can enjoy this. I'm fortunate."

Liga MX's James Rodríguez also chose not to play in the game played in front of more than 20,000 fans at Q2 Stadium.

MLS has defeated Liga MX three times in four tries. Last year Liga MX won 4-1 in Columbus, Ohio. The MLS All-Stars won in 2022 and beat Liga MX on penalty kicks after a 1-1 draw a year prior.

Messi has yet to appear in an MLS All-Star Game. He missed the game last year with an injury. Messi is currently tied with Nashville's Surridge for the MLS lead in goals with 18.

Surridge scored another goal on Wednesday, from the middle of the box, heading in to the lower right corner a ball directed by LAFC's Denis Bouanga in the 28th minute.

The opportunity developed after Bouanga had a point-blank attempt stopped by Liga MX goalkeeper Luis Malagon (Club America). Bouanga hustled to retrieve the long rebound and sent it to Surridge.

Before the goal, both teams had attempts rejected with diving stops by Luis Malagón and Austin FC's Brad Stuver in the 13th and 18th minutes.

MLS went ahead 2-0 in the 51st minute when Diego Rossi (Columbus) passed ahead to Baribo (Philadelphia), whose right footed shot from the center of the box made it to the lower left corner of the goal.

Liga MX closed the gap to 2-1 just 13 minutes later when Gilberto Mora (Club Tijuana) converted a pass from Elias Montiel (Pachuca) from the middle of the box.

"We had moments when we played good soccer," Liga MX coach André Jardine said.

Liga MX's bid to tie the match was snubbed when a shot by Diber Cambindo (Necaxa) was stopped by Yohei Takaoka (Vancouver) in the 75th minute.

White (Vancouver) finished the scoring in the 80th minute.

Baribo ranks fourth in MLS with 14 goals and White has scored 11 as they chase Messi and Surridge.

"They are competitive," Estévez said. "One scores and the other says 'I have to score.' Brian in the end said 'I have to score.' "

MLS and Liga MX continue their rivalry with the Leagues Cup that begins on July 29 and concludes Aug. 31. The competition features a new format, with all 18 clubs from Liga MX and the top 18 from MLS competing. Last year all 47 clubs from the two leagues were included.

MLB

Ohtani homers in 5th straight game

By Jill Painter Lopez
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Shohei Ohtani homered for the fifth consecutive game on Wednesday, tying a Los Angeles Dodgers franchise record.

New York Yankees star Aaron Judge was the last player to homer in five consecutive games, accomplishing that feat last year.

Ohtani, who leads the National League with 37 home runs, homered in the first inning off Minnesota Twins starter Chris Paddack. He hit a slow curveball 441 feet to center. He carried the bat midway down the first-base line and then did a bat flip.

He didn't hit a home run later in the game with the Dodgers trailing, but his presence was felt. With two outs and the Twins leading by one run, Rocco Baldelli elected to put Ohtani — the potential winning run — on base. Esteury Ruiz drew a walk to load the bases, setting the stage for Freddie Freeman, who delivered a two-run hit to left field. Betts and Ohtani scored to give Los Angeles a 4-3 win.

Ohtani did not speak to the media after the game.

"It was the right decision," Dave Roberts said of Baldelli intentionally walking Ohtani. "He's got five in a row now (games with homers), which is pretty impressive. He continues to use the big part of the field and hit breaking balls, hit fastballs, so that's been really good. And so that's been really good. And yeah, I mean, Shohei comes up with a chance to win the game so you got to take your chances with their closer and against Esteury (Ruiz). And fortunately, Esteury put together a good at bat to get Freddie up there."

Asked if he was surprised Minnesota made that move, Roberts said: "No, no, I wasn't surprised. It was the right decision. Just didn't work out."

This is the seventh time in Dodgers history that a player has homered in five consecutive games. Ohtani joins Max Muncy, Joc Pederson, Adrian Gonzalez, Matt Kemp, Shawn Green and Roy Campanella in that club.

Ohtani, a three-time MVP, is batting .276 with 70 RBIs. He's also pitched well in six games and is scheduled to throw four innings Monday in Cincinnati as he is getting close in his buildup as a starter, coming back from his second right UCL repair surgery.

The record for consecutive games with a home run is eight, which has been held for a long time by Dale Long, Ken Griffey Jr. and Don Mattingly. Griffey Jr. was the last player to do it in 1993.

Roberts was asked if he thinks Ohtani can reach eight consecutive games.

"Well, I don't know that answer," Roberts said. "I do know that if he has the same approach that he's had the last week, that Green Monster is very short. So any fly ball that he hits will be a homer. So he's just got to continue to have that same approach when we go to Boston, and then we'll see what happens."



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

The Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani tosses his bat after hitting a solo home run during the first inning against the Twins on Wednesday in Los Angeles. Ohtani and the Dodgers play three games in Boston starting Friday.

Rockies snap streak since last shutout win

Associated Press

DENVER — Colorado ended a dubious streak by recording a zero.

Rookie right-hander Tanner Gordon pitched six innings and the Rockies beat the St. Louis Cardinals 6-0 on Wednesday for their first shutout since May 15, 2024, ending a record streak of 220 games since they last kept an opponent from scoring.

"I did not know that. ... That's a long time without a shutout," Colorado interim manager Warren Schaeffer said. "But I'm glad we shut them out today. That was good behind Gordon. Gordon did a fantastic job."

Jimmy Herget threw two innings of one-hit relief before Tyler Kinley pitched a 1-2-3 ninth.

The Rockies are the only major league team since at least 1901 to go more than 200 games without a shutout victory, according to Stathead and Baseball Reference.

The last shutout for Colorado had been 8-0 at San Diego in its only one last season. Its previous one at home was 2-0 over the Athletics on July 30, 2023.

Gordon (2-2) scattered four hits while striking out three and walking three to become the first Rockies rookie since Kyle Freeman in 2017 to pitch at least six scoreless innings in a game at Coors Field.

Colorado (26-76) has won consecutive series for the first time this season, taking two of three games from St. Louis after coming out of the All-Star break by winning two of three against Minnesota last weekend.

"Extremely important," Rockies catcher Austin Nola said. "One game at a time. And I think that's the biggest thing, is sticking to the plan, being in the present. And then at the end of the day we're going to come out on top."

Last month, Colorado ended an MLB-record streak of 22 consecutive series losses, dating to last year, with a 3-2 victory at Miami.

Leaders

AMERICAN LEAGUE

BATTING — Judge, New York, .345; Peña, Houston, .322; Aranda, Tampa Bay, .318; Ja.Wilson, Athletics, .311; Meyers, Houston, .308; Kirk, Toronto, .304; Ramírez, Cleveland, .294; M.Garcia, Kansas City, .291; Y.Díaz, Tampa Bay, .290; Buxton, Minnesota, .288; Goldschmidt, New York, .288; Witt, Kansas City, .288.

