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ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

An F/A-18 Super Hornet lands on the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford on Tuesday, in the Ionian Sea.

Drills and deterrence

USS Ford uses lessons from exercises to prepare for what's next

BY ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE USS GERALD R. FORD — The Navy's newest carrier strike group is putting hard-earned lessons from the Red Sea into practice, drawing on the fleet's recent combat experience to shape its current Mediterranean deployment.

Before deploying, Carrier Strike Group 12 leaders had one-on-one meetings with commanders from the aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman, whose strike group battled Houthi militants and launched the largest carrier-based airstrike in history against Islamic State targets in Somalia.

The idea was to learn "what they experienced ... and how we can apply those lessons to our own deployment if we're faced with the same kind of threat," Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, commander of Carrier Strike Group 12, told reporters Tuesday aboard USS Gerald R. Ford in the Ionian Sea.



Lanzilotta

While the Ford strike group is currently operating in the Mediterranean, it's not clear whether the carrier and its escorts will remain in the region or shift to the Middle East, where tensions con-

tinue to simmer.

Iran-backed Houthi militants have threatened to renew attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea, and the war in Ukraine shows no signs of ending. Ford's presence serves as both a show of force and a hedge against escalation.

"I'm actually here to help manage that escalation so that it doesn't start to go that way," Lanzilotta said.

The U.S. has frequently kept an aircraft carrier or amphibious ready group in the Mediterranean Sea following Russia's invasion of Uk-

SEE DRILLS ON PAGE 6

S. Korea to handle DOD cases with special unit

BY DAVID CHOI
AND YOOJIN LEE
Stars and Stripes

PYEONGTAEK, South Korea — In a move aimed at streamlining coordination with American military authorities, police in a city that hosts two major bases have established a dedicated department to handle incidents involving troops and other U.S. personnel.

The status of forces agreement, or SOFA, liaison unit began operating on June 27 in Pyeongtaek, about 35 miles south of Seoul and home to Camp Humphreys and Osan Air Base.

The team was created to respond more effectively to crimes and security issues involving members of U.S. Forces Korea, Julie Song, an officer at the Pyeongtaek Police Station said July 22. She's one of two officers assigned to the unit.

They will oversee coordination on a range of incidents, including traffic accidents, allegations of assault and driving under the influence, she said.

The unit will also investigate unauthorized drone flights and trespassing cases at U.S. military facilities, Song said, adding that there are no immediate plans to expand the unit.

Cases involving USFK personnel were previously handled by various departments, based on the allegations involved, Song said.

"Through this SOFA liaison officer system, we can cooperate closely with USFK bases," she said. "When SOFA cases occur, we can exchange information and communicate quickly and therefore prevent conflicts and strengthen our cooperative sys-

SEE HANDLE ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Germany	\$3.553	\$4.117	\$4.462	\$4.235	Azores	..	..	\$4.320	..
Change in price	+0.2 cents	No change	-0.4 cents	-0.7 cents	Change in price	..	..	-0.4 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$4.709	\$5.281	\$5.177	Turkey	..	..	\$4.112	\$3.885*
Change in price	..	-12.7 cents	-14.3 cents	+1.4 cents	Change in price	..	..	-0.4 cents	-0.7 cents
U.K.	..	\$4.129	\$4.474	\$4.247	Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective Aug. 1. The change in prices is from July 25.				
Change in price	..	No change	-0.4 cents	-0.7 cents					

PACIFIC GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Japan	..	\$4.099	..	\$3.869	South Korea	\$3.219	..	\$4.129	\$3.899
Change in price	..	No change	..	-1.0 cents	Change in price	No change	..	No change	-1.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.289	..	..	\$3.869	Guam	\$3.249**	\$3.809	\$4.159	..
Change in price	No change	..	..	-1.0 cents	Change in price	+1.0 cents	No change	No change	..
*DieselEFD **Midgrade									
Pacific prices for the week of Aug. 1-7									

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates													
Euro costs (Aug. 1)	0.85	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8141										
British pound (Aug. 1)	\$1.29	Thailand (Baht)	32.71										
Japanese yen (Aug. 1)	144.00	Turkey (NewLira)	40.5896										
South Korean won (Aug. 1)	1353.00												
Commercial rates													
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3743	(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 <table> <tr> <td>Prime rate</td> <td>7.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Interest Rates Discount rate</td> <td>4.33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Federal funds market rate</td> <td>4.38</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3-month bill</td> <td>4.36</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30-year bond</td> <td>4.90</td> </tr> </table>		Prime rate	7.50	Interest Rates Discount rate	4.33	Federal funds market rate	4.38	3-month bill	4.36	30-year bond	4.90
Prime rate	7.50												
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.33												
Federal funds market rate	4.38												
3-month bill	4.36												
30-year bond	4.90												
Britain (Pound)	1.3189												
Canada (Dollar)	1.3847												
China (Yuan)	7.1764												
Denmark (Krone)	6.5395												
Egypt (Pound)	48.5393												
Euro	0.8749												
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8499												
Hungary (Forint)	350.43												
Israel (Shekel)	3.3906												
Japan (Yen)	150.55												
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2056												
Norway (Krone)	10.3154												
Philippines (Peso)	58.36												
Poland (Zloty)	3.74												
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7468												
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2985												
South Korea (Won)	1396.61												

WEATHER OUTLOOK



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MILITARY

Fort Bliss could start housing migrants soon

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Construction of a tent complex at Fort Bliss designed to house up to 5,000 migrants detained by immigration officials has begun at the El Paso installation with a goal of detaining people there in August.

Rep. Veronica Escobar, D-Texas, said Wednesday that construction was underway at the Army base and she was informed by the Pentagon that Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials would like to begin housing up to 1,000 detained adults by this month.

The Army, which is responsible for managing the \$1.24 billion contract for the ICE facility, awarded the job of building and operating the site to Virginia-based company Acquisition Logistics on July 18, according to the Pentagon. The contract runs through Sept. 30, 2027.

The Army and ICE declined to provide additional information about the contract or its projected timeline for operations.

Local news reports showed large white tents taking shape this week on the 60-acre area formerly known as Site Monitor, which sits behind a public transportation park-and-ride site on Montana Avenue. It is accessible through El Paso public roads without entering the gates of Fort Bliss.

Initially, the detention facility will open to about 1,000 single



ROSE L. THAYER/Stars and Stripes

A bulldozer sits at a location known as Site Monitor at Fort Bliss, Texas, on April 10.

adults and add about 250 beds each week until it reaches 5,000, according to Escobar's office.

Tricia McLaughlin, the assistant secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, said in a statement that the facility is part of the department's push to expand detention capacity.

"This process does include

housing detainees at certain military bases, including Fort Bliss," she said.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth notified members of Congress last month of a proposal to house detained migrants temporarily at Camp Atterbury in Indiana and Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey. The

Pentagon has not released further details of that plan.

Escobar, who represents Fort Bliss and El Paso, has expressed concern about housing immigration detainees at the west Texas base because the U.S. is not in an emergency immigration situation.

"There's no reason to use a military installation. We are not in an

emergency situation where we're seeing an overwhelming number of people arriving at the border," she said.

The facility is part of President Donald Trump's larger plan to detain and deport people in the United States without authorization. The government has removed more than 111,000 people from the country this fiscal year, which began Oct. 1, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

Immigration enforcement officials have said they need more detention space to be more aggressive with arrests.

Since Trump took office in January, the Defense Department has become increasingly involved in immigration and border operations, including working with Customs and Border Protection along the border with Mexico and providing security for federal agents making immigration-related arrests in California.

Fort Bliss also hosts troops deployed to the southwest border and has loaned its airfield to conduct deportation flights. The base is roughly 1,700 square miles that stretch into New Mexico and offers large swaths of open desert terrain.

It has been used in the past to house unaccompanied child migrants alone in the U.S. and in 2021 to support refugees who fled Afghanistan when the government collapsed and the U.S. military left the country.

Senate confirms counterterrorism leader, a former Green Beret

By STEPHEN GROVES
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate confirmed President Donald Trump's pick to lead the National Counterterrorism Center, Joe Kent, on Wednesday evening as Republicans looked past his connections to right-wing extremists and support for conspiracy theories about the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol.

Kent won confirmation on a 52-44 vote tally, with Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina as the only Republican nay vote. Kent had already been working for Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard.

As the head of the National Counterterrorism Center, he will oversee an agency tasked with analyzing and detecting terrorist threats.

In the role, he plans to devote agency resources to targeting Latin American gangs and other criminal groups tied to migration. He is the latest Trump loyalist to win Senate confirmation to the up-

per echelons of U.S. national security leadership at a time when Trump is stretching his presidential wartime powers to accomplish his goals.

"President Trump is committed to identifying these cartels and these violent gang members and making sure that we locate them and that we get them out of our country," Kent said at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee in April.

Kent enters the top role at the counterterrorism center after two unsuccessful campaigns for Congress in Washington state, as well as a military career that saw him deployed 11 times as a Green Beret, followed by work at the CIA.

His first wife, a Navy cryptologist, was killed by a suicide bomber in 2019 while fighting the Islamic State group in Syria.



Kent

Yet Democrats strongly opposed his confirmation, pointing to his past ties to far-right figures and conspiracy theories.

During his 2022 congressional campaign, Kent paid Graham Jorgensen, a member of the far-right military group the Proud Boys, for consulting work.

He also worked closely on his campaign with Joey Gibson, the founder of the Christian nationalist group Patriot Prayer, and has attracted support from a wide variety of far-right and extremist figures.

During his Senate confirmation hearing, Kent also refused to distance himself from a conspiracy theory that federal agents had somehow instigated the Jan. 6, 2021, attack at the Capitol, as well as false claims that Trump won the 2020 election over President Joe Biden.

Democrats grilled him on his participation in a group chat on Signal that was used by Trump's national security team to discuss sensitive military plans.

Fort Gordon officer convicted after police sting

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

An officer at Fort Gordon, Ga., was convicted of attempting to sexually assault a child after local police caught him talking to an undercover agent he believed to be a 14-year-old girl as part of a sting operation aimed at child predators, the Army said.

Lt. Col. Rene Gamara, 45, was sentenced July 22 to three years at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and dismissal from the Army, according to the Office of Special Trial Counsel, which prosecuted the case.

He will have to register as a sex offender upon his release at the end of his sentence.

Gamara served as an Army Reserve cyber officer on active duty with Cyber Command when the Hall County Sheriff's Office arrested him in February 2024.

He was among more than a dozen people that were arrested during the course of the sting operation, according to the sheriff's office.

Gamara communicated with

the undercover agent online and then drove more than two hours northwest from the town of Martinez, near Fort Gordon, to Braselton to meet the girl, according to prosecutors.

When he arrived at the agreed upon location, police arrested him and found he was carrying condoms.

"As a lieutenant colonel, Rene Gamara held a position of significant trust and responsibility. His actions represented a grave violation of the standards expected of officers in the U.S. Army," said Maj. Steven Poland, prosecutor for the court-martial.

"This verdict ensures accountability, removes his opportunity to receive retirement benefits, and sends a clear message that those who seek to exploit children will be brought to justice," he added during his remarks.

Col. Alexander Pickands served as judge for the court-martial and found the officer not guilty of a second charge of attempting to sexually abuse a child by indecent communication.

PACIFIC

Airmen receive rescue award

By JEREMY STILLWAGNER
Stars and Stripes

OKUTAMA, Japan — Two airmen from Yokota Air Base were honored by the Tokyo Fire Department this week for helping to save a woman who fell into a river canyon west of the city.

Senior Airman Malachi Mustango and Staff Sgt. Danaie Lloyd were presented with certificates of appreciation Wednesday by the chief of Okutama Fire Station, Tsuyoshi Ito, for their lifesaving actions on June 19 after Mustango saw the woman fall about 50 feet from a bridge over the Tama River in Hatonosu Canyon.

Mustango and Lloyd were on a group hike near Okutama, a mountain town about an hour west of Yokota, according to a July 14 press release from the 374th Airlift Wing.

The airmen were not available for interviews after Wednesday's ceremony.

The woman fell as Mustango was taking photos from the bottom of the canyon, the release said.

Mustango, a resource adviser



Senior Airman Malachi Mustango, left, and Staff Sgt. Danaie Lloyd pose with certificates of appreciation for lifesaving efforts, during a ceremony at Okutama Fire Station in Okutama, Japan, Wednesday.

for the 36th Airlift Squadron, called out to her but got no response and saw no movement, according to the release. He handed his phone, wallet and keys to Lloyd, who dialed 119, Japan's emergency number, while he dove into the river to help.

Lloyd, an inventory inspection supervisor for the 374th Logistics Readiness Squadron, said she was unsure if the dispatcher understood her, so they waited for a translator to join the call.

Although the call lasted only a few minutes, it felt much longer, Lloyd said during Wednesday's presentation.

The Tokyo Fire Department deployed a rescue team from the Okutama Fire Station and a helicopter to airlift the injured woman out of the canyon.

Meanwhile, Mustango swam through the strong current and

cold water to reach the injured woman. He checked her for bleeding and external injuries and tried to keep her immobile, concerned she might have a spinal injury, according to the release.

"At one point she began to say 119. I tried to tell her everything will be OK, and I was just hoping she understood me," Mustango said in the release.

Upon arrival, rescuers determined the canyon was too narrow for an airlift and instead carried the woman out on a stretcher, Ito said during the presentation. She was taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital.

"It's very easy for people to get swept away by the current if no one is there to help," Ito said. "She is very lucky that you were there, and thanks to your brave and courageous actions that day she is OK."

Rusty, US-made hand grenade discovered at apartment complex

By HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

Japanese soldiers retrieved a rusty, American-made hand grenade this week at an apartment complex on Kyushu, the country's southernmost main island, according to the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force.

Soldiers from Camp Metabaru responded to the scene around 4:33 p.m. Tuesday, a base spokesman told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday. The grenade, whose date of manufacture is unknown, will be safely disposed of, he said.

The spokesman declined to share further details on the incident.

Workers mowing the lawn at the complex in the Moji ward of Kitakyushu, Fukuoka prefecture, discovered the device around 12:25 p.m. Tuesday, the Yomiuri Shim-



The area where an American-made hand grenade was found near apartment buildings in Kitakyushu city, Fukuoka prefecture, July 29.

bun reported the following day. The apartment management company notified local police, the report said.

The grenade, a little over 4 inches long and 2 inches in diameter, had a fuse but was missing its safety pin and striker lever, according

to the report.

About 25 residents from 19 households within a 98-foot radius of the complex were evacuated while Ground Self-Defense Force troops secured the device, the Mainichi Shimbun reported Wednesday.

F-35 pilot safe after crash in California

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

A Navy F-35C Lightning II crashed Wednesday near Naval Air Station Lemoore, Calif., according to a post on the base's official Facebook page.

The pilot ejected safely when the multirole fighter from Fighter Attack Squadron 125 went down at 6:30 p.m. local time, according to the base. No other damage or injuries resulted from the crash, according to the base.

The plane crashed in a field in

Fresno County, according to Fox26 News, a local broadcaster.

Lemoore, 30 miles south of Fresno in California's Central Valley, is the headquarters of the Navy Strike Fighter Command Pacific, according to the base website.

Sixteen operational strike fighter squadrons are based there, including F/A-18E/F Super Hornets and Lightning IIs, according to the website. The F-35C is the version of the fifth-generation stealth fighter built for carrier operations.



An F-35C Lightning II lands at Naval Air Station Lemoore, Calif., on March 18, 2022.

Maintenance issue prompts Tokyo diversion

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — An aerial refueling tanker diverted to this airlift hub in western Tokyo due to a maintenance issue Thursday morning, according to the 374th Airlift Wing.

The KC-135 Stratotanker, assigned to the 909th Air Refueling Squadron at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, landed safely at Yokota at 10:40 a.m. with no reported injuries, Master Sgt. Nathan Allen, a wing spokesman, said in an email that day.

"Emergency response protocols were activated in accordance with standard procedures," he wrote.

The incident follows a pair of recent precautionary landings by Air Force CV-22 Ospreys in northern Japan.

A tiltrotor from Kadena's 353rd Special Operations Wing landed at 9:45 a.m. July 24 at Iwate Hanamaki Airport in Hanamaki, wing spokesman 1st Lt. Cullen Drenkahn said in an email sent that day.

No injuries or damage were reported as a result of that incident, and commercial flights were not affected.

The wing's Ospreys are assigned to the 21st Special Operations Squadron at Yokota.



A KC-135 Stratotanker assigned to the 909th Air Refueling Squadron visits Naval Air Facility Atsugi, Japan, July 14.

Iwate prefecture Gov. Takuya Tasso raised concerns about the incident during his regular news conference the following day.

"I want them to give us notice about flight plans in advance," he said. "I would like to sort that out and will consider making a request to the Ministry of Defense and other relevant agencies."

Another Yokota Osprey landed at 3:55 p.m. 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 flight delays were reported.

The aircraft departed for Misawa Air Base about six hours later.

MILITARY

Decorated Marine returns to Okinawa as CO

By BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes
CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — An infantry officer who led troops during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars has returned to Okinawa to lead the Marine Corps' infantry division in the Indo-Pacific.

Maj. Gen. Kyle Ellison assumed command of the 3rd Marine Division from Maj. Gen. Christian Wortman during a ceremony Wednesday at the Butler Officers' Club on Foster, according to a news release and photos from the division that day. The ceremony was not open to media.

The division, headquartered at Camp Courtney, provides the infantry component of the III Marine Expeditionary Force, which also includes the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and the 3rd Marine Logistics Group. III MEF commander Lt. Gen. Roger Turner presided over the ceremony.

Wortman, of Pennsylvania, took command of the division in 2023 and oversaw changes under the Marine Corps' Force Design plan, which aims to reshape the service to defend island battlefields in the



ALEXANDER DEVEREUX/U.S. Marine Corps
Maj. Gen. Kyle Ellison gives his first speech as 3rd Marine Division commander during a ceremony at the Butler Officers' Club on Camp Foster, Okinawa, on Wednesday.

Indo-Pacific and counter China more effectively.

"Together, we have embraced modernization, successfully deployed critical new capabilities,

and built readiness for wide-ranging Indo-Pacific operational responsibilities," he said in the release. "This assignment was another powerful reminder of the in-

credible capability, dedication and professionalism of our young Marines and sailors."

In November 2023, the Marine Corps redesignated the division's 12th Marine Regiment as the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment.

A littoral regiment — about 2,000 Marines — is a mobile unit inserted within range of enemy fire, including missiles, to seize and hold key islands and deny enemy vessels access to surrounding seas.

The regiment made its operational debut during last year's Resolute Dragon joint exercise, deploying the AN/TPS-80 air-defense radar system for the first time to Yonaguni, Japan's westernmost island, 67 miles east of Taiwan.

The division's other littoral regiment, the 3rd Littoral Regiment, in April deployed for the first time the Navy/Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System, or NMESIS, and the Marine Air Defense Integrated System, or MADIS, during the Balikatan exercise in the Philippines.

The division also received 12

amphibious combat vehicles in July 2024. In December, the 4th Marine Regiment made the first open-water transit at Kushi Crossing on Okinawa using the armored personnel carriers designed to move troops from ship to shore.

Ellison, also of Pennsylvania, previously served as deputy director for current and integrated operations for the Joint Staff at the Pentagon. He was commander of the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade and deputy commander of the III Marine Expeditionary Force from 2020 to 2022.

"I look forward to working alongside these dedicated Marines and sailors continuing our modernization efforts and strengthening our partnerships throughout the Indo-Pacific," Ellison said in the release.

"We will remain focused on maintaining a high state of readiness, embracing innovation, and ensuring we are prepared to answer our nation's call."

The division acknowledged email and phone inquiries on Wednesday but did not immediately provide responses.

Army secretary directs West Point to overhaul hiring practices

By ALI SWENSON
Associated Press
NEW YORK — The secretary of the Army on Wednesday directed the U.S. Military Academy at West Point to review its hiring practices, bar outside groups from choosing employees and remove a newly announced hire who led the nation's cybersecurity agency under President Joe Biden.

The directive, shared on the social platform X by Secretary Dan Driscoll, came just a day after Jen Easterly was announced as the Robert F. McDermott Distinguished Chair in West Point's social sciences department.

It demonstrated how vigorously President Donald Trump's administration has sought to

wield control over the ideology and leadership of higher education and the military during the president's second term.

It also highlighted how deeply concerns about censorship have seeped into the Republican Party and the Trump administration.

As the director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA, Easterly faced harsh criticism from Republicans who argued that her work to counter misinformation about elections and the COVID-19 pandemic amounted to censorship.



Easterly

CISA secures the nation's critical infrastructure, including the nation's dams, banks and nuclear power plants. It also secures voting systems — work that became controversial as Trump has made false claims to create doubt about the integrity of elections in recent years.

Easterly has denied claims that her agency censored anyone and said last fall that "allegations against CISA are riddled with factual inaccuracies."

She said in January she hopes the agency will be allowed to continue its election-related work despite "contentiousness" around that part of its mission.

Driscoll's directive came after far-right activist Laura Loomer posted about Easterly's

new role on X, saying "Biden holdovers" at the Defense Department were "undermining" Trump's administration.

Loomer has frequently urged Trump's administration to purge staffers she deems insufficiently loyal to his agenda, and on multiple occasions, they have been fired.

The memo directs West Point to terminate Easterly's agreement with the institution and "immediately pause non-governmental and outside groups from selecting employees of the Academy, including instructors, professors, teachers and shaping academic or developmental lectures."

It also requests an immediate review of the military training

academy's hiring practices.

Asked for a reason for the memo, an Army spokesperson said in a statement that ahead of the new academic year, "we are crafting a deliberate approach to ensure that our future officers are best prepared to meet the demands of the modern battlefield."

Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell was more blunt about the reasoning in a post on X.

"We're not turning cadets into censorship activists," he said.

"We're turning them into warriors & leaders. We're in the business of warfighting."

Easterly, an Army combat veteran and West Point graduate, didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Navy suspends the search for sailor missing at sea near Australia

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes
The search for a sailor who went missing from the USS George Washington at sea north of Australia has ended, the Pentagon reported Wednesday.

"The U.S. Navy suspended the active search for a sailor assigned to the aircraft carrier USS George Washington," the service said in a statement.

The name of the missing sailor is being withheld until 24 hours after next of kin are notified, the Navy said.

The George Washington has a crew of about 3,500 sailors and an air wing element of about 2,400 personnel.

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier was taking part in Operation Talisman Sabre. The major multi-national exercise centered on the Sea of Timor, between the northern coast of Australia and the island of Timor.

When the sailor was reported missing Monday, the carrier and the warships in its strike group broke off from the exer-



ADAM K. THOMAS/U.S. Navy
USS George Washington cruises in the Pacific Ocean in 2009.

cise to conduct a search, the Navy said.

"The ship initiated search-and-rescue procedures after receiving reports of a possible sailor overboard," the USS George Washington said in a statement released by the Navy.

The search was joined by the destroyer USS Shoup, the cruiser USS Robert Smalls, helicopters, and fixed-wing aircraft from the George Washington's strike group. It also included assistance from Australian forces.

MILITARY

Large Scale Exercise 2025 launches

Stars and Stripes

One of the biggest Navy and Marine Corps training exercises launched Wednesday with Large Scale Exercise 2025, the third iteration of an all-of-Navy exercise that takes place across the world.

LSE 2025 includes six component commands, all seven numbered fleets and sailors and Marines across 22 time zones, a Fleet Forces Command news release said. It is the only exercise that features the simultaneous operation of all 10 Fleet Maritime Operations Centers, according to the release.

LSE features live training and virtual simulations of scenarios intended to stress-test the Navy and Marine Corps without physically wearing down their materiel. Those taking part are doing so from bases and ships at sea.

The scale and complexity of the exercise is intended to mirror the challenges posed by strategic competitors.



SUSANNA ROGERS/U.S. Navy

Information Systems Technician 3rd Class Hector Torres, left, and Senior Chief Electronics Technician Mark Stuiwenga work on unclassified networks as part of the Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet forward maritime operations team supporting Large Scale Exercise 2025.

“This isn’t just about scale — it’s about integration, synchronization and rehearsal for the full spectrum of conflict,” Vice Adm. John Gumbleton, the deputy commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command, said in the release.

Gumbleton also said LSE 2025 will test the military’s ability to “execute contested logistics.”

The 2025 iteration of LSE is also the first to include allied forces, the release said.

The previous iterations took place in 2023 and 2021.

Though the number of participants was not publicly stated, the previous version of the exercise included about 25,000 sailors and Marines.

LSE 2025 launches as two other major training exercises are underway: Talisman Sabre 2025, a bilateral U.S.-Australia exercise; and REFORPAC 2025, the Pacific Air Forces’ largest contingency response exercise. Both are still ongoing.

Drills: Ford prepares for NATO exercise

FROM PAGE 1

raine in February 2022.

In January 2024, Ford ended a more than eight-month deployment to the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations that included duty in the Eastern Mediterranean following Hamas’ attack on Israel in October 2023.

Then-Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin extended Ford’s deployment as the U.S. used a dual-carrier strategy as part of efforts to keep Iran-backed proxies from broadening the conflict.

The aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, which was presumed to relieve Ford, was sent to the Middle East as part of that strategy. More recently, the Navy stationed five destroyers in the Eastern Mediterranean in June to defend Israel against Iranian attacks and promote regional stability. Earlier this month, the Ford strike group entered the

Mediterranean.

One of the most notable changes on this deployment is the role of the destroyer USS Winston Churchill, which is functioning as the air and missile defense commander for the strike group.

That role has long been filled by a cruiser.

But with the Navy’s aging cruiser fleet nearing retirement, destroyers are bridging the gap. Churchill is the first East Coast destroyer equipped with the modifications to deploy to take on the role, officials said.

The shift in structure and training comes as the Navy reassesses how carriers may be targeted in combat.

In March, Adm. Daryl Caudle, commander of U.S. Fleet Forces, said Ford was training to use its close-in weapons system to defend against incoming missiles or drones, Naval News reported.

Carriers in recent decades typically have been defended by embarked aircraft and escort ships.

But in March 2024, officials aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower on duty in the Red Sea acknowledged that the Houthis had employed swarm drone attacks and upgraded ballistic missile capabilities.

Since its arrival, the Ford group has trained with the Spanish and Italian navies and participated in Neptune Strike 25-2, a NATO exercise spanning multiple theaters, including the Mediterranean, the Baltic Sea, Eastern Europe and the Black Sea. The exercise emphasizes long-range air operations, according to NATO.

On Tuesday, there were about 90 to 100 flights scheduled aboard Ford, officials said, noting that four catapults and three arresting wires that help launch and stop aircraft, respectively, had been in use on the carrier during the entire deployment.

“We are fully mission-capable to meet all missions at any time at any place,” said Capt. David Skarosi, commander of USS Gerald R. Ford.

Leaders say sailors have aggressively trained for this deployment, which marks its third to the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations.

The group’s day-to-day operations focus on training and readiness for any contingency, such as challenging weather conditions or the need to provide humanitarian assistance.

“Or, if there’s some crisis in the region, we’re able to respond to that, too,” Lanzilotta said.



RICHARD KIM/U.S. Army

U.S. military police officers stand guard during a 2023 exercise at Camp Humphreys, South Korea.

Handle: New unit debuts

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tem.”

The SOFA, which establishes the rights and responsibilities of U.S. troops, Defense Department civilians and their family members in South Korea, allows the United States to retain custody of its members in most criminal cases, except for serious offenses.

The unit’s creation comes as South Korea grapples with an uptick in incidents involving the U.S. military. Last year, 479 service members and 190 U.S. civilians were accused of crimes, according to the Ministry of Justice — up from 450 service members and 176 civilians in 2023.

Pyeongtaek became a focal point of the U.S. presence following a massive consolidation effort that relocated the headquarters of USFK, U.N. Command, Combined Forces Command, Eighth Army and the 2nd Infantry Division from Seoul to Humphreys be-

tween 2017 and 2022.

The city, a mix of rural farmland and urban expansion, now accommodates more than 55,000 U.S. personnel and local staff — roughly 8.5% of its population.

“Pyeongtaek city has the biggest U.S. base outside of America, which means we have more responsibility and chances of cooperation,” Song said.

American military officials have also voiced support for the initiative. Eighth Army’s provost marshal, Col. Christopher Rivers, said the new unit is expected to “respond faster and more effectively.”

“With growing security concerns around the bases, both sides agreed to hold regular meetings and improve communication at the working level,” he said. “Subjects like trespassing, unauthorized drone flights, unauthorized filming and SOFA-related incidents facilitated the need for even closer cooperation.”



ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

Pilots aboard the Ford in an F/A-18 Super Hornet prepare for takeoff. Pilot names have been blurred from the photo for security purposes.

MILITARY

Trump interviews 4-star general candidates

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a break with past practice, President Donald Trump now meets with candidates for promotion to the rank of four-star general, the White House has acknowledged.

The Republican president has the meetings because he wants to make sure the U.S. military retains its superiority and its leaders focus on fighting wars, a White House spokesperson said.

“President Trump wants to ensure our military is the greatest and most lethal fighting force in history, which is why he meets with four-star-general nominees directly to ensure they are war fighters first — not bureaucrats,” assistant press secretary Anna Kelly said.

The meetings, however, are a departure from past practice, and knowledge of them has raised concerns about politicization of the military’s top ranks.

Trump has not always respected the long-standing tradition of walling off the military from partisan politics.

In June, Trump took the rare step of mobilizing the National Guard and then the Marines, sending hundreds of them into Los Angeles over the objections of California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat with whom the president has feuded politically.

Trump followed up with a campaign-style rally at Fort

Bragg in North Carolina, where uniformed soldiers cheered as he criticized former President Joe Biden, Newsom and other Democrats — raising concerns that Trump was using the military as a political prop.

Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., an Army veteran and member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called the meetings “very welcome reform.”

“I’ve long advocated for presidents to meet with 4-star nominees. President Trump’s most

important responsibility is commander-in-chief,” Cotton wrote in a post on X. “The military-service chiefs and combatant commanders are hugely consequential jobs” and “I commend President Trump and Secretary Hegseth for treating these jobs with the seriousness they deserve.”

The New York Times, which first reported on the practice, said it had been initiated by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

NTSB: Military air traffic drew concern before DC midair crash

By JOSH FUNK
Associated Press

Military helicopter traffic over Washington was a longtime worry among aviators operating around the airport where an Army helicopter and commercial airliner collided this year, killing 67 people, federal investigators heard during testimony on Thursday.

It is the second of three days of witness testimony and public inquiry by the National Transportation Safety Board into the January midair crash over the Potomac River.

The board focused on air traffic control and heard Thursday that it was common for pilots to ask to use visual separation — basically relying on their eyesight — just as the Army Black Hawk’s pilot agreed to do the night of the crash. FAA officials also said controllers relied heavily on pilots using visual separation as a way to manage the complex airspace with so many helicopters flying around Washington D.C.

But Rick Dressler, an official with medevac operator Metro Aviation, told the board it is difficult to identify other aircraft in the night sky around Ronald Reagan National Airport, especially if an onboard locator system was switched off, as Army choppers routine did.

Dressler said that he and other civilian helicopter pilots in the area have long been concerned about the Army and Air Force helicopters flying around Reagan airport.

“I don’t like saying this. I’ll say it again on the record,” Dressler, a former Army aviator and retired Air Force officer, said. “I’m speaking for my group there. We are all very uncomfortable when those two units are operating.”

Clark Allen, an FAA training manager in the Washington area who worked in the tower at Reagan National Airport, said it was common for visual separation to be used daily between helicopter pilots and commercial traffic.

The American Airlines jet arrived from Wichita, Kansas, car-



ROD LAMKEY/AP

Lance Gant, right, of the Federal Aviation Administration, listens as Dan Cooper, left, of Sikorsky Aircraft, responds to questions during the NTSB fact-finding hearing on the DCA midair collision accident, at the National Transportation and Safety Board boardroom, Wednesday, in Washington.

rying, among others, a group of elite young figure skaters, their parents and coaches, and four union steamfitters from the Washington area.

The collision was the nation’s deadliest plane crash since November 2001 and was the first in a string of crashes and near misses this year that have alarmed officials and the traveling public, despite statistics that still show flying remains the safest form of transportation.

It’s too early for the board to identify what exactly caused the crash. The board’s final report won’t be released until sometime next year.

On the first day of hearings Wednesday, investigators highlighted a number of factors that may have contributed to the crash and the warnings about helicopter traffic that the Federal Aviation Administration received years before the tragedy over the Potomac River.

NTSB Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy urged the FAA to “Fix

it. Do better” at the end of a fiery exchange when she highlighted the warnings the agency ignored years earlier. She also suggested the Army adopt a formal policy making it clear that helicopter pilots should never fly under landing planes because pilots told investigators they were doing that routinely.

“Every sign was there that there was a safety risk and the tower was telling you that,” Homendy said.

But there were 21 bureaucratic steps the tower had to follow to get a change made and after the accident the FAA transferred managers out of the tower instead of acknowledging that they had been warned.

“What you did is you transferred people out instead of taking ownership over the fact that everybody in FAA in the tower was saying there was a problem,” Homendy said. “But you guys are pointing out, ‘Welp, our bureaucratic process. Somebody should have brought it up at some other

symposium.’ Are you kidding me? 67 people are dead. How do you explain that?”

Homendy said an FAA working group raised concerns about all the helicopter traffic around Ronald Reagan National Airport and the risk of a collision in 2022, but the FAA refused to add a warning to helicopter charts urging pilots to use caution when this runway was in use.

“This is the very event that this would have been the cautionary note for,” she said.

Video and animation presented during the proceeding’s first day showed the helicopter flying above the 200 feet altitude limit before colliding with the plane.

Investigators said Wednesday the flight data recorder showed the helicopter was actually 80 feet to 100 feet higher than the barometric altimeter the pilots relied upon showed they were flying.

So the NTSB conducted tests on three other helicopters from the same unit in a flight over the same area and found similar discrepan-

cies in their altimeters.

Dan Cooper with Sikorsky helicopters said that when the Black Hawk helicopter involved in the crash was designed in the 1970s, it used a style of altimeter that was common at the time.

Newer helicopters have air data computers that didn’t exist back then that help provide more accurate altitude readings.

Army officials said a discrepancy of 70 to 100 feet between the Black Hawk’s altimeters is within the acceptable range because pilots are expected to maintain their altitude plus or minus 100 feet.