RUNS — Judge, New York, 90; Buxton, Minnesota, 68; Raleigh, Seattle, 68; Neto, Los Angeles, 65; Ju.Rodríguez, Seattle, 65; V.Guerrero, Toronto, 64; Rooker, Athletics, 64; Ramírez, Cleveland, 62; Springer, Toronto, 60; Witt, Kansas City, 60.

RBI — Raleigh, Seattle, 84; Judge, New York, 84; Greene, Detroit, 79; Ward, Los Angeles, 76; Caminero, Tampa Bay, 68; Perez, Kansas City, 62; Pasquantino, Kansas City, 61; Story, Boston, 60; Y.Díaz, Tampa Bay, 60; Torkelson, Detroit, 59; Bichette, Toronto, 59.

HOME RUNS — Raleigh, Seattle, 39; Judge, New York, 37; Caminero, Tampa Bay, 26; Greene, Detroit, 25; Buxton, Minnesota, 23; Ward, Los Angeles, 23; Adell, Los Angeles, 21; Torkelson, Detroit, 21; Ramírez, Cleveland, 21; Rooker, Athletics, 21.

STOLEN BASES — Caballero, Tampa Bay, 33; Simpson, Tampa Bay, 31; Ramírez, Cleveland, 30; Witt, Kansas City, 27; Robert, Chicago, 26; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 19; Ju.Rodríguez, Seattle, 19.

PITCHING — Crochet, Boston, 11-4; Valdez, Houston, 11-4; Fried, New York, 11-4; Bassitt, Toronto, 11-4; deGrom, Texas, 10-2; Skubal, Detroit, 10-3; Ryan, Minnesota, 10-4; Rodón, New York, 10-7; H.Brown, Houston, 9-4; Mize, Detroit, 9-4.

ERA — Crochet, Boston, 2.19; Skubal, Detroit, 2.19; deGrom, Texas, 2.28; Bubic, Kansas City, 2.38; H.Brown, Houston, 2.57; Fried, New York, 2.62; Ryan, Minnesota, 2.63; Valdez, Houston, 2.67; Woo, Seattle, 2.91; S.Lugo, Kansas City, 2.95.

STRIKEOUTS — Crochet, Boston, 165; Skubal, Detroit, 164; H.Brown, Houston, 144; Rodón, New York, 139; Ryan, Minnesota, 132; Flaherty, Detroit, 130; Valdez, Houston, 129; Kikuchi, Los Angeles, 123; deGrom, Texas, 122; Pepiot, Tampa Bay, 118.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

BATTING — W.Smith, Los Angeles, .323; F.Freeman, Los Angeles, .295; Stowers, Miami, .295; Frelick, Milwaukee, .294; Donovan, St. Louis, .292; Edwards, Miami, .292; Naylor, Arizona, .292; Burleson, St. Louis, .290; T.Turner, Philadelphia, .290; Hoerner, Chicago, .286.

RUNS — Ohtani, Los Angeles, 97; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 77; Schwarber, Philadelphia, 72; Soto, New York, 72; Tucker, Chicago, 71; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 69; Chourio, Milwaukee, 68; Tatis, San Diego, 67; Carroll, Arizona, 66; T.Turner, Philadelphia, 66.

RBI — E.Suárez, Arizona, 86; Suzuki, Chicago, 81; Alonso, New York, 80; Schwarber, Philadelphia, 78; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 74; Perdomo, Arizona, 72; Wood, Washington, 70; Ohtani, Los Angeles, 70; Yelich, Milwaukee, 66; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 65; Chourio, Milwaukee, 65.

HOME RUNS — Ohtani, Los Angeles, 37; E.Suárez, Arizona, 36; Schwarber, Philadelphia, 34; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 27; Suzuki, Chicago, 26; Soto, New York, 24; Wood, Washington, 24.

STOLEN BASES — On.Cruz, Pittsburgh, 33; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 28; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 27; V.Scott, St. Louis, 25; T.Turner, Philadelphia, 25; Tucker, Chicago, 23.

PITCHING — F.Peralta, Milwaukee, 12-4; Boyd, Chicago, 11-3; Pivetta, San Diego, 10-2; Pfaadt, Arizona, 10-6; C.Sánchez, Philadelphia, 9-2; Priester, Milwaukee, 9-2; Wheeler, Philadelphia, 9-3; Ray, San Francisco, 9-4; Gray, St. Louis, 9-4; M.Kelly, Arizona, 9-5.

ERA — Skenes, Pittsburgh, 1.91; Boyd, Chicago, 2.20; Wheeler, Philadelphia, 2.39; C.Sánchez, Philadelphia, 2.40; Yamamoto, Los Angeles, 2.55; Pivetta, San Diego, 2.81; F.Peralta, Milwaukee, 2.85; Peterson, New York, 2.90.

STRIKEOUTS — Wheeler, Philadelphia, 164; Cease, San Diego, 144; Gore, Washington, 140; Webb, San Francisco, 140; Skenes, Pittsburgh, 137; Luzardo, Philadelphia, 136; C.Sánchez, Philadelphia, 134; Ray, San Francisco, 131.

Scoreboard

American League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	60	42	.588	—
New York	56	46	.549	4
Boston	55	49	.529	6
Tampa Bay	53	50	.515	7½
Baltimore	44	57	.436	15½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	60	43	.583	—
Cleveland	51	50	.505	8
Kansas City	50	53	.485	10
Minnesota	49	53	.480	10½
Chicago	37	66	.359	23

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	60	42	.588	—
Seattle	54	48	.529	6
Texas	53	50	.515	7½
Los Angeles	49	53	.480	11
Athletics	42	62	.404	19

National League

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	59	44	.573	—
Philadelphia	58	44	.569	½
Miami	48	53	.475	10
Atlanta	44	57	.436	14
Washington	41	61	.402	17½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	61	41	.598	—
Chicago	60	42	.588	1
Cincinnati	53	50	.515	8½
St. Louis	52	51	.505	9½
Pittsburgh	42	61	.408	19½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	60	43	.583	—
San Diego	55	47	.539	4½
San Francisco	54	49	.524	6
Arizona	50	53	.485	10
Colorado	26	76	.255	33½

Wednesday's games

Cincinnati 5, Washington 0
Miami 3, San Diego 2
San Francisco 9, Atlanta 3
Pittsburgh 6, Detroit 1
N.Y. Mets 6, L.A. Angels 3
Kansas City 8, Chicago Cubs 4
Colorado 6, St. Louis 0
Houston 4, Arizona 3
Milwaukee 10, Seattle 2
L.A. Dodgers 4, Minnesota 3
Cleveland 3, Baltimore 2
Toronto 8, N.Y. Yankees 4
Boston 9, Philadelphia 8, 11 innings
Chicago White Sox 11, Tampa Bay 9
Texas 2, Athletics 1