The greater concern is that the FAA approved routes around Reagan airport that included such small separation distances between helicopters and planes when planes are landing.

“The fact that we have less than 500 foot separation is a concern for me,” said Scott Rosengren, who is chief engineer in the office that manages the Army’s utility helicopters.

During the two minutes before the crash, one air traffic controller was directing airport traffic and helicopters in the area, a task that involved speaking to or receiving communications from several different aircraft, according to the NTSB’s History of Flight Performance Study.

Chief Warrant Officer Kylene Lewis told the board that she wouldn’t find an 80 to 100 foot discrepancy between the different altimeters on a helicopter alarming because at lower altitudes she would be relying more on the radar altimeter than the barometric altimeter.

Below 500 feet, Lewis said she would be checking both instruments and cross referencing them.

The air traffic controller had spoken to or received communications from the Black Hawk helicopter, an airplane that was taking off, an Air Force helicopter, an airplane on the ground, a medical helicopter and an inbound flight that was not the American Airlines plane that would crash.

NATION

Trump extends trade deal with Mexico

By JOSH BOAK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States will enter a 90-day negotiating period with Mexico over trade as 25% tariff rates stay in place, part of the rush of trade activity Thursday before President Donald Trump plans to impose a broad set of global import taxes starting Friday.

Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that his phone conversation with Mexican leader Claudia Sheinbaum was “very successful in that, more and more, we are getting to know and understand each other.”

The Republican president had threatened tariffs of 30% on goods from Mexico in a July letter, something that Sheinbaum said Mexico gets to stave off for the next three months.

“We avoided the tariff increase announced for tomorrow and we got 90 days to build a long-term agreement through dialogue,” Sheinbaum wrote on X.

The leaders’ morning call came at a moment of pressure and uncertainty for the world economy. Nations are scrambling to finalize the outlines of a trade framework with Trump in order to avoid him simply imposing higher tariff rates that could upend economies and governments.

Trump reached a deal with South Korea on Wednesday, and earlier with the European Union,



JOHN McDONNELL/AP

President Donald Trump speaks at an event in the East Room of the White House, Wednesday.

Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines.

His commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, said on Fox News’ “Hannity” that there were agreements with Cambodia and Thailand after they had agreed to a ceasefire to their border conflict.

Among those uncertain about their trade status were wealthy Switzerland and Norway.

Norwegian Finance Minister Jens Stoltenberg said it was “completely uncertain” whether a deal would be completed before Trump’s deadline.

But even the public announcement of a deal can offer scant reassurance for an American trading partner.

EU officials are waiting to complete a crucial document outlining how the framework to tax imported autos and other goods from the

27-member state bloc would operate. Trump had announced a deal Sunday while he was in Scotland.

“The U.S. has made these commitments. Now it’s up to the U.S. to implement them. The ball is in their court,” EU commission spokesman Olof Gill said. The document would not be legally binding.

Trump said as part of the agreement with Mexico that goods imported into the U.S. would continue to face a 25% tariff that he has ostensibly linked to fentanyl trafficking.

He said autos would face a 25% tariff, while copper, aluminum and steel would be taxed at 50% during the negotiating period.

He said Mexico would end its “Non Tariff Trade Barriers,” but he didn’t provide specifics.

Some goods continue to be protected from the tariffs by the 2020 U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA, which Trump negotiated during his first term.

But Trump appeared to have soured on that deal, which is up for renegotiation next year. One of his first significant moves as president was to tariff goods from both Mexico and Canada earlier this year.

U.S. Census Bureau figures show that the U.S. ran a \$171.5 billion trade imbalance with Mexico last year. That means the U.S. bought more goods from Mexico than it sold to the country.

Virginia Giuffre’s family expresses shock over Trump comments

By MIKE CATALINI
Associated Press

The family of Virginia Giuffre, who was among Jeffrey Epstein’s most well-known sex trafficking accusers, said that it was shocking to hear President Donald Trump say the disgraced financier “stole” Giuffre from him and urged that Epstein’s former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell remain in prison.

Giuffre, who had accused Britain’s Prince Andrew and other influential men of sexually exploit-

ing her as a teenager trafficked by Epstein, has been a central figure in conspiracy theories tied to the case. She died by suicide this year.

Her family’s statement is the latest development involving Epstein, who took his own life in a New York jail in 2019 while facing federal sex trafficking charges, and the Republican president, who was his one-time friend. Trump denied prior knowledge of Epstein’s crimes and said he cut off their relationship years ago,

but he still faces questions about the case.

Trump, responding to a reporter’s question on Tuesday, said that he got upset with Epstein over his poaching of workers and that Epstein had stolen Giuffre from his Palm Beach, Fla., club.

“It was shocking to hear President Trump invoke our sister and say that he was aware that Virginia had been ‘stolen’ from Mar-a-Lago,” the family’s statement said.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt noted the president was responding to a reporter’s question and didn’t bring up Giuffre himself.

The family’s statement comes shortly after the Justice Department interviewed Maxwell, who was convicted in 2021 on sex trafficking and other charges and is serving a 20-year sentence in Tallahassee, Florida. Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche interviewed Maxwell in a Florida

courthouse, though details about what she said haven’t become public.

A Trump administration official said the president is not considering clemency action for Maxwell.

Giuffre said she was approached by Maxwell in 2000 and eventually was hired by her as a masseuse for Epstein. But the couple effectively made her a sexual servant, she said, pressuring her into gratifying not only Epstein but his friends and associates.

Trump administration halts, then releases, NIH research funding

By HANNAH NATANSON,
DAN DIAMOND,
CAROLYN Y. JOHNSON
AND JEFF STEIN
The Washington Post

The Trump administration on Tuesday temporarily halted all funding for science research issued by the National Institutes of Health before releasing the funds later in the day, according to emails obtained by The Washington Post and more than a half-dozen federal officials.

The halt stemmed from a footnote in an Office of Management and Budget document, according to an email sent to NIH staff Tuesday afternoon by the NIH’s associate director for budget, Neil Shapiro.

The OMB gave the NIH its “full-year apportionment” of congressionally mandated funds, Shapiro wrote, but included a footnote limiting what the NIH could spend the money on.

Finance officials within the

agency “interpreted this footnote to permit NIH obligations only for salaries, administrative expenses, and Clinical Center expenses,” Shapiro wrote.

But research money including “research grant, R & D contract, or training awards cannot be issued during this pause,” Shapiro wrote.

He added: “We are working to make this limitation short-term and temporary.”

If the money had not later been

unfrozen, the move would have affected about \$15 billion in federal funds, according to the office of Sen. Patty Murray D-Wash., the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Contacted for comment Tuesday evening, less than four hours after Shapiro sent his email, OMB spokeswoman Rachel Cauley said that the money will be given out.

“This was a programmatic review of NIH funding,” Cauley wrote. “The funds were released.”

The dustup over NIH spending is part of a debate within the Trump administration over federal spending and whether the government is moving too quickly to institute cuts.

Some political appointees have balked at efforts to curb the NIH’s funding, including the OMB’s proposed 40 percent cut to the agency’s budget, according to two people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal conversations.

NATION



JOSHUA LOTT/The Washington Post

Demonstrators hold signs as they stand outside the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse on March 12 in Eau Claire, Wis. They were protesting cuts to the federal government workforce and other Trump administration policies.

Federal government is paying more than 154,000 not to work

BY MERYL KORNFIELD, HANNAH NATANSON AND LAURA MECKLER
The Washington Post

The government is paying more than 154,000 federal employees not to work as part of the Trump administration’s deferred resignation program, according to two administration officials.

The number, which has not been previously reported, accounts for workers at dozens of agencies who took offers from the government as of June to get paid through Sept. 30 — the end of the fiscal year — or the end of 2025 and then voluntarily leave government, significantly reducing the size of several major agencies, according to two Office of Personnel Management officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to disclose details of the administration’s plans to scale down government.

The buyouts have rapidly sped up the process of slashing the federal workforce at an unprecedented rate, the officials said. But critics have argued the administration’s tactics of using buyouts and admin-

istrative leave have been wasteful because the public is paying tens of thousands of employees not to work for months.

Officials could not say how much the government is spending on salaries for employees who are resigning. The timing of buyouts has varied by agency, employees remain on their agencies’ payrolls as long as they are on leave and some workers got additional payments through other retirement programs, as well. The officials also could not say how much they expect the cuts will save in payroll costs in the long term.

The resignations amount to about 6.7% of the government’s civilian workforce of 2.3 million people.

“Ultimately, the deferred resignation program was not only legal, it provided over 150,000 civil servants a dignified and generous departure from the federal government,” OPM spokeswoman McLaurine Pinover said in a statement. “It also delivered incredible relief to the American taxpayer.”

The White House declined to comment.

Democrats on the Senate Perma-

nent Subcommittee on Investigations have separately estimated that the government has spent billions of dollars paying workers who are on leave either through the voluntary departure program or because of ongoing litigation over mass firings, according to a report released Thursday. The Democrats, led by Sen. Richard Blumenthal, of Connecticut, argue that the Department of Government Efficiency’s race to slim government this spring led to mistakes and waste, estimating that the whole enterprise cost the government \$21.7 billion.

Meanwhile, the government has spent about the same amount of money this year as it did last year to this point. Daily Treasury statements, which show the government’s ongoing expenses, are slightly higher now than last year. Expenditures on federal salaries are up about 5% this year compared to last year, according to federal spending trackers kept by the non-partisan Brookings Institution and the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School.

Harris says she will not run for Calif. governor

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Former Vice President Kamala Harris will not run for California governor next year, leaving open the possibility that she could mount a third run for the White House in 2028.

“Over the past six months, I have spent time reflecting on this moment in our nation’s history and the best way for me to continue fighting for the American people and advancing the values and ideals I hold dear,” Harris said in a statement released by her office Wednesday.

“I have given serious thought to asking the people of California for the privilege to serve as their governor. I love this state, its people and its promise. It is my home. But after deep reflection, I’ve decided that I will not run for Governor in this election,” she said.

Harris’ decision extends a guessing game about her political future that started after she lost last year’s presidential election to Donald Trump. Harris spent months privately considering whether to run for governor, stage another run for the White House or step away from electoral politics altogether after her bruising defeat by Trump.

She has not ruled out another run for president, after unsuccessful bids in 2020 and 2024. It’s not known when she will make that decision.

Harris didn’t mention Trump directly in her statement, but said “our politics, our government, and our institutions have too often failed the American people, culminating in this moment of crisis.”

“For now, my leadership — and public service — will not be in elected office. I look forward to getting back out and listening to the American people, helping elect Democrats across the nation who will

fight fearlessly, and sharing more details in the months ahead about my own plans,” Harris said.

“In the United States of America, power must lie with the people. And We, the People must use our power to fight for freedom, opportunity, fairness and the dignity of all. I will remain in that fight,” the statement said.

Harris would have entered the crowded contest to replace term-limited Gov. Gavin Newsom as a front-runner given



Harris

en her widespread name recognition, fundraising prowess and track record of winning statewide elections. Before serving as U.S. senator and vice president, she was elected state attorney general and district attorney in San Francisco.

But after years in Washington on the national and international stage, it was never clear if Harris was interested in returning to the less-glamorous world of statehouse politics in Sacramento.

Outside California, Harris’ political career has been marked by historic firsts but also disappointments.

Harris sought the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, but dropped out of the race before the leadoff Iowa caucuses — the first defeat of her political career. After Joe Biden chose her as his running mate, she made history as the first woman, Black person or person of South Asian descent to serve as vice president.

In 2024, Harris became the Democratic presidential nominee after Biden left the race months before Election Day and endorsed her. She lost that race to Trump, who won every swing state.

Ohio city braces to defend Haitian migrants against deportation

Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ohio — An Ohio city whose Haitian migrants were disparaged by President Donald Trump last year as he pitched voters on his plans for an immigration crackdown is now bracing to defend the community against possible deportation.

A group of about 100 community members, clergy and Haitian leaders in Springfield, Ohio, gathered this week for several days of training

sessions as they prepare to defend potential deportees and provide them refuge.

“We feel that this is something that our faith requires, that people of faith are typically law-abiding people — that’s who we want to be — but if there are laws that are unjust, if there are laws that don’t respect human dignity, we feel that our commitment to Christ requires that we put ourselves in places where we may face some of the same threats,”

said Carl Ruby, senior pastor of Central Christian Church.

Ruby said the ultimate goal of the group is to persuade the Trump administration to reverse its decision to terminate legal protections for hundreds of thousands of Haitians in the U.S. under temporary protected status, or TPS.

“One way of standing with the Haitians is getting out the message of how much value they bring to the city of Springfield,” he said. “It

would be an absolute disaster if we lost 10,000 of our best workers overnight because their TPS ends and they can no longer work.”

In lieu of that, Ruby said participants in the effort are learning how to help Haitians by building relationships, accompanying migrants to appointments with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and providing their families with physical shelter.

Springfield found itself in a spot-

light last year after Trump amplified false rumors in a presidential debate that members of its burgeoning Haitian population were abducting and eating cats and dogs.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced in June that it would terminate TPS as soon as Sept. 2 for about 500,000 Haitians who are already in the U.S. The department said conditions in the island nation have improved adequately to allow their safe return.

NATION

Powell ignores Trump demands, holds rate cuts

By Christopher Rugaber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell gave little indication on Wednesday of bowing anytime soon to President Donald Trump’s frequent demands that he cut interest rates, even as signs of dissent emerged on the Fed’s governing board.

The Fed left its key short-term interest rate unchanged for the fifth time this year, at about 4.3%, as was expected. But Powell also signaled that it could take months for the Fed to determine whether Trump’s sweeping tariffs will push up inflation temporarily or lead to a more persistent bout of higher prices. His comments suggest that a rate cut in September, which had been expected by some economists and investors, is now less likely.

“We’ve learned that the process will probably be slower than expected,” Powell said. “We think we have a long way to go to really understand exactly how” the tariffs will affect inflation and the economy.

There were some signs of splits in the Fed’s ranks: Governors

Christopher Waller and Michelle Bowman voted to reduce borrowing costs, while nine officials, including Powell, favored standing pat. It is the first time in more than three decades that two of the seven Washington-based governors have dissented. One official, Governor Adriana Kugler, was absent and didn’t vote.

The choice to hold off on a rate cut will almost certainly result in further conflict between the Fed and White House, as Trump has repeatedly demanded that the central bank reduce borrowing costs as part of his effort to assert control over one of the few remaining independent federal agencies.

Powell has in the past signaled during a news conference that a rate move might be on the table for an upcoming meeting, but he gave no such hints this time. The odds of a rate cut in September, according to futures pricing, fell from nearly 60% before the meeting to just 45% after the press conference, the equivalent of a coin flip, according to CME Fedwatch.

“We have made no decisions about September,” Powell said.



MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, speaks Wednesday during a news conference following the Federal Open Market Committee meeting in Washington.

The chair acknowledged that if the Fed cut its rate too soon, inflation could move higher, and if it cut too late, then the job market could suffer.

Major U.S. stock indexes, which had been trading slightly higher Wednesday, went negative after Powell’s comments.

“The markets seem to think that Powell pushed back on a September rate cut,” said Lauren Goodwin, chief market strategist at New York Life Investments.

Powell also underscored that the vast majority of the committee agreed with a basic framework: Inflation is still above the Fed’s target of 2%, while the job market

is still mostly healthy, so the Fed should keep rates elevated. On Thursday, the government will release the latest reading of the Fed’s preferred inflation gauge, and it is expected to show that core prices, excluding energy and food, rose 2.7% from a year earlier.

Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial, says he expects the tariffs will only temporarily raise inflation, but that it will take most of the rest of this year for that to become apparent. He doesn’t expect the Fed to cut until December.

Trump argues that because the U.S. economy is doing well, rates should be lowered. But unlike a

blue-chip company that usually pays lower rates than a troubled startup, it’s different for an entire economy. The Fed adjusts rates to either slow or speed growth, and would be more likely to keep them high if the economy is strong to prevent an inflationary outbreak.

Earlier Wednesday, the government said the economy expanded at a healthy 3% annual rate in the second quarter, though that figure followed a negative reading for the first three months of the year, when the economy shrank 0.5% at an annual rate. Most economists averaged the two figures to get a growth rate of about 1.2% for the first half of this year.

Jobless benefit claims inch up for 1st time in weeks, but layoffs low

By Matt Ott
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans filing for jobless benefits inched up modestly last week as business continue to retain staff despite economic uncertainty around U.S. trade policy.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that jobless claims for the week ending July 26 ticked up by 1,000 to 218,000, less than the 225,000 new applications analysts forecast.

It was the first time in seven weeks that benefit applications rose, although layoffs remain at historically low levels.

Weekly applications for jobless benefits are seen as representative of U.S. layoffs and have mostly settled in a historically healthy range between 200,000 and 250,000 since COVID-19 throttled the economy in the spring of 2020, wiping out millions of jobs.

Earlier in July, the Labor Department reported that U.S. employers added a surprisingly



NAM Y. HUH/AP

A help wanted sign is displayed at a live music and blues club in Chicago, on July 24.

strong 147,000 jobs in June, adding to evidence that the American labor market continues to show resilience despite uncertainty over President Donald Trump’s economic policies.

The job gains were much more than expected and the unemployment rate ticked down 4.1% from 4.2% in May.

The government issues its July

jobs report on Friday.

This week, government data showed that employers posted 7.4 million job vacancies in June, down from 7.7 million in May.

The number of people quitting their jobs — a sign of confidence in their prospects elsewhere — fell in June to the lowest level since December. Hiring also fell in May.

Key inflation gauge rose as tariffs increase prices

By Christopher Rugaber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve’s preferred inflation gauge ticked higher last month in a sign that President Donald Trump’s broad-based tariffs are starting to lift prices for many goods.

Prices rose 2.6% in June compared with a year ago, the Commerce Department said Thursday, up from an annual pace of 2.4% in May. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, prices rose 2.8% in the past year, the same as the previous month, which was revised higher. The figures are above the Fed’s 2% goal.

The uptick in prices helps explain the central bank’s reluctance to cut its key interest rate, despite repeated demands from Trump that it do so. On Wednesday, the Fed left its key rate unchanged at 4.3%, and Chair Fed Powell suggested it could take months for the central bank to determine whether the import duties will cause just a one-time in-

crease in prices or a more persistent increase in inflation.

On a monthly basis, prices ticked up 0.3% from May to June, while core prices also rose 0.3%. Both figures are higher than consistent with the 2% target.

Also Wednesday, the government said the economy expanded at a 3% annual rate in the second quarter, a solid showing but one that masked some red flags. Consumer spending, for example, rose at a lackluster 1.4% pace, after an even smaller gain of 0.5% in the first three months of the year. A sharp drop in imports in the April-June quarter, which followed a surge in the first quarter, provided a big lift to the government’s calculation of U.S. gross domestic product.

Last month, the government reported that its more closely-watched consumer price index, its primary inflation measure, also ticked higher in June as the cost of heavily-imported items such as appliances, furniture, and toys increased.

EUROPE

Europe has ‘understanding’ of a US military drawdown

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — More details about an anticipated U.S. troop reduction in Europe are expected in the fall, Estonia’s defense chief said this week following recent talks at the Pentagon.

Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur, in an interview Tuesday with Estonia’s ERR network, said that he and other Baltic leaders were told by U.S. defense officials that more clarity on plans for American forces could come by October.

“There is an understanding and assumption that the U.S. military posture across Europe will change,” Pevkur said.

While there is no indication how the Baltic states or any other country could be affected, “in Europe as a whole, a reduction is likely to take place,” he added.

Pevkur’s comments came after a visit to the Pentagon, where he held talks with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on a range of security matters.

During a joint appearance with defense chiefs from all three Baltic states at the Pentagon, Hegseth lauded Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia for being among NATO’s largest defense spenders on a per-

capita basis.

Those countries have all pledged to quickly meet President Donald Trump’s call for dedicating 5% of gross domestic product to military spending.

“Our Baltic allies have long blazed the trail here,” Hegseth said in reference to defense spending by the three countries, which spent decades under Soviet occupation.

“This is not new for all of you, and you led the charge on other countries in NATO stepping up,” he said.

For months, allies in Europe have been waiting for more information on a possible reduction in U.S. troops in Europe, but the Pentagon has yet to indicate whether those cuts are a certainty or signaled what form a drawdown could take.

The U.S. now has about 85,000 service members on the Continent, with roughly 20,000 of those deployed on a rotational basis.

If the Defense Department reduces its European force posture, it will also need to weigh whether to pull back on rotations, cut into its permanently based presence or opt for some combination of the two.

Scaling back the number of short-term unit rotations to Europe could be the quickest solution, but that would mean downsizing the American presence on NATO’s eastern flank, which is considered a high-priority mission for deterring potential Russian aggression.

Meanwhile, pulling forces from permanent bases could mean giving up strategic infrastructure that’s been built up over the years and used to project power across Europe and beyond.

Hegseth and other leaders have said that European militaries need to carry more of the security burden so the U.S. can dedicate more resources to challenges in the Pacific.

Still, U.S. officials also have said that if a reduction happens, it would be carried out in an orderly manner.

“At NATO, we will work closely with the Pentagon and with our allies to address the impact of any decisions,” U.S. Ambassador to NATO Matthew Whitaker told reporters in June.

He said the U.S. will make sure there are “no security gaps in defense capabilities” should it change its force posture.

Ukraine restores two key watchdogs’ independence

By ILLIA NOVIKOV
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine’s Parliament on Thursday overwhelmingly approved a bill presented by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that restores the independence of two of the country’s key anti-corruption watchdogs, reversing his contentious move last week that curbed their power and brought an outcry.

Last week’s measure by Zelenskyy to place the watchdogs under the oversight of the prosecutor-general prompted rebukes from Ukrainians, the European Union and international rights groups. It raised fears that the government could meddle in investigations and potentially shield its supporters from scrutiny.

Fighting entrenched corruption is crucial for Ukraine’s aspirations to join the EU and maintain access to billions of dollars of vital Western aid in the nearly 3½-year all-out war with Russia. It’s also an effort that enjoys broad public support.

Zelenskyy said he signed the bill into law less than two hours after its approval — an unusually speedy procedure for legislation.

“It guarantees normal, independent work for anti-corruption bodies and all law enforcement agencies in our state,” Zelenskyy said. “A truly productive day with

real impact for the people.”

Zelenskyy has been the international face of Ukraine’s determination to thwart Russia’s invasion. The anti-graft changes that he backed last week tarnished his image abroad and put a question mark over his efforts to meet standards set by the EU for membership.

“Ukraine’s move to restore powers of anti-corruption bodies demonstrates its resolve to quickly get back on course when European democratic values are at stake,” EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said on social media.

EU Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos, who called last week’s legislative changes “a serious step back,” welcomed approval of the bill.

The backlash against Zelenskyy’s measures brought street protests across the country, the first major demonstrations since Russia’s invasion. Though the protests didn’t call for the president’s removal, the controversy threatened to undermine public trust in their leaders at a critical time.

Russia’s bigger army is accelerating its efforts to pierce Ukraine’s front-line defenses and is escalating its bombardment of Ukrainian cities. There is also uncertainty over how much additional weaponry Ukraine’s Western partners can provide and how quickly.

18 countries apply for new EU defense fund

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — Eighteen European Union countries have applied for billions of euros from a new defense fund aimed at helping Europe provide for its own security, the bloc’s executive branch said Wednesday, with Poland seeking more than a third of the money.

The Security Action for Europe fund is a \$173 billion program of cheap loans that member countries, Ukraine and outsiders with an EU security agreement, like Britain, can use to buy military equipment together.

The fund was launched after the Trump administration signaled that Europe is no longer a U.S. security priority. It’s for buying key equipment like air and missile defense systems, artillery, ammunition, drones and “strategic enablers” like air-to-air refueling.

The European Commission said that Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain had applied for money so far.

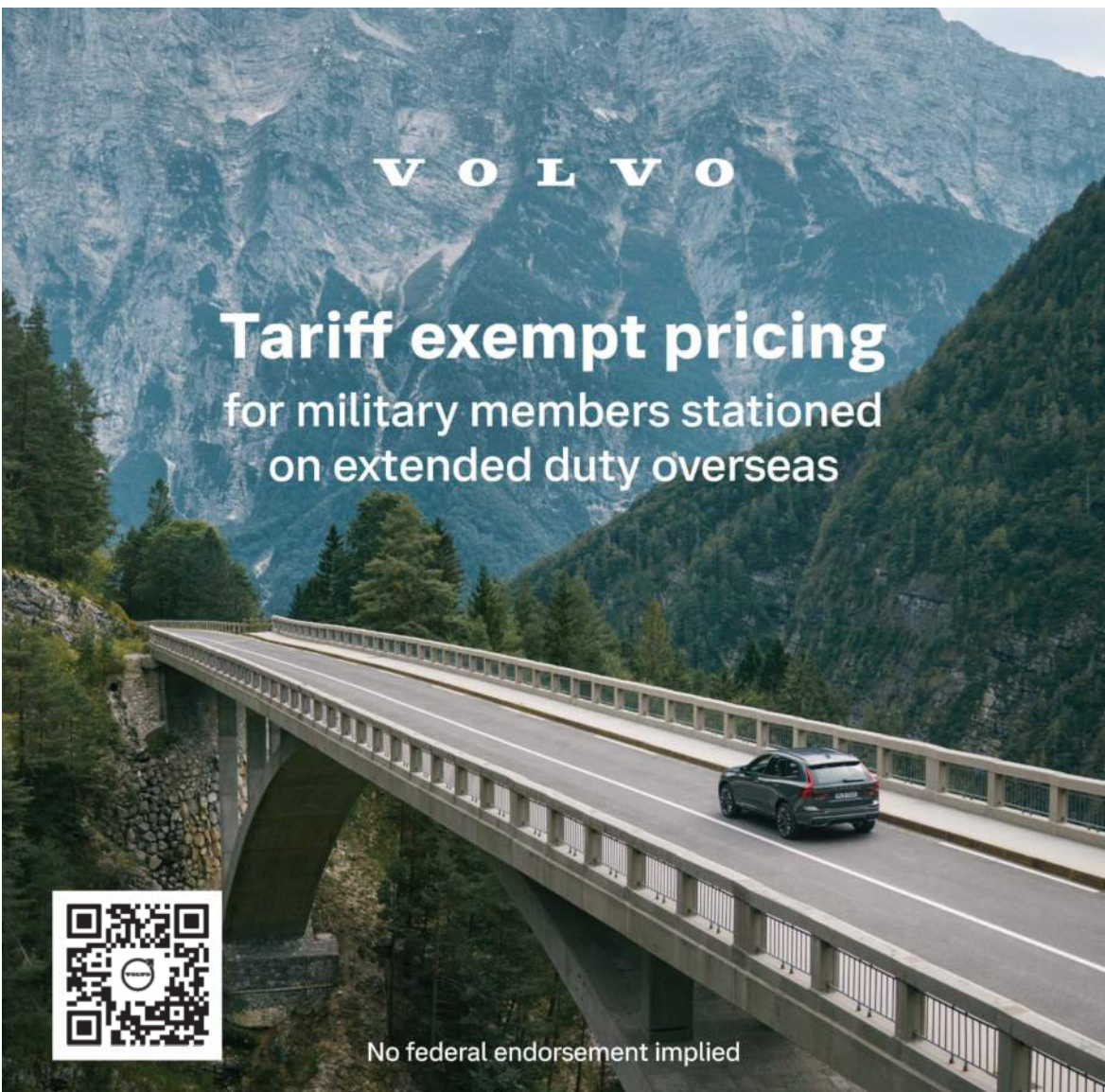
They have requested at least \$147 billion in total, it said.

Polish Defense Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz said on Tuesday that his government has identified defense projects worth around \$52 billion but that the amount it receives will depend on how the commission allocates funds.

Countries using the fund are urged to buy much of their military equipment in Europe, working mostly with European suppliers — in some cases with EU help to cut prices and speed up orders.

Earlier in July, 15 EU countries were also permitted to use a “national escape clause” to allow them to spend more on defense without breaking the bloc’s debt rules.

U.S. allies in Europe are convinced that President Vladimir Putin could target one of them if Russia wins its war on Ukraine. The SAFE fund and budget leniency are aimed at preparing Europe to defend itself from attack by the end of the decade, but even EU governments concede that this is an ambitious target.



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WORLD

Russia's 'land of fire and ice' spared by quake and tsunami

By Vladimir Isachenkov
Associated Press

MOSCOW — A powerful earthquake struck Wednesday off Russia's Far East coast, flooding a fishing port with waves from a tsunami, cutting power to a few areas and sending some panicked residents fleeing buildings but causing only a few injuries.

Regional authorities say they were prepared for the 8.8-magnitude quake and the subsequent waves, and moved quickly to keep residents safe. They introduced a state of emergency in some areas, but said there was no major damage.

Here is what to know about the Russian areas hit by the quake and tsunami:

Kamchatka peninsula
Dubbed the "land of fire and ice," Kamchatka is one of the most active volcanic regions on Earth. It has about 300 volcanoes, with 29 of them still active, according to NASA's Earth Observatory. Quakes and tsunamis regularly strike the peninsula that lies close to an ocean trench where two tectonic plates meet.

The 750-mile-long peninsula nine time zones east of Moscow faces the Pacific Ocean on its east and the Sea of Okhotsk along its west coast. Kamchatka and a few nearby islands have a population of about 290,000 with about 162,000 of them living in the regional capital of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky in Avacha Bay on the peninsula's south-east.

There are few roads on the penin-

sula, and helicopters are the only way to reach most areas. Fishing is the main economic activity.

The tallest volcano is Klyuchevskaya Sopka (15,584 feet), the largest active volcano in the Northern Hemisphere. Observers heard explosions and saw streams of lava on its western slopes, according to the Kamchatka branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences' geophysical service. It last erupted in 2023.

A nuclear submarine base
Kamchatka hosts a major Russian nuclear submarine base in Vilyuchinsk in Avacha Bay. The base is home to five state-of-the-art Borei-class submarines armed with nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles, a key element of the country's nuclear triad of land, sea and air forces. Vilyuchinsk also hosts several nuclear-powered attack submarines, including some of the most advanced in the Russian navy's inventory.

The quake raised questions about whether the Vilyuchinsk base suffered any damage. The Defense Ministry hasn't reported any problems, and there was no independent way to check on the condition of the base that is closed to outsiders.

Military experts say, however, that Avacha Bay protects the base from tsunami waves and note it was constructed to take into account the seismic threat.

Russian media have reported the base is expected to serve as the home for nuclear-powered submarines intended to carry nuclear-

armed and atomic-powered Poseidon torpedoes that have intercontinental range and are designed to explode near coastlines and cause what some military experts describe as a radioactive tsunami. The Poseidon has been veiled in secrecy, but President Vladimir Putin said last year that its tests were nearing completion.

The Kuril islands
The four volcanic islands, known in Russia as the Kurils, stretch between Kamchatka and the Japanese island of Hokkaido.

The islands were captured by the Soviet Union from Japan in the closing days of World War II. Japan asserts territorial rights to the islands it calls the Northern Territories, and the dispute has kept the countries from signing a peace treaty.

The islands have a population of about 20,000, and the local economy is based on fishing. The Russian military has bolstered its presence in the area, refurbishing a Soviet-era air base and other outposts.

Canada, Malta to join others, recognize state of Palestine

By Edith M. Lederer
Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Canada and Malta announced Wednesday they will recognize the state of Palestine in September, joining France and the United Kingdom in stepping up pressure to end the nearly 80-year Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney made the announcement after a Cabinet meeting. Christopher Cutajar, the permanent secretary at Malta's Foreign Ministry, made his country's announcement earlier at the U.N. General Assembly's meeting on a two-state solution to the conflict that was extended to a third day because of the high number of countries wanting to speak.

Cutajar said Malta has long supported self-determination for the Palestinian people, and "as responsible actors, we have a duty to work to translate the concept of a two-state solution from theory into practice."

"It is for this reason that the government of Malta has taken the principled decision to formally recognize the state of Palestine at the upcoming U.N. General Assembly in

September," he said.

Carney said Canada will also make its announcement at the annual gathering of world leaders that starts Sept. 23. He said the intention is predicated on the Palestinian Authority "holding general elections in 2026 in which Hamas can play no part, and to demilitarize the Palestinian state." Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas made those promises in a June 10 letter and it's unclear what more Carney is seeking.

Malta's Prime Minister Robert Abela earlier announced the decision by his country, a former British colony, to recognize a Palestinian state on Facebook, saying it is part of the nation's efforts "for a lasting peace in the Middle East."

Israel opposes a two-state solution and is boycotting the meeting along with its closest ally, the U.S.

Israel's U.N. ambassador, Danny Danon, on Tuesday criticized about 125 countries participating in the conference and new recognitions of a Palestinian state, saying "there are those in the world who fight terrorists and extremist forces and then there are those who turn a blind eye to them or resort to appeasement."



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WEEKEND



Prized album
gets reissue
Music, Pages 28-29

A full-page background image of Liam Neeson in a scene from 'The Naked Gun'. He is wearing a white shirt, a dark tie, a maroon cardigan, and plaid shorts. He is holding a large, colorful lollipop in his right hand and looking at it with a serious expression.

Sticky situations

‘Naked Gun’ spirit of deadpan silliness
continues with Liam Neeson in lead role

Movies, Page 15

Liam Neeson stars in “The Naked Gun.”
PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECH

Snooze, you lose

An overreliance on hitting that alarm clock button can be harmful but with these tips, you can wake up on time

By MORAYO OGUNBAYO
Atlanta Journal-Constitution

It just might be the worst sound in the world: your alarm clock. If you find yourself rushing to press the snooze button, you are not alone.

A new study found just how common the practice is, with over 50% of people saying they use the snooze button almost every morning — which allows an extra few minutes in bed as most alarm clocks have a default snooze duration set to nine minutes.

The study, published by Scientific Reports, set out to find the frequency of snooze button use as well as how “countries, cultures and climates” can influence it. Studying over 21,000 users of the app SleepCycle and over 3 million of their sleep sessions, 56% of sessions ended with the subject using the feature.

While men and women are equally likely to press snooze, women are more likely to sleep in for longer than men, the study found, which researchers attributed to the higher risk of insomnia among women and the greater burden of child care duties. Most people will hit snooze twice, adding an average of an extra 11 minutes to sleep in.

Hitting snooze can be a harmless way to get some much-needed rest without missing work or other important plans; however, overreliance on the button can have negative effects.

“Some of the most vital stages of sleep take place right before we wake up,” Rebecca Robbins, a sleep scientist and assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, told Today.com. “Hitting the snooze alarm will interrupt these crucial stages of sleep and typically only offer you some light sleep in between alarms.”

REM sleep often occurs in the early morning hours and minutes before your sleep ends, and cutting into it frequently with multiple snooze alarms can be harmful. Frequent snoozing can also cause your sleep to be “fragmented,” which can have adverse effects on your mood.

If you’re struggling to break the habit, here are tips you can start today to make sure you’re ready to jump out of bed on time:

Get out of bed

When the alarm goes off, hitting the snooze can feel like second nature. Resist that feeling, and instead, pop right out of bed after the alarm goes off. It may be hard in the moment, but it will make your morning routine go much smoother than allowing yourself to keep lying down.

Try moving your clock to the other side of the room instead of your nightstand — forcing yourself to stand up to turn it off. Adding meditation and movement when you first wake up is beneficial.

“Reach your arms overhead, stretch out your legs, flex your feet and point your



DREAMSTIME/TNS

A study found that over 50% of people use the snooze button almost every morning.

toes,” Robbins recommended to Today.com, “then, take deep breaths and focus on one positive thing that will get you excited about the day and motivated.”

Avoid scrolling on your phone

If you had a decent night’s sleep, you have been disconnected for hours and might have several notifications waiting on your phone. But using your phone first thing in the morning can add anxiety to your day from the start.

Instead of a bright screen, let sunlight help regulate your circadian rhythm. If you still feel you need something stimulating when you first wake up, the morning is the perfect time to add journaling into

your daily routine — or opt for a cold shower.

Set your alarm for the latest time possible

According to the Mayo Clinic, adults need at least seven hours of sleep each night. You might be tempted to set your alarm earlier than needed to allow for extra snoozing, but this can have detrimental effects to your sleep health.

“One could wake up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, but by and large, for all of us there’s a bit of a transition,” Robbins told Today.com. “We’re not all going to wake up and feel perfect; it takes time to ease into the day.”

JourneyGo hotspot not limited by your cell provider

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

With the TravlFi JourneyGo 4G Hotspot, you’ll have Wi-Fi wherever you go.

The dark gray, pocket-sized (approximately 3.47 inches in diameter by 0.94 inches deep) travel-ready JourneyGo 4G Hotspot ensures you have a secure internet connection at vacation destinations. It is designed to work virtually anywhere in the U.S., including on the road in a recreation vehicle, in hotels, at beaches and almost anywhere else.

On the fly, it automatically switches to the strongest network signal available among many of the largest cellular carriers in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The main difference between using JourneyGo and using Wi-Fi on your cellular phone is that your cellphone only connects to your provider. TravlFi connects to the best signal in your area among multiple different cellular networks.

TravlFi lists typical download speeds as 10 to 35 Mbps, with a high of 150 Mbps, which is al-



TRAVLFI/TNS

The TravlFi JourneyGo 4G Hotspot is pocket-sized at 3.47 inches by 0.94 inches.

ways dependent on the location. The maximum upload speed is 50 Mbps. It has an IP64 rating, so it’s dust-tight and can withstand water splashes.

It is rated to work for up to 16 hours before a USB-C charge is needed for the 4,700 mAh polymer lithium battery. The battery life will vary depending on the number of devices connected — up to 10.

No SIM card is required, and a wide variety of data plans are



The Acefit Pro true wireless earbuds are well-rounded with an open-ear design. The earbuds have 40 breathing lights for night safety, designed to make the user more visible in low-light situations.

available, including an unlimited option.

Best of all, there are no contracts or prepaid data plans. Instead, you prepay on a month-to-month basis depending on your data usage needs and travel schedule.

The JourneyGo 4G Hotspot is currently on sale for \$199 from \$219, and the TravlFi JourneyGo Hotspot Carrying Case is \$20. Data plans range from 2GB of data for \$19 to unlimited data for



ACEFAST/TNS

\$129, which is ideal for 4K streaming, remote work and gaming.

A 5G hotspot from TravlFi is expected to be released later this year.

Online: travlf.com

Acefast’s FA001 Acefit Pro true wireless earbuds are well-rounded with an open-ear design. The Acefit Pros feature ear hooks for a secure fit and deliver music with clear, crisp sound.

The setup and use are the same as that of regular true-wireless earbuds; pair them (Bluetooth 5.4) and play.

What’s new and different is the Acefit Pros have Night Safety Mode, technology consisting of a matrix of 40 breathing (pulsating) lights around the ear area. The technology is designed to enhance safety in low-light conditions by making the user more visible to others. The Acefast app offers eight settings to control them.

The charging case features an LED floating digital display that shows the power level. With the case, you’ll get up to 25 hours of listening time, with each charge lasting up to 6 hours at 60% volume.

They have an IP54 dustproof and waterproof rating, and you can turn each earbud on and off independently.

Online: acefast.com/catalog/audio/tws-earbuds-fa001-acefit-pro; normally \$125.99 on Amazon but currently on sale for \$92.79, available in color choices of rime grey, olive green, windy purple and cherry blossom

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW



PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP photos

Paul Walter Hauser, left, and Liam Neeson are police detective partners in “The Naked Gun,” a legacy sequel to the original franchise.

‘Naked Gun’ has plenty of ammo

Jokes fly thick and fast, and many of them stick, in remake starring Liam Neeson

By TY BURR

The Washington Post

Among its other attributes, the 1980 movie “Airplane!” was responsible for a pioneering pop-culture discovery: that non-comic actors playing it straight in a comedy could be insanely funny. Leslie Nielsen — up until then known as a stone-faced dramatic actor — was the prime beneficiary, parlaying his “Airplane!” turn as Dr. Rumack (“Don’t call me Shirley”) into an entire second career as a deadpan farceur in TV’s “Police Squad!” and three “Naked Gun” movie spin-offs.

Do we need a belated third sequel to “The Naked Gun,” or this it just a case of nostalgia squared? Regardless, we’ve got one, and it’s extremely funny until it isn’t.

The director is Akiva Schaffer, part of Andy Samberg’s Lonely Island comedy crew who has since branched out to movies such as 2016’s “Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping” and Tim Robinson’s TV sketch comedy “I Think You Should Leave.” More important, the star is Liam Neeson, for whom “The Naked Gun” is the latest curlicue in a proper pig’s tail of a career. From an Oscar nomination for playing a Holocaust savior in “Schindler’s List” to his reinvention in the new millennium as a sour-faced B-movie action star to filling Nielsen’s police-issue brogans as Lieutenant Frank Drebin, Neeson has never stooped to conquer but, rather, has striven to bring the material up to his level.

In the new “Naked Gun,” he’s technically Frank Drebin Jr., seen tearfully talking to a wall photo of Nielsen in police headquarters. The camera cuts to Frank’s partner, Capt. Ed Hocken Jr. (Paul Walter Hauser), tearfully talking to a wall photo

of his father (played in the original films by George Kennedy) and then to an entire line of police detectives tearfully talking to photos of *their* dads. So far, so good.

In fact, the early scenes of “The Naked Gun” so ably recapture the manic, anything-goes highs of the early movies that you settle into your seat for a rollicking time, and, for a while, that’s what you get. The background sight gags fly by and the dialogue is gloriously dumb. (“UCLA?” Frank asks a woman who’s mentioned she went to college in the area. “Yes, I can see it — I live here,” is the response.)

A running joke about people handing Frank cups of coffee builds and builds, and there are just enough nods to current events and attitudes to give “The Naked Gun” some edge: An O.J. Simpson joke here, a perfectly served Black Lives Matter zinger there. The film’s chief villain (Danny Huston) is a tech-bro billionaire with a Project 2025 attitude toward the common man, and just to make sure we get it, his head henchman (Kevin Durand) is a bottle-blond ringer for Elon Musk. (Other random appearances include rapper Busta Rhymes, YouTube star Liza Koshy and a much-loved presence from the first “Naked Gun.”)

Pamela Anderson gamely plays Frank’s love interest, Beth Davenport, who’s mourning the mysterious death of her brother, the tech titan’s right-hand man. That’s right, “The Naked Gun” has a plot, and by the film’s midpoint it has started elbowing the comedy out of the way. There’s nothing here as crazy-funny as Frank Sr.’s assault on Queen Elizabeth in the 1988 original, although a bit with thermal-imaging binoculars providing the filthiest possible interpretation of benign activities comes close. But the early



Pamela Anderson plays Beth Davenport, a love interest to Neeson’s character.

scenes are so shamelessly, stupidly funny, with a hit-to-miss gag ratio of about 75 percent, that you can’t help be disappointed as that ratio steadily sinks.

Neeson enters into the spirit of the thing with zeal and a stony demeanor, even in a body-cam sequence of Frank suffering the effects of a particularly toxic chili dog. His interpretation is more in the Chuck Norris toughest-guy-on-earth mode, biting gun barrels in two and ripping off an assailant’s arms, the better to beat him with them. He’s good fun, but you miss the almost primal silliness that galvanized Nielsen’s Frank — the pleasure of a journeyman performer cutting loose after all those decades of playing it straight.

It may be that Neeson is too *good* an actor for a down-and-dirty comedy like “The Naked Gun” — perhaps a man who has played Oskar Schindler can only let his hair down so far. Let’s hope he lightens up for the sequels that are almost certain to come. After “Taken 3,” he’s earned it.

“The Naked Gun” is rated PG-13 for crude/sexual material, violence/bloody images and brief partial nudity. Running time: 85 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

Dive into the former files of ‘Naked Gun’ filmmakers

In the late ’80s and early ’90s, “The Naked Gun” movies starring Leslie Nielsen were wildly popular and the height of absurdist comedy. The franchise gets revived this week with a new installment and cast, and a new director, Akiva Schaffer, of comedy troupe the Lonely Island.

In the dog days of summer, there’s nothing better than a silly, lightweight comedy, especially of the variety provided by Jim Abrahams and brothers David and Jerry Zucker — the original force behind “The Naked Gun” movies — or the trio that is the Lonely Island (which also features Jorma Taccone and Andy Samberg).

A fun connection between Zucker, Abrahams and Zucker (also known as ZAZ) and the Lonely Island is that they’re comedy collaborators who started out as childhood friends — ZAZ in Wisconsin and the Lonely Island from Berkeley, Calif. ZAZ’s breakout hit is the 1980 stone-cold classic “Airplane!” starring Leslie Nielsen, a parody of the disaster films that were so popular in the 1970s. The film established their slapstick, absurdist tone, predicated on wordplay, utter silliness and naughty humor. Stream “Airplane!” on Paramount, Kanopy, Peacock.

They followed that up with 1984’s “Top Secret!”, another barn burner of a comedy about a spy mission in Germany led by an American rock star, played by Val Kilmer in his first film role. Rent “Top Secret!” on iTunes or Amazon.

Then 1988 brought “The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!” based on the ZAZ TV series “Police Squad!” from 1982, a parody of the Lee Marvin series “M Squad.” The film yielded two sequels, “The Naked Gun 2 1/2: The Smell of Fear” in 1991, and “Naked Gun 33 1/3: The Final Insult” — only David Zucker had a writing credit on that film of the ZAZ trio. All of the “Naked Gun” films are streaming on Paramount+.

Schaffer and the Lonely Island crew got their start on “Saturday Night Live” in 2005, and went viral with their digital short “Lazy Sunday.” Schaffer directed dozens of digital shorts in the group’s tenure at the show, and began expanding into feature films in 2007 with “Hot Rod,” starring Samberg as an aspiring stuntman and Taccone as one of his friends. While it wasn’t a success, it has become a cult hit. Stream it on Kanopy or Paramount+.

Schaffer also directed “The Watch” in 2012, written by Jared Stern, Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg, starring Ben Stiller, Vince Vaughn, Jonah Hill and Richard Ayoade as a neighborhood watch group that discovers extraterrestrial activity. Stream it on Starz or rent it elsewhere.

Schaffer reunited with Samberg and Taccone for their 2016 mockumentary “Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping.” Samberg plays Conner4Real while Taccone is his DJ and Schaffer his lyricist. It’s another cult comedy from the trio; stream it on Netflix or Peacock.

Schaffer also directed the 2022 animated comedy “Chip ‘n Dale: Rescue Rangers,” streaming on Disney+, and has directed episodes of “Brooklyn Nine-Nine,” which starred Samberg (streaming on Peacock and Netflix) and episodes of the sketch comedy show “I Think You Should Leave with Tim Robinson,” another “SNL” alum with an absurdist bent.

— Katie Walsh/TNS

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW



DREAMWORKS ANIMATION, UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP photos

From left, Mr. Snake, voiced by Marc Maron; Mr. Wolf, voiced by Sam Rockwell; Ms. Tarantula, voiced by Awkwafina; Mr. Piranha, voiced by Anthony Ramos; and Mr. Shark, voiced by Craig Robinson, are trying to turn their backs on bad-hood in “The Bad Guys 2.”

‘Bad Guys 2’ is bigger, bolder, badder

Sequel has top-notch animation but issues with plot and morality

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

The good news for fans of “The Bad Guys” is that the new sequel is stellar. But that’s because a good portion is actually set in — are you kidding us? — outer space. “The Bad Guys 2” has clearly lost its moorings.

Returning director Pierre Perifel, writers Yoni Brenner and Etan Cohen and the same voice cast have done what all sequels do these days — amp it all up like everyone is on molly, try to hit the same emotional notes and layer an insane plot with the fate of the world at stake. It’s hard to watch a franchise drift so expensively and pointlessly in Earth’s orbit.

The gang is all back: Sam Rockwell as Mr. Wolf, Marc Maron as safecracker Mr. Snake, Craig Robinson as master-of-disguise Mr. Shark, Anthony Ramos as Mr. Piranha and Awkwafina as hacker Ms. Tarantula. We left them in the last movie walking out of prison early after good behavior and trying to turn their back on bad-hood.

It’s not that easy since would-be employers these days want to know about gaps in their job experience — they were robbing banks, after all — workplace trust issues and salary expectations. No one wants to hire a bunch of ex-cons.

“Anyone who wants to change



A new robbery crew comes to the forefront in “The Bad Guys 2.” From left: Pigtail, voiced by Maria Bakalova; Kitty Kat, voiced by Danielle Brooks; and Doom, voiced by Natasha Lyonne.

has to start somewhere,” Mr. Wolf, pushing the George Clooney-like charm offensive, begs one dubious interviewer. “I’m just asking for a chance.”

A life on the straight and narrow is hard for four of the former baddies, but not Maron — so perfectly cast as the grouchy, self-loathing snake. Now he spends his days doing Vinyasa yoga, listening to Sabrina Carpenter’s “Espresso,” telling people “namaste” and sipping wheatgrass kombucha with dandelion. He’s even more irritating.

Soon all five are caught in a series of traps and double crosses by a new robbery crew — Danielle Brooks’ lollipop-licking venomous snow leopard, Maria Bakalova’s Bulgarian wild boar engineer and Natasha Lyonne’s wry raven, using her same vocal tic as on “Poker Face.” These dames have a plan to get very rich using a substance known as

MacGuffinite, a clever — or lazy — joke on the object that everyone wants in a movie like this, which drives the plot.

There’s soon a trip to a Mexican wrestling festival and then a wedding needs crashing in order to gain control over a rocket owned by an Elon Musk-like billionaire — voice acted by Colin Jost — who runs the MoonX company. Then the rocket has to be stopped before a gadget aboard creates a “24-carat catastrophe.”

The animation is amazingly kinetic and with no corners cut, from tiny bugs illuminated in a light beam at night to the bumpy way a truck moves on the highway. The franchise’s love of vrooming and fishtailing Looney Tunes-like car chases stays intact, as does the wavy green air farts that emanate from Piranha.

Based on Aaron Blabey’s popular graphic book series, the first

movie in 2022 drove hard into the nature of good and evil — like asking if DNA determines behavior — as our heroes whipsawed between heroic and villainous, to the glee of all the kiddies in the theater. “We may be bad, but we’re so good at it,” was the slogan. It was all nicely set against a zombie guinea pig uprising.

This time the writers have just given up on what side of the ethical divide their antiheroes are on. “Are we bad again?” asks the confused piranha. Replies Mr. Wolf: “I get it. We’re all over the place.” Left unexplored is the concept of doing wrong for a greater good, and can being bad be excused if it stops a worse badness? “What if the bad life was your best life?” asks one of the newcomers. (Another thing to chew on: If “The Bad Guys 2” is a worse sequel, does that make “The Bad Guys” good?)

When we say the gang is all

here, they’re all here without any editing: Zazie Beetz returns as Gov. Diane Foxington, Alex Borstein comes back as the top cop and even the kitten from the first film meows in the second. So is Richard Ayoade as Professor Marmalade, the evil guinea pig who is now surprisingly swole and tattooed up in prison. He threatens again to steal the show and may if there’s a “The Bad Guys 3.” (There’s going to be a “The Bad Guys 3.”)

The joy of “The Bad Guys” was that it was a respectful send-up of the movies of Quentin Tarantino and caper flicks like “Ocean’s 11.” This time, the “Fast & Furious” series gets mocked, as does “Silence of the Lambs,” “Men in Black” and maybe “Moonraker,” which is now 46 years old. But the subversion is painfully flat now: The first film in the franchise would have laughed at one climactic line in the second: “We’ve got one shot to save the world. Let’s make it count!”

The three new villains may be a touch too much for younger viewers — the violence seems darker and more volcanic this time — but there’s a very loud soundtrack that includes Busta Rhymes, Sofi Tukker and Rag’n-Bone Man.

So what does it all mean? It means the folks behind “The Bad Guys 2” reunited for a shot to push the franchise into exciting areas, but — c’mon, everyone — they didn’t make it count.

“The Bad Guys 2” is rated PG for action/mild violence, rude humor and language. Running time: 104 minutes. Now playing in select on-base theaters.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS



NEON/AP

Alison Brie, left, and Dave Franco, stars of “Together,” are married both on-screen and off. The body horror film explores the themes of codependency and convergence, literally.

Relational ties that bind

Body horror film ‘Together’ takes codependency to gruesome lengths

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

The perils of the dating scene are vast, but there are horrors in long-term relationships too. With intimacy and commitment, there can also come codependency and even convergence. Once individuals, some couples start to dress alike, act alike and even, terrifyingly, look alike.

On the comedic end, there’s the smug marrieds table of “Bridget Jones.” And then there’s the scary end in “Together,” in which convergence is rendered more literally and where the Spice Girls anthem “2 Become 1” takes on a whole new, horrifying meaning.

“Together,” written and directed by Australian filmmaker Michael Shanks in his feature debut, stars Alison Brie and Dave Franco as the converging couple Millie and Tim. Brie and Franco bring some authenticity to the roles — in real life, they’ve been together for nearly 15 years and married for eight.

When they’re calling one another “babe” on-screen or reacting to the other’s light flirting with someone else, the lived-in comfort and easy rapport is evident. That’s not to say this film doesn’t require them to stretch or act, but the base credibility established by that off-screen fact goes a long way in selling the wild things that transpire down the line.

When we meet them, at a farewell party with friends in New York, they don’t seem particularly happy together as they prepare to embark on a big life step: moving to the country for Millie’s teaching job. Tim is embarrassed when he’s made aware of the fact that they’re dressed similarly and immediately changes.

The mood overall is a little less than joyous — both seem hesitant, and their friends aren’t exactly supportive either. We learn early that their physical relationship has been lacking for some time. But it’s already set in motion and Tim and Millie seem destined, or perhaps doomed, to stay together whether they like it or not.

There are a lot of strange things happening in the country before the body horror enters the picture.

Tim is haunted by the memory of discovering his parents dead — a frightening image that we’re faced with several times. And he’s having a visceral reaction to some of the smells in the old home. A warning: Food does not pair well with “Together.”

But things start to go really downhill when the city couple goes for a little hike in the woods and ends up spending the night in a cavernous hole they’ve fallen into. In the morning, they discover their legs are stuck together by a gooey film. It’s immensely painful for them to separate. This is among the most minor of the disturbing images to come, so brace yourself. It might not be body horror auteur David Cronenberg, but it’s effective.

We moviegoers can take the art of body horror for granted, but the makeup, prosthetics and effects teams deserve a lot of credit for making this work. Shanks has a command of the tone and pacing, which isn’t without moments of humor and lightness along with the trauma and gore. Tim, in this transformation, is suddenly very hot for Millie, which results in one particularly intense encounter that is at turns awkward, comedic, heartbreaking and utterly disgusting. It’s an impressive combination.

I’ll respectfully stay out of the debate about whether “Together” is the best or worst date-night movie ever (depends on the relationship, I’d say), but it could make for a fun double feature with its Sundance companion “Oh, Hi!”

There are times when “Together” does start to feel a bit redundant in the wait for the crescendo and conclusion. And like many horror movies, there might be a little too much explanation given for why these things are occurring. Perhaps the alternative would be equally frustrating.

Still, it’s an impressive work of independent cinema that stays shockingly grounded thanks to its two leads and their fearless performances. If Shanks can do “Together” with a limited budget, it’s exciting to think what he might dream up with a bigger canvas.

“Together” is rated R for language, graphic nudity, brief drug content, sexual content, violent and disturbing content. Running time: 102 minutes. Now playing in select on-base theaters.

‘Oh, Hi!’ a dark comedy about modern dating

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

The modern dating scene is not a healthy one. Perhaps it never really was, and everyone is nostalgic for something that didn’t exist. But you don’t need to be on the apps to sense the anxiety around.

We wonder what happened to the rom-com. Maybe we’re all to blame. How can we have fun with stories about romance when it is so bleak out there? But thank goodness for the filmmakers who are trying to, if not make sense of it all, talk about it. Celine Song did it in her own way with “Materialists.” And now comes Sophie Brooks’ “Oh, Hi!” about a new-ish couple on their first weekend away together. These movies are not at all similar, and yet both speak to the current mood in valuable ways.

In “Oh, Hi!” Iris (Molly Gordon) and Isaac (Logan Lerman) seem to be very much in sync as a pair, singing in the car together, laughing about a little accident that results in the purchase of hundreds of strawberries and excitedly exploring the very nice house they’ve rented for this romantic getaway. The chemistry is there: There’s humor, wit, conversation and attraction. They’re even on the same page on more intimate matters. It is a terrific opening — nothing is really happening, and yet it’s pleasant to just be in the moment with them.

But then things take a turn. We know they’re headed south from the first frame, when a distraught Iris greets her friend Max (Geraldine Viswanathan) at the country home late one night. We’re trained to expect that it’s all leading to a fight, or a breakup. “Oh, Hi!” however, has other things up its sleeve.

Note to new couples: Best not to define a relationship while one is chained to the bed after a bit of experimentation. Granted, neither thought they needed to have this conversation, but it quickly becomes clear that they both

heard things differently. Iris thought they were exclusive. Isaac thought it was perfectly clear that they weren’t and aren’t. But why, Iris asks, are they doing this at all after four months? Why are they on this trip? Why did he make her scallops? It’s enough to make anyone go a little mad, which Iris does, deciding that she’s going to keep Isaac chained up until they talk it through to her satisfaction.

It’s a kind of over-the-top, “Misery”-styled meditation on entrenched gender clichés in heterosexual dating. The women are crazy and needy. The men are jerks and aloof. And no amount of rational discussion on either side will end the stalemate. Iris believes that if he just gets to know her a little better, perhaps he’ll change his mind. She goes long on her biography in a funny little sequence, but the monologuing doesn’t help Isaac figure out how to escape. It just goes on.

“Oh, Hi!” follows this path to extreme ends as Iris involves Max and her boyfriend Kenny (John Reynolds), who are all trying to figure out how to get out of the situation without going to jail. It’s admirable how ardently they commit to making this outlandish premise as realistic as possible.

The film loses the plot a bit when Max and Kenny get involved and things get extra silly. It might have been better had it stayed with Iris and Isaac to the bitter end. Gordon, who co-wrote the story with Brooks, is a huge reason it works at all. She somehow keeps Iris grounded and relatable throughout, which is no small feat. And while Lerman gets substantially less to do, you come out feeling for both characters, trapped in anxieties of their own making and a social structure in which neither romance nor commitment seems to be a priority. At least this film lets us laugh about it a little bit.

“Oh, Hi!” is rated R for language, sexual content and some nudity. Running time: 94 minutes.



SONY PICTURES CLASSICS/AP

Logan Lerman, left, and Molly Gordon struggle to define their relationship in “Oh, Hi!” Gordon also co-wrote the story.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

‘Tony is the revolution’

Hawk’s Pro Skater series, recently remade, changed games and popularized sport

By GENE PARK
The Washington Post

After becoming the world’s most recognizable athlete for his chosen sport, Anthony Frank “Tony” Hawk is now a 57-year-old grandfather. It’s a life that’s vastly exceeded any expectations he ever had.

Named at birth like a superhero, Tony Hawk became the face of skateboarding in no small part due to Activision’s blockbuster Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater series, which just released remakes of its third and fourth games, developed by Iron Galaxy. Hawk’s amiable presence is felt across his fan interactions and interviews, proving it’s still possible in 2025 to hold all that clout and still be down-to-earth. Hawk tells *The Post* in an interview that it’s because nothing, including skateboarding becoming a respected, international sport, was ever expected.

“There’s just no way I would’ve dreamt any of this,” Hawk says. “You couldn’t be rich or famous as a skateboarder when I first started. No one had been.”

It’s been a long road to respectability for the once-maligned sport, invented in the 1940s and ’50s by bored Southern California surfers looking for more reasons to be on a board. Sidelined and dismissed for decades as idle activity for loitering teens and misfits, skateboarding has elevated to the Olympic Games. Hawk and some of his peer skating legends attribute much of that rise in acceptance to the 1999 game developed by the now-defunct Neversoft Entertainment, Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater.

“Tony is the revolution; he took us to a whole other level,” said Kareem Campbell, the Harlem-born 51-year-old often called the godfather of smooth street style and inventor of the “Ghetto Bird” trick. “The game helped pro skating be in the Olympics right now. He became a household name. Every skater on the game became a household name. It captures all the different elements of skateboarding.”

The game became a top seller on Sony PlayStation in 1999, and its sequel the next year was even bigger. It revolutionized the extreme sports genre in video games by wearing its video game inspirations on its sleeve.

Scott Pease, former Neversoft studio development director, said the ragtag team of developers looked to the early pioneers of 3D video games to inspire their own groundbreaking work.

“The influences are definitely [Super] Mario 64, and even, to a certain extent, Diddy Kong Racing,” Pease said, giggling to himself. “If you look at the structure of Tony Hawk 1 with the secret tapes and the goals, we kinda lifted a lot of that from Diddy Kong Racing,” whose collectible balloons let players unlock more of the game.

The game also mimicked racing games, propelling skaters forward automatically.



Scott Pease

Rodney Mullen performs tricks for members of Neversoft Entertainment, developers of the first Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater game, in this 1999 photo at the Los Angeles studio. Hawk and others attribute much of the rise in acceptance of skateboarding to that game.

Level designs used real-life skate spots like schools and abandoned warehouses, all littered with rails and ledges for grinding and ramps for vertical tricks.

“A lot of that comes from our lead programmer and technical director Mick West and him trying to understand how people interacted with their controller,” Pease said.

Game designers were still figuring out how to make 3D gameplay feel natural.

“He understood innately that the camera and your responsiveness were completely connected, and how your view is completely determined by that 3D camera,” Pease said. “Mick invented the camera movement where you jump off the vert ramp and the camera would swing around and look down to see where you were going to land. Without that, there’s no game.”

As a child of the coin-munching arcades of the 1980s, Hawk grew up on video games. He had played every skateboarding game ever made, but for years he was looking for the perfect formula. Hawk said he was shopping around various game

publishers pitching a skating game, and Activision caught wind and invited him to Neversoft. In 1998, Neversoft made a game starring Bruce Willis called Apocalypse. It didn’t sell well, but the team used the same 3D technology to power a prototype of their hypothetical skating game. Sans a pro skater, they used Willis.

“The first build I ever saw of the game was seeing Bruce Willis on a skateboard,” Hawk said. “I was able to control him, do kick-flips and do grabs and spins, and I thought, ‘This is the coolest thing I’ve ever been able to play.’”

Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater became the rare video game experience that can alter one’s perception of the world. Like Tetris induced its players to perceive the world built with blocks of four tiles, THPS made its players think like a skater, seeing “lines” of opportunity across the framework of civilization.

“Especially in the first few years, people who never skated suddenly understood skate culture, skate language, and they would see landscapes as skateable places in the real world,” Hawk said. “That’s

when I saw a big shift.”

It was normalizing skating culture right at the turn of the millennium, as the video games industry expanded to new audiences with the introduction of PlayStation and Microsoft Xbox.

Brazil-born Bob Burnquist, winner of 30 medals at the X Games, was in the first class of pro skaters of the series, hand-picked by Hawk. Now 48, Burnquist grew up in Rio de Janeiro, far away from the skating hotbed of Southern California. He admired Hawk from afar as a teen.

“I got a glimpse of Tony for the first time on video. Friends would travel to the U.S. and come home with a VHS tape, and that’s how we got what was happening. Right when I started, Tony in 1989 went down to Brazil. My dad couldn’t take me, but it just put a mark on Brazil.”

Burnquist saw the spread of antiskateboarding legislation across various jurisdictions, including Brazil. It was important for him to see that it was growing in popularity despite these bans. The game was a

SEE SKATER ON PAGE 19

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Skater: Despite the title, director says he thinks of remake as a new project

FROM PAGE 18

piercing bullet through the consciousness of a new generation, millennials who grew into midlife today.

“After all these years, you have the city of Rio you can choose [in the game] with all these different characters, and seeing Brazil there? It’s an accomplishment for Brazilian skateboarding,” Burnquist said. “To be included as a Brazilian, it showed we are a part of the culture.”

Skating culture was not immune to the changes brought by the internet. People of Hawk’s generation discovered new tricks and athletes through the VHS tapes and magazines like Thrasher. Hawk said social media has changed the dynamics of discovery.

“When we first started this game, one of the only ways to be known as a skater was to compete, and if you weren’t competing, you’d better be producing a lot of video, and you hoped to be featured in a skate video,” Hawk said. “Nowadays you can be your own brand, producing content daily and sharing it whenever. Now the field is wider and more open, but you have to keep producing, have to keep getting better at it. You can’t just rest on your accolades; that’s the one thing that’s been the same throughout the years.”

Hawk takes credit for igniting the current remakes. He approached Activision to use the intellectual property for a concert series, and suggested the series be revived for its 20th anniversary. For the first two games, Activision tapped an internal studio that eventually got absorbed into its sizable operation to create the titanic Call of Duty series. For the remake Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater 3 + 4, released July 11, Iron Galaxy was selected.

Despite carrying the title of games from the early 2000s, the studio considers the latest release a new project, said game director Kurt Tillmanns. For example, the team created new levels just for this release.

“We were able to go in and make brand new levels and unlock our creativity, do some wacky things like pinball and make this skater’s paradise of a shutdown water park,” Tillmanns said.

The game also largely overhauls its soundtrack. Hawk takes credit for that decision, in the spirit of how the original game introduced players to new bands and music genres. (The Tony Hawk and Grand Theft Auto games are often credited with expanding the use of licensed popular music in the medium.)

Hawk is now grandfather to Ronin Walker Cobain Hawk, as his son Riley (now featured in the updated games) married rock legend Kurt Cobain’s daughter, Frances Bean. The birth announcement resulted in an explosion of memes suggesting the coolest human being might’ve been born.

“Being a grandparent is exactly all the fun that grandparents gush over, and the reason they get excited when they know their grandchild’s coming. That’s how my wife and I feel exactly,” Hawk said. “The fact that Ronin has this legacy behind him, I don’t want him to feel like he has to live up to anything in that respect. I just want him to find what he really enjoys, to follow his passion. I just want him to have fun, and I don’t want him to feel like an outsider or that people are looking at him in a different way.”

Hawk said the family has a group text chat of nothing but photos of the still-infant Ronin, and he had just received them and was looking at them before the interview.

But is grandpa Hawk feeling old?

“Oh my body feels it every time I wake up. I definitely have my go-to skill set, but it’s a lot more work than it used to be, and a lot more recovery and progress.”

For Tony Hawk’s pro and personal adventures, it’s been a life well lived.

“I’m living the dream, the idea that I still get to participate, and then I get to witness skating come to this level, and I can help guide or foster up-and-coming skaters,” Hawk said. “It’s between that and helping to develop public skate parks; that’s the most important and most gratifying work I can do.”



Activision photos

Game director Kurt Tillmanns says the remake of Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater 3 + 4 includes new levels and “wacky things” like pinball, above. The game also largely overhauls its soundtrack.



A side-by-side screenshot comparison from one of the original Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater games released in the early 2000s and the remade combined version, released July 11. Skateboarder Andrew Reynolds’ character is shown.



One of the new levels in Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater 3 + 4 makes a skater’s paradise of a shutdown water park.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Uppsala, Sweden’s ancient capital, beckons

Uppsala, Sweden’s fourth-largest city, is the best day trip from Stockholm (it’s just under an hour away by train). This happy town is Sweden’s answer to Oxford, offering state-ly university facilities and mu-seums, the home and garden of botanist Carl Linnaeus as well as a grand cathedral and the enig-matic burial mounds of Gamla Uppsala on the town’s outskirts.

Almost all the sights are in the compact city center, dominated by one of Scandinavia’s largest, most historic churches — Gothic Uppsala Cathedral, which was completed in 1435 (though its spires and interior decorations are Neo-Gothic, from the late 19th century). The cathedral — with a fine interior, relics of St. Erik, memories of countless Swedish coronations and the tomb of King Gustav Vasa — is well worth a visit.

Inside, you’ll find a different take on the Virgin Mary. An eerily lifelike statue from 2005, called “Mary (The Return),” captures Jesus’ mother wearing a scarf and timeless garb. In keep-ing with the Protestant spirit, this version of Mary is shown not as an exalted queen, but as an eve-rywoman, saddened by the loss of her child and seeking solace — or answers — in the church.

Facing the cathedral is the university’s oldest surviving building, the Gustavianum, with a bulbous dome that doubles as a sundial. Today it houses a well-presented museum that features an anatomical theater, a cabinet



Rick Steves

filled with minia-ture curiosities and Anders Celsi-us’ thermometer. The collection is curiously engaging for the glimpse it gives into the mindset of 17th-century Europe. Uppsala was also home to the father of mod-ern botany, Carl Linnaeus, whose house and garden — now a mu-seum — provide a vivid look at this influential scientist’s work. Linnaeus lived here from 1743 until 1778, while he was a profes-sor at the University of Uppsala. Here, he developed a way to classify the plant kingdom.