Thursday's games

Baltimore at Cleveland
Toronto at Detroit
San Diego at St. Louis
Athletics at Houston
Seattle at L.A. Angels

Friday's games

Miami (Quantrill 3-8) at Milwaukee (Peralta 12-4)
Arizona (Nelson 6-2) at Pittsburgh (Burrows 1-3)
Colorado (Freeland 2-10) at Baltimore (Kremer 8-7)
Philadelphia (Walker 3-5) at N.Y. Yankees (Warren 6-5)
L.A. Dodgers (Sheehan 1-1) at Boston (Bello 6-4)
Tampa Bay (Littell 8-7) at Cincinnati (Martinez 8-9)
Toronto (Berríos 6-4) at Detroit (Montero 4-2)
San Diego (Pivetta 10-2) at St. Louis (Mikolas 5-7)
Chicago Cubs (Imanaga 7-3) at Chicago White Sox (Houser 5-2)
Atlanta (Wentz 2-1) at Texas (Eovaldi 7-3)
Athletics (Springs 8-7) at Houston (TBD)
Cleveland (Williams 6-4) at Kansas City (Wacha 4-9)
Washington (Gore 4-9) at Minnesota (Matthews 1-2)
Seattle (Woo 8-5) at L.A. Angels (Soriano 7-7)
N.Y. Mets (Holmes 8-5) at San Francisco (Webb 9-7)

Saturday's games

Philadelphia at N.Y. Yankees
Toronto at Detroit
Arizona at Pittsburgh
Tampa Bay at Cincinnati
Colorado at Baltimore
Atlanta at Texas
Athletics at Houston
Washington at Minnesota
Chicago Cubs at Chicago White Sox
Miami at Milwaukee
Cleveland at Kansas City
L.A. Dodgers at Boston
San Diego at St. Louis
N.Y. Mets at San Francisco
Seattle at L.A. Angels

AUTO RACING



DERIK HAMILTON/AP

Denny Hamlin crosses the finish line to win a NASCAR Cup Series race at Dover Motor Speedway on Sunday in Dover, Del. The victory was the 58th for Hamlin in his career.

Hamlin climbs NASCAR's wins list with 60 in sight

BY DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

DOVER, Del. — Denny Hamlin has stood his ground that wins — enough of them to soon earn his place inside NASCAR's career top-10 list — matter more to his legacy than a championship.

Easy to say, of course, with 58 race victories to zero titles.

The 44-year-old Hamlin, still driving the No. 11 Toyota for Joe Gibbs Racing as he's done since his rookie season in 2006, is motivated to reach the top 10 this season over the final 15 races of the Cup season. Kevin Harvick is 10th on the career list with 60 and Kyle Busch, still active with Richard Childress Racing, is ninth with 63, giving Hamlin realistic numbers to shoot for the rest of the season.

Best to take advantage at tracks where he's had success, such as Dover Motor Speedway, where he won Sunday for the second straight year and third time overall, compared with a track like this weekend's race on the Indianapolis oval, where Hamlin is 0 for 16.

"I don't think I've ever wanted to go back to back so bad," Hamlin said of Dover. "(Indy's) a track that I've just come so fricking close to winning. I just want to cross off all the major racetracks on our schedule."

Hamlin is a driver who thrives in the chaos like few others — if any can — in the series. His win at Dover came days after the race team he owns with Michael Jordan suffered a setback in its court fight with NASCAR. He insisted ahead of the race that the legal issues never caused a distraction for him in the race car, then proved it on the mile concrete track with a series-best fourth win of the season.

Maybe more dark clouds — like the ones that opened up Sunday, causing a rain delay just laps ahead of the scheduled finish — can fuel Hamlin at Indy.

"All I can hope is that something happens this week that derails everything and then I'll do better," Hamlin said.

Hamlin then turned to a NASCAR employee and cracked, "Maybe it'll come from them."

Can Hamlin realistically get to 60 in 2025? He won eight times in 2010, six times in 2019 and seven in 2020, all totals that would get him to 60 this year.

"When you get him in a situation where he's got the ball in his hands and it's time to go win the race, he finds a way to do that most times," crew chief Chris Gayle said.

It's a fitting analogy for a race team owned by a former NFL coach.

At his pace, Hamlin remains a contender to cash in this November at Phoenix Raceway and win his first NASCAR championship — even if he lost out on the $1 million prize in the series' first In-season challenge.

The idea for the challenge was largely championed by Hamlin, a three-time Daytona 500 winner who floated the idea of a midseason tournament on his "Actions Detrimental" podcast. When NASCAR bought into the idea and announced the creation of the tournament last year, Hamlin called the tournament on social media "such a win for our sport and drivers." He jokingly added, "I will collect my 1M royalty next season."

Hamlin earned the No. 1 seed — and was promptly eliminated in the first race by Ty Dillon, the No. 32 seed.

Dillon faces Ty Gibbs next week at Indianapolis to decide the first winner of the tournament.

Hamlin said the five-race, bracket-style tournament overall was a success — but not without a few kinks. Some of the seeding was off, such as Shane van Gisbergen not qualifying for the field, then ripping off consecutive wins on the Chicago street race and Sonoma Raceway during the tournament races.

And sure, everyone loves a Cinderella in March. But two in July isn't necessarily making the tournament the NASCAR story of the summer.

"I think it has been unfortunate, right, you probably had a lot of the top seeds get knocked out pretty early in it, but overall, I thought the implementation of it has been good," Hamlin said.

The other side of the argument is this: Would any fan or media outlet really care about a pair of winless drivers such as Gibbs (the sixth seed) or Dillon at this point of the season without $1 million at stake?

"For a team like us, at this point in the season, we're not exactly where we want to be yet, but we're trending in a good direction," Dillon said on TNT. "Our story doesn't get told in years past. It's mainly the guys trying to fight for the points position. It's the guys running up front, trying to win the race. But our story and our growth in the year stops getting told. I'm grateful we've been able to show our personality as a team."

Hamilton dedicated to getting better after Ferrari frustrations

BY ANDREW DAMPF
Associated Press

No wins. Nary even a podium finish. And virtually no hope of a championship.

Lewis Hamilton is so fed up with his results at Ferrari midway through his first season with the team that he's taking matters into his own hands.

Hamilton revealed Thursday upon arriving at the Belgian Grand Prix that he spent the summer break holding meetings with Ferrari's leaders to demand improvements, and composed documents detailing areas he believes need to be addressed.

Hamilton alluded to the mostly disappointing results for Ferrari over the last 20 years with world champions like Kimi Raikkonen, Fernando Alonso and Sebastian Vettel at the wheel.