Strolling Sweden’s first botan-ical garden, it’s easy to feel a childlike sense of wonder. Lin-naeus ran this garden, living on-site to study plants — day and night, year round — tracking about 3,000 species. The museum fills his home with the family’s personal possessions and his professional gear. You’ll see his insect cabinet, herb collection,



Rick Steves

Burial mounds just outside of Uppsala mark the site where the kingdom of Sweden came together.

desk, botany tools and notes.

Just outside of town stands Gamla (“Old”) Uppsala, a series of mounds where the nation of Sweden was born back in the Iron Age. This site gives histori-ans goose bumps even on a sunny day. It includes nine large royal burial mounds circled by a walk-ing path, all with English de-scriptions.

Fifteen hundred years ago, the pagan Swedish kings had their

capital there. Old Uppsala is where the disparate little Swed-ish kingdoms came together and a nation coalesced. It was also here where Sweden became Christianized, a thousand years ago.

Climbing the burial mounds is a highlight to any Uppsala visit. From here you can imagine the scene more than a thousand years ago, when the democratic tradition of this country helped

bring those small Swedish king-doms together. Entire commun-ities would gather at the rock that marked their place. Then the leader of all the clans, standing atop the flat mound, would ad-dress the crowd as if in a natural amphitheater, and issues of the day would be dealt with.

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.

Many European festivals can trace their origins to religious figures

A countless number of Europe’s fests can trace their roots to religious holidays honoring saints and holy fig-ures from throughout the centuries. Even when the holy figure being honored no longer stands front and central to the celebrations, it can be interesting to piece together the connection between the partying and the person.

Annafest in Forchheim, Germany: Saint Anne is con-sidered to be the mother of the Virgin Mary and grand-mother of Jesus Christ. She and her husband Joachim were long unable to conceive a child, but they were re-warded for their perseverance and faith with the birth of a baby girl. Saint Anne is the patron saint of grandmothers, pregnant women, lace makers, seamstresses and many others. The day chosen by the Ro-man Catholic Church to jointly honor her and her husband is July 26.



Karen Bradbury

The city of Forchheim, located in Bava-ria’s Franconia region, has hosted a folk festival by the name of Annafest since 1840. Pilgrims traveling to a chapel dedica-ted to Saint Anne would pass through the Kellerwald, an oak-forested area where many beer cellars were built to make sure the beer would stay as cool as possible. To-day’s Annafest is an 11-day celebration known and loved for its exceptional woodsy setting, four local breweries creating a special Bock beer and traditional fare includ-ing sausages and grilled meats. The usual rides and carni-val games are also present. The Annafest continues its 2025 run through Aug. 4. Forchheim is located roughly 25 miles north of Nuremberg. Online: annafest.bayern

Saint Lawrence Day in Florence, Italy: Tradition holds that Saint Lawrence, or San Lorenzo in Italian, was one of seven deacons of the early Christian church in Rome. On Aug. 6, 258 A.D., Emperor Valerian ordered six of these clergy members, including the pope, to be executed. San



annafest.bayern

Annafest in Forchheim, Germany, celebrates St. Anne. The festival continues through Aug. 4.

Lorenzo was given three days to collect the treasures of the church, and upon giving them to the emperor, his life was to be spared. San Lorenzo instead distributed the church’s wealth to the poor, which earned him martyr-dom by being roasted over hot coals atop a gridiron. A quip to his tormentor about being well-done on one side led him to be named a patron saint of not just cooks and firemen but comedians too. He is celebrated on Aug. 10.

Florence celebrates San Lorenzo, one of its two patron saints, on Aug. 10 with a historical procession of costumed marchers, a mass at the basilica bearing the name of the saint, a concert and the distribution of pasta and water-melon. The parade sets off from the Palagio di Parte Guelfa at 9:45 a.m., and the free meal is handed out at the square in front of the basilica at 8:30 p.m. It’s traditional to end the evening by looking for the shooting stars of the Perseids meteor shower. Online: tinyurl.com/22pnvuxv

Sant Bartameu in Sitges, Spain: Bartholomew is one of the 12 apostles who traveled with Jesus during his three-year ministry. Following Jesus’ Ascension, he is believed to have served as a missionary to lands in the area of modern-day India, Turkey and Armenia. Various ac-counts of his martyrdom exist; one version is that he was flayed as punishment for converting a king to Christian-ity. The patron saint of tanners, bookbinders, butchers and shoemakers, his feast day is celebrated on Aug. 24.

Sitges, a lively coastal resort 25 miles southwest of Barcelona, celebrates one of its two patron saints with the city’s biggest bash of the year, the Festa Major de Sant Bartomeu, on Aug. 23 and 24. Elements of the festivities include costumed figures of giants and devils running in the streets, folk dancing and the lighting of a fire castle on La Fragata beach. A grand display of fireworks is set off late on Aug. 23. Online: sitgesfestamajor.cat

Feast of Saint Marinus in San Marino: Tradition holds that Marinus was a stonemason born on what is now the island of Rab in Croatia around 275 A.D. To flee persecu-tion for his Christian beliefs, he moved to the area near Rimini, eventually settling into a hermit’s life on Monte Titano. This mountain is the highest peak in the Republic of San Marino, considered the world’s oldest extant sover-eign state. Surrounded entirely by Italy, the world’s fifth-smallest nation in terms of land mass has a population of about 34,000.

The feast day of San Marino, celebrating the origin of the Republic in 301, is observed each Sept. 3. Following the 10 a.m. Mass, the relics of the saint are paraded through the streets, and at 2:30 p.m., a historical parade with costumed marchers sets off from the Porta San Francesco. The crossbow tournament featuring shooters from the nation’s nine districts at 3:30 p.m. is followed by a concert by the country’s military band, and fireworks are shot off at 11:30 p.m. Online: tinyurl.com/3k9e4jff

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Eat like a local

Why every trip should start with a food tour or cooking class

By ANDREA UPDYKE
Associated Press

The Hilton Trends Report estimates that nearly 1 in 5 travelers will take a trip specifically to seek out new restaurants or culinary experiences in 2025. Even as food chains spread worldwide, many tourists still crave local flavors rooted in culture. That’s where food tours shine, whether on foot, by bus or by boat; these excursions offer a glimpse of history through what and how locals eat.

Culinary travel continues to rise in popularity, even as historic landmarks and tourist destinations remain timeless. And food tours and cooking classes are in demand now more than ever.

What to look for in a food tour

Rather than passive sightseeing, more travelers now opt for interactive small-group experiences. This includes guided walking tours, which have seen a nearly 40% surge in popularity year over year. Before award-winning journalist Mosh-eh Oinounou became widely known for his Mo.news platform and podcast, he and his wife, Alex, ran a food tour company in New York City. Their goal was to bring people together safely in a post-COVID world.

“As a tour guide exploring both history and food, we found it was a powerful way to tell the story of NYC,” Oinounou said. “Food gives you such a unique perspective on the culture and history of the place you are visiting. Sharing a meal is also something universal, a way we all connect.”

A great food tour combines passionate storytelling with delicious cuisine. Companies that employ local guides with proper knowledge and love of the area are a great place to start.

Expect the unexpected

The Athens Food on Foot tour started near a train station in Greece. Kostas, an Athens native, was the fun, free-spirited guide, excited to share his city’s rich history. After the first stop and a taste of mastiha, a Greek liqueur, the journey continued through city streets and alleyways. In the shade of the Acropolis, Kostas pointed out giant murals painted on high rises, one after the other, as symbols of modern political protest. Much like food, art comes from deep within, and it’s nearly impossible to visit a new culture without feeling its effects.

By the end of the walk, guests were full of meat pie, bougatsa, souvlaki and loukama- des, and a genuine appreciation of Greek culture and the local Athenian community. This food tour was an unforgettable experience. Athens came to

life in breathtaking taste and color.

Stories from the road

Robin Donovan, a food and travel writer, recalled a street food tour in Saigon taken on the back of a motorcycle.

“We tried so many different foods that I never would have ordered without our tour guide’s expert guidance. He took us to several different neighborhoods, ordered for us and explained what everything was, as well as sharing interesting cultural and historical tidbits. We had some of the best food of the whole three-week trip on that day.”

In the United States, Casandra Karpiak experienced San Antonio, Texas, through Julia Rosenfeld’s Food Chick Tour.

“It was one of the most thoughtful and engaging experiences I’ve had in any city,” Karpiak said. “We explored San Antonio through its food, from modern Mediterranean dishes at Ladino to some of the best puffy tacos I’ve ever tasted at Lala’s Gorditas. Julia shared the city’s history and culture with the insight of a longtime restaurant critic and the warmth of a local who truly loves where she lives. Every stop felt intentional and memorable.”

Keep an open mind on your tour and don’t be afraid to try new things. Above all, come hungry and save room in your suitcase for edible souvenirs.

Food tours from the water

Earlier this year, popular dining and sightseeing cruise company City Cruises launched six culinary voyages across the United States. The sailings, available in Chicago, New York City and San Diego, among others, feature food tailored to each city for a more immersive experience.

Mike Flaskey, CEO, Hornblower Group, stated, “With this exciting partnership, City Cruises is reimagining what dining experiences await on the water, mixing



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A great food tour must have not only delicious cuisine but also passionate storytelling. Read reviews and listen to word of mouth to locate the best tours and guides to ensure you have a memorable experience.

culinary expertise with some of America’s greatest local cuisines, all while creating memorable experiences with friends and family.”

How to book a food tour

Like any other guided tour, finding a great storyteller is essential. Read reviews and listen to word of mouth to locate the best tours and guides to ensure you have a memorable experience. Book through websites like The Tour Guy, Viator or Get Your Guide, or research local companies and go straight to the source.

Choosing the right style of tour for your

group is also important. When deciding between walking tours, golf cart tours or culinary options for foodies, consider travel partners such as children or those with accessibility needs or mobility restrictions. When it comes to food allergies or dietary limitations, reach out to your guide before the tour so they can provide suitable alternatives as needed.

Whether it’s your first visit or a return to a favorite destination, a food tour offers a personal and welcoming way to connect. In the words of Anthony Bourdain, “You learn a lot about someone when you share a meal together.”

“Food gives you such a unique perspective on the culture and history of the place you are visiting. Sharing a meal is also something universal, a way we all connect.”

Mosheh Oinounou

award-winning journalist, previously co-owner of a New York City food tour company

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

On the QT

Address: Wöhrdstrasse 25, Tübingen, Germany
Hours: 1 p.m. every day and 5 p.m. Saturdays from May through September

Prices: 13 euros for adults, 11 euros for children up to 12. Groups of seven or more can book a private ride. "After work" rides that last 90 minutes are available Thursday and Friday evenings for 19.90 euros for adults and 17.90 euros for children up to 12 years old, drink included.

Information: Phone: +49 7071 9136 0; online: tinyurl.com/9599b5eu

Matt Wagner



PHOTOS BY MATT WAGNER/Stars and Stripes

A Tübingen punt floats along the Neckar River near the Neckar Bridge in Tübingen, Germany, on July 6.

Punting a pleasure in Tübingen

River rides on Neckar are relaxing but also informative

BY MATT WAGNER
Stars and Stripes

When I first floated the idea of meeting my German friend and her family in Tübingen to go punting, she expressed skepticism that her 4-year-old daughter and 2-year-old son could sit still for an hour.

We decided to go with the flow one Sunday in early July when we met in the city, 24 miles south of Stuttgart, where she began her university studies. It turned out we were in for a relaxing day.

When the traditional Tübingen punt, or stocherkahn, began traversing the Neckar River in this city is unclear.

The students at the university — founded in 1477 and boasting alumni like astronomer Johannes Kepler and philosophers Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling — have played a key role in making punting synonymous with Tübingen.

It was a popular mode of transportation before the invention of cars and bikes, and students in the mid-1950s started a famous yearly race that now brings out thousands and pits 50 or so boats against each other.

Our punt ride did not involve a race —



Players jostle for position during a game of kayak polo on the Neckar River on July 6.

except to show up on time. After lunch near city hall, we dashed across the Neckar Bridge and to the jetty casino where the Steinlach and Neckar rivers meet.

I had bought my ticket days before. My friend and her family didn't. I tried to buy some on the walk over, but the website said they were sold out. Yet my friend's daughter kept talking excitedly about the boat ride, so we looked like we were heading for the rocks.

Once others stepped onto the boat, I explained our situation to the guide to see if we could squeeze at least the youngster on board. He glanced at her and her mom, checked the space in the boat and allowed the two of them to join. Crisis averted.

My friend's husband and napping son stayed ashore.

I had thought that by getting on the boat last, we were going to be near the tour guide, but I was wrong. He climbed to the opposite end and pushed us off the dock.

Because I'm hard of hearing, I missed most of the information our guide gave, like Tübingen's oldest building, the number of flowers on the Neckar Bridge, the Neckar's source (Schwenninger Moos in the Black Forest) and other fun facts.

That wasn't necessarily a bad thing, though, as it allowed me to take in the surrounding views. And I had plenty to see. Our punt traveled north of Neckar Island and its Plane Tree Alley.



Houses line the north bank of the Neckar River in Tübingen, Germany. The city is located 24 miles south of Stuttgart and is also known for its university.



A duck dips its beak into the water as seen during a July 6 punting ride on the Neckar River in Tübingen.



This weeping willow stands near the yellow Hölderlin Tower in Tübingen. The tower is named after poet Friedrich Hölderlin, who lived there from 1806 until his death in 1843.

Bright, colorful houses line the river's north bank. The boat passed the pastel yellow building that features the Hölderlin Tower, which hosted famed poet Friedrich Hölderlin from 1806 until his death in 1843 after he was deemed "incurably mentally ill."

Before we reached the Neckar Bridge to the west, a game of kayak polo broke out. As a sports guy, I watched with rapt attention as numerous players jostled for position with their boats while fighting for the ball.

My friend's daughter had a blast following the river's wildlife. She called out every mama and papa duck she saw, making sure her mother and I saw them, too.

My friend, meanwhile, got the fulfillment of a Tübingen experience that she had missed out on during her time in the city, as well as a respite from typical parental duties.

We lost track of time and didn't realize until we were docking that an hour had passed. We stepped off the boat calmer and happier than when we boarded.

For those looking for a little more action, plenty of themed rides are available throughout the year, such as a wine tasting on Aug. 2. Other companies also offer grill and pinsa rides for a full summer experience.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Creative eats meet handmade ceramics

Pottery classes, unique dishes help couple's Klay Keramik & Café stand out in K-Town

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

Oliver Annan smiled when speaking about a recent German news article that compared his downtown Kaiserslautern neighborhood to a hip area of Berlin, in part because of the café and ceramics studio he and his wife, Liana, opened a few months ago.

"Maybe not Berlin," he said. "But something is happening in Kaiserslautern."

On a Tuesday morning, about an hour before opening, daylight poured through the picture windows of the historic sandstone building next to the Union Cinema that the couple converted into the modern Klay Keramik & Café.

Soon the space filled with an eclectic mix of patrons. I once ate there in the company of an elderly man reading a book, two young women gossiping over an iPhone, a mother breastfeeding her child and a Labrador napping under a table.

Like some other popular places nearby, Klay Café offers a health-focused, vegetarian-friendly menu with cakes made from organic ingredients, and a variety of coffees.

But two things make the new establishment stand out from similar places nearby. First, there's a ceramics studio in the back, and handmade pottery is everywhere, some for sale, some used to serve food and drinks. Second, the food is better.

That assessment may reflect my soft spot for dill. A few months ago, my best friend from college asked if I'd had any good dill dishes lately. I hadn't. But after ordering the savory waffle at Klay, I sent her a photo with an exclamation point.

It showed a warm, unsweetened square waffle topped with an organic soft-boiled egg and a sauce made of avocado and crème fraîche but with dill being the dominant flavor.

It was so different that it forced me to eat slowly to fully appreciate just how well the unusually paired flavors went together.

That has also been the case with every dish I ordered at the café, courtesy of Liana's culinary experimentation. I was surprised to learn that she taught herself to cook, in part to make healthy meals for her family of four.

The organic burrata salad is another standout among her creations. It's a bed of tomato



Klay Keramik & Café owners Oliver and Liana Annan.



Klay Keramik & Café

Address: Kerststrasse 24, Kaiserslautern, Germany
Café hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.; closed Wednesday and Sunday.
Prices: Main dishes range from 10.50 to 15 euros; cake slices, 4.50 euros
Information: keramikcafe-klay@outlook.de, [instagram.com/klay_keramik_cafe](https://www.instagram.com/klay_keramik_cafe)

Phillip Walter Wellman

and orange slices topped with a large ball of burrata cheese, olive oil, balsamic vinegar and a homemade seasonal pesto.

After the cheese is sliced, its liquid center spills onto the fruit, which can be scooped up with the slices of brown bread that are served with the dish.

It was the first time I'd eaten oranges with tomatoes or bread or cheese, but the combination was light, fresh and satisfying on a summer morning.

One other dish that impressed me is the homemade roasted nut granola, served with organic yogurt, a sweet mango-and-apple puree, organic silken tofu chocolate mousse and tangy berries. I was also surprised to taste rosemary in a bite or two. The dish has a lot going on, but it works.

Born in Turkmenistan, Liana moved to Kaiserslautern when she was 12. Oliver grew up in the city. After finishing school, the couple moved to various places, including Berlin, Vienna and Seoul, before returning to Kaiserslautern a few years ago, largely so their two children could be closer to family.

Pottery is Liana's primary passion, and she teaches classes on site, including on Wednesdays when the kitchen is closed. Oliver, who also works as an economist, liked the idea of opening a



PHOTOS BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

Customers enjoy food and drinks July 24 at Klay Keramik & Café in Kaiserslautern, Germany. The eatery occupies a historically listed building next door to the Union Cinema.



The organic burrata salad at Klay Keramik & Café consists of tomato and orange slices topped with a large ball of burrata cheese, olive oil, balsamic vinegar and a homemade seasonal pesto.



The savory waffle at Klay Keramik & Café is a warm, unsweetened square waffle topped with an organic soft-boiled egg and a sauce made with avocado, crème fraîche and dill.

café. In the end, they merged both.

The hybrid space has been attracting many of Kaiserslautern's creatives, they say. One regular who paints during her

visits even gifted them a still life of lemons, which now hangs on the wall.

Patrons who come in to make their own art, play games or read often order hot drinks and cakes,



The crunchy homemade roasted nut granola served at Klay Keramik & Café.

of which several varieties are offered each day.

The lavender and lemon, carrot and cardamom, and banana cakes each got thumbs-up from two colleagues who sampled slices I recently brought to the office.

One compared it to Starbucks cake but said it tasted "more rustic, homemade and not as super sugary, which is to its benefit."

The other said she'd have preferred a bit more sweetness to satisfy her American palate but added that the carrot cake, which she's usually not a fan of, was one of the best she'd ever tasted.

Finding a seat at Klay can be tricky, as there's only about 15 inside. A few additional outdoor tables are available in warmer months.

Oliver said they hope their current model proves sustainable, as they like the role the café is carving out in the community.

"We are a very small place, and people stay here for a while, but that's OK for us," he said. "We're very liberal and open-minded. Our attitude is that we like to welcome people."

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL



PHOTOS BY TREVARES JOHNSON/Stars and Stripes
Patrons study works by Edgar Degas, including a top-hatted male, at the From Monet to Andy Warhol exhibit in Seoul, South Korea.

A walk through Western art

From Monet to Andy Warhol traveling exhibition in Seoul features 143 original works

BY TREVARES JOHNSON
Stars and Stripes

The From Monet to Andy Warhol exhibition at the Sejong Center Art Museum in Seoul is a journey through 400 years of artistic evolution.

Open through Aug. 31, the exhibit features 143 original works by 89 iconic artists, including Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol.

On loan from the Johannesburg Art Gallery, the collection is arranged in nine sections tracing the evolution of Western art from the 17th-century Dutch Golden Age to the rise of 20th-century Modernism.

Visitors begin with works influenced by Baroque and Dutch realism, in which artists like Frans Hals and Jacob van Ruisdael captured ordinary life with dramatic lighting and detail.

Moving forward, the exhibit highlights Impressionism, then transitions into the brushwork of van Gogh's Post-Impressionism, the fractured forms of Picasso's Cubism and Warhol's bright, consumer-driven Pop Art.

Curated by Italian art historian Simona Bartolena, the exhibition also includes South African works that explore the relationship between colonial influence and local identity, a rare combination of Eu-



Andy Warhol's "Joseph Beuys" in black, white and red anchors the Pop Art section of the From Monet to Andy Warhol exhibit in Seoul, South Korea.

ropean and African perspectives.

The exhibition attracted more than 200,000 visitors during previous showings in Gyeongju, Busan and Jeju, according to the Sejong Center's website. This Seoul stop marks the final leg of its Korean tour.

Interactive features include a free audio guide voiced by Korean celebrities Kim Chan-yong and Shim Seong-a, as well as family-friendly programs tied to art education. English is also available.

The Sejong Center, in the city's Jongno District, is a worthwhile outing for art aficionados and military families alike.

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From Monet to Andy Warhol

Location: 175, Sejong-daero, Jongno-gu, Seoul
Hours: The gallery is open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Closed Mondays and holidays.
Prices: Tickets are available online. Adult admission is 20,000 won, or \$14.50; youth, 16,000 won; children, 12,000 won
Dress: Casual
Directions: Easily accessible by subway and just a short distance from Yongsan Garrison.
Information: Online: sejongpac.or.kr

Trevares Johnson



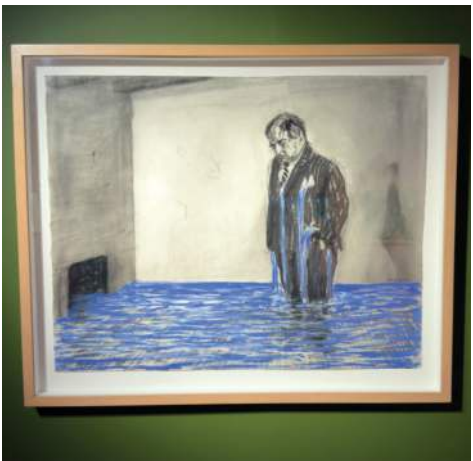
In this first stop along the exploration of evolution of Western art, works show how masters such as Frans Hals and Jacob van Ruisdael captured ordinary life with dramatic lighting and detail.



A 19th-century still life of tulips and other flowers. The exhibit begins with works influenced by Baroque and Dutch realism.



Claude Monet's "Le Printemps" draws viewers into a sunlit orchard.



A somber, blue-toned portrait by German artist Rainer Fetting is displayed in the late-20th-century wing of the exhibition.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Single-origin & sensational

Matayoshi Coffee Farm offers visitors a farm-to-cup experience on Okinawa

BY RYAN BREEDEN
Stars and Stripes

Japan may be the world's third largest importer of coffee beans, but a handful of farms on Okinawa are capitalizing on the islands' rich soil, subtropical climate and favorable temperatures to make a dent in that record.

The lush Yanbaru region on the northern part of the island is home to several coffee growers, among them the Matayoshi Coffee Farm, a boutique, single-origin coffee plantation where visitors can experience coffee culture firsthand.

The Matayoshi family turned the 10-year-old rose plantation from pesticide-intense flower cultivation to an environmentally conscious, 24.5-acre organic fruit and coffee farm, said Takuyuki Matayoshi, 38, owner of Matayoshi Coffee Farm by phone July 22.

The farm endured typhoons and salt intrusion and through its transformation it has capitalized on Japan's rising coffee consumption and combined it with tourism.

From the initial 100 coffee trees planted in 2014, the farm has grown to 2,000. In 2016, it opened a café, where visitors may sip freshly brewed coffee from Okinawa and around the world.

During harvest season between November and April, guests may also experience the complex art of coffee cultivation firsthand. For 3,000 yen, or \$20.17, you may pick and process

the beans, roast and grind them and brew your own cup of coffee.

A fresh-brewed cup of Matayoshi's finest without the added labor will set you back 2,500 yen. The farm grows its coffee primarily for its café and the visitor experience, according to Matayoshi during the phone conversation.

"Coffee is an agricultural product, and there are people who make it. Nothing makes us happier than when people come to our farm and understand that consuming coffee supports the producers," Matayoshi wrote by email July 20.

After a tour of the farm, I tried a cup of Matayoshi's Okinawa coffee and, for another 1,000 yen, a mango smoothie.

As an avid coffee consumer, I was thoroughly pleased with the delicate aroma emanating from the cup. It delivered clear flavors with fruity notes while balancing acidity and bitterness.

The mango smoothly juxtaposed the coffee, bringing bold flavor while not being overwhelmingly sweet.

Once finished, I was invited by the staff to see the selection and roasting process, in which they carefully hand-selected every bean.

The farm is a kind of resort, with cottages available for overnight stays, where visitors may explore a vibrant landscape. Outdoor activities include hiking, kayaking, camping and ATV riding.

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PHOTOS BY RYAN M. BREEDEN/Stars and Stripes

Matayoshi Coffee Farm in northern Okinawa serves its own coffee by the cup. The farm accommodates overnight stays with options of cottages and camping. Other outdoor activities are also available.

On the QT

Directions: GPS coordinates: N 26.609947, E 128.143898. Drive north on Route 58 and turn right on Route 14; stay on 14 until it merges with Route 331 and takes you to Matayoshi Coffee Farm. 718-28 Gesashi, Higashi, Kunigami District, Okinawa 905-1205
Times: Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.
Costs: Admission to explore the coffee farm is 550 yen per person; during harvest season, the coffee-picking experience is 3,000 yen per person.
Parking: Free
Food: Matayoshi Coffee Farm Cafe offers a wide selection of food and sweets priced between 750 and 1,100 yen. Coffee and juice are 150 to 2,500 yen.
Information: Phone: 0980-43-2838; Online: matayoshicoffee.jp

Ryan Breeden



A worker checks the coffee beans' aroma for quality on July 17 at Matayoshi Coffee Farm on Okinawa.



Coffee trees grow on Okinawa at Matayoshi Coffee Farm. The rich soil and subtropical climate are ideal for them.



A worker inspects coffee beans for quality. The harvest season runs from November to April.



A worker empties a roaster at the farm. A fresh-brewed cup of Matayoshi's finest will set you back 2,500 yen.

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

‘Suddenly everyone wants matcha’

Global supplies of the bright-green tea powder are dwindling, thanks to social media, Japanese tourism

BY JULIAN MARK
AND MARGOT AMOYAL
The Washington Post

It’s in lattes, ice cream and even shampoo — and now, suddenly, it’s difficult to find.

Matcha, the bright-green tea powder from Japan, has become so popular in recent months that producers are straining to meet the surge in global demand, fueled by social media hype and a boom in tourism to Japan, according to vendors. Retailers say they’re having to pay higher prices, wait longer for shipments and search in increasingly obscure places for the centuries-old delicacy, prized for its unique sweet and umami flavor notes.

“Suddenly you can’t get matcha,” said Leo Lukidi, whose Las Vegas specialty tea shop, Tea and Whisk, has been selling matcha for nine years. “Suddenly everyone wants matcha.”

Here’s what we know about the recent matcha boom — and the shortage it’s causing:

What is matcha?

Matcha is a fine powder made from green tea leaves. It’s traditionally drunk suspended in hot water, but in recent years, it has become a staple of coffee shops and restaurants, mixed into everything from lattes to desserts.

Early forms of matcha originated in 8th-century China, but the matcha we know today developed in 16th-century Japan, where the beverage was served to elites during specialized “tea ceremonies.”

The tea leaves are grown in the shade and, depending on the grade of the matcha, ground to a powder either on a stone mill or in a machine. It’s traditionally incorporated into hot water using a bamboo whisk.

Why is there a shortage?

Matcha has become a hot commodity outside Japan — particularly as TikTok influencers rave about its health benefits and unique flavors. Tourism in Japan has also left shelves empty, with some shops limiting sales to one container per person.

In addition, matcha is now an ingredient in a wide variety of food and beauty products, from potato chips to hand lotion. Retailers told The Washington Post that the trend began to snowball over the past few years, but demand saw a major surge starting last year.

Strained supply from a heat wave this year in Japan has not helped, said André Fasciola, the CEO of Matcha.com, a retail and wholesale matcha vendor, who estimated that yields are down 20% compared with last year.

At the same time, his companies are now seeing “unprecedented demand,” Fasciola said, noting that over the past four years, his company’s sales soared by 940%, fueled by both wholesale and retail demand.

“We could go through twice as much matcha as we are



iStock

Matcha is a fine powder made from green tea leaves. The tea leaves are grown in the shade and, depending on the grade of the matcha, ground to the powder either on a stone mill or in a machine. It’s traditionally incorporated into hot water using a bamboo whisk.

getting,” he said, adding that finding customers was much harder three years ago. “It is like drinking out of a fire hose.”

What is ‘ceremonial grade’ matcha?

“Ceremonial grade” matcha is grown in the shade, handpicked and ground on a stone mill, making it more precious, expensive and tastier to drink by itself. A one-ounce container can range from \$30 to \$100.

Social media has glommed onto this special form of matcha, sparking a rush that has Japanese producers scrambling to meet the high demand.

“We could go through twice as much matcha as we are getting. It is like drinking out of a fire hose.”

André Fasciola
the CEO of Matcha.com

“The problem is everyone is making lattes using ceremonial-grade matcha,” Lukidi said.

During a trip to Japan in May, Lukidi said he struggled to find the most prized matcha. Now, “places where you thought matcha wasn’t good enough are very popular,” he said.

Can I still get a matcha latte?

Although much of the craze has been around high-grade matcha, suppliers say all forms of matcha are still

in high demand. That doesn’t mean you’ll have to sacrifice your daily matcha latte.

A Starbucks spokesperson told The Post that the company doesn’t anticipate having a shortage of matcha. They hold enough matcha reserves to weather any variability in supply and demand, the company added.

Johnny Hill, the CEO at Cha Cha Matcha — an online marketplace of matcha products and a café chain of more than 10 storefronts in California and New York selling lattes and desserts — said that he is still able to source matcha for his products, even though he fears price hikes.

“Even a year or two years ago, you could outreach to matcha farms, get samples and start a matcha brand,” he said. “You can’t do that anymore.”

What’s happening to matcha prices?

The U.S. and Japan last month reached a trade deal that puts a 15% levy on Japanese imports. That’s making it harder to sell matcha at current rates, Fasciola said. His company has “held it off as long as we can” on price hikes and has been eating the cost of tariffs for now, but he’ll have to raise prices eventually, he said.

Tariffs aside, prices are already elevated for traditional, stone-milled matcha, said David Lavecchia, co-founder of the online retailer Tezumi Tea. At the end of the 2024 harvest, some suppliers were charging new customers double or triple what they were charging at the beginning of the year, he said.

This year, the price spikes are becoming more widespread and hitting machine-picked tea leaves — which are generally lower in quality. Sellers are also experimenting with cheaper blends.

“Instead of raising prices, another approach we have seen is decreasing the quality of matcha blends in order to [minimize] the sticker shock,” Lavecchia said.

WEEKEND: BOOK REVIEWS

The long road to ending WWII

‘Victory ’45’ chronicles challenges of concluding massive, multi-front conflict

By DOUGLASS K. DANIEL
Associated Press

Most wars begin with a unilateral act. Americans fired “the shot heard round the world” in Lexington in 1775, the Germans invaded Poland in 1939 and the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941. To call off a war, however, the belligerents must agree to terms and conditions, a collaborative and convoluted process.

In the popular imagination, World War II concluded in 1945 with the deaths of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini in Europe, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. As historians James Holland and Al Murray chronicle in their finely detailed book “Victory ’45: The End of the War in Eight Surrenders,” those events alone were not capable of halting the colossal military might unleashed over the previous six years.

Consider how the ultimate aim of the Allies — unconditional surrender as set in a joint declaration — contrasted with the Nazi blood oath calling for a “1,000-year Reich or Armageddon.” President Frank-

lin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, meeting in Casablanca in January 1943, outlined the strategic, political and moral clarity necessary to fight a global conflict. By spring 1945, Hitler and his supporters were rotting in his Berlin bunker.

Holland and Murray use the bunker setting — depicted in the 2004 German film “Downfall,” featuring a meme-able Hitler tirade — as the predicate for the multiple European surrenders to come. If rehashing Hitler’s suicide, in April 1945, early in the book seems anti-climactic, “Victory ’45” justifies itself by moving on to the unsung but equally dramatic tales of those who navigated the confusion of a war that was won but hardly finished.

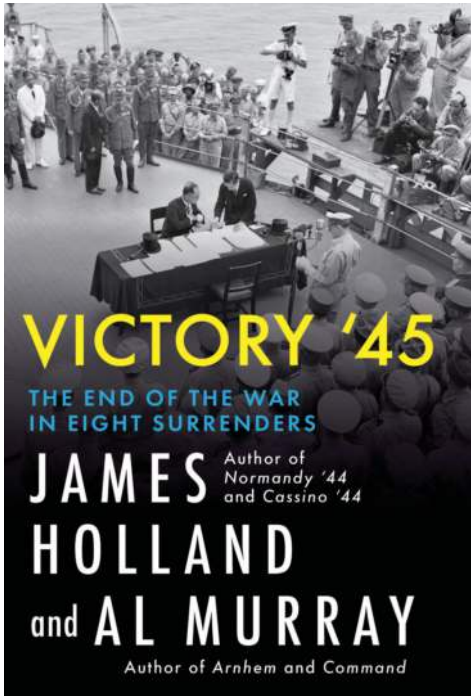
The first significant capitulation began weeks earlier when two backstabbing rivals in the Nazi SS high command in Northern Italy separately schemed to save their own postwar skins. Their intrigues delayed the first of Europe’s unconditional surrenders, limited to their sector, signed just a day before Hitler’s demise. A recurring motif was the futile attempts by the Germans to only yield to the West in hopes

of splintering the Allies and escaping Soviet vengeance.

While Holland and Murray include brief profiles of famous politicians and commanders as further European surrender ceremonies were staged and announced, “Victory ’45” finds its relevance and poignancy when it directs its focus downward. There, ordinary individuals journeyed to the intersections of triumph and despair, relief and revulsion.

Examples include the Jewish-American college student haunted by the atrocities at a slave compound in Austria seized by his Army unit. Those rescued included a Jewish-Czech teen who lied about his age to avoid extermination at Auschwitz and joined his father in surviving stints at multiple camps. Liberation was punctuated by grief just days later in a makeshift hospital when his father died in his arms.

On the Eastern Front, a young female translator in Soviet military intelligence was integral to a search in Germany’s devastated capital. Were the reports of the Fuhrer’s death Nazi disinformation? She interrogated captured witnesses, attended the autopsy of the burned corpse, and was



even given custody of the teeth that were eventually confirmed as Hitler’s.

Turning to the Pacific Theater, “Victory ’45” examines the grim prospect the Western Allies faced in “unconditionally” conquering a warrior ethos in Japan, epitomized by their civilians’ suicidal resistance to the Allied invasion of Okinawa.

Not just for WWII enthusiasts, “Victory ’45” illustrates for those with a broader historical interest the myriad challenges in bringing to heel the dogs of war.

Gwyneth: The Biography

Amy Odell

This thorough portrait of Gwyneth Paltrow splits her life and career into two distinct periods: the rise (and fall) of the quintessential ’90s Hollywood “It girl,” and her transformation to wellness mogul with the creation of lifestyle brand Goop.

In both phases, she struggles with likability in the press and from the public, often coming across in interviews as elitist and out of touch. But that hasn’t stopped her from succeeding on both fronts.

Blond, glamorous and patrician, Paltrow is the ultimate nepo baby, the daughter of actor Blythe Danner and TV producer Bruce Paltrow, acting from an early age.

In the first half of the book, Odell charts Paltrow’s rise from chain-smoking party girl at elite New York private school Spence to Hollywood “It girl.” She starred in 1990s classics like “Emma,” “Sliding Doors” and “Shakespeare in Love,” for which she won an Oscar at 26. She was on the cover of Vogue and constantly in the tabloids with movie star boyfriends like Brad Pitt and Ben Affleck.

But she eventually turned her focus to lifestyle and wellness. She started Goop as a newsletter in 2008.

Goop promoted some dubious wellness theories and was hit with the same press bashing as she had gotten as an actor.



But Odell — who based the book on more than 200 interviews with people who know or worked with Paltrow — shows Paltrow has a masterful control of her image, working negative press to her advantage.

At Goop, a \$66 jade egg meant to be inserted vaginally and a \$75 candle called “This Smells Like My Vagina” were ridiculed in the press — and sold out in short order.

When Goop launched a travel app, an advertiser sponsored it with the promise that it would reach 10,000 downloads. “Call it G. Spotting,” Gwyneth told an executive, according to Odell. “Everybody will make fun of me for being an idiot and we’ll have the 10,000 downloads we need right there.” It worked, as have most things for the pioneering and polarizing actor and business woman..

— Mae Anderson/AP

The Tilting House

Ivonne Lamazares

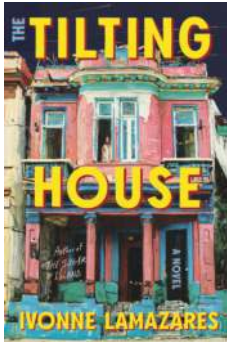
Yuri is a 16-year-old orphan who lives simply with her religious aunt in a big, old house in Communist Cuba in the years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Yuri has vague hopes of being accepted into the Lenin school, Cuba’s prestigious preparatory.

Yuri and her Aunt Ruth’s quiet lives are suddenly turned upside down when an unexpected visitor from “la Yuma” — slang for the United States — shows up at their Havana home with a camera swinging from her neck and announcing she is family. Ruth later tells Yuri that 34-year-old Mariela is her daughter, and that when Mariela was an infant she sent her to live with a family in the United States through Operation Pedro Pan, a U.S. government program in which thousands of unaccompanied children were sent from Cuba to Miami in the early 1960s.

“The Tilting House” is an affecting and sometimes amusing coming-of-age novel set in a country that few have had the opportunity to visit, despite its proximity to the U.S. It’s a study of hidden family secrets, the unhealed wound of losing a mother and the quest for home.

Miami-based writer Lamazares, who was born in Havana, knows her homeland well, and her book is rife with description and historic detail that only someone with firsthand knowledge could provide. Lamazares left Cuba for the United States in 1989.



Yuri is quickly pulled into Mariela’s chaotic world and her absurd art projects, which include a tragicomic funeral for Ruth’s dead dog, Lucho, in a public park using highly illegal homemade fireworks. Ruth, already viewed as suspect by the government as a member of the small Jehovah’s Witnesses group, is arrested and sent to jail on unexplained charges.

Mariela later tells Yuri that they aren’t cousins, but sisters, and that their now-dead mother gave birth to her as a teenager. Harebrained projects follow, and the family’s tilting house finally tumbles after neighbors and acquaintances slowly chip away at the building to repurpose many of the structure’s materials.

— Anita Snow/AP

Not Quite Dead Yet

Holly Jackson

After the shattering conclusion of “Not Quite Dead Yet,” author Jackson addresses her readers this way: “... and breathe. Sorry. I know that was intense.”

This is the first adult suspense novel by Jackson, the author of popular young-adult fiction including “A Good Girl’s Guide to Murder,” and it is emotionally wrenching from start to finish.

The unforgettable protagonist is Jet Mason, a 27-year-old woman still living with her parents in Woodstock, Vt. She’s can’t seem to get her life started — has never finished anything including law school. “I’ll do it later,” she always says. “I have plenty of time.” But she doesn’t.

Returning home after a Halloween party, she is attacked, her skull smashed with a hammer. When she wakes up in the hospital, she receives shocking news. Her surgeon was unable to remove a tiny bone fragment resting against a major blood vessel in her brain. If it remains there, it will cause a fatal brain aneurysm within seven days. If they try to remove it, they must act now, but she has only a remote chance of survival.

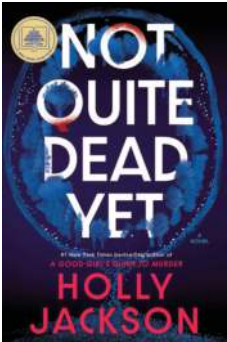
Her doctor tells her that she must choose.

Jet decides against surgery. With just seven days left, she is determined to finally finish something. Before she dies, she will solve her own murder.

Leaving home to escape her mother’s constant pleas to have the surgery, Jet teams up with Billy, a sweet young man who has loved her since they were children, and together they set out to unmask the killer.

Jet never imagined that she had enemies, but before long the police have arrested JJ, a former boyfriend. All but sure the police got it wrong, Jet persists, uncovering a series of family and small-town secrets that reveal an abundance of motives and suspects.

The result is a fast-paced, intensely suspenseful race against time populated by an impressive collection of well-drawn characters. And in the end, the young woman who never finished anything emerges as a model of intelligence, courage, resilience and decency.



— Bruce DeSilva/AP

WEEKEND: MUSIC



Top: Music historian and journalist Brian Mansfield holds an original pressing of the “Buckingham Nicks” vinyl record at his home in Nashville, Tenn., on July 23.

Inset: The side 2 label of the album.

KRISTIN M. HALL/AP

Duo album gets its due

‘Buckingham Nicks’ was a record store holy grail for decades. It’s finally getting reissued

BY BEN FINLEY AND KRISTIN M. HALL
Associated Press

They were in love once. Four years before Fleetwood Mac’s “Rumours” became one of the best breakup records of the 1970s — and, many might say, all time — Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham were relative unknowns, a young couple putting out their own album, posing nude on the cover like a

Laurel Canyon version of Adam and Eve.

Released as “Buckingham Nicks,” the 1973 album has for decades maintained somewhat of a holy grail status in the dusty bins of record stores, selling for \$20 to \$90 depending on its condition. Now, in addition to new vinyl, it will be available on streaming and CD for the first time when it’s reissued Sept. 19 on Rhino, Warner Music Group announced July 23.

“It’s one of those records that everybody has heard

of but not that many people have actually heard,” said Brian Mansfield, a music historian, journalist and record collector in Nashville, Tenn.

“Especially before everything got put onto YouTube, very few people had heard it because it had never been on CD. But it had this iconic cover that everybody recognized.”

SEE DUO ON PAGE 29

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

Duo: Album bombed upon 1973 release

FROM PAGE 28

“Buckingham Nicks” featured the duo’s iconic harmonies and Buckingham’s distinct guitar sound, which later fueled Fleetwood Mac’s ability to sell tens of millions of records. But “Buckingham Nicks” bombed upon release and Polydor dropped them from the label, prompting Nicks’ return to waitressing and Buckingham to briefly tour with Don Everly.

The rest of the story is enshrined in lore: Drummer Mick Fleetwood heard “Frozen Love” from the album when he visited the studio where it was recorded, Sound City. After guitarist Bob Welch left the band, Fleetwood invited Buckingham to Fleetwood Mac, with Buckingham insisting Nicks join too. The band also included the late Christine McVie on keyboards and John McVie on bass.

Generations of avid Fleetwood Mac fans have tattooed their lyrics or analyzed them at a forensic level, enshrining the tumultuous relationship between Buckingham and Nicks in pop culture. The upcoming reissue of “Buckingham Nicks” is a reminder of the couple’s musical beginnings and the special status their only joint album has held among fans and record collectors.

“As soon as we put it out, it goes that day,” said Michael Bell, owner of Hunky Dory Records, which has locations in Raleigh, Durham and Cary, N.C.

‘Joni Mitchell fronting the Eagles’

Nicks and Buckingham met during high school at a local church in Northern California where young musicians gathered on a school night, according to Stephen Davis’ “Gold Dust Woman: The Biography of Stevie Nicks.”

Buckingham played the Mamas & the Papas’ “California Dreamin’” on piano, prompting Nicks to chime in, singing Michelle Phillips’ high harmony.

“They glanced at each other; she noticed his eyes, cold blue like lake ice,” Davis wrote. “They sang the whole song while the room went quiet, everyone mesmerized.”

After high school, Nicks joined the band Buckingham was in, Fritz, which would open for Creedence Clearwater Revival, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix. They eventually split off as a duo, started dating and moved to Los Angeles.

Nicks said she loved Buckingham before he was a millionaire,



KRISTIN M. HALL/AP

Music historian and journalist Brian Mansfield, who recently found a copy of “Buckingham Nicks” at a garage sale, has no idea why the album hasn’t been reissued before now given the demand.

according to Davis’ book, and “washed his jeans and embroidered stupid moons and stars on the bottom of them.”

The first track on “Buckingham Nicks,” “Crying in the Night,” has “a sense of Joni Mitchell fronting the Eagles,” Davis wrote. “Frozen Love” closed out side two, with “layers of strings and synthesizers and a major Lindsey Buckingham rock guitar symphony.”

“No one seemed to like the record,” Davis wrote. “Polydor executives hadn’t even wanted to release it.”

A review that ran in The Pittsburgh Press said Nicks and Buckingham produced “a pleasant, albeit a whiny vocal blend on some pretty fair songs.”

“And if you don’t like the record,” the review concluded, “you might like the costumes they’re wearing on the cover — a couple of those oh-so-chic birthday suits.”

Interest in the record only grew following the new Fleetwood Mac lineup. That incarnation’s first record in 1975, “Fleetwood Mac,” contained the songs “Landslide,” “Rhiannon” and “Monday Morning.”

“Rumours” came two years later.

Record store rarity

Bob Fuchs, retail manager of record store Electric Fetus in Minneapolis, said the shop gets in about two to four of the original vinyl a year. Those go on its collectible wall that showcases hard-to-find titles. Depending on its condition, the album sells for between \$40 to \$90, he said.

“You put it up on a Saturday morning and it’s gone by Saturday at noon. So it lasts about two hours,” he said.

Fuchs never bought the album himself because, “every time I came in, it was \$60 or \$80. ... So I’ll probably end up picking up a reissue.”

Across the river at the St. Paul, Minn., location of Cheapo Discs,

though, worker Geoff Good said people rarely came in looking for the original. He does expect the reissue to juice sales. He has the original, which he bought in 1974 or 1975, in his own collection.

“The songwriting is really good, the harmonies are good, Lindsey Buckingham is an amazing guitar player,” he said.

Mansfield, the Nashville historian, randomly found a copy two weeks ago in a neighborhood garage sale, just days prior to hints that a reissue was coming.

He has no idea why “Buckingham Nicks” hasn’t been reissued more considering the steady demand. For him, it’s a good album but not one that reached the heights of what was to come. “It’s definitely not there yet,” he said. “I don’t know that there’s anything on this album that would have made a Fleetwood album.”

The romantic relationship between Buckingham and Nicks would end around the making of “Rumours.” Nicks and Buckingham would shoot eye daggers at each other onstage in packed stadiums, while Buckingham would roll his eyes during Nicks’ MusiCares speech in 2018, according to the Los Angeles Times. Buckingham would eventually be kicked off the band’s tour in 2018, prompting a lawsuit that was later settled.

But last month, Buckingham and Nicks seemed to be operating in perfect symmetry — at least on Instagram. Each posted half a line from “Frozen Love,” — with Nicks writing “And if you go forward...” and Buckingham responding, “I’ll meet you there.” On July 16, they shared the same video of a billboard being put up to advertise the reissue of “Buckingham Nicks.”

They may have made the album more than 50 years ago, Buckingham said in announcing its reissue, “but it stands up in a way you hope it would, by these two kids who were pretty young to be doing that work.”

Elton John

Live From the Rainbow Theatre with Ray Cooper (Mercury)

On Elton John’s new concert album, the songs steal the show.

Deep cuts from John’s rich catalog are given the spotlight on “Live From the Rainbow Theatre with Ray Cooper.” The 13-song set was culled from a six-show residency in London in May 1977, with John at the piano and his longtime percussionist, Cooper, joining him for the second half of the show.

The album initially received a limited release on vinyl for Record Store Day and is now available digitally and on CD for the first time.

While John, of course, performed his biggest hits during the residency, the album wisely focuses on often overlooked material, pointing to the astounding quantity of quality songs John produced early in his career.

That includes “Cage the Songbird,” a lilting tribute to Édith Piaf from the underrated 1976 LP “Blue Moves.”

Another highlight from that album is the cabaret jazz ballad “Idol,” which shows John could have thrived in a lounge had the rock star thing not worked out.

The piano man’s playing here is closer to Liberace than Little Richard, because ballads predominate, and Cooper’s role is tastefully restrained. Even when the tempo gets brisk on “Better Off Dead,” the song is delightfully hammy operetta rather than rock ‘n’ roll.

“Live From the Rainbow Theatre” underscores John’s lyricist Bernie Taupin’s vital role in their songwriting partnership. The album opens with “The Greatest Discovery,” a pairing of sweet sentiment and a charming melody, while “Ticking” is a gripping tale set in Queens that anticipated America’s epidemic of gun violence.

John introduces “Ticking” and two other songs by noting he doesn’t perform them often, or often enough. Banter elsewhere is mostly brief and stiff, but his droll wit surfaces in one exchange with a spectator.

“How are you tonight? Nice handkerchief,” John says, before telling the rest of the audience, “He hasn’t washed that in three years.”

The 1977 performances took place as punk and disco were knocking John off his pop pedestal and ending his years-long reign as a consistent hitmaker. “Live From the Rainbow Theatre” offers a reminder that not all of his superb songs were singles.

— Steven Wine
Associated Press



Michael Clifford

SIDEQUEST (Hopeless Records)

Over a decade ago, the Australian pop-punk boy band 5 Seconds of Summer emerged as charming genre-revivalists. Their 2014 career-making single “She Looks So Perfect” was all palm-muted power chords and gang vocals, a familiar sound for fans of the Warped Tour scene. In the years since, the quartet evolved into an arena pop-rock act, taking turns at releasing solo material. Next up is lead guitarist Michael Clifford, the edgiest of the bunch, with a spirited debut album that feels truer to the band’s earliest material than their most recent.

But he doesn’t just rehash the past. Rather, the colorful-haired musician adds his own twist on “SIDEQUEST.”

Ten energetic, introspective tracks form a tight album that explores self-doubt, fame and romance. The songs are pop-punk in spirit but deviate from the formula with a stadium-sized production: experimental electronics, big synths and versatile vocals.

And it is an emotional journey. The lovesick opener “Kill Me for Always,” featuring Porter Robinson, sets the stage, with its scintillating mix of electronica and bass.

The sound of “Cool,” released as a single, acts as the strongest evidence of Clifford’s former boy band roots. It’s self-deprecating and self-aware. “Confidence doesn’t come so easily / When you’re the guy who caught fire with the colored hair / From the band with the song about underwear,” Clifford sings, referencing the chorus of “She Looks So Perfect.”

In an album stuffed with energetic songs juxtaposed with existential lyrics, the best track arrives at a midpoint high in “Enough.” “At 3 a.m. awake again / I can see all of the damage you’ve done,” Clifford sings through an evocative rasp. “With friends like you who needs a loaded gun.”

“SIDEQUEST” sets out to prove it’s both a culmination of the last decade of Clifford’s life and a deviation from it, as he steps into his own sound. Thankfully, for fans, it succeeds.

“All I’ve done / Is it ever gonna be enough?” Clifford sings, growing hoarser, in “Enough.” Then the question changes: “Am I ever gonna be enough?” On “SIDEQUEST,” the answer, quite simply, is yes.

— Rachel S. Hunt
Associated Press



WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Roku/AP photos

Tracee Ellis Ross in a scene from the three-part Roku original docuseries “Solo Traveling with Tracee Ellis Ross.” In the series, a camera crew follows the actor on her solo travels to Marrakech, Morocco; Cancún, Mexico; and Marbella, Spain.

Making ‘Solo Traveling’ more comfortable

‘Black-ish’ actor Ross, star of new Roku docuseries, offers her top tips

By ALICIA RANCILIO
Associated Press

Tracee Ellis Ross, the actor best known for her roles in shows like “black-ish” and “Girlfriends,” happens to be single and without children, but she doesn’t let either hold her back from experiencing a fulfilling, joyful life, especially when it comes to vacations.

When friends and family can’t join her, or if she just wants to decompress, Ross will jet-set by herself and have a fabulous time doing it. She says she takes at least one solo trip a year by herself, and if vacationing with others, might stay a little longer to include alone time.

In a new three-part docuseries streaming on Roku Channel, “Solo Traveling with Tracee Ellis Ross,” a camera crew follows the actor on solo trips to Marrakech, Morocco; Cancún, Mexico; and Marbella, Spain.

Ross says her first solo travel experience was in her 20s, and she’s learned over the years that even the uncomfortable moments of being by herself have given her coping skills for everyday life.

“What I find is that I gain a muscle strength around being uncomfortable,” she told The Associated Press in a recent interview. “It’s like when a baseball player swings with two bats, and then by the time they get to the one bat, it feels lighter. When you get back into your regular day life and uncomfortable things happen, I have muscle memory to know how to walk through this on my own.”

Ross shared tips for traveling as a party of one:

Ease into it

“Start by going to dinner by yourself,” Ross says. “And if you feel nervous about doing that, go to dinner by yourself on a Tuesday night at 6 o’clock and work your way up



Ross, shown in a scene from her new series, says she can take lessons learned while traveling — how to handle being uncomfortable, for instance — back to regular life.

to going to dinner by yourself on a Saturday or Friday night at 8 o’clock.

“Walk up to the host and say, ‘I need a table for one.’ See what it feels like to be in that experience because it will only be that times 10 on vacation.”

She suggests bringing something like a book or an iPad when you’re eating alone, and also for when you’re spending time in your room.

That way, “if you end up having to stay in your hotel room the whole time and only going to a restaurant in your hotel or somewhere just around the corner, you don’t feel like you have ruined your trip and done something stupid.”

Know why you’re taking the trip

Ross says there are different reasons for solo trips and you need to understand what yours is.

“Are you going on a solo trip because you’re single and want to meet other people? Are you going on a solo trip because your life is overwhelmed with your children, your dogs, your cats, your job, your life, your survival, all the things, and you’re going to have a moment to sort of

recharge and get away by yourself? Or are you going for an adventure?” she asks.

Once you’ve decided what kind of experience you’re seeking, you can make plans to achieve it realistically and safely.

Safety, safety, safety

No matter how independent you are, certain kinds of travelers are more vulnerable than others, especially if they’re by themselves, Ross notes. Take safety seriously when mapping out your itinerary.

“You might not feel vulnerable, but depending on where you’re going, it might leave you vulnerable. That’s a very specific distinction and something to plan for in order to have a good experience,” she says.

“If you are a Black woman, if you are a woman, if you are LGBTQIA, if you are nonbinary, if you are differently abled — that might leave you vulnerable in a foreign place. Make sure you do the best diligence you can to make sure you’re going somewhere that can create a sense of safety for you with whatever those vulnerabilities,” she says.

Ross prefers to travel to destinations with resorts where she can feel safe on her own.

“It allows me to not have to adventure off property,” she said. And she returns to places where she’s found comfort “all the time.”

Research many other parts of the trip too

Ross says she’s a planner by nature and does a lot of research online. She also asks around for info about best navigating the experience from beginning to end.

She likes to know whether particular airports are busy and what to expect when she gets there. If it’s a big airport and there’s a lot of walking, she makes sure she has comfortable shoes. She also likes to pack a personal fan.

Knowing what to expect won’t just lead to feeling prepared and comfortable in general, but also feeling prepared and comfortable by yourself.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

Twenty years after Hurricane Katrina

Netflix's 'Race Against Time' focuses on the victims of the storm's fury in New Orleans

BY ROBERT LLOYD

Los Angeles Times

It's been 20 years since Hurricane Katrina reshaped the city of New Orleans.

Spike Lee examined the disaster with two big HBO documentaries, the 2006 "When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts," just a year after the event, and a 2010 sequel, "If God Is Willing and Da Creek Don't Rise," and he is involved with a new work for Netflix, "Katrina: Come Hell and High Water," arriving in late August. Other nonfiction films have been made on the subject over the years, including "Trouble the Water," winner of the grand jury prize at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival; Nova's "Hurricane Katrina: The Storm That Drowned a City"; "Hurricane Katrina: Through the Eyes of the Children"; and "Dark Water Rising: Survival Stories of Hurricane Katrina Animal Rescues," while the storm also framed the excellent 2022 hospital-set docudrama "Five Days at Memorial." As a personified disaster with a human name and a week-long arc, it remains famous, or infamous, and indelible.

In the gripping five-part "Hurricane Katrina: Race Against Time," premiering over subsequent nights that began July 27 on National Geographic (all episodes stream on Hulu and Disney+ on Mondays), director Traci A. Curry ("Attica") necessarily repeats many of Lee's incidents and themes. But she finds her own way through mountains of material in the series that is at once highly compelling and difficult to watch — though I suggest you do.

Though there are many paths to take through the story, they lead to the same conclusions. Curry speaks with survivors, activists, scientists, officials and journalists, some of whom also appear in archival footage, but her eye is mainly on the victims: the people who lost their homes, people who lost their people, those unable to evacuate, for lack of money or transportation or the need to care for family members.

If the storm itself was an assault on the city, most everything else — the broken levees, the flooded streets, the slow government response, the misinformation, the exaggerations and the mischaracterizations taken as fact — constituted an attack on the poor, which in New Orleans meant mostly Black people.

"The way they depicted Black folks," says one survivor regarding sensational media coverage of the aftermath, when troops with automatic weapons patrolled the streets as if in a war zone, "it's like they didn't see us as regular people, law abiding, churchgoing, hardworking people."

Effective both as an informational piece and a real-life drama, "Race Against Time" puts you deep into the story, unfolding as the week did. First, the calm before the storm — "One of the most peaceful scariest things that a person can



TNS photos

Hurricane Katrina survivors wait outside the Superdome and Convention Center in New Orleans Sept. 2, 2005. The New Orleans sports arena housed hurricane refugees for five days in lawless squalor.

experience," says one 8th Ward resident — as Katrina gained power over the Gulf of Mexico. Then the storm, which ripped off part of the Superdome roof, where citizens had been instructed to shelter, and plunged the city into darkness; but when that passed, it looked briefly like the apocalypse missed them.

Then the levees, never well designed, were breached in multiple locations and 80% of the city, which sits in a bowl between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, found itself under water.

Homes down: "You're looking at your life, the life that your parents provided for you, your belongings being ruined, your mother's furniture that she prided is being thrown against a wall." Residents are driven onto roofs, hoping for rescue, while dead bodies float in the water.

This is also in many ways the most heartening part of the series, as neighbors help neighbors and firefighters and police set about rescuing as many as possible, going house to house in boats running on gasoline siphoned from cars and trucks. A Coast Guardsman tears up at the memory of carrying a baby in her bare arms as they were winched into a helicopter.

And then we descend into a catalog of institutional failures — of governance, of communication, of commitment, of nerve, of common sense, of service, of the media — which, camped in the unflooded French Quarter or watching from afar, repeated rumors as fact, helping create a climate of fear. (Bill O'Reilly, then still sitting pretty at Fox News, suggests that looters should be shot dead.)



Stranded victims of the hurricane wait outside the Superdome to be evacuated Sept. 2, 2005. Troops poured into the city that day to help with security and delivery of supplies.

More people escaping the flood arrive at the Superdome, where the bathrooms and the air conditioning don't work, there's no food or water and people suffer in the August heat, waiting for days to be evacuated. Instead, the National Guard comes to town along with federal troops, which residents of this city know is not necessarily a good thing.

Many speakers here make a deep impression — community organizer Malik Rahim, sitting on his porch, speaking straight to the camera, with his long white hair and beard, is almost a guiding spirit — but the star of this show is the eminent-sensible Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honoré (now retired), a Louisiana Creole who was finally brought in to coordinate operations

between FEMA and the military. We see him walking through the streets, ordering soldiers to "put your guns on your back; don't be pointing guns at nobody."

Honoré, who is free with his opinions here, had respect for the victims — "When you're poor in America, you're not free, and when you're poor, you learn to have patience" — but none for foolish officialdom, the main fool being FEMA director Michael Brown, mismanaging from Baton Rouge, who would resign soon after the hurricane.

When buses finally did arrive, passengers were driven away, and some later flown off, with no announcement of where they were headed; family members might be scattered around the country. Many would never return to New Orleans, and some who did no longer recognized the place they left, not only because of the damage, but because of the new development.

The arrival of this and the upcoming Lee documentary is dictated by the calendar, but the timing is also fortuitous, given where we are now. Floods and fires, storms and cyclones are growing more frequent and intense, even as Washington strips money from the very agencies designed to predict and mitigate them or aid in recovery.

And yet Curry manages to end her series on an optimistic note. Residents of the Lower 9th Ward have returned drying wetlands to life, creating a community park that will help control the next storm surge. No matter how far-reaching the disaster, life goes on afterward.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Becoming a parent? Prepare to be injured

‘Raising a child is just like being an athlete,’ with plenty of tales of orthopedic woe

BY DAN DIAMOND
The Washington Post

Before you become a parent, you receive lots of well-meaning warnings. “You’ll be tired” or “you’ll be busy.”

The warning they forget: You’ll get injured.

Every parent I know has a tale of orthopedic woe — of tweaking her back when trying to carry toddlers or breaking his foot while rushing to a crying child in the night or simply straining their hands from nonstop scrubbing of baby bottles.

New mothers are particularly vulnerable because of the physical trauma associated with pregnancy and the caregiving burdens that tend to fall on them, including breastfeeding. But even minor nagging pains can bloom into yearslong problems, in part because new parents rarely prioritize rehab and recovery, and they are often underslept and overstressed.

“People care more about their children than they do themselves,” Kola Jegede, a New York University spinal surgeon, told me. He and other experts urged prompt treatment for injuries, as well as “prehab,” such as core-muscle training before a child arrives. “This is a sport that you have to be prepared for,” Jegede said.

I want to be clear: I love being a parent, and I adore my two children. But I don’t love limping around after them. So as I scoured for research and recommendations this summer — frustrated as my paternity leave has spiraled into trips to the local orthopedist, as one small injury inevitably led to another — I was surprised by the lack of media coverage or even data on a problem that every parent seems to face.

Some of that is because it’s an unmonitored issue. There are medical-billing codes intended to capture all manner of injuries — even including being struck by a turtle or a spacecraft — which allow health insurers and researchers to tally cases. But there’s nothing that measures if you’ve been “struck by a toddler” or otherwise injured from child care, and several health-data experts told me they didn’t know how to begin capturing it.

“It’s one of those patient populations that’s overlooked because everybody has kids,” Jordan Miller, a physical therapist at Athletico, a nationwide chain of rehab centers.

Caregiving contortions

In theory, parenting could make for a well-designed workout because a child’s weight and activity levels steadily increase. A 6-pound newborn becomes a 12-pound baby and later a 24-pound toddler. Pushing an infant in a stroller gives way to chasing that child at a park.

In reality, as children treat their parents’ bodies like jungle gyms — yanking on arms, jumping on backs — injuries quickly follow, often concentrated in a few places. Friends have told me about developing tennis or golf elbow, not because



iStock

“In my practice, back, neck, shoulder, wrist are the most common” injuries among parents of young children, said Cody Mansfield, a physical therapist at Ohio State University. His colleagues prepared videos demonstrating how to lift a child and pick up a car seat with proper form, tasks often associated with repetitive strain injuries.

they played the sports, but because of carrying their children or scrubbing bottles and breast-pump parts.

“In my practice, back, neck, shoulder, wrist are the most common” injuries among parents of young children, said Cody Mansfield, a physical therapist at Ohio State University.

Some of these strains may be exacerbated by societal pressures and demographic changes. Parents spend much more time with their children today than decades ago, increasing the number of interactions. Moms and dads can be juggling always-on jobs that leave them worn down and vulnerable, even as community and family supports have weakened.

First-time parents also are now older — the average age of a first-time mom has risen to nearly 30 years old, compared with about 21 years old in 1970, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. And a 33-year-old parent of a

toddler may have more orthopedic problems than her 24-year-old counterpart.

It’s “the same way any athlete is going to have maybe a higher risk of injury, the older they get. Or just aches and pains, the older they get,” Miller said. “Because really, raising a child is just like being an athlete.”

Some parental injuries have obvious clinical causes. Miller, who leads Athletico’s program to help new parents recover their physical health, pointed to diastasis recti, a frequent condition when a pregnant person’s abdominal muscles separate. The condition is linked to months of problems after giving birth, including a mom’s inability to safely lift her child and urinary incontinence.

“Those kinds of things are going to keep our new parent from being able to take care of their kids and take care of their own bodies,” Miller said.

Seemingly no parent is protected. As I

canvassed for comment, I heard tales of injured athletic royalty — an NFL player who needed rehab after his toddler jumped on him — and everyday accidents, perhaps none flukier than a story shared by my colleague Meghan Hoyer.

“I dislocated my pinky toe last year hitting it against a doorframe while playing ‘indoor snowball fight’ with my kid, needed surgery to repair this, post-surgery traveled against my doctor’s orders and ended up snagged in a hotel carpet caught by my surgical pin, and that required maintenance to break down the door and cut me out of the floor. ... And then I ended up on house rest for nearly two months and literally am still seeing my [orthopedist] for this 9 months later,” Meghan wrote in a message, later sharing a photo of being cut out of the hotel carpet.

Training tips for parents

Torn muscles and broken bones remain a small price to pay for the joy of having children. But that doesn’t mean we have to grit our teeth and bear it.

Here’s the advice I’ve gleaned after two kids, multiple doctor appointments and numerous interviews.

■ **Build core strength whenever you can.** Experts recommended a variety of exercises — weight training, yoga, Pilates, swimming, biking — to strengthen necks, backs, shoulders and trunks.

■ **Focus on proper form.** Mansfield’s colleagues at Ohio State prepared videos that demonstrate how to lift a child, pick up a car seat and complete other tasks that are often associated with repetitive strain injuries.

■ **Don’t bend if you don’t need to.** Jegede, a parent of two young children, said he developed a technique to combat his own back pain: sitting down on the ground next to a stroller to strap his children in, rather than attempting to bend over from a standing position.

■ **Do a bag check.** Jegede also recommended a “minimalist” approach to how parents pack and what they carry.

■ **Slow down.** Experts agreed that many injuries come from rushing — of trying to carry too many things between a house and a car, for instance. Better to make two trips now than one trip now and a trip to the doctor’s office later.

■ **Clear a path.** This was a hard-won lesson after I broke my toe in the middle of the night. Every evening, we now spend a few minutes picking up toys and clearing the floor. It’s helped reduce painful missteps when rushing through a dark house to attend to a crying child.

■ **Break up workouts — or rethink them.** Those 90-minute gym trips may be on hold, but a 20-minute workout at your house doesn’t need to be. Several experts recommended seeking out other ways to stay active, such as converting drinks with a friend into a brisk walk instead.

■ **Use it before you lose it.** Forgoing your fitness for the sake of your young children may seem noble, but it can complicate later efforts to do activities with them.

■ **Don’t tough it out.** If you’re hurting, find time to get a checkup. Without treatment, “it gets worse before it gets better,” Miller said.

WEEKEND: FAMILY



KATIE ADKINS/AP

Bruce Perry, 17, demonstrates last month how to create an artificial intelligence companion on Character AI.

‘AI for everything’

Teens say they are turning to bots for friendship as well as advice

By JOCELYN GECKER
Associated Press

No question is too small when Kayla Chege, a high school student in Kansas, is using artificial intelligence. The 15-year-old asks ChatGPT for guidance on back-to-school shopping, makeup colors and low-calorie choices at Smoothie King, plus ideas for her Sweet 16 and her younger sister’s birthday party. The sophomore honors student makes a point of not having chatbots do her homework and tries to limit her interactions to mundane questions. But in interviews with The Associated Press and a new study, teenagers say they are increasingly interacting with AI as if it were capable of providing advice and friendship. “Everyone uses AI for everything now. It’s really taking over,” said Chege, who wonders how AI tools will affect her generation. “I think kids use AI to get out of thinking.” For the past couple of years, concerns about cheating at school have dominated the conversation around kids and AI. But artificial intelligence is playing a much larger role in many of their lives.

‘AI never gets bored with you’

More than 70% of teens have used AI companions and half use them regularly, according to a new study from Common Sense Media, a group that studies and advocates for using screens and digital media sensibly. The study defines AI companions as platforms designed to serve as “digital friends,” like Character AI or Replika, which can be customized with specific traits or personalities and can offer emotional support, companionship and conversations that can feel human-like. But popular sites like ChatGPT and Claude, which mainly answer questions, are being used in the same way, the researchers say. As the technology rapidly gets more sophisticated, teenagers and experts worry about AI’s potential to redefine human relationships and exacerbate crises of loneliness and youth mental health. “AI is always available. It never gets bored with you. It’s never judgmental,” says Ganesh Nair, an 18-year-old in Arkansas. “When you’re talking to AI, you are always right. You’re always interesting. You are always emotionally justified.” All that used to be appealing, but as Nair heads to

college this fall, he wants to step back from using AI. Nair got spooked after a high school friend who relied on an “AI companion” for heart-to-heart conversations with his girlfriend later had the chatbot write the breakup text ending his two-year relationship. “That felt a little bit dystopian, that a computer generated the end to a real relationship,” said Nair. “It’s almost like we are allowing computers to replace our relationships with people.”