"I refuse for that to be the case with me," said Hamilton, who shares the F1 record of seven drivers' championships with Michael Schumacher. "So I'm going the extra mile … if you take the same path all the time, you get the same results. So I'm just challenging certain things."

Hamilton said he spent four days over two weeks at Ferrari's headquarters in Italy during the break.

"I've called on lots of meetings with the heads of the team," Hamilton said at Spa-Francorchamps. "So I've sat with John (Elkann, Ferrari's president), Benedetto (Vigna, CEO) and Fred (Frederic Vasseur, team principal) in several meetings.

"I've sat with the head of our car development, with Loic (Serra, technical director), with also the heads of different departments talking about the engine for next year, talking about front suspension for next year, talking about rear suspension for next year.

"After the first few races, I did a full document for the team. And during this break I had another two documents that I sent in. So then I come in and want to address those," Hamilton added, detailing "structural adjustments that we need to make" and "issues that I have with this car."

The 40-year-old Hamilton's best results with Ferrari have been three fourth-place finishes — two of them in the two races before the break. Teammate Charles Leclerc, who is in his seventh season with the team, has fared only slightly better with four podium finishes and a best result of second at his home Monaco GP.

Hamilton noted that Ferrari "is a huge organization and there's a lot of moving parts and not all of them are firing on all the cylinders that need to be. That's ultimately why the team's not had the success that I think it deserves.

"So I feel that it's my job to challenge absolutely every area, to challenge everybody in the team, particularly the guys that are at the top who are making the decisions."

Ferrari is second in the constructors' standings but has less than half as many points as runaway leader McLaren, which has dominated with Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris.

"I'm here to win. And I don't have as much time as this one here," Hamilton said, gesturing toward 18-year-old Kimi Antonelli, who replaced him at Mercedes, and who was sitting next to the British driver at an F1 news conference. "So it's crunch time. I truly believe in the potential of this team."



GEERT VANDEN WIJNGAERT/AP

Ferrari driver Lewis Hamilton, of Britain, attends a media conference ahead of the Formula One Grand Prix at the Spa-Francorchamps racetrack in Spa, Belgium, on Thursday.

NFL

Players intent on making up for lost time

Hutchinson, McCaffrey, Prescott, McCarthy all look ready to bounce back after injuries cut short last season

BY LARRY LAGE
Associated Press

ALLEN PARK, Mich. — Aidan Hutchinson put his left hand down in a three-point stance and on the snap, made an inside move on an offensive tackle to help collapse a pocket around the passer.

Hutchinson looked like he did on most plays in practice and games during his first two-plus seasons with the Detroit Lions.

The only obvious difference was a black sleeve that covered and supported much of his surgically repaired left leg.

Hutchinson appeared to practice without any limitiations on Sunday, when Detroit kicked off training camp with its first practice.

That was a good sign for him and a franchise that desperately needs him to regain the spectacular form he had before breaking his leg in two places nine months ago against the Dallas Cowboys.

Hutchinson, the No. 2 overall pick in 2022, was an early candidate for The Associated Press NFL Defensive Player of the Year last season when he had 7½ sacks in five games for one of the league's top teams.

His third season ended with a gruesome injury that landed him in a Texas hospital for a couple of days, forcing him into his longest hiatus without football.

Hutchinson's long wait to play again is expected to end Sept. 7 at Green Bay, where the two-time defending NFC North champions will start the season.

"I don't think anybody in the game of football will ever be as grateful when I come back in that first game," Hutchinson said.

San Francisco running back Christian McCaffrey, Dallas quarterback Dak Prescott and Minnesota quarterback J.J. McCarthy may beg to differ because they, too, are thankful to be on pace to bounce back from injury-shortened seasons.



PAUL SANCYA/AP

Detroit Lions defensive end Aidan Hutchinson runs a drill during practice in Allen Park, Mich. Hutchinson is working his way back from a serious leg injury.

Christian McCaffrey

The two-time All-Pro running back has said he has "zero restrictions" after Achilles tendinitis kept him out of the first eight games last year and a right knee injury relegated him to watching the last five games.

San Francisco slipped last season with McCaffrey limited to four games, going 6-11 after reaching the Super Bowl thanks in part to its dynamic running back. He won the AP Offensive Player of the Year that season after leading the league with 2,023 yards from scrimmage and tying for the NFL lead with 21 touchdowns.

"Last year didn't go the way I wanted. It didn't go the way anyone wanted," he said.

"But having this time off has allowed me to start from scratch and have the time where I can build a base again."

Dak Prescott

The three-time Pro Bowl quarterback is expected to be fully recovered from surgery on his torn hamstring last November. That will give him a chance to live up to the $240 million, four-year contract he signed just before the 2024 season.

The Cowboys are counting on Prescott to bounce back to help them get back to the playoffs following a three-year postseason run with just seven wins last season.

A year after finishing second in AP NFL MVP voting, Prescott had 11 touchdown passes and eight interceptions in eight games last season.

"I'm healthy," he said. "I'll be full go for camp."

J.J. McCarthy

The Minnesota Vikings, aiming to earn consecutive postseason bids for the first time since 2009, plan to give McCarthy a shot to take the first snaps this season after he missed his rookie year with a knee surgery. The Vikings let Sam Darnold depart in free agency, clearing the way for the 10th overall pick in the 2024 draft. McCarthy showed no signs of trouble during spring practices and declared himself to be bigger, faster and stronger than he was before he hurt his knee in the team's first exhibition game on last August.

"When you get it taken away from you, you take every chance you get to be back out here and really appreciate it, really take the most out of it," McCarthy said. "Nothing better than being out here with the boys playing some ball, so having a great time."

Johnson sets lofty goal for QB Williams in first Bears camp together

BY GENE CHAMBERLAIN
Associated Press

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Chicago Bears coach Ben Johnson set a high bar for quarterback Caleb Williams as the two began their first training camp together Tuesday at Halas Hall.

It could be the key to how well the Bears bounce back in Johnson's first season from a 5-12 record and last year's firing of former coach Matt Eberflus.

"We certainly have goals that we strive for, it's not a secret," said Johnson, the former Detroit Lions offensive coordinator. "I told him I would love for him this season to complete 70% of his balls.

"So, you would like to think that over the course of practice that we're completing 70% or more or that's hard to just magically arise in a game. It's a lofty goal but it's one we're going to strive for because of that we're going to use that as a benchmark and kind of work from there."

The Bears have done a lot to help Williams improve from a QB who completed 62.5% to one with more consistency. GM Ryan Poles added guards Joe Thuney and Jonah Jackson, and center Drew Dalman, to avoid last season's 68-sack debacle.



NAM Y. HUH/AP

Caleb Williams wants to be the first Bears quarterback to throw for 4,000 yards, and new coach Ben Johnson has set a goal of the second year player completing 70% of his passes this season.

"Obviously I have self-goals," Williams said. "That's being the first 4,000-yard passer in Bears history. That's a goal of mine. Seventy percent completion, that helps the team keep on the field, puts us in better positions.

"And then other than that just trying to go down and score the most points that we can with each drive that we have. That's kind of my self-goal and obviously other than that you've got to go win."

Whether the mix is there for last season's last-ranked offense to improve is the question. Johnson hasn't been a head coach before and Williams hasn't had pro success yet.

Even though it's revamped, the offensive line may take time coming together because left tackle Braxton Jones hasn't practiced all offseason. However, when the team reported for camp Tuesday he was deemed fit for practice after rehabbing from ankle surgery.

Now it will be a three-way competition for the starting spot between Jones, rookie Ozzy Trapilo and second-year tackle Kiran Amegadjie. Johnson gives no favors to the incumbent.

"I would like to think his experience will help him but we're coming in with blank slates right now," Johnson said. "And so just because a guy has played and another guy hasn't in this league. We're going to let the competition play out and we'll see where it goes."

Johnson called it a case where Jones does need some time to "ramp up" after being away all offseason.

"Every play matters, it all is going to matter as we go through this thing," Johnson said. "And so I can't tell you I've been through a three-man race before and so each play is going to be evaluated and they got to take full advantage of each opportunity that they get."

Rookie receiver Luther Burden III and first-round pick tight end Colston Loveland, both recovering from injuries at OTAs and training camp, will also be ready for Wednesday's first practice.

The only starter in question is cornerback Jaylon Johnson, who has a leg injury he suffered while training on his own, and is now on the non-football injury list for now.

The Bears gave Poles a contract extension before training camp so that he and Johnson both have deals running to 2029. They're expecting progress to come much sooner.

"The focus for us is going to be on continuous improvement, all right?" Johnson said. "Really, for the next six weeks that's all we care about is getting a little bit better every single day, day by day, brick by brick and that starts today."

NFL



TERRANCE WILLIAMS/AP

Rams wide receiver Puka Nacua, right, runs the ball after catching a pass against Philadelphia Eagles cornerback Cooper DeJean. Nacua seeks to improve with the help from new teammate Davante Adams.

Already a star WR, Nacua eager to learn from Adams

BY GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Although Puka Nacua is one of the NFL's top receivers as he heads into his third season with the Los Angeles Rams, he thinks he still has plenty to learn from the new teammate wearing his old uniform number.

Nacua was full of praise and admiration for Davante Adams after just one practice in training camp at Loyola Marymount University on Wednesday. Nacua is determined to soak up the techniques and teachings of the six-time Pro Bowl selection who joined the Rams as a replacement for Cooper Kupp in the spring.

"I've asked Davante to lead our position group drills," Nacua said. "There was respect from him coming in, saying, 'I don't want to push you out of the way, or to try to take your spot,' or that I should be up there No. 1, but it's something (where) I have a huge amount of respect for his game, and I'm blessed to be around people like Coop, and to have Davante come in."

There's also a practical reason for Nacua's invitation to Adams: "When I was in the front, I'm trying to sprint as fast as I can so I can turn around and watch him. So I was like, 'Hey, I think it would make my job a little easier if you go first.'"

Nacua's respect for Adams has been obvious from the day Adams signed. Nacua willingly ceded the No. 17 jersey he had worn for two seasons in Los Angeles, switching to the No. 12 he wore in college.

Adams got the ball frequently during the Rams' opening workout, impressing the fans in the stands while catching passes from Jimmy Garoppolo. Matthew Stafford is starting training camp on the sidelines as he recovers from back soreness, leaving Garoppolo and Stetson Bennett in the pocket for the first week.

Nacua was observing Adams with admiration, watching everything from his famous release skills at the line of scrimmage to his ball concentration in traffic.

"His illusion of speed and lateral quickness is something I'm trying to add to my game in the way that it fits my skill set," Nacua said. "I wouldn't say there's a lot of people that can replicate some of the things that he can do, but I try to understand the movement so I can add it to my game."

But Adams also recognizes the remarkable ascent of Nacua, the former fifth-round pick. Nacua's average of 88.4 yards receiving per game is the second-best in NFL history among non-scab players, trailing only Minnesota's Justin Jefferson (96.5).

Nacua has 184 catches for 2,476 yards in just 28 regular-season games for the Rams, but he could be even more dangerous with Adams as his counterpart. Defenses will be unable to focus primarily on Nacua, as they did at times in his first two seasons when Kupp was injured or ineffective, likely allowing Nacua to get into more advantageous matchups for Stafford.

The big picture looks good for Nacua, but he's also concentrating on learning the small details from Adams, whose skills he can list in encyclopedic detail.

"I'd say his body control, and obviously his elusiveness at the line of scrimmage," Nacua said. "But then his awareness, the rotation of defenders and how to attack leverage on anyone, everything down the field, and then to have the illusion of going the opposite direction of where you want to go. He does a great job, and he explains it so well in the meeting room, so it makes it fun to watch tape and to be like, 'OK, how can I add some of these things to my toolbox?'"

Nacua is one year away from the chance to sign a contract extension, but he isn't thinking much about the massive looming payday if he produces another prolific season with Stafford and Adams.

"A little bit, but I try my best to stay completely present where my feet are," Nacua said. "It's exciting to see guys push the envelope for the wide receiver game."

Pats QB Maye ready for leadership role in Year 2

BY KYLE HIGHTOWER
Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Drake Maye got a crash course in confronting change during his first NFL season.

The 2024 third overall draft pick took on expected challenges, such as becoming a rookie starter in Week 6 for a New England Patriots team that was 1-4 at the time.

And he handled unexpected hiccups, such as being knocked out of a win over the New York Jets two games later and spending time in the concussion protocol. He then finished the season with the biggest surprise of Year 1 when Jerod Mayo was fired as the Patriots coach after a 4-13 finish.

It's why a busy offseason heading into Year 2 just kind of made sense for the 22-year-old as he prepares for a season that's seeped in expectation under new coach Mike Vrabel.

So what exactly is driving Maye heading into his sophomore season?

"You've got guys out here that are tired of losing around here. You've got guys that want to win. I think that's what excites me most," Maye said. "I think the past two or three years around here and the past year — I can only speak for myself — guys around here are tired of losing and want to win."

Some of the most glaring deficiencies the Patriots had last season centered on an offense that struggled to keep Maye upright and had few playmakers.

The Patriots attacked both issues this spring, first drafting former LSU left tackle Will Campbell fourth overall to be Maye's new blindside protector. They also picked up former Ohio State running back Tre-Veyon Henderson in the second round and Washington State receiver Kyle Williams in the third round, in addition to adding veteran receiver Stefon Diggs in free agency.