Teens’ AI use stuns researchers

In the Common Sense Media survey, 31% of teens said their conversations with AI companions were “as satisfying or more satisfying” than talking with real friends. Even though half of teens said they distrust AI’s advice, 33% had discussed serious or important issues with AI instead of real people. Those findings are worrisome, says Michael Robb, the study’s lead author and head researcher at Common Sense, and should send a warning to parents, teachers and policymakers. The now-booming and largely unregulated AI industry is becoming as integrated with adolescence as smartphones and social media are. “It’s eye-opening,” said Robb. “When we set out to do this survey, we had no understanding of how many kids are actually using AI companions.” The study polled more than 1,000 teens nationwide in April and May. Adolescence is a critical time for developing identity, social skills and independence, Robb said, and AI companions should complement — not replace — real-world interactions. “If teens are developing social skills on AI platforms where they are constantly being validated, not being challenged, not learning to read social cues or understand somebody else’s perspective, they are not going to be adequately prepared in the real world,” he said. Common Sense Media recommends that minors not use AI companions. “Social media complemented the need people have to be seen, to be known, to meet new people,” Nair said. “I think AI complements another need that runs a lot deeper — our need for attachment and our need to feel emotions. It feeds off of that.” “It’s the new addiction,” Nair added. “That’s how I see it.”

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Nuggets of truth about planning family meals

Much to my husband’s chagrin, I don’t cook much now that we’re empty nesters. Nowadays, my idea of dinner is popcorn paired with pino noir. I don’t feel guilty, because I spent two decades as a short-order cook without pay. “What’s for dinner, Mom?” my famished kids would inquire every afternoon. Despite the made-to-order lunches I packed them — which featured deli meat sandwiches, fresh fruit, a salty snack, a sweet treat and a fun drink — my three children dragged themselves out of school, arms outstretched, as if they’d crossed the Sahara Desert and barely survived. My husband wasn’t so dramatic, but make no mistake — when he wasn’t deployed or TDY, he came home hungry. Or rather, hangry. A huge cheese and cracker fan, my husband could down an entire wheel of brie if I didn’t get a meal on the table fast enough. In those days, I felt under pressure to produce a meal for our family of five. Not just any meal, mind you — a meal that everyone actually liked. A nearly impossible task. When the kids were little, our kitchen was packed with items intended to please people whose age was in single digits. We had yogurt in tubes, cheese in sticks and chicken shaped like fingers, nuggets and dinosaurs. There were muffins molded into bars, potatoes ground down to tots and bagels reduced to bites. Pigs rolled into blankets, and pizzas stuffed into rolls. Just about anything wrapped into a pastry pocket — ham and cheese, eggs and bacon, apples and cinnamon. Juice came in boxes and bags. Fruit pulverized into leathery edible skin. PB&Js de-crusted, boxed and frozen. Everything was compacted into individual servings requiring no utensils, no preparation and no taste buds. We mustn’t forget the main staple — like tortillas of Mexican cuisine, rice of Asian food and potatoes in Ireland, the children of this nation would starve without the sustenance of boxed macaroni and cheese. Those tiny tubular noodles required no chewing, and the powdered, imitation cheese sauce kept rug rats coming back for more. When our three children became teens, I mistakenly assumed their palates had matured. I began cooking traditional meals, meals that required utensils and didn’t necessarily involve dipping. “Ew, a mushroom!” my youngest daughter exclaimed. “Do I have to eat all of this?” my middle child inquired. “The sauce touched my broccoli,” my son complained. Thankfully, my husband ate anything, especially if I melted cheese on it. “Mmmm, dee-lish,” he’d say, mouth full. By the end of each frustrating week, I’d fire up the oven, grab a bag of buns and a bottle of ketchup and throw frozen chicken patties on a cookie sheet. “Yay! We’re having chicken patties tonight!” my kids exclaimed with joy. “Chicken patties?” my husband would protest. “Don’t worry,” I’d say to allay his fears, “we have plenty of Monterey Jack.” Now that our children are adults, they finally appreciate my culinary efforts, but during those dicey teen years, I longed for a revival of TV dinners to solve my problems. Got a hankering for beef, son? Well, here’s a Salisbury steak dinner just for you! You girls prefer poultry? Why not try this delicious fried chicken dinner? And I’ve got something special for my “hungry man,” too! From freezer to TV tray table in under 30 minutes and no dishes to wash. Knowing my opinionated lot, they’d still complain. I eventually learned to let go of my dream of cooking the perfect family dinner, and simply put something on the table. The rest was just gravy, and apparently our kids never liked that anyway.

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

TEN POINT SPREAD
BY MICHAEL SCHLOSSBERG / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Michael Schlossberg is an internist in Bend, Ore. This is his 15th crossword for The Times. His favorite part of puzzlemaking is creating a theme. “Sometimes I have a great phrase in my head that I know would make a terrific puzzle if I could only figure out the right crossword angle.” His wife knows that he’s mentally working on a theme when he seems distracted and is staring off into space. — W.S.

- ACROSS
- 1 The small screen’s second Golden Age, informally

7 Completed in two under par

13 Indian tourist mecca

16 Scoundrel

19 One working near home

20 Flourish

21 “Wait for it . . . finished!”

23 Cardinal point?

25 Philanthropist ____ French Gates

26 Ignore the alarm, say

27 Tipping point?

29 Few and far between

32 Terse affirmation

33 Scottish regional accents

34 [My word!]

38 Father of Transcendentalism

41 What makes a twister twistier?

43 “Absolutamente!”

44 Really really

46 ____ Miss

47 Cry near a scarecrow

49 Airport sign carrier

51 Fine point?

53 Plot point?

56 Swear

57 Tree ring, to a dendro-chronologist

59 Potpourri feature

60 What the Mosquirix vaccine targets

63 “Take a hike, pal!”

65 Supergiant, e.g.

69 Match point?

72 Flash point?

75 Comic who said “One thing about being narrow-minded — you’ll never be lonely”

76 Singsong refrain syllables

78 Total

79 Mary Westmacott, for Agatha Christie

81 Bring up the rear?

84 Galoots

85 Style point?

89 Low point?

93 Sawbones, in brief

94 Alternative to Yahoo Mail

95 It’s just a guess: Abbr.

96 More cunning

97 Japanese pitcher nicknamed “The Tornado”

98 Frodo’s sidekick

101 Gym

104 Stately trees

105 Barn-raising participants, maybe

107 ____ Paulo

109 Lessens

111 Sticking point?

115 Smooths, as the way

120 Home to Uganda’s presidential palace

121 Brownie point?

124 Biting

125 Flagship Honda model

126 Lover of Bassanio, in Shakespeare

127 Like hemoglobin

128 Still

129 Wise king in the “Iliad” and “Odyssey”

130 They’re not good looks

DOWN

1 Kisser

2 Jannings who won the first Best Actor Oscar

3 Sunday school recess?

4 Chinese symbol of hope and prosperity

5 Beater of pocket rockets, in Texas hold ‘em

6 “The Floating City”

7 “You get the picture”

8 Sound while sticking out one’s tongue

9 Greek sisters of myth

10 Pop star Dua ____

11 Beforetimes?

12 Second-most-populous city in the world (after Tokyo)

13 “Let’s do this!”

14 Much-desired blood type, for short

15 Fly by the seat of one’s pants

16 Repentant

17 Author of “The Princess and the Pea” and “The Ugly Duckling”

18 Letter opener

22 Derelict

24 Charm

28 Nutrient inits.

30 Race with an anchor

31 Brunch station offering

34 Astronaut Grissom

35 Finsteraarhorn, e.g.

36 Furtiveness

37 Triumph

39 Common lampshade shade

40 Scottish negative

42 Muslim leader

45 Festoon

48 “Star Trek II: The ____ of Khan”

50 Epic time

52 Stick on a tree

54 Joie de vivre

55 More than wanna

58 Biblical shepherd

60 Many residents, for short

61 Org. with a “Topsy Tow” service

62 Up

64 Lhasa ____

65 It’s literally “inflated” in the kitchen

66 Mast attachment above a gaff

67 QB stat: Abbr.

68 Fraternity letter

70 Plans for the future, in brief?

71 Actress Smith of Fox’s “Empire”

73 Funk

74 Annual celebrations, informally

77 Enough

79 “The Golden Bachelor” network

80 Without

82 Newbery-winning author Scott ____

83 Twangy

85 Cousin of a man crush

86 Took in

87 Cock

88 Alley ____

90 “The plan has been approved!”

91 Kind of cycle at night

92 Partner, with “the”

93 Hot, hot, hot

99 Facet

100 Petting zoo noise

102 Suburban setting?

103 IHOP selections

106 Woodworking or bird-watching

108 Heart, e.g.

110 Place atop

112 New York theater award first given in 1956

113 One of the 10 plagues of Egypt

114 Dungeons & Dragons baddies

116 One of 24 in Yankee Stadium

117 Quench

118 Gulf bigwig

119 Some cruise ship amenities

122 Ticketmaster spec

123 Navy submarine head: Abbr.
-
- GUNSTON STREET
-
- “Gunston Street” is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.
- RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE
-
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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Experts: We may need to use AI to fight AI

National security comes under threat as creating deepfakes gets easier

By DAVID KLEPPER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The phone rings. It's the secretary of state calling. Or is it?

For Washington insiders, seeing and hearing is no longer believing, thanks to a spate of recent incidents involving deepfakes impersonating top officials in President Donald Trump's administration.

Digital fakes are coming for corporate America, too, as criminal gangs and hackers associated with adversaries, including North Korea, use synthetic video and audio to impersonate CEOs and low-level job candidates to gain access to critical systems or business secrets.

Thanks to advances in artificial intelligence, creating realistic deepfakes is easier than ever, causing security problems for governments, businesses and private individuals and making trust the most valuable currency of the digital age.

Responding to the challenge will require laws, better digital literacy and technical solutions that fight AI with more AI.

"As humans, we are remarkably susceptible to deception," said Vijay Balasubramanian, CEO and founder of the tech firm Pindrop Security. But he believes solutions to the challenge of deepfakes may be within reach: "We are going to fight back."

■ **AI deepfakes become a national security threat.**

This summer, someone used AI to create a deepfake of Secretary of State Marco Rubio in an attempt to reach out to foreign ministers, a U.S. senator and a governor over text, voice mail and the Signal messaging app.

In May, someone impersonated Trump's chief of staff, Susie

Wiles.

Another phony Rubio had popped up in a deepfake earlier this year, saying he wanted to cut off Ukraine's access to Elon Musk's Starlink internet service. Ukraine's government later rebutted the false claim.

The national security implications are huge: People who think they're chatting with Rubio or Wiles, for instance, might discuss sensitive information about diplomatic negotiations or military strategy.

"You're either trying to extract sensitive secrets or competitive information or you're going after access, to an email server or other sensitive network," Kinny Chan, CEO of the cybersecurity firm QiD, said of the possible motivations.

Synthetic media can also aim to alter behavior. Last year, Democratic voters in New Hampshire received a robocall urging them not to vote in the state's upcoming primary. The voice on the call sounded suspiciously like then-President Joe Biden but was actually created using AI.

Their ability to deceive makes AI deepfakes a potent weapon for foreign actors. Both Russia and China have used disinformation and propaganda directed at Americans as a way of undermining trust in democratic alliances and institutions.

Steven Kramer, the political consultant who admitted sending the fake Biden robocalls, said he wanted to send a message of the dangers deepfakes pose to the American political system. Kramer was acquitted last month of charges of voter suppression and impersonating a candidate.

"I did what I did for \$500," Kramer said. "Can you imagine what would happen if the Chinese



MARK SCHIEFELBEIN, POOL/AP

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, seen here in February, has been the subject of multiple deepfake incidents as it gets easier to create realistic content.

government decided to do this?"

■ **Scammers target the financial industry with deepfakes.**

The greater availability and sophistication of the programs mean deepfakes are increasingly used for corporate espionage and garden variety fraud.

"The financial industry is right in the crosshairs," said Jennifer Ewbank, a former deputy director of the CIA who worked on cybersecurity and digital threats. "Even individuals who know each other have been convinced to transfer vast sums of money."

In the context of corporate espionage, they can be used to impersonate CEOs asking employees to hand over passwords or routing numbers.

Deepfakes can also allow scammers to apply for jobs — and even do them — under an assumed or fake identity. For some, this is a way to access sensitive networks,

to steal secrets or to install ransomware.

Others just want the work and may be working a few similar jobs at different companies at the same time.

Authorities in the U.S. have said that thousands of North Koreans with information technology skills have been dispatched to live abroad, using stolen identities to obtain jobs at tech firms in the U.S. and elsewhere. The workers get access to company networks as well as a paycheck. In some cases, the workers install ransomware that can be later used to extort even more money.

The schemes have generated billions of dollars for the North Korean government.

Within three years, as many as 1 in 4 job applications is expected to be fake, according to research from Adaptive Security, a cybersecurity company.

"We've entered an era where anyone with a laptop and access to an open-source model can convincingly impersonate a real person," said Brian Long, Adaptive's CEO. "It's no longer about hacking systems — it's about hacking trust."

■ **Experts deploy AI to fight back against AI.**

Researchers, public policy experts and technology companies are now investigating the best ways of addressing the economic, political and social challenges posed by deepfakes.

New regulations could require tech companies to do more to identify, label and potentially remove deepfakes on their platforms. Lawmakers could also impose greater penalties on those who use digital technology to deceive others — if they can be caught.

Greater investments in digital literacy could also boost people's immunity to online deception by teaching them ways to spot fake media and avoid falling prey to scammers.

The best tool for catching AI may be another AI program, one trained to sniff out the tiny flaws in deepfakes that would go unnoticed by a person.

Systems like Pindrop's analyze millions of datapoints in any person's speech to quickly identify irregularities. The system can be used during job interviews or other video conferences to detect if the person is using voice cloning software, for instance.

Similar programs may one day be commonplace, running in the background as people chat with colleagues and loved ones online. Someday, deepfakes may go the way of email spam, a technological challenge that once threatened to upend the usefulness of email, said Balasubramanian, Pindrop's CEO.

"You can take the defeatist view and say we're going to be subservient to disinformation," he said. "But that's not going to happen."

Submersible finds sea creatures thriving in deepest parts of ocean

Associated Press

NEW YORK — An underwater voyage has revealed a network of creatures thriving at the bottom of deep-sea ocean trenches.

In these extreme environments, the crushing pressure, scant food and lack of sunlight can make it hard to survive. Scientists know that tiny microbes prosper there, but less is known about evidence of larger marine life.

Researchers traveling along the Kuril—Kamchatka and Aleutian trenches in the northwest Pacific Ocean used a submersible to find tubeworms and mollusks flourishing at over 31,000 feet deep. The

deepest part of the ocean goes down to about 36,000 feet.

Scientists had surveyed this area before and had hints that larger creatures might live at such depths.

The new discovery confirms those suspicions and shows just how extensive the communities are, said Julie Huber, a deep sea microbiologist with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

"Look how many there are, look how deep they are," said Huber, who was not involved with the research. "They don't all look the same and they're in a place that we haven't had good access to

before."

The findings were published Wednesday in the journal Nature.

In the absence of light to make their own food, many trench-dwellers, big and small, survive on key elements like carbon that trickle down from higher in the ocean.

Scientists think microbes in this new network may instead be capitalizing on carbon that's accumulated in the trench over time, processing it to create chemicals that seep through cracks in the ocean floor.

The tubeworms and mollusks may survive by eating those tiny

creatures or living with them and snacking on the products of their labor, scientists said.

With this discovery, future studies will focus on how these deep-sea creatures adapted to survive in such extreme conditions and how exactly they harness chemical reactions for food, study authors Mengran Du with the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Vladimir Mordukhovich with the Russian Academy of Sciences said in a statement.

Their existence challenges "long-standing assumptions about life's potential at extreme depths," the authors said.



INSTITUTE OF DEEP-SEA SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING, CHINESE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES/AP

Tubeworms in an ocean trench.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

City warns hikers after 2 bear attacks in a week

AK ANCHORAGE — Authorities are warning hikers to steer clear of streams and rivers where salmon are running and to take precautions after bears mauled hikers on two different occasions within a week in Anchorage.

Both unidentified hikers survived the attacks in separate parts of the municipality of Anchorage, a sprawling urban-wildlife interface that spreads across 1,961 square miles, an area slightly larger than the state of Rhode Island.

Anchorage is home to about 290,000 people, or about 40% of the state’s population, and all kinds of wildlife, including an estimated 350 black bears, 65 brown bears and 1,600 moose.

“Every year we recommend that folks avoid salmon-bearing streams because that concentrates both species of bears,” said Cory Stantorf, the Anchorage area biologist for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. “That’s a major food source for these animals as they get ready for that hibernation season coming up.”

Both bear maulings in the last week occurred near populated areas, including the second attack Saturday near the suburb of Eagle River.

Suit against fossil fuel firms leads legal fight

HI HONOLULU — Honolulu is not alone in its effort to sue fossil fuel companies to hold them accountable for climate change harms, but the city’s lawsuit is further along than similar litigation across the country.

Judge Lisa Cataldo didn’t immediately rule Tuesday after hearing arguments on a defense motion seeking to dismiss the lawsuit because the state’s two-year statute of limitations expired. Honolulu’s claims are based on allegations that have been publicly known for decades, attorneys for the oil companies argue.

In 2020, Hawaii’s capital city sued major oil companies, including Exxon Mobil, Shell and Chevron, arguing they knew for nearly half a century that fossil fuel products create greenhouse gas pollution that warms the planet and changes the climate. The companies have also profited from the consumption of oil, coal and natural gas while deceiving the public about the role of their products in causing a global climate crisis, the lawsuit says.

Honolulu’s lawsuit blames the companies for the sea level rise around the island of Oahu’s world-famous coastline. It also warns that hurricanes, heat waves and other extreme weather will be more frequent, along with ocean warming that will reduce fish stocks and kill coral reefs that tourists love to snorkel over.

While the case is still far from trial, it is much closer than some 30



CHARLES KRUPA/AP

2 wheels, 4 paws

A dog sits over the handlebars of a motorcycle while taking a ride on Tuesday, in New Castle, N.H.

similar lawsuits nationwide brought by other states, cities and counties. The outcome could indicate how other cases play out and how oil companies will defend themselves in court.

Ex-officer who thought he saw gun is sentenced

OH COLUMBUS — A former Ohio police officer convicted of murder in the shooting of Andre Hill, a Black man who was holding a cellphone and keys when he was killed, was given a mandatory sentence Monday of 15 years to life.

Former Columbus officer Adam Coy shot Hill four times in a garage in December 2020, as the country reckoned with a series of police killings of Black men, women and children. He told jurors that he feared for his life because he thought Hill was holding a silver revolver.

Coy, who is being treated for Hodgkin lymphoma, told the court Monday he plans to appeal the verdict.

“I feel my actions were justified,” Coy said. “I reacted the same way I had in hundreds of training scenarios. I drew and fired my weapon to stop a threat, protect myself and my partner.”

Prosecutors said Hill followed police commands and was never a threat to Coy.

Police body camera footage showed Hill, 47, coming out of the garage of a friend’s house holding up a cellphone in his left hand, his

right hand not visible, seconds before he was fatally shot.

Coy was fired afterward. Weeks later, the mayor forced out the police chief after a series of fatal police shootings of Black people.

Judge blocks law limiting ownership of pharmacies

AR LITTLE ROCK — A federal judge temporarily blocked on Monday Arkansas’ first-in-the-nation law that would have prohibited pharmacy benefit managers from owning pharmacies in the state.

U.S. District Judge Brian Miller issued a preliminary injunction against the law restricting pharmacy benefit managers, who run prescription drug coverage for big clients that include health insurers and employers that provide coverage.

Republican Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed the restriction into law earlier this year, and it was set to take effect Aug. 5. CVS and Express Scripts had sued the state over the law.

The law, Miller wrote, “appears to overtly discriminate against plaintiffs as out of state companies and the state has failed to show that it has no other means to advance its interests.”

Republican Attorney General Tim Griffin said he respected the court’s decision and planned to appeal.

Supporters of the Arkansas law have said it’s needed because phar-

macy benefit managers are forcing independent pharmacies, especially those in rural areas, to close. CVS and Express Scripts in their lawsuits said the restriction would have devastating effects on consumers if it was allowed to take effect.

Reports of explicit images on official’s TV probed

OK OKLAHOMACITY — An Oklahoma sheriff’s office Monday opened an investigation over reports that images of nude women were displayed on the state’s school superintendent office television during a meeting with education board members.

Top Oklahoma lawmakers have sought answers over accounts given by two State Board of Education members, who said they saw the images during a meeting in Ryan Walters’ office on July 24. Another board member, Chris Van Denhende, said he was not in a position to see the television but that “something was on the screen that should not have been,” based on Walters’ reaction.

The investigation is in the early stages, said Aaron Brillbeck, a spokesperson for the Oklahoma County Sheriff’s Office. He said it was not clear if any laws were violated.

Education board members Becky Carson and Ryan Deatherage told the online news outlet Non-Doc that they saw a video featuring naked women in Walters’ office

during the executive session. They said that they were the only people seated in places where they could see the screen.

Carson said that when she asked Walters to turn it off he expressed confusion before doing so.

Walters said in a post on the social platform X on Sunday that “any suggestion that a device of mine was used to stream inappropriate content on the television set is categorically false.”

Tupac slaying suspect seeks charges dismissal

CA LOS ANGELES — The man charged with ordering the 1996 killing of rap icon Tupac Shakur in Las Vegas is asking the Nevada Supreme Court to dismiss his murder charges.

Duane “Keffe D” Davis filed an appeal with the court Tuesday after a lower court judge upheld his charges.

Davis, the only man ever to be charged in Shakur’s killing, was arrested in September 2023. Other conspirators in the drive-by shooting have since died. The 62-year-old has admitted in interviews and in his 2019 tell-all memoir, “Compton Street Legend,” that he provided the gun used in the shooting.

His attorney, Carl Arnold, said Davis’ constitutional rights were being violated.

“Mr. Davis cooperated with law enforcement over the course of more than a decade, relying on repeated assurances that his statements would not be used against him — yet those very statements now form the core of the State’s case,” Arnold said in a statement.

Waymo plans to dispatch robotaxis in Dallas in ’26

TX DALLAS — Robotaxi pioneer Waymo has added Dallas to its expanding list of cities where people will be able to request a driverless ride beginning sometime next year in attempt to further distance itself from rivals still scrambling to catch up in the autonomous race.

Dallas will become the second major Texas city where Waymo’s robotaxis, following the company’s move into Austin earlier this year as part of a partnership with ride-hailing leader Uber.

Unlike the Austin driverless rides that must be ordered through Uber’s app, Waymo will deploy its Dallas robotaxis through its own service and team up with the Avis Budget Group to manage its fleet there. Waymo hasn’t set an exact date in 2026 for when its robotaxis will begin cruising through Dallas, which joins Washington and Miami as cities where the company plans to expand next year.

Waymo’s robotaxis have already provided more than 250,000 trips in Austin and several other major U.S. cities, including Phoenix, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Atlanta.



130 YEARS STRONG

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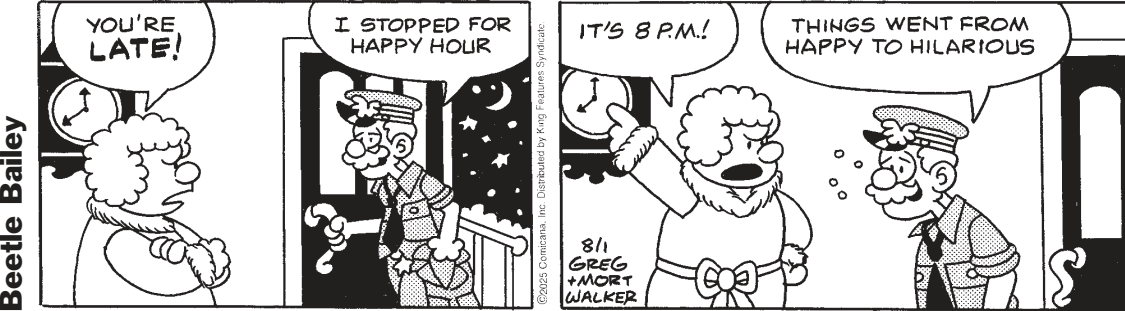
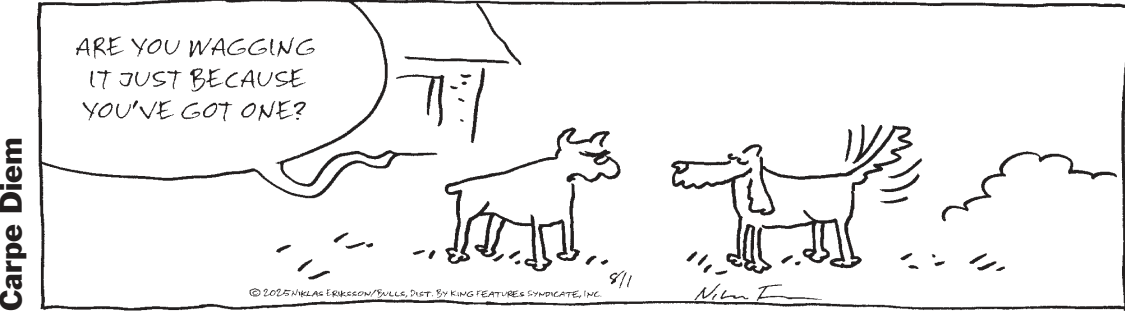
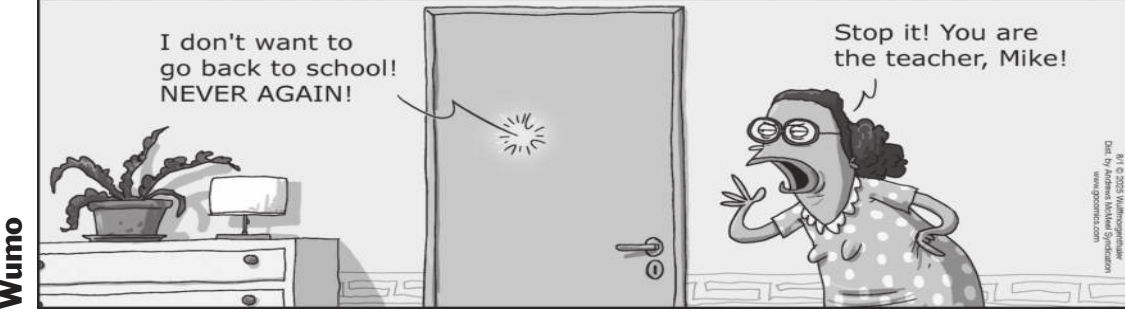
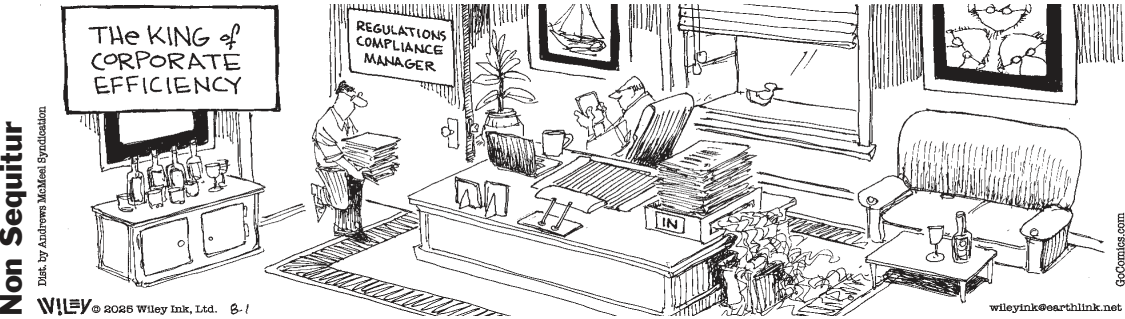
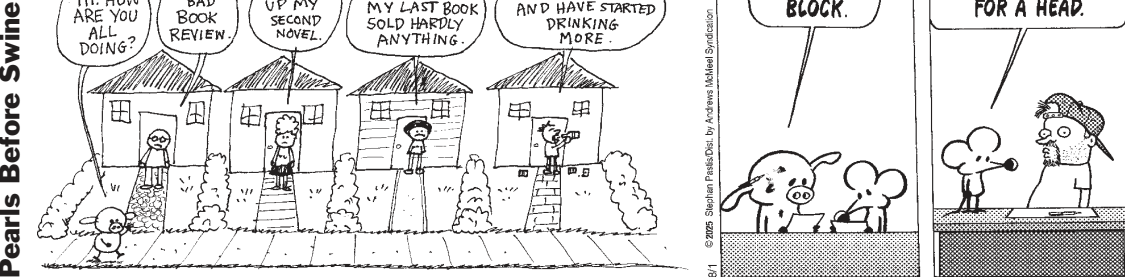
IN VALUE FOR THE
MILITARY COMMUNITY
IN THE LAST 10 YEARS



Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
18							19	20				
			21				22			23	24	25
26	27	28				29				30		
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34				35				36				
37			38				39					
			40				41			42	43	44
45	46	47				48	49					
50						51				52		
53						54				55		

- ACROSS
- 1 Bio stat
4 Basra resident
8 Pacific nation
12 ICU pros
13 Apportion
14 Laundry unit
15 Model Naomi
17 — Domini
18 Braces (oneself)
19 Chou En- —
21 Golf peg
22 Jordan's neighbor
26 Goofed
29 "Whatever"
30 French vineyard
31 Heath
32 Greyhound vehicle
33 Lure
34 Actress Hagen
35 Marry
36 Pizza serving
37 Write sloppily
39 "Rugrats" dad
40 He gives a hoot
41 Nobel-winning Mother
45 Slightly open
48 Blue-flowered herb
50 Dryer fuzz
51 "Ars Amatoria" poet
52 High tennis shot
53 Pool site, for short
- DOWN
- 54 Gladys Knight's backup
55 Govt. lender
26 Flightless birds
27 Campus mil. group
28 Crowd noise
29 Wet dirt
32 Hotel staffer
33 Book jacket write-up
35 URL part
36 Spirited horses
38 Main artery
39 Vegas area
42 "Electric" creatures
43 Neatnik's bane
44 Jessica of "Dark Angel"
45 Olympic gymnast Raisman
46 Comic Carrey
47 Mandela's org.
49 Bird (Pref.)