Maye spent the balance of the spring getting to know all of them, first during official team workouts and minicamp, and then by getting together a group that included Diggs and Williams, fellow receivers Kendrick Bourne, DeMario Douglas, and Ja'Lynn Polk; running backs Rhamondre Stevenson and Terrell Jennings; and tight ends Hunter Henry and Jaheim Bell in Maye's native North Carolina for an informal throwing session earlier this month.

Vrabel said the idea of Maye being a leader for this team comes with the territory by nature of his position. But he acknowledged it's still a unique spot for a player that won't turn 23 until the end of August. Still, Vrabel was proud to see that it was Maye that approached him with the idea of organizing the throwing session in Charlotte. He said Maye also handled about "95%" of all the logistics for his teammates, including travel and lodging.

Maye did all of that while juggling his wedding, which took place in June just two weeks after minicamp.

"So, it was important to him," Vrabel said. "I think that was something that he wanted to do. It was something that he approached me with early on. Something that he was thinking about."

Diggs likes Maye's approach thus far.

"He's a young quarterback, I believe in him. I think we have a lot of success in this league," Diggs said. "Breathing confidence in him is very important when they're young and you know just talking to a lot of the stuff."

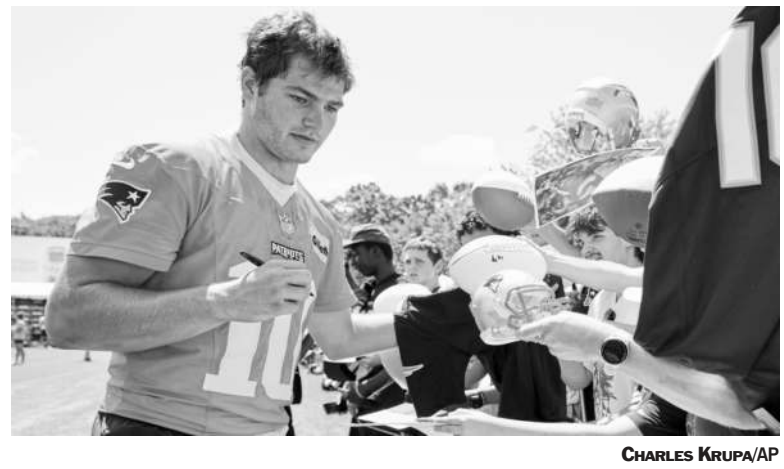
Maye acknowledged his efforts to be more of a leader will continue to be more deliberate.

"I think I'm trying to be, I think that's something you've got to earn," he said.

He expects progress to be made little by little.

"I think it's something I come in there every day, work hard, play good in practice. I think that's a big part, take practice seriously. I think practice translates to the games," he said.

"It's hard to get, this simulation, it's not basketball. You can't go get shots, open 3-pointers. There's nothing like being in the mix of it with a lot of bullets going. So, trying to earn my stripes in practice. And then from there, just try going along and hopefully win some games. And I think that'll help."



CHARLES KRUPA/AP

New England Patriots quarterback Drake Maye signs autographs at the team's training camp, Wednesday, in Foxborough, Mass.

NFL

Repeat: Players watching out for Super Bowl hangover

FROM PAGE 48

While most Philadelphia players were snapped flashing the gaudy bling, Hurts simply held the box in his photos.

Hurts was cryptic when asked if he actually slipped on the ring — which include wings on each side that release from the bezel and feature 145 diamonds, celebrating the Eagles' 145 points scored in the playoffs.

"I've moved on to the new year," Hurts said. "It's as simple as that."

Hurts did say the ceremony allowed him to appreciate the Super Bowl "one last time."

Only the ones in uniform have truly moved on from the Super Bowl.

Super Bowl swag blanketed fans and most of them stopped to pose next to the oversized Super Bowl replica ring that greeted them as they made the walk to the field. Fans in Super Bowl gear crushed beers in the parking lot as they waited for the gates to open for camp.

Unlike the diehard revelers, Mailata noted, "I'm not trying to be hung over."

Mailata was talking about the so-called Super Bowl hangover, of course, and how Philadelphia is taking steps like banning the word repeat in a bid to ... well, win a Super Bowl for the second straight season. The players who talked to the media bulked up on buzzwords such as chemistry and culture, and reiterated the "tough, detailed, together" mantra that inspired them last season.

Just in case they forget, those words are also stamped on the ring.

"I truly felt like a true champion," wide receiver A.J. Brown said of the ring ceremony. "I came there only for the ring. I didn't eat, I didn't do anything."

Saquon Barkley, who became the ninth 2,000-yard season rusher in NFL history, said it was easy to turn the page after a whirlwind offseason that included a parade, a White House visit and, even for the All-Pro running back, a video game cover.

"Howie asked me, what's better, the confetti or the ring," Barkley said.

How about a new contract?

(For the record, Barkley said it was the ring.)

Roseman put the Eagles in prime position to repe .. er, win the Super Bowl again with a busy offseason that included making Barkley the highest-paid running back in NFL history, giving him a two-year contract extension and $36 million guaranteed. Philadelphia retained All-Pro linebacker Zack Baun before he could test free agency, center Cam Jurgens got a four-year extension and Sirianni earned a multiyear extension, too.

It's all just part of the recipe that add up to the Eagles having the best odds out of the NFC to win the Super Bowl at 7-1, according to BetMGM Sportsbook.

With Brandon Graham retired and Darius Slay and C.J. Gardner-Johnson having moved on, Sirianni said he was ready to get to work in camp and learn about his new roster.

"It's so important at this time to come together as a football team," Sirianni said. "You do that through suffering together."

Suffering in Philly? What year is this, 1998?

The Eagles have played in three of the last eight Super Bowls and won two of them. They are no longer loveable underdogs but a model NFL franchise with yearly championship expectations.

So what if Philadelphia doesn't want to call it a repeat bid inside the locker room?

"You're not looking back, you're not looking forward," Sirianni said.

Yeah, but take a look around and let it soak in that, for only the second time in franchise history, the Super Bowl champs are indeed here.



MATT ROURKE/AP

Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts speaks during a news conference at the team's training camp Wednesday in Philadelphia.



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

Tennessee Titans quarterback Cam Ward, the No. 1 overall pick of this year's NFL draft, throws a pass during practice at the team's training camp Wednesday in Nashville, Tenn.

Titans' Ward to get much of 1st-team work in camp

BY TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Titans will give rookie quarterback Cam Ward most of the work running the first-team offense in training camp, even as they hold off announcing the No. 1 overall draft pick as their starter.

That gives Ward and the Titans more time to speed up his development. This comes after coach Brian Callahan worked to make this a competition during the offseason and a move made easier by Will Levis choosing season-ending shoulder surgery.

"Obviously that's going to be a huge part of his development over the course of the camp, and those other guys will fill in those other spots." Callahan said Wednesday before Tennessee's first practice of camp. "I've generally really carried three quarterbacks a lot of years in camps and for that reason."

Callahan rotated all quarterbacks during the offseason program. Then the Titans announced Monday that Levis is having surgery July 29, and Chad Brinker, the team's president of football operations, and first-year general manager Mike Borgonzi said Tuesday that they're content with three quarterbacks in camp.

Ward said Levis made the best decision for himself and wishes his fellow quarterback a speedy recovery. Tennessee placed Levis on injured reserve Wednesday afternoon.

"I really didn't have a reaction. I focus on Cam Ward," the rookie said of hearing about Levis having surgery.

Now it's up to Ward, the top pick out of Miami, to take full control and show what he can do in his latest offense. The Titans will have joint practices with Tampa Bay and Atlanta ahead of preseason games to help Ward develop. Tennessee opens the season Sept. 7 at Denver.

The Titans selected Ward after the quarterback led the country with 39 touchdown passes and finished second with 4,313 yards passing while leading the Hurricanes to a 10-3 record. Ward also had only seven interceptions and completed 67.2% of his passes. He finished fourth in the Heisman Trophy voting.

Ward sounds ready for this opportunity. Asked if he feels like a pro yet as camp starts, Ward said he felt like a pro when Tennessee drafted him.

"I've been waiting on opportunity," Ward said. "So you know I'm blessed. Not a lot of people get a chance to do what they love. So every time I wake up, I get a chance to step on the field and I'm excited whether it's a good or bad day. You just got to take the wins with the losses."

Training camp started with a session around 90 minutes to start ramping up the intensity for the day pads go on. Veteran wide receiver Calvin Ridley said Ward handled himself well.

"We all know he can play at this point," Ridley said.

Three-time Pro Bowl defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons said the usually talkative Ward was quieter Wednesday and focused on work. Simmons said the Titans have high expectations for the rookie, and the veteran plans to do all he can to push the quarterback who wants to be great.

"We have a young quarterback who need the reps and wants the reps. That's what it's about," Simmons said.

The other two quarterbacks on the roster are a pair of journeymen in Brandon Allen and Tim Boyle. Callahan was with Brandon Allen in Cincinnati, and the coach noted the 32-year-old quarterback has been in the NFL for around 10 years.

"He's kind of seen all of all of what it means to be a quarterback in this league good and bad," Callahan said of Allen. "He's got a great feel for the system, for how to operate. He understands the role of the backup quarterback. He's got a lot of experience he can share with Cam as well."

Allen said helping Ward has the added benefit of making the veteran better: "Those two things go hand in hand."



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

New York Jets quarterback Justin Fields throws during drills at training camp Thursday before he suffered a toe injury.

Jets' Fields carted off with injury

BY DENNIS WASZAK JR.
Associated Press

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — New York Jets quarterback Justin Fields was carted from the practice field Thursday morning with a toe injury.

Fields threw an incomplete pass to Jeremy Ruckert on his fifth play of team drills when he went down. The quarterback, in his first season with the Jets, sat on the grass for a few moments before getting up and limping to the sideline while helped by a trainer.

Coach Aaron Glenn said the injury was to Fields' right foot, but had no immediate information on the nature or severity.

"I know it was a quick throw, so I'm assuming someone stepped on his toe," Glenn said after New York's second practice of training camp. "It had to be because of the nature of the call that we had as far as offensive play call. I want to look at the tape and be sure."

Fields spent a few minutes in the injury tent on the sideline as trainers examined him before a cart came out to transport him into the facility. He sat in the passenger seat next to the driver in the cart and then got up under his own power before stepping inside to be further evaluated.

Glenn stopped the team period after Fields was hurt and the Jets ran special teams drills.

"When anybody goes down, there's a lump in my throat," Glenn said. "Listen, I hate injuries for any player, but the thing is I want to make sure that I understand exactly what the injury is before I move forward on my thought process."

Fields signed a two-year, $40 million contract as a free agent in March after playing last season in Pittsburgh and is expected to be New York's starter this season. Veteran Tyrod Taylor, the team's oldest player who turns 36 next month, is the backup and replaced Fields in team drills.

"Listen, Justin is who he is and if something happens to him, we've got Tyrod and we're ready to go," Glenn said.

But if Fields is sidelined for a significant amount of time, the Jets could be in the market for an experienced quarterback.

ACC boasts key transfer QBs

BY STEVE REED
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. Carson Beck transferred from Georgia to Miami because he viewed himself as a great fit in the Hurricanes' explosive offensive scheme. Miller Moss left USC for Louisville after learning of coach Jeff Brohm's history of developing transfer quarterbacks. And Tommy Castellanos moved on from Boston College to Florida State for a crack at beating national power Alabama in the season opener.

And then there's Gio Lopez, who wouldn't mind becoming Bill Belichick's next Tom Brady at North Carolina.

In all, eight of the top 25 quarterbacks in 247Sports' transfer-portal rankings landed in the Atlantic Coast Conference. By comparison, the Southeastern Conference has six of those top-level transfer QBs, while the Big Ten has four and the Big 12 three. It's why the ACC has spent this week touting itself as the "conference of quarterbacks" while pointing to being the only league with at least one QB drafted in the first round of six different drafts since 2018.

Each QB has his own story and reasons for leaving for greener pastures — and no doubt about it, NIL money certainly played a huge factor — but each comes with aspirations of replicating what Miami transfer Cam Ward accomplished last season.

Ward left Washington State for the Hurricanes and in one season developed into the No. 1 overall pick in the NFL draft, securing a fully guaranteed $48.7 million contract with the Tennessee Titans.

Beck, who was the No. 2-ranked QB in the transfer portal behind only former Tennessee product Nico Iamaleava at UCLA, left Athens despite going 24-3 as a starter for the Bulldogs.

He called it a "very difficult decision," but said it's one that has worked out well so far leaving him excited about the future.