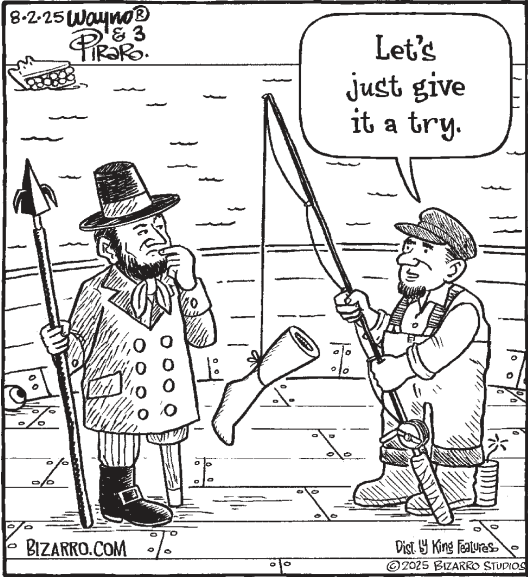
Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

8-1 CRYPTOQUIP

WG HRI ZIBKE FM DBZBUWHWT
LYEDWGQ WGUITHU, HRI
UYNLITHU DZFNBNKX TZX "WH'U
B MKIB TFYGHZX!"
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WEIRD INFIRMITY
THAT HAS BECOME INEXPLICABLY LINKED
TO ONE PART OF NEW YORK CITY: BRONXITIS.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals J

Bizarro



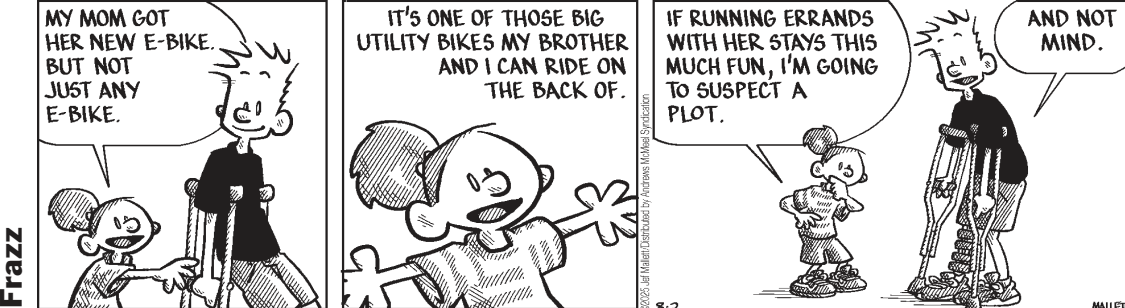
Loose Parts



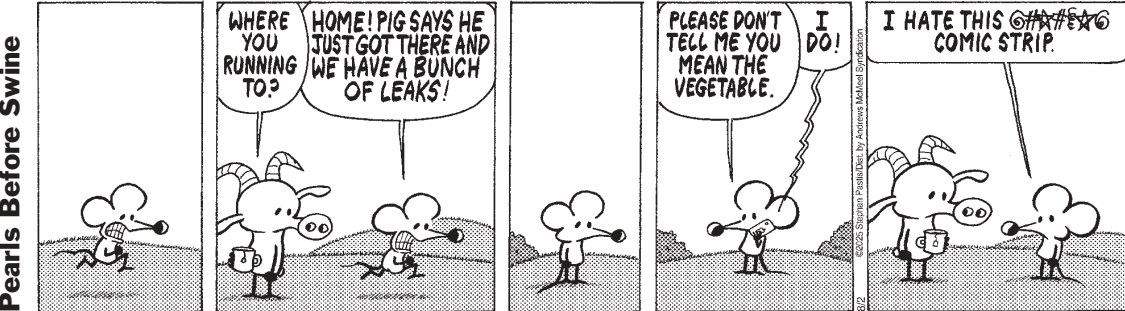
Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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12							13					
14							15					
16					17	18				19		
			20	21			22	23				
24	25	26		27			28		29		30	31
32			33				34					
35					36					37		
		38		39		40			41			
42	43			44	45				46	47	48	49
50			51				52	53				
54							55					
56							57					

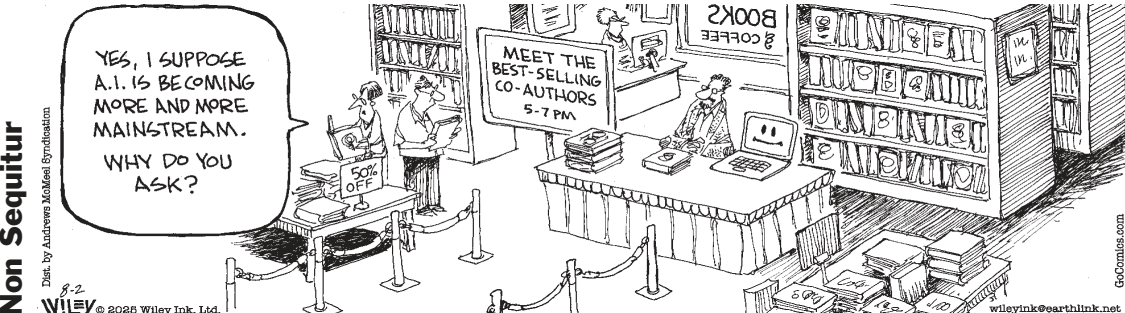
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



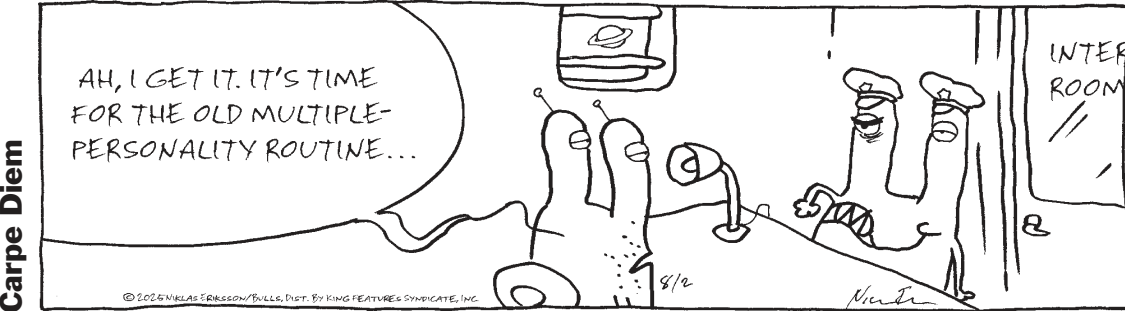
Non Sequitur



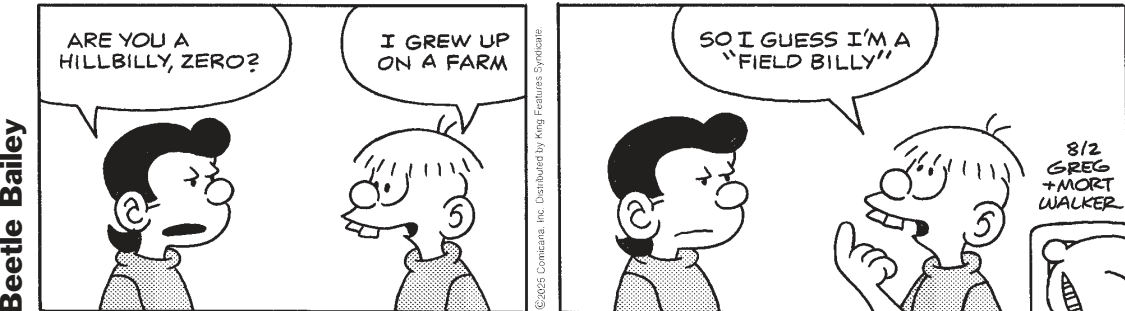
Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



ACROSS

- 1 Actor — Baron Cohen
- 6 Saws
- 12 Respectful bow
- 13 Comedian George
- 14 Leaf vein
- 15 Turkey's capital
- 16 Duel prompter
- 17 Baseball stats abbr.
- 20 Langston Hughes poem
- 22 U.K. recording label
- 24 Use henna
- 27 "— She Lovely"
- 29 Speck
- 32 Group that supports a larger organization
- 35 Crunchy lunches
- 36 Novelist Seton
- 37 Devoured
- 38 Paris street
- 40 Microwaves
- 42 Pub pint
- 44 Free stuff
- 46 Words said with a sigh
- 50 Soup choice
- 52 Sea off Greece
- 54 Tarzan types
- 55 Clarifying words
- 56 Stop
- 57 Peculiar

DOWN

- 1 Go yachting
- 2 Actor Alan
- 3 Wrist bones
- 4 Japanese "yes"
- 5 Food of the gods
- 6 Antioxidant berry
- 7 Can-can, in Cannes
- 8 Deluge refuge
- 9 Sword lilies
- 10 Ireland
- 11 Crisp cookie
- 12 Texting format, for short
- 18 Sudden windfall
- 21 Up to
- 23 Karaoke prop, for short
- 24 Apply cream

- 25 Actor Brynner
- 26 Highs and lows
- 28 Make another attempt
- 30 Boy king
- 31 Actor Vigoda
- 33 Terre Haute sch.
- 34 Chatter
- 39 — Park, Colorado
- 41 Bob of "Full House"
- 42 Slightly
- 43 Unhurried gait
- 45 Refuses to
- 47 Miami team
- 48 Oodles
- 49 Tolkien creature
- 51 "— Blue?"
- 53 Outback bird

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

8-2

CRYPTOQUIP

YN EDB LTG NJYIKGR XLTX
EDB JIVBUTJUE AIKX DBX XD
ITX AYXL, ADBUG XLIE ZI
EDBJ XTRXI ZBGR?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IN THE REALM OF PARASITIC JUMPING INSECTS, THE SUBJECTS PROBABLY CRY "IT'S A FLEA COUNTRY!"
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals W



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OPINION

ICE enforcement practices remind me of Iran

BY ARA TOROSIAN
Los Angeles Times
 As a Christian who smuggled Bibles into my home country of Iran, I became a target of the country’s Islamist regime, which imprisons and sometimes kills those who invite Muslims to convert. After living under house arrest for two years, I fled as a refugee and was ultimately resettled to the United States.

I experienced true religious freedom for the first time in my life in this country, of which I am now a proud, grateful citizen — and that’s why I am shocked by the ways that my government is now treating my Iranian congregants, who have been detained by masked officers, separated from their families and threatened with deportation to a country that would kill them for their Christian faith. What I have witnessed gives me flashbacks to Tehran, and I believe that America must be better.

Two families who are a part of the Farsi-speaking evangelical congregation that I pastor in Los Angeles have been detained in recent weeks. First, a couple and their 3-year-old daughter, who are in the process of seeking asylum because they fear persecution if they were returned to Iran. They were detained at their court hearing in downtown Los Angeles on June 23. The entire family is now being held in South Texas.

The next day, I received a call from a woman in my church. Like me, she had been forced to flee Iran for Turkey when her involvement in Iran’s underground churches was exposed.

When the woman and her husband found themselves in a desperate situation in Turkey last year, they were not offered the option to fly to the U.S. as resettled refugees as I had been in 2010. Instead, they flew to South America, made a treacherous journey north and waited in Mexico for an appointment they reserved on a U.S. govern-

ment app, CBP One, to be able to explain their situation to officers of the U.S. government.

Once lawfully allowed in with provisional humanitarian status, they found our church — where they could be baptized and publicly profess their faith in Jesus — and legal help to begin their asylum request. They received their work authorization documents and found jobs. Their first asylum hearing in immigration court was scheduled for this September.

When President Donald Trump returned to office, however, his administration both suspended all refugee resettlement and canceled humanitarian parole for those who had been allowed to enter via the CBP One app. Many parolees received menacing letters instructing them to self-deport or face prosecution, fines or deportation. But these letters also noted that these instructions did not apply to those who had “otherwise obtained a lawful basis to remain,” such as a pending asylum application.

That’s why I was so shocked to receive a call from the woman in my congregation informing me that her husband had been detained by masked immigration officers on the street, just a few blocks from our church. I rushed over and began to film the shocking scene: First he was detained by masked officers, and then she was.

I asked if they had a judicial warrant, but if they did, they would not show me. The woman experienced a panic attack and was taken to a hospital but discharged into ICE custody; she is now hours away in a detention center in California. Her husband is in a detention center in Texas.

It’s not just these two families who are affected. My community of Iranian Christians is terrified of being detained and deported back to Iran, where they fear being killed for their faith. Some have lost jobs because they fear leaving their homes. Others lost jobs because their work authorization,

tied to humanitarian parole, was abruptly terminated.

I believe that America is better than this. This behavior reminds me disturbingly of what I fled in Iran. But I know that most Americans do not support this, nor do most fellow evangelical Christians: Many evangelicals voted for Trump because he pledged to protect persecuted Christians — not to deport them.

While most evangelicals want those convicted of violent crimes detained, one-quarter or less of us say that about other immigrants, and 7 in 10 believe the U.S. has a moral responsibility to receive refugees. I have been overwhelmed by the support of English- and Spanish-speaking sister congregations of our church, by the outreach of Christians from across the country and by a recent biblically rooted statement of many California evangelical leaders.

Now, Congress has passed legislation to exponentially increase the funding for detaining and deporting immigrants. Trump’s administration has been clear that anyone in the country unlawfully — including more than a million who were here lawfully until his administration abruptly canceled their status — is at risk of deportation. According to a recent study by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 80% of those vulnerable to deportation are Christians; some, like those in my church, would likely face death if deported to their home countries.

I hope and pray Trump will reverse course on these policies, going after those who genuinely present a public safety threat but having mercy on others, especially those who fled persecution on account of their faith. And until he does make that policy shift, I plead with Congress to pass real immigration reforms that would halt these horrifying detentions and deportations.

Ara Torosian is a pastor at Cornerstone West Los Angeles.

Immediate expensing: The Trump tax deduction that counts

BY KARL SMITH
Special to The Washington Post
 In unveiling his AI action plan last week, President Donald Trump repeatedly emphasized a key taxation provision in the recently passed One Big Beautiful Bill: immediate expensing of capital investment. This might not be as well known as the bill’s extension of the 2017 tax cuts, but it is at least as significant, because it is essential to ensuring that the United States remains the world leader in artificial intelligence.

The president rightly called the provision “the most important thing in the whole tax cut in terms of pure economics.”

America needs far more investment in AI. Immediate expensing significantly reduces the after-tax cost of such investment, and thus encourages businesses to expand at home.

Here’s how it works. Businesses pay taxes on their profits — that is, money coming in (revenue) minus money going out (expenses). But in the eyes of the IRS, not all expenses are equal.

When a business pays salaries, leases office space or buys internet service, for instance, these costs are expensed from revenue immediately — the year the money is spent. For capital investments in machinery, buildings, computers and the like,

however, the IRS requires companies to expense the cost over several years. Trucking rigs take three years; factory buildings, a full 39.

The new tax and spending bill has changed all this. It allows businesses to expense nearly all investments right away. This gives growing businesses greater cash flow up front, when they need it most. Consider an AI lab investing \$30 billion in new data centers next year. Under the old rules, it would expense roughly \$770 million in the first year, leaving more than \$29 billion remaining as taxable profit. At the current combined tax rate of 27.5%, this increases the lab’s tax bill by \$8 billion.

Does immediate expensing mean the company gets a \$8 billion tax cut? No. It’s only a shift in timing: Rather than spreading out the expense over 39 years, the company expenses the full cost of the data center immediately. This means somewhat higher taxes each year in the future, since no remaining costs are left to expense.

Immediate expensing enables businesses to make larger investments than they otherwise would be able to manage. And it makes those investments more profitable to undertake in the first place.

Remember, without immediate expensing, the company’s tax bill would be \$8

billion higher next year. A rapidly growing company with limited cash on hand would probably have to take out a loan to cover this expense.

In turn, the interest payments each year would eat into the return from the data center. Given current interest rates, the return would be reduced by 20%.

Research by the independent, nonpartisan Tax Foundation has shown that immediate expensing is by far the most effective tax incentive for investment. Each dollar of lost tax revenue generates several dollars of additional investment.

To be sure, the tax legislation was passed with many flaws. For instance, it raises the expense cap on state and local taxes, which is a benefit for high-income taxpayers but is also regressive, rewarding states and municipalities that have sky-high property taxes. And the cuts to clean energy credits are counterproductive at a time when America needs to expand its energy supply.

But the investment provision is so vital as to outweigh such problems. It puts muscle behind the goal of ensuring that the United States is the best place to invent, build and scale AI and related technologies that will define the rest of the century.

Karl Smith is an economist specializing in artificial intelligence.

SCOREBOARD/AUTO RACING

DEALS

Wednesday's transactions

BASEBALL Major League Baseball American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Sent RHP Tyler Wells to Chesapeake (EL) on a rehab assignment. Optioned RHP Brandon Young to Chesapeake.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Recalled LF Will Robertson from Charlotte (IL). Acquired RHP Gage Ziehl from the New York Yankees in exchange for LF Austin Slater. Sent 1B Tim Elko to Charlotte on a rehab assignment.

CLEVELAND GUARDIANS — Reinstated RHP Trevor Stephan from the 60-day IL and optioned him to Columbus (IL).

DETROIT TIGERS — Acquired RHP Rafael Montero from Atlanta for minor league INF Jim Jarvis.

HOUSTON ASTROS — Agreed to terms with 3B Luis Guillorme on a minor league contract.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Released 1B Cavan Biggio.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Designated LHP Jose Quijada for assignment. Sent 2B Christian Moore to Inland Empire (CAL) on a rehab assignment.

MINNESOTA TWINS — Recalled RHP Noah Davis from St. Paul (IL). Optioned RHP Pierson Ohl to St. Paul. Acquired C Eduardo Tait and RHP Mick Abel from Philadelphia in exchange for RHP Jhoan Duran. Sent RHP Connor Gillispie outright to St. Paul.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Transferred RHP Clarke Schmidt from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Added OF Austin Slater to the active roster. Optioned C J.C. Escarra to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (IL).

SEATTLE MARINERS — Recalled INF Tyler Locklear from Tacoma (PCL).. Placed RF Luke Raley on the 10-day IL retroactive to July 27. Reinstated RHP Collin Snider from the 15-day IL and designated for assignment. Activated LHP Caleb Ferguson. Optioned RHP Jackson Kowar to Tacoma.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Optioned LHP Ian Seymour and 3B Tristan Gray to Durham (IL). Recalled RHP Paul Gervase from Durham. Reinstated 2B Brandon Lowe from the 10-day IL. Acquired RHP Brian Van Belle and LHP Adam Serwinowski from Cincinnati in exchange for RHP Zack Littell.

TEXAS RANGERS — Placed RHP Jacob Webb on the 15-day IL retroactive to July 29. Recalled RHP Luis Curvelo from Round Rock (PCL).

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Optioned RHP Lazaro Estrada to Buffalo (IL).

National League
ATLANTA BRAVES — Placed RF Ronald Acuna Jr. on the 10-day IL. Recalled RF Jarred Kelenic from Gwinnett (IL). Desig-

nated RHP Enyel De Los Santos for assignment.

CHICAGO CUBS — Reinstated RHP Porter Hodge from the 15-day IL. Sent RHP Javier Assad to Iowa (IL) on a rehab assignment. Optioned RHP Porter Hodge to Iowa. Designated 3B Vidal Brujan for assignment. Recalled C Moises Ballesteros from Iowa. Acquired RHP Michael Soroka from Washington in exchange for minor league OF Christian Franklin and minor league INF Ronny Cruz.

CINCINNATI REDS — Recalled RHP Luis Mey from Louisville (IL).

COLORADO ROCKIES — Acquired minor league RHP Austin Smith from Atlanta in exchange for RHP Tyler Kinley.

NEW YORK METS — Acquired RHP Ryan Helsley from St. Louis in exchange for minor leaguers SS Jesus Baez and RHPs Nate Dohm and Frank Ellissalt.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Acquired LHP Taylor Rogers, SS Sammy Stafura and cash considerations from Cincinnati in exchange for 3B Ke'Bryan Hayes. Acquired RHP Jeter Martinez from Seattle in exchange for LHP Caleb Ferguson.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Sent LF Lars Nootbaar to Springfield (TL) on a rehab assignment. Placed LHP John King on the 15-day IL. Recalled RHP Gordon Graceffo from Memphis (IL).

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Acquired RHPs Jose Butto, Blade Tidwell and CF Drew Gilbert from the New York Mets in exchange for RHP Tyler Rogers. Designated RHP Sean Hjelle for assignment.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Acquired LHP Jake Eder and 1B Sam Brown from the Los Angeles Angels in exchange for RHP Luis Garcia and LHP Andrew Chafin; Optioned LHP Jake Eder to Rochester (IL). Recalled RHP Zach Brzykcy from Rochester.

BASKETBALL National Basketball Association

BOSTON CELTICS — Signed G Max Shulga to a two-way contract.

SACRAMENTO KINGS — Signed G Daeqwon Plowden to a two-way contract.

FOOTBALL National Football League

ATLANTA FALCONS — Tried out DBs Henry black, Jack Howell and Jordan Whitehead.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Released RB Zack Moss. Activated C Seth McLaughlin from the active/non-football injury list. Activated DE Trey Hendrickson from the did not report list.

CLEVELAND BROWNS — Placed CB Martin Emerson on injured reserve. Waived WR Michael Woods II with an injury designation. Signed C Bucky Williams. Waived G Brady Latham.

DALLAS COWBOYS — Signed CB Christian Matthew. Waived WR Kelvin Harmon.

GREEN BAY PACKERS — Signed LB Jared

Bartlett. Released S Kahzir Brown. Tried out LB Alphonzo Tuputala.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Waived P Eddie Czaplicki. Tried out WRs Kawaan Baker, Kwamie Lassiter and DBs Ajani Carter, Harrison Hand, Kaleb Hayes and Azizi Hearn.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Tried out DBs Wyatt Ekeler, Tre Herndon, Christian Holmes, Myles Jones and Duke Shelley.

MIAMI DOLPHINS — Signed OL Jalen McKenzie. Placed OL Obinna Eze on injured reserve. Tried out Ts Bless Harris and Max Pircher.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Signed S Gervarius Owens. Waived LB Max Tooley.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Signed Tes Tyler Davis, Cole Fotheringham and C Alec Lindstrom. Waived OT Yasir Durant with an injury designation. Waived WR DeMeer Blankumsee and released RB Trayveon Williams. Tried out LB Duane Martin and TE John Samuel Shenker.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Signed DB Jonathan Mendoza.

NEW YORK JETS — Reverted C Gus Hartwig to injured reserve.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Reverted WR Danny Grey to injured reserve.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Reverted WR Montana Lemonius-Craig and LB Jeremiah Moon to injured reserve.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Tried out RBs Ameer Abdullah, Deon Jackson, D'Ernest Johnson, Jeffrey Wilson, WRs Marquez Callaway, Andy Isabella, Cornell Powell and QB Carter Bradley.

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Tried out RBs Micah Bernard, Kylin James, Anthony Tyus, DBs Keydrain Calligan, Braden Price and WR Jordan Taylor.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Tried out RBs Malik Davis, Nay'Quan Wright, Owen Wright, WRs Jacob Harris, Jaden Smith, TE Holden Willis and QB Jordan McCloud.

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Signed OT Lucas Niang. Tried out Gs Malaesala Aumavae-Laulu and Wyatt Davis.

SOCCER Major League Soccer

COLORADO RAPIDS — Loaned F Kimani Stewart-Baynes to Lexington SC of the USL Championship for the remainder of the 2025 season. They retain the right to recall Stewart-Baynes at any time.

HOUSTON DYNAMO FC — Signed D Antonio Carlos to a contract through 2026 on a free transfer from Brazilian powerhouse Fluminense FC.

SAN DIEGO FC — Acquired a 2026 MLS SuperDraft natural third-round selection from FC Dallas in exchange for G Jacob Jackson.

National Women's Soccer League

RACING LOUISVILLE FC — Exercised an option for coach Beverly Yanez for 2026.

NY/NJ GOTHAM FC — Signed D Bruninha to a two-year contract through 2027.

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	17	9	.654	—
Atlanta	16	11	.593	1½
Indiana	15	12	.556	2½
Washington	13	13	.500	4
Chicago	7	19	.269	10
Connecticut	4	21	.160	12½

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	23	5	.821	—
Phoenix	16	10	.615	6
Seattle	16	11	.593	6½
Las Vegas	14	13	.519	8½
Golden State	12	13	.480	9½
Los Angeles	11	15	.423	11
Dallas	8	20	.286	15

Wednesday's games

Indiana 107, Phoenix 101
Minnesota 100, New York 93
Atlanta 88, Dallas 85

Thursday's game

Friday's games

Golden State at Washington
Indiana at Dallas
New York at Connecticut
Phoenix at Atlanta
Los Angeles at Seattle

AP SPORTLIGHT

Aug. 1
1936 — The Berlin Olympics begin.
1945 — New York's Mel Ott hits his 500th home run in a 9-2 victory over the Boston Braves at the Polo Grounds. Only Babe Ruth with 714 and Jimmie Foxx with 527 have more.
1963 — Arthur Ashe becomes first the African American tennis player to be named in the US Davis Cup team.
1972 — Nate Colbert of the San Diego Padres drives in 13 runs in a doubleheader sweep of the Atlanta Braves, 9-0 and 11-7.
1982 — American diver Greg Louganis becomes the first to score 700 (752.67) in 11 dives in winning the three-meter springboard gold at the World Champion-

ships in Guayaquil, Ecuador.
1987 — Mike Tyson wins the undisputed heavyweight championship with a 12-round unanimous decision over IBF champion Tony Tucker in Las Vegas.
1992 — Eric Griffin, a two-time world champion at 106 pounds, loses to Rafael Lozano of Spain under the new electronic scoring system at the Olympics. All five judges credit him with more blows than his opponent as did five jury members used as a backup in case the computer failed.
1994 — Baltimore's Cal Ripken becomes the second major leaguer to play 2,000 straight games when the Orioles beat the Minnesota Twins 1-0.
1996 — Michael Johnson wins Olympic

gold in the 200 meters in a record 19.32 seconds, becoming the first male Olympian to win the 200 and 400 in a single games. Dan O'Brien wins gold in the decathlon, four years after failing to make the U.S. Olympic team.
2002 — In signing star linebacker Ray Lewis to a 5-year contract extension, the Baltimore Ravens give him a \$19 million signing bonus, then the largest in NFL history.
2004 — Karen Stupples wins her first major title with a record-tying 19-under 269 at the Women's British Open. Stupples ties the low score in a major, set by Dottie Pepper at the 1999 Nabisco Dinah Shore.
2010 — Stuart Appleby hits golf's magic number, shooting a 59 to win the Greenbrier Classic. He is the fifth PGA Tour

PRO SOCCER

MLS Western Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego FC	14	7	4	46	48	32
Vancouver	13	5	6	45	42	26
Minn. United	12	5	8	44	42	28
Seattle	10	6	8	38	39	35
Portland	10	7	7	37	33	32
LAFC	10	6	6	36	39	28
Austin FC	9	8	6	33	21	26
Real Salt Lake	9	11	4	31	26	30
Colorado	8	11	6	30	31	39
San Jose	7	10	8	29	47	44
Houston	7	11	6	27	30	39
FC Dallas	6	11	7	25	35	45
Sporting KC	6	12	6	24	36	45
St Louis City	4	14	6	18	24	40
LA Galaxy	3	14	7	16	28	48

Eastern Conference

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	15	5	5	50	43	24
Cincinnati	15	6	4	49	39	31
Nashville	14	6	5	47	42	26
Columbus	12	5	8	44	41	36
Inter Miami CF	12	4	6	42	49	34
Orlando City	11	6	8	41	46	33
Charlotte FC	12	11	2	38	43	39
NYC FC	11	8	5	38	34	29
Chicago	10	9	5	35	45	40
New York	9	10	6	33	39	36
New England	6	11	7	25	31	35
Toronto FC	5	13	6	21	25	32
Atlanta	4	11	9	21	29	45
D.C. United	4	14	7	19	22	49
CF Montréal	4	15	6	18	23	46

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Saturday, Aug. 9
Atlanta at CF Montréal
D.C. United at New England
Columbus at New York City FC
Toronto FC at Philadelphia
Houston at Austin FC
Los Angeles FC at Chicago
Portland at FC Dallas
San Diego FC at Sporting Kansas City
Nashville at St Louis City
Vancouver at San Jose

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Kansas City	11	2	0	33	29	10
Orlando	8	4	1	25	20	10
San Diego	7	3	3	24	25	16
Washington	7	4	2	23	21	19
Portland	6	3	4	22	19	12
Seattle	6	4	3	21	17	13
Louisville	6	5	2	20	19	22
Gotham FC	5	5	3	18	18	13
North Carolina	5	5	3	18	18	20
Bay FC	4	6	3	15	14	17
Angel City	4	6	3	15	20	24
Houston	3	8	2	11	13	22
Chicago	1	9	3	6	10	27
Utah Royals FC	1	10	2	5	11	29

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday's games
Kansas City at Louisville
Gotham FC at Chicago
Angel City at Seattle

Saturday's games
San Diego at North Carolina
Houston at Bay FC

Sunday's games
Portland at Washington
Utah Royals FC at Orlando

Friday, Aug. 8

North Carolina at Houston
Kansas City at Utah Royals FC

Saturday, Aug. 9

Washington at Gotham FC
Louisville at Orlando
Angel City at San Diego

Sunday, Aug. 10
Bay FC at Chicago
Seattle at Portland

Verstappen will return to Red Bull

Associated Press

Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen said he is staying with the Red Bull team next year, ending months of speculation over his future.

“Some people just like to stir the pot, some people just like to create drama. But for me, it’s always been quite clear, and also for next year,” the four-time champion said Thursday ahead of the Hungarian Grand Prix.

“I’m discussing with the team already the plans—the things that we want to change for next year, so that means that I’m also staying with the team for next year.”

Verstappen has a contract with Red Bull through 2028. At recent races he had deflected questions about whether he’d stay with the team next year, and there had been indications that a performance-related clause could allow him to exit the contract early. The details of any clause are not public.

His announcement brings some much-needed stability for Red Bull, less than a month after Christian Horner was removed from his role as Red Bull team principal after 20 years and replaced by Laurent Mekies. Verstappen last week dismissed the suggestion that Horner’s firing would affect his decision on his future.

Red Bull is more dependent on Verstappen than any of F1’s other leading teams are on any one driver. Of the 192 points Red Bull has scored this season, Verstappen contributed 185, while his teammate Yuki Tsunoda hasn’t scored a point in the last six races.

Teams are also well underway with developing cars for the major rule changes coming in 2026, so it would have been especially disruptive if Verstappen left.

Mercedes driver George Russell had said he believed his team was holding talks with Verstappen, and speculation was further fueled by reports that Verstappen and Mercedes boss Toto Wolff’s yachts were off the Italian island of Sardinia at the same time.

“If my boat is next to Toto’s, then the boat is next to Toto’s,” Verstappen said Thursday. “You can have a personal relationship with someone even if you don’t have a working relationship with someone.”

With Verstappen out of the running for a Mercedes seat, it could speed up extensions for Russell and his 18-year-old rookie teammate Kimi Antonelli, who are not contracted beyond 2025.

Russell and Verstappen are the only non-McLaren drivers to win Grand Prix races this season.

Leaders

AMERICAN LEAGUE

BATTING—Judge, New York, .342; Peña, Houston, .322; Aranda, Tampa Bay, .315; Ja.Wilson, Athletics, .312; Kirk, Toronto, .304; M.Garcia, Kansas City, .301; Ramirez, Cleveland, .298; V.Guerrero, Toronto, .295; Bichette, Toronto, .291; Springer, Toronto, .291.

RUNS—Judge, New York, 90; V.Guerrero, Toronto, 71; Raleigh, Seattle, 71; Ju.Rodriguez, Seattle, 70; Buxton, Minnesota, 68; Ramirez, Cleveland, 68; Rooker, Athletics, 68; Neto, Los Angeles, 67; Springer, Toronto, 66; Witt, Kansas City, 66.

RBI—Raleigh, Seattle, 87; Judge, New York, 85; Greene, Detroit, 84; Ward, Los Angeles, 78; Caminero, Tampa Bay, 70; Bichette, Toronto, 67; Story, Boston, 65; Pasquantino, Kansas City, 65; Perez, Kansas City, 64; Torkelson, Detroit, 63.

HITS—Bichette, Toronto, 132; Judge, New York, 129; Witt, Kansas City, 123; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 119; V.Guerrero, Toronto, 119; Ramirez, Cleveland, 118; Rooker, Athletics, 118; Y.Diaz, Tampa Bay, 117; Ja.Duran, Boston, 116; Greene, Detroit, 115; Kwan, Cleveland, 115; Ja.Wilson, Athletics, 115.

DOUBLES—Witt, Kansas City, 36; Bichette, Toronto, 32; Ja.Duran, Boston, 29; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 28; Perez, Kansas City, 27; Barger, Toronto, 25; Henderson, Baltimore, 25; M.Vargas, Chicago, 25; Ward, Los Angeles, 25.

TRIPLES—Ja.Duran, Boston, 12; McKinstry, Detroit, 8; Bellinger, New York, 5; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 5.

HOME RUNS—Raleigh, Seattle, 41; Judge, New York, 37; Caminero, Tampa Bay, 27; Greene, Detroit, 26; Ward, Los Angeles, 25; Kurtz, Athletics, 23; Buxton, Minnesota, 23; Torkelson, Detroit, 23; Rooker, Athletics, 23; Adell, Los Angeles, 21; Ramirez, Cleveland, 21; Arozarena, Seattle, 21.

STOLEN BASES—Caballero, Tampa Bay, 34; Simpson, Tampa Bay, 32; Ramirez, Cleveland, 31; Witt, Kansas City, 28; Robert, Chicago, 27; Neto, Los Angeles, 21; Arozarena, Seattle, 20; Ju.Rodriguez, Seattle, 20; M.Garcia, Kansas City, 19; Ja.Duran, Boston, 18.

PITCHING—Crochet, Boston, 12-4; Fried, New York, 12-4; Valdez, Houston, 11-4; Bassitt, Toronto, 11-5; Rodón, New York, 11-7; Skubal, Detroit, 10-3; deGrom, Texas, 10-3; Ryan, Minnesota, 10-5; Springs, Athletics, 10-7; Eovaldi, Texas, 9-3.

ERA—Skubal, Detroit, 2.09; Crochet, Boston, 2.23; H.Brown, Houston, 2.54; Bubic, Kansas City, 2.55; deGrom, Texas, 2.55; Fried, New York, 2.62; Valdez, Houston, 2.62; Ryan, Minnesota, 2.82; S.Lugo, Kansas City, 3.03; Woo, Seattle, 3.11.

STRIKEOUTS—Crochet, Boston, 175; Skubal, Detroit, 171; H.Brown, Houston, 149; Rodón, New York, 147; Valdez, Houston, 141; Flaherty, Detroit, 137; Ryan, Minnesota, 137; Kikuchi, Los Angeles, 132; deGrom, Texas, 130; Warren, New York, 128.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

BATTING—W.Smith, Los Angeles, .325; Machado, San Diego, .302; Stowers, Miami, .298; F.Freeman, Los Angeles, .297; Arraez, San Diego, .295; Edwards, Miami, .294; Frellick, Milwaukee, .292; Naylor, Seattle, .292; Hoerner, Chicago, .291; T.Turner, Philadelphia, .289.

RUNS—Ohtani, Los Angeles, 100; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 78; Schwarber, Philadelphia, 76; Tatis, San Diego, 76; J.Soto, New York, 75; Tucker, Chicago, 75; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 74; T.Turner, Philadelphia, 72; Chourio, Milwaukee, 71; Carroll, Arizona, 69.

RBI—E.Suárez, Seattle, 87; Schwarber, Philadelphia, 86; Alonso, New York, 81; Suzuki, Chicago, 81; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 78; Perdomo, Arizona, 75; Ohtani, Los Angeles, 73; Wood, Washington, 71; Machado, San Diego, 71; Yelich, Milwaukee, 69; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 69.

HITS—Machado, San Diego, 127; T.Turner, Philadelphia, 127; Arraez, San Diego, 123; Chourio, Milwaukee, 123; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 117; Hoerner, Chicago, 115; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 113; Ohtani, Los Angeles, 113; Donovan, St. Louis, 111; Pages, Los Angeles, 111.

DOUBLES—Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 30; Chourio, Milwaukee, 29; Wills.Contreiras, St. Louis, 28; F.Freeman, Los Angeles, 27; Machado, San Diego, 27; Alonso, New York, 26; Olson, Atlanta, 26.

TRIPLES—Carroll, Arizona, 14; J.Lee, San Francisco, 8; Ohtani, Los Angeles, 7; Harris, Atlanta, 6; Moniak, Colorado, 6; J.Beck, Colorado, 5; 9 tied at 4.

HOME RUNS—Ohtani, Los Angeles, 38; Schwarber, Philadelphia, 37; E.Suárez, Seattle, 36; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 27; Suzuki, Chicago, 26; J.Soto, New York, 25; Wood, Washington, 24; Stowers, Miami, 23.

STOLEN BASES—On.Cruz, Pittsburgh, 34; Crow-Armstrong, Chicago, 29; E.De La Cruz, Cincinnati, 29; V.Scott, St. Louis, 29; Abrams, Washington, 26; T.Turner, Philadelphia, 25; Tucker, Chicago, 23; Tatis, San Diego, 22.

PITCHING—F.Peralta, Milwaukee, 12-5; Boyd, Chicago, 11-4; Priestler, Milwaukee, 10-2; Pivetta, San Diego, 10-3; Gray, St. Louis, 10-5; Pfaadt, Arizona, 10-7; C.Sánchez, Philadelphia, 9-3; Wheeler, Philadelphia, 9-4; Ray, San Francisco, 9-5; Luzardo, Philadelphia, 9-5.