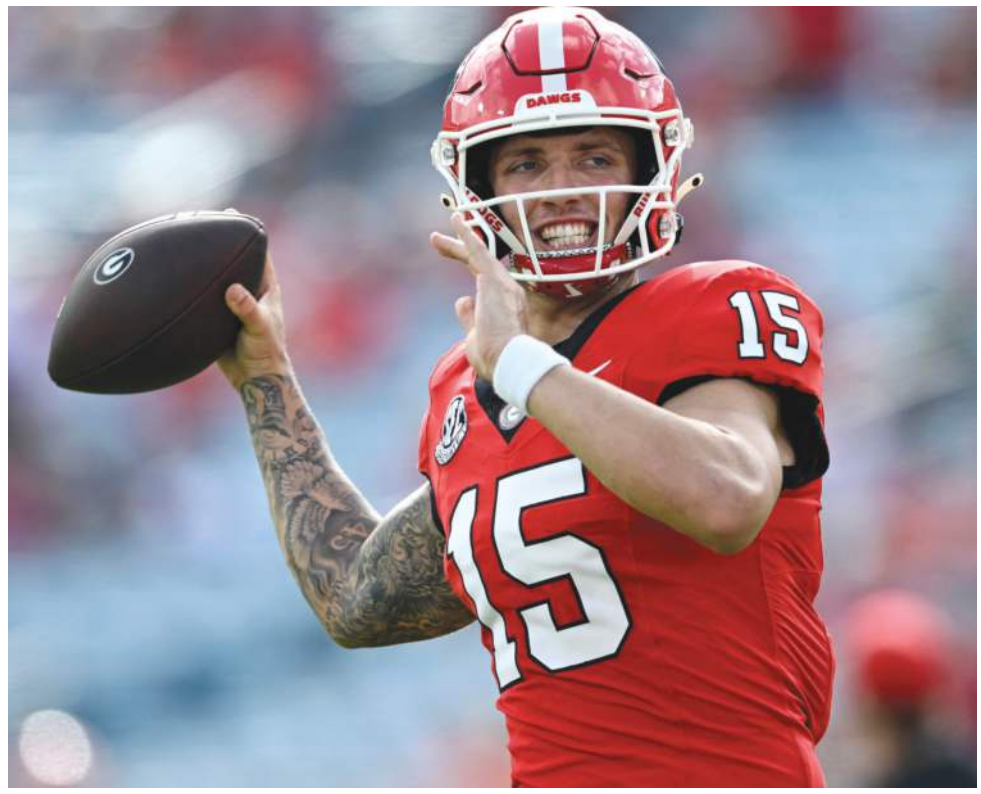
"What Cam was able to do is undeniable," said Beck, who added that he's fully recovered from an elbow injury he sustained in last year's SEC championship game. "The last school I was at, I followed up the two-time national champion, so I didn't really feel any pressure there. It's a game; I've played football my whole life. I've played quarterback since I was 7 years old. I've got a lot of good talent around me and really good coaches in position to be really successful."

Miami coach Mario Cristobal couldn't resist the temptation of adding such a proven commodity, saying "everything" drew him to recruiting Beck.

"He's played in monster games and he's played at a high level," Cristobal said. "He is ultra competitive, and his football IQ is off the charts. It didn't take long to realize that he's a team player, and that his work ethic is also through the roof."

Moss threw for 2,555 yards and 18 touchdowns last season for the Trojans, but needed a change of scenery and couldn't wait for the opportunity to work with Brohm, who's viewed by many as a quarterback whisperer for his efforts in developing the likes of Aidan O'Connell, Tyler Shough and Jack Plummer.

"Obviously different coaches try to sell you on different things, but when there's consistent proof of your ability to do something, that kind of transcends any words you hear in a meeting," Moss said of Brohm's history.



PHELAN M. EBENHACK/AP

Quarterback Carson Beck left Georgia for Miami, hoping he can replicate what Cam Ward did last season in the explosive Hurricanes offense.



KYUSUNG GONG/AP

Southern California quarterback Miller Moss threw for 2,555 yards and 18 touchdowns last season for the Trojans, but needed a change of scenery.

Castellanos hasn't played a snap at Florida State but has already created a stir nationally when he told On3 that he doesn't believe Alabama can stop him in the Aug. 30 season opener — in part because the Crimson Tide no longer have Nick Saban running the show.

He didn't back down from those comments on Wednesday at the ACC media days.

"We stand on what I said," said Castellanos, who'll look to lead the Seminoles back to national prominence following a miserable 2-10 season. "But there's no disrespect between that team or anything like that. It's just the confidence that I have in my teammates and the way we've been preparing and putting this preparation together this offseason. I just feel confident in the guys and the work that we've been putting in."

Among the other QB newcomers in the ACC include Cal's Jaron Sagapolutele, who was ranked fifth in transfer portal after his decision to leave perennial West coast power Oregon.

Duke landed a key transfer in Tulane's Darian Mensah and Syracuse coach Fran Brown signed a pair of big-school transfers in LSU's Rickie Collins and Notre Dame's Steve Angeli. Collins is projected to start and attended the league's preseason media days Wednesday, and will look to build on Kyle McCord's success last season after McCord — himself a transfer from Ohio State — threw for a national-best 4,779 yards for the Orange.

The ACC has some highly-touted returning quarterbacks as well, most notably 4,000-yard passer Cade Klubnik at Clemson and the versatile Kevin Jennings at SMU. Both led their teams to the ACC title game and College Football Playoff berths.

Georgia Tech's Haynes King transferred from Texas A&M after the 2022 season, said he never entertained the idea of leaving despite two successful seasons with the Yellow Jackets in which he's thrown for nearly 5,000 yards and combined for 68 TDs.

"I feel like we have a great opportunity this year to win some championships," King said. "The people in the building, I trust them, they're all wired the same, and they want to do things the right way and I'm not one to jump ship like I've said before.

"I've helped build this and rebuild it, and I want to see it through. I want to be part of it," King added.

SPORTS



No slowing down

Hamlin nearing 60 wins, NASCAR's career top-10 list ›› Auto racing, Page 43



NFL

No repeat

Hurts, defending champion Eagles insistent on solely looking ahead, not behind

By Dan Gelston
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jalen Hurts calls Michael Jordan a friend — the two cigar aficionados were photographed rubbing shoulders over the summer in Greece — so when the retired Chicago Bulls great offers advice, it's perhaps best to listen.

Jordan won six NBA titles, including two separate runs of three straight, so his words of wisdom to Hurts following the Philadelphia Eagles' Super Bowl victory resonated with the QB.

At the top of the list?

"He used every word but repeat," Hurts said with a laugh.

One by one, from coach Nick Sirianni to Hurts to general manager Howie Roseman to offensive lineman Jordan Mailata, the Eagles stood firm Wednesday on the first day of training camp that the word "repeat" for the 2024 champions is not part of the vernacular around the complex.

"We're not defending nothing," Mailata said, later tossing in a profanity for emphasis. "We're not the defending champs. We're the 2024 world champs, that's it."

Hurts, who won Super Bowl MVP honors in Philadelphia's 40-22 thrashing over Kansas City, said he appreciated Jordan's advice. The best approach in 2025 is for the Eagles to took at the season as a blank canvas, that it's "purely about resetting," rather than rambling on about a repeat, which would shift focus to what they accomplished last season.

Maybe that's why Hurts was never photographed wearing the Super Bowl ring in the scores of photos released on social media from last week's ceremony.

SEE REPEAT ON PAGE 46

Eagles quarterback and Super Bowl LIX MVP Jalen Hurts runs a drill during training camp Wednesday in Philadelphia.

MATT ROURKE/AP

Ohtani marks 5 straight games with homer ›› MLB, Page 42

027664 520705