ERA—Skenes, Pittsburgh, 1.83; Boyd, Chicago, 2.47; C.Sánchez, Philadelphia, 2.55; Wheeler, Philadelphia, 2.56; Yamamoto, Los Angeles, 2.63; Pivetta, San Diego, 2.81; Peterson, New York, 2.83; Ray, San Francisco, 2.93.

STRIKEOUTS—Wheeler, Philadelphia, 172; Webb, San Francisco, 155; Cease, San Diego, 153; Gore, Washington, 148; Skenes, Pittsburgh, 146; Luzardo, Philadelphia, 140; C.Sánchez, Philadelphia, 139; F.Peralta, Milwaukee, 134; Ray, San Francisco, 134; Gray, St. Louis, 133; Yamamoto, Los Angeles, 133.



AARON GASH / AP

Milwaukee Brewers' Andrew Vaughn gestures to the crowds after hitting an RBI double during the eighth inning against the Miami Marlins, Sunday, in Milwaukee.

Vaughn hot with Brewers after slumping in Chicago

By STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — When Andrew Vaughn joined the Milwaukee Brewers last month with a chance to rejuvenate a career that had gone sideways, the message he received from his new team was simple.

If you chase, you won't play.

Vaughn took that advice to heart, and suddenly the guy who was batting well below .200 for the first two months of the season is one of baseball's hottest hitters.

His remarkable turnaround produced its biggest highlight yet on Tuesday night as Vaughn hit a grand slam and had a career-high six RBIs in the Brewers' 9-3 victory over the Chicago Cubs. Chicwon 10-3 on Wednesday night to get back to within one game in the NL Central.

"It's a special group here right now," said Vaughn, who went 3-for-4 on Tuesday. "We're playing really good baseball. It's fun to be a part of."

Vaughn, 27, is batting .375 with a .439 on-base percentage, .771 slugging percentage, five homers and 21 RBIs in 16 games since joining the Brewers on July 7. The only player in the major leagues with more RBIs during that stretch is

Philadelphia's Kyle Schwarber.

"It's been awesome," teammate Jackson Chourio said through an interpreter. "The way he's been able to help us out has just been spectacular. It's just been inspiring to watch."

Vaughn's surge is particularly notable because he was struggling as much as just about any hitter in the game for much of the season.

After hitting a combined 72 homers for the Chicago White Sox from 2021-24, Vaughn batted just .189 with a .218 on-base percentage, five homers and 19 RBIs in 48 games before he got sent down to the minors.

Vaughn was still playing with Triple-A Charlotte when the Brewers acquired him in a June 13 trade that sent Aaron Civale to Chicago. The Brewers initially assigned Vaughn to their Triple-A team in Nashville, but they called him up when a thumb sprain sent first baseman Rhys Hoskins to the injured list.

Little did the Brewers know the guy they'd picked up from the minors would get on this kind of heater.

"The kid's been unbelievable," manager Pat Murphy said.

Murphy noted that Vaughn is swinging at the right pitches now.

Vaughn concedes that wasn't the case earlier when he was with the White Sox.

"Early in the year, I was hitting the ball hard, maybe swinging at some bad pitches," Vaughn said. "Just trying to hone in on that, focus on getting my pitch to hit."

Vaughn certainly found the right offering Tuesday when he sent the first pitch he saw from Ryan Pressly over the left-field wall for his second career grand slam. Vaughn also drove in a run with a sacrifice fly in the second and hit an RBI single in the fifth.

He has gone 8 of 15 over his last four games while helping the Brewers overcome their injury issues at first base. Jake Bauers joined Hoskins on the injured list July 20 with a left shoulder issue.

Yet the Brewers have kept on winning with Vaughn taking over at first.

Vaughn's transformation at the plate is similar to the turnaround he's encountered in the standings. After playing for last-place White Sox teams, he savors the opportunity to have a major role on a Brewers squad that has the best record in the majors.

"Winning's fun, and we've been doing it a lot," Vaughn said. "We want to keep it going."

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	64	46	.582	—
New York	59	49	.546	4
Boston	59	51	.536	5
Tampa Bay	54	55	.495	9½
Baltimore	50	59	.459	13½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	64	46	.582	—
Cleveland	54	54	.500	9
Kansas City	54	55	.495	9½
Minnesota	51	57	.472	12
Chicago	40	69	.367	23½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	62	47	.569	—
Seattle	57	52	.523	5
Texas	57	52	.523	5
Los Angeles	53	56	.486	9
Athletics	48	63	.432	15
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	62	47	.569	—
Philadelphia	61	47	.565	½
Miami	52	55	.486	9
Atlanta	45	62	.421	16
Washington	44	64	.407	17½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	64	44	.593	—
Chicago	63	45	.583	1
Cincinnati	57	52	.523	7½
St. Louis	55	55	.500	10
Pittsburgh	47	62	.431	17½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	63	46	.578	—
San Diego	60	49	.550	3
San Francisco	54	55	.495	9
Arizona	51	58	.468	12
Colorado	28	80	.259	34½
Wednesday's games				
Detroit 7, Arizona 2				
Boston 13, Minnesota 1				
Toronto 9, Baltimore 8				
Chicago White Sox 9, Philadelphia 3				
Kansas City 1, Atlanta 0, 10 innings				
Houston 9, Washington 1				
Cleveland 5, Colorado 0				
N.Y. Yankees 5, Tampa Bay 4, 11 innings				
Texas 6, L.A. Angels 3				
Athletics 5, Seattle 4				
Chicago Cubs 10, Milwaukee 3				
Pittsburgh 2, San Francisco 1, 10 innings				
San Diego 5, N.Y. Mets 0				
Cincinnati 5, L.A. Dodgers 2				
Miami 2, St. Louis 0				
Thursday's games				
Tampa Bay at N.Y. Yankees				
Texas at Seattle				
Atlanta at Cincinnati				
Friday's games				
Baltimore (Rogers 4-1) at Chicago Cubs (Horton 4-3)				
Detroit (Flaherty 6-10) at Philadelphia (Suárez 8-4)				
Kansas City (Wacha 4-9) at Toronto (Gausman 7-7)				
Houston (Brown 9-5) at Boston (TBD)				
Minnesota (Ryan 10-5) at Cleveland (Williams 6-4)				
N.Y. Yankees (Rodón 11-7) at Miami (Junk 5-2)				
L.A. Dodgers (Kershaw 4-2) at Tampa Bay (Baz 8-7)				
Chicago White Sox (TBD) at L.A. Angels (Anderson 2-6)				
Arizona (Kelly 9-6) at Athletics (Lopez 3-6)				
Texas (Leiter 7-6) at Seattle (Gilbert 3-4)				
Atlanta (Elder 4-7) at Cincinnati (Singer 8-8)				
Milwaukee (Quintana 7-4) at Washington (Parker 7-10)				
San Francisco (Ray 9-5) at N.Y. Mets (Peterson 7-4)				
Pittsburgh (Heaney 5-9) at Colorado (Senzatela 4-14)				
St. Louis (Liberatore 6-8) at San Diego (Pivetta 10-3)				
Saturday's games				
L.A. Dodgers at Tampa Bay				
Baltimore at Chicago Cubs				
Kansas City at Toronto				
Detroit at Philadelphia				
Houston at Boston				
Minnesota at Cleveland				
N.Y. Yankees at Miami				
Texas at Seattle				
Arizona at Athletics				
Chicago White Sox at L.A. Angels				
Pittsburgh at Colorado				
Milwaukee at Washington				
San Francisco at N.Y. Mets				
Atlanta at Cincinnati				
St. Louis at San Diego				

MLB

TRADE DEADLINE ROUNDUP

Padres acquire Miller, Sears in 6-player move

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The San Diego Padres acquired hard-throwing closer Mason Miller and left-hander JP Sears in a deal with the Athletics on Thursday, adding major upgrades to their pitching staff in a trade deadline blockbuster.

The Padres sent the A’s a package of prospects, including highly-regarded shortstop Leo De Vries and right-handed pitchers Henry Baez, Braden Nett and Eduarniel Nunez.

The 26-year-old Miller — who has a fastball that averages 101 mph — has 20 saves in 23 opportunities, a 3.76 ERA and 59 strikeouts this season. He was an All-Star in 2024 and is under team control through the 2029 season.

The 29-year-old Sears has a 7-9 record and 4.95 ERA this season, striking out 95 batters over 22 starts.

San Diego entered Thursday with a 60-49 record and currently holds the last National League wild card spot.

Bieber to Blue Jays

Pitcher Shane Bieber is headed to the AL East-leading Toronto Blue Jays in a deal with the rebuilding Cleveland Guardians, who also dealt right-hander Paul Sewald to the AL Central-leading Detroit Tigers on Thursday.

Bieber, who is working his way back from April 2024 Tommy John surgery, has made five rehab starts. His most recent outing was Tuesday for Double-A Akron, in

which he allowed one run on three hits and struck out seven in four innings. His next rehab start was scheduled for Sunday.

The Guardians are getting right-hander Khal Stephen from the Blue Jays.

Bieber had spent his entire career in Cleveland, including winning the AL Cy Young Award in 2020. He has a career record of 62-32 with a 3.22 ERA and 958 strikeouts in 136 games, with 134 starts since his debut in 2018.

The 22-year old Stephen has a combined record of 9-1 with a 2.06 ERA in 18 games, with 17 starts, in Toronto’s farm system this season. He was a second-round selection (59th overall) by the Blue Jays in the 2024 amateur draft.

Cleveland traded Sewald to Detroit for a player to be named later.

The Tigers bolstered their bullpen with the 35-year-old Sewald, who is eligible to return from the injured list on Sunday after being shut down with a strained right shoulder.

Sewald is 1-1 with a 4.70 ERA in 18 games this season, averaging more than one strikeout each inning. He is 21-26 with a 4.11 ERA with 86 saves in 377 appearances with the New York Mets, Seattle, Arizona and Cleveland.

Suárez to Mariners

SEATTLE — Slugging third baseman Eugenio Suárez is headed back to the Seattle Mariners in a deal with the Arizona Diamondbacks, a person familiar with the deal said Wednesday night.



JESSIE ALCHEH/AP

The Seattle Mariners acquired Eugenio Suárez, widely seen as the top bat available on the trade market, from the Arizona Diamondbacks.



SARA NEVIS/AP

All-Star closer Mason Miller was traded to the San Diego Padres along with teammate JP Sears.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the deal had not been announced.

Suarez spent the 2022 and 2023 seasons with Mariners, hitting 53 home runs.

The 34-year-old infielder has 36 homers this season and is tied with Seattle’s Cal Raleigh for the major league RBI lead with 87 going into Thursday. He joins a lineup that already ranks fifth in the majors in home runs, thanks in large part to Raleigh — the major league leader with 41 homers.

Suárez is in the final season of an eight-year, \$79 million contract and is eligible for free agency after next season. The Mariners are fighting for a wild-card spot.

Soroka, Kittredge to Cubs

The Chicago Cubs bolstered their pitching staff ahead of Thursday’s trade deadline by adding right-handers Michael Soroka from the Washington Nationals and Andrew Kittredge from the Baltimore Orioles.

Washington received minor league infielder Ronny Cruz and outfielder Christian Franklin in the Soroka trade announced Wednesday night. Baltimore got minor league infielder Wilfri De La Cruz in return for Kittredge in a trade announced Thursday.

An All-Star in 2019 with Atlanta, the 27-year-old Soroka is 3-8 with a 4.87 ERA this season for the Nationals, who signed him to a one-year, \$9 million contract in the off-season. He should provide depth in the Cubs’ rotation behind Matthew Boyd and Shota Imanaga.

The 35-year-old Kittredge was an All-Star in 2021 and has a 3.44 ERA over nine seasons. The re-

liever has a 3.45 ERA in 31 games this season. He signed a \$9 million, one-year deal with Baltimore last offseason that includes a \$9 million club option for 2026 with a \$1 million buyout.

The Cubs trail the division-leading Milwaukee Brewers by one game after beating them 10-3 earlier Wednesday.

Duran to Phillies

CHICAGO — The Philadelphia Phillies think Jhoan Duran has electric stuff. So electric that they were willing to pay a hefty price for the hard-throwing closer.

The Phillies reeled in Duran on Wednesday, trading two of their top prospects to the Minnesota Twins for the veteran right-hander.

“This guy’s one of the best closers in baseball,” manager Rob Thomson said, “and we’ve turned the bullpen into a really good bullpen as far as I’m concerned.”

Duran has 16 saves and a 2.01 ERA in 49 appearances this season, striking out 53 in 49⅓ innings. His 100.2 mph average velocity for his four-seam fastball is second to Miller’s 101.1 mph among those who have thrown 200 or more pitches.

The 27-year-old Duran, who isn’t eligible for free agency until after the 2027 season, is expected to join the team before Friday night’s game against Detroit.

Catcher Eduardo Tait and right-hander Mick Abel were shipped off to Minnesota. Tait, 18, is batting .255 with 11 homers and 57 RBIs across two minor league stops this year, and Abel, 23, made his major league debut in May.

Philadelphia (61-47) is a half-game back of the NL East-leading

New York Mets. The Phillies won the division last year before they were eliminated by the Mets in their NL Division Series.

Rogers, Helsley to Mets

NEW YORK — The busy New York Mets remade the back end of their injury-depleted bullpen with two significant trades Wednesday, acquiring Tyler Rogers from San Francisco and Ryan Helsley from St. Louis.

New York gave up six players for a pair of right-handed relievers who can become free agents in the fall, signaling Mets executives believe this year’s team is at least capable of winning the franchise’s first World Series championship since 1986.

First, New York obtained Rogers from the fading Giants for pitchers José Buttó and Blade Tidwell, along with minor league outfield prospect Drew Gilbert. Tidwell was at Triple-A Syracuse after making two starts and two relief appearances for New York this season.

Hours later, the Mets landed Helsley from the Cardinals for three minor leaguers: infielder Jesus Baez, right-hander Nate Dohm and right-hander Frank Elissalt.

Rogers is 4-3 with a 1.80 ERA this season, using his drastic submarine delivery to great effect. The 34-year-old reliever has struck out 38 batters and walked only four in 50 innings, tying for the major league lead with 53 appearances.

The 31-year-old Helsley, a two-time All-Star, is 3-1 with a 3.00 ERA and 21 saves this season. He has struck out 41 batters and walked 14 in 36 innings.

NFL

Raiders to play to Jeanty's strengths

BY MARK ANDERSON
Associated Press

HENDERSON, Nev. — Ashton Jeanty took a handoff Monday on the first day in full pads and appeared to be stopped for a short gain.

But somehow he wiggled free and avoided tacklers for at least a 10-yard gain.

It was a reminder of what he did at Boise State, using his low center of gravity and strength — he can squat more than 600 pounds — to break tackles on his way to a second-place finish for the Heisman Trophy.

And why the Las Vegas Raiders selected him sixth overall in this year's draft, an unusually high pick for a running back in today's NFL.

But how long can Jeanty hold up with such a physical running style, even with all the power packed into his 5-foot-8, 208-pound frame,

remains to be seen.

The Raiders apparently are willing to find out.

"Ashton has his own unique style," offensive coordinator Chip Kelly said. "I don't think we're going to ever coach that out of him. I think he's amazing after contact and that's probably one of his biggest strengths. So our job right now is just getting him lined up, having him understand what our offense, what our scheme is and then let him go in terms of his running style."

Boise State certainly did that.

Jeanty led the nation with 2,601 yards and 29 touchdowns rushing last season, coming up just 27 yards short of matching Barry Sanders' college record set in his

"Ashton has his own unique style."

Chip Kelly
Offensive coordinator

Heisman-winning season in 1988.

Perhaps more remarkable, Jeanty gained 1,970 yards after contact, which not only set the NCAA single-season record, but also by itself would have made him the nation's leading rusher.

Jeanty said he makes sure he stays at his physical peak by adhering to a nutritional plan and getting the right amount of sleep in addition to his on-field work.

Something he is able to do now without the extra duties of classes and homework.

"That's what's most exciting, because you can become the best version of yourself," Jeanty said. "You can devote all the time you want to the game of football. And this game, you get

what you put in. I'm grateful for that and I'm going to keep putting in and getting out great things."

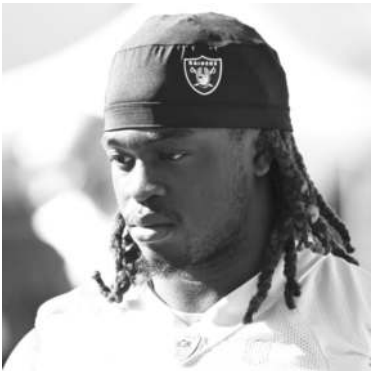
Being available wasn't a problem in college. He played 40 games in three seasons, missing two in 2023 because of a leg injury.

If Jeanty remains healthy, he very well could deliver for the Raiders all that they hoped when they drafted him. He has shown elite footwork going back to organized team activities, but now with full-padded practices underway, there is even more attention to what he might accomplish.

And Jeanty hasn't disappointed, earning rave reviews from coach Pete Carroll over his work the past two days.

Carroll pointed to a shot that Jeanty took from linebacker Elan-don Roberts on Tuesday that sent the back to the turf.

"Didn't even faze him," Carroll said. "A perfect reaction of a re-



CANDICE WARD/AP
Raiders rookie RB Ashton Jeanty has showcased the skills that made him a standout at Boise State during training camp.

sponse. And then the next carry he busted."

Jeanty carries a confidence that is easy to see, and he doesn't appear overwhelmed by trying to prove he can excel at the sport's highest level. Nor does he seem burdened by living up to expectations of being the highest-drafted running back since the New York Giants took Penn State's Saquon Barkley second overall in 2018.

Worst to first: 49ers look like obvious choice to continue trend

BY JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

A team going from worst to first in the division is nearly an annual occurrence in the NFL.

With last-place teams getting advantages like favorable schedules and higher draft picks, there have been 25 teams since the 2002 realignment that followed up a last-place finish with a division title the following year.

While no team pulled off the trick last season, it had happened least once in each of the previous four seasons. Perhaps no team is better positioned to do it this season than the San Francisco 49ers, who followed up a Super Bowl loss in the 2023 season with a 6-11 last-place finish in 2024.



ERIN HOOLEY/AP

The Bears made moves to help quarterback Caleb Williams improve in his second season, including upgrading the offensive line.

part of a movement to get cheaper and younger. But if their rookie class can't step in and contribute immediately, the defense could have some holes even with the return of coordinator Robert Saleh.

New England Patriots

Odds to win division: +475.
Reason for optimism: QB Drake Maye showed flashes as a rookie and should get a boost in Year 2 with a better coaching staff led by Mike Vrabel and coordinator Josh McDaniels.
Reason for pessimism: Maye still has very little support even after the offseason acquisitions of rookie lineman Will Campbell and veteran receiver Stefon Diggs.

Chicago Bears

Odds to win division: +550.
Reason for optimism: The Bears brought in the most highly

sought after coaching candidate when Ben Johnson was hired after a strong run as offensive coordinator in Detroit. They also upgraded the interior of the offensive line by acquiring Joe Thuney, Drew Dalman and Jonah Jackson in the off-season to help second-year QB Caleb Williams.

Reason for pessimism: Chicago is in a division with three returning playoff teams and has one of the more difficult schedules in the NFL. If Williams' struggles as a rookie were more about holding onto the ball too long instead of the surrounding environment, the upgrades might not be enough.

Tennessee Titans

Odds to win division: +800.
Reason for optimism: Last year's struggles delivered Tennessee the No. 1 overall pick. QB Cam Ward brings his playmaking

ability to Tennessee and should be helped by an improved offensive line following the additions of Dan Moore and Kevin Zeitler and anticipated improvement from recent first-rounders JC Latham and Peter Skoronski.

Reason for pessimism: Ward doesn't have a strong group of pass catchers even after the signing of veteran Tyler Lockett and Tennessee hasn't done much to upgrade a defense that allowed 27.1 points per game last season.

New Orleans Saints

Odds to win division: +1,300.
Reason for optimism: The offense could get a boost if first-round tackle Kelvin Banks can step in immediately and receivers Chris Olave and Rasheed Shaheed are healthy.
Reason for pessimism: New Orleans has uncertainty at quarterback after Derek Carr's retirement and is counting on either second-round rookie Tyler Shough or 2024 fifth-rounder Spencer Rattler to perform at a high enough level to compete.

Las Vegas Raiders

Odds to win division: +1,500.
Reason for optimism: Perhaps no team upgraded at quarterback and head coach as much as the Raiders with Pete Carroll replacing Antonio Pierce at coach and Geno Smith coming in at quarterback after a platoon of Gardner Minshew and Aidan O'Connell. The offense under new coordinator Chip Kelly could be intriguing with record-setting second-year tight end Brock Bowers and rookie running back Ashton Jeanty.
Reason for pessimism: Las Vegas is in a division that had three

playoff teams last season, making it a difficult proposition to climb too high in the standings. There are major questions in the secondary that could prove fatal in a division with Patrick Mahomes, Justin Herbert and Bo Nix.

New York Giants

Odds to win division: +2,800.
Reason for optimism: The Giants should have one of the top defensive lines with No. 3 overall pick Abdul Carter joining Dexter Lawrence, Brian Burns and Kayvon Thibodeaux. The return of left tackle Andrew Thomas after he missed 11 games last season should help boost the offense under new quarterback Russell Wilson.

Reason for pessimism: While Wilson may be an upgrade at quarterback, his play has fallen significantly since leaving Seattle following the 2021 season. New York traded up to draft Jaxson Dart in the first round but he might not be ready to take over as a rookie on a team that still has many holes on offense.

Cleveland Browns

Odds to win division: +3,000.
Reason for optimism: The Browns feature one of the game's top defensive players in four-time All-Pro Myles Garrett after he got a new contract last season and Kevin Stefanski has won AP Coach of the Year twice in five seasons with Cleveland.
Reason for pessimism: Cleveland is still searching for a QB three years after trading for Deshaun Watson. Veteran Joe Flacco, Kenny Pickett and rookies Dillon Gabriel and Shedeur Sanders are all in the mix but none provide immediate hope for success.

NFL

5 rookie head coaches face distinct tasks

BY DENNIS WASZAK JR.

Associated Press

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — Aaron Glenn has been mapping out exactly how he wants to lead an NFL team for a few years.

Before he was hired as the New York Jets' head coach in January, Glenn spent four seasons as the Detroit Lions' defensive coordinator and was empowered by coach Dan Campbell to make some crucial calls for the team off the field.

"He allowed me to actually act in the position of being the head coach," Glenn said. "To be able to do the calendar for the offseason, plan training camp out, be able to make decisions that he was supposed to make."

"But he allowed me to make those decisions to get me ready to be in this position."

Glenn, a three-time Pro Bowl cornerback during a 15-year playing career, is charged with trying to turn around the fortunes of a Jets franchise that has the NFL's longest playoff drought at 14 seasons.

He opened training camp last week as one of five first-time head coaches in the league, joining Jacksonville's Liam Coen, Chicago's Ben Johnson, New Orleans' Kellen Moore and Dallas' Brian Schottenheimer.

All five are long-time assistants who now each face distinct challenges and must balance the responsibilities of managing an entire roster and staff instead of focusing on one particular side of the football.

Aaron Glenn, Jets

Background: Jets' first-round pick (No. 12 overall) in 1994 out of Texas A&M. Played eight seasons for New York before three with Houston, two with Dallas and one each with Jacksonville and New Orleans. After retiring from playing, Glenn served as the general manager of the Houston Stallions of the indoor Texas Lone Star Football League in 2012 before being hired as a personnel scout with the Jets later that year. He then had stints as an assistant with Cleveland, New Orleans and Detroit.

Task: He and new GM Darren Mougey focused on making the Jets' roster younger, parting ways with veterans such as QB Aaron Rodgers, WR Davante Adams, LB C.J. Mosley, K Greg Zuerlein and P Thomas Morstead. Glenn, who considers his former coach Bill Parcells a mentor, spoke often during the offseason about changing the Jets' culture. Ending their long postseason drought will help and there's key foundational talent — WR Garrett Wilson, CB Sauce Gardner, RB Breece Hall, DT Quinnen Williams, edge rusher Jermaine Johnson — but the youth movement could temper some first-year expectations.



ADAM HUNGER/AP

Aaron Glenn, left, was the defensive coordinator for the Lions for four season before being named head coach for the Jets. One of his tasks in his first year is making the New York roster younger.



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

New Dallas head coach Brian Schottenheimer has extensive experience as an offensive coordinator, including with the Cowboys. He's tasked with getting more out of veteran QB Dak Prescott.

Liam Coen, Jaguars

Background: Played quarterback at UMass. Spent last season as Tampa Bay's offensive coordinator before being hired by Jacksonville in January to replace the fired Doug Pederson. Coen had two stints with the Los Angeles Rams, including serving as Sean McVay's offensive coordinator in 2022. He also had college stops as an assistant at Brown, Rhode Island, UMass, Maine and Kentucky.

Task: His awkward Jaguars intro — "Duuuval" — went viral, but Coen was hired for his offensive prowess after he helped Baker Mayfield to the best season of his career with the Buccaneers. Trevor Lawrence, the No. 1 overall pick in 2021, has not yet fully lived up to expectations and that will be the focus for Coen, who'll call the plays, and offensive coordinator Grant Udinski. Adding versatile No. 2 pick Travis Hunter to the offense (and defense) should help Lawrence and a franchise that has just one playoff appearance in the past seven seasons.

Ben Johnson, Bears

Background: A former backup QB at North Carolina, Johnson

was Detroit's offensive coordinator the past three years and helped Jared Goff and the Lions lead the league in scoring last season. Johnson's path to the NFL began as an assistant at Boston College before seven seasons with the Miami Dolphins. He joined the Lions in 2019 as an offensive quality control coach and was retained by Campbell when he took over as coach in 2020, serving as the tight ends coach and then passing game coordinator before becoming the OC in 2022.

Task: The Bears drafted Caleb Williams with the No. 1 overall pick in last year's draft and Chicago is hoping Johnson will be able to develop the quarterback into a playmaking star.

Williams showed promise while starting all 17 games, throwing for a franchise rookie-record 3,541 yard with 20 touchdown passes and six interceptions, but his 68 sacks led the league. Getting Williams to get rid of the ball faster and improve on his accuracy should help, so should GM Ryan Poles' trade acquisitions of guards Joe Thuney and Jonah Jackson to bolster the offensive line.

Kellen Moore, Saints

Background: A former backup

quarterback with Detroit and Dallas over six NFL seasons, Moore was long considered a head coaching candidate during his stops as an offensive coordinator with the Cowboys, Chargers and Eagles. In his only season in Philadelphia, he guided a high-scoring offense that powered the Eagles to the Super Bowl behind quarterback Jalen Hurts and running back Saquon Barkley.

Brian Schottenheimer, Cowboys

Background: The son of the late Marty Schottenheimer was a bit of a surprise pick by Jerry Jones to replace Mike McCarthy as Dallas' coach.

But the younger Schottenheimer has a lengthy resume in both the pros and at the college level, with stints as an offensive coordinator with the Cowboys, Seahawks, Rams and Jets among them.

Task: Schottenheimer will need to build an even better rapport with quarterback Dak Prescott, who played in only eight games last season because of a hamstring injury.

The coach also made some headlines during the offseason when he said Prescott is still "in the developmental phase" of his career and the team is tweaking some things with him.

With Philadelphia still among the NFL's elite teams and Washington one of the league's most promising squads, Schottenheimer and the Cowboys will have a tough road to make the playoffs out of the NFC East. That's despite Jones saying he's "excited about our team's ability to compete right now."

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FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

Sharpes will be first brothers inducted

Ex-Packers receiving great Sterling to join Shannon in Canton

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
Associated Press

Shannon Sharpe donned his gold jacket emblazoned with the Pro Football Hall of Fame logo at his Atlanta home last winter and awaited his brother's arrival.

Sterling ambled down the stairs and into the basement looking perplexed.

"Welcome, bro!" Shannon said.

To what, Sterling wondered, "your house?"

"To the Pro Football Hall of Fame," corrected Shannon. "Class of 2025."

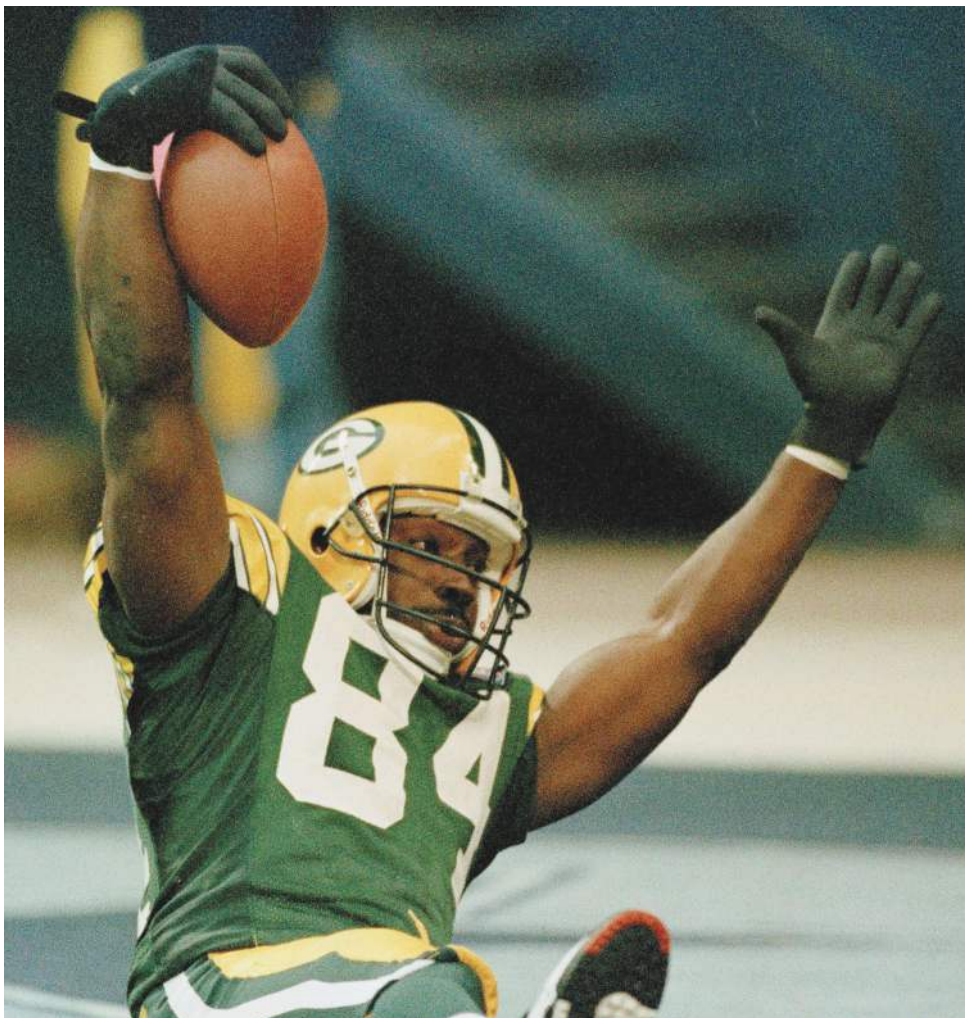
The first pair of brothers who will have both of their busts on display in Canton fell into each other's arms, decades of doubts dissipating in a medley of laughter and tears.

Dashed was the notion that seven stellar NFL seasons weren't enough for football immortality.

All along, the brothers figured it was Sterling who would reach Canton first. He was born three years earlier and the wide receiver had a standout career at South Carolina and then for the Green Bay Packers, who made him a first-round pick in 1988, two years before the Denver Broncos selected his younger brother in the seventh round out of Savannah State.

Sterling would start every game for seven straight seasons until a neck injury cut short his career just as he and the Packers were peaking. The green and gold would go on to return the title to Tittletown behind fellow Hall of Famers Ron Wolf, LeRoy Butler, Reggie White and Brett Favre while Sterling dabbled in broadcasting before leaving football behind for the golf links.

Sterling was named to five Pro Bowls and earned first-team All-Pro honors the three years he led the league in receptions. He averaged 85 catches in his career — an un-



TIM SHARPE/AP

Packers wide receiver Sterling Sharpe celebrates a touchdown against the Dallas Cowboys on Nov. 24, 1994. He led the league with 18 touchdown receptions that season.

heard of number for that era and 10 more than Jerry Rice averaged in his first seven seasons.

In his last season he led the league with 18 touchdown receptions, including a trio of scores in his final game despite dealing with numbness in his arms and tingling in his neck caused by an abnormal loosening of the first and second vertebrae in his cervical spine.

He had felt increasingly bothersome symptoms over the last half of that season

and suffered what's commonly referred to as "stingers" against the Falcons in the Packers' final game at the old Milwaukee County Stadium on Dec. 18, 1994, and again six days later at Tampa, where he caught nine passes for 132 yards and three first-half touchdowns in what turned out to be his final game.

Right after Christmas, he learned he needed neck fusion surgery that would limit his head swivel, making it too dangerous to continue playing football. Upon hearing

the prognosis, he stood up and shook his doctors' hands.

"I had already accomplished what I wanted to," Sterling told NBC affiliate WIS News in Columbia, S.C., this spring. "... I just wanted to play, and I got to play in the NFL for seven years."

His career cut short at age 29, his protracted wait for Canton would last 31 years.

"Sterling was supposed to be in the Hall first," Shannon said ahead of his 2011 induction, where he drew a standing ovation for saying, "I'm the second-best player in my own family."

Unlike Sterling's truncated testimonial, Shannon's Canton credentials were never in question. He set the standard at tight end, going to eight Pro Bowls in 14 seasons, earning four first-team All-Pro honors and winning three Super Bowls in a four-year span, two in Denver and one in Baltimore.

He gave his first Super Bowl ring — from Denver's 31-24 win over Green Bay in 1997 — to Sterling. And he called the chance to welcome his big brother into the Hall "the proudest moment of my life."

Despite their shared love of the game, the brothers who grew up in a tiny cinder block house in rural Georgia were different in one big way: Shannon overcame a childhood speech impediment to become one of the game's most talkative players and later one of football's most vocal commentators. Sterling preferred to hone his craft in relative obscurity and mostly avoided the public and the media.

"As a football player, I was unapproachable," Sterling told WIS News. "I didn't want to be approached. I didn't want to be famous. I didn't want to make friends. I've got a job to do and I'm going to do this job better than anyone else does anything else."

Butler said Sterling's media blackout was on par with his isolated nature. He just didn't let many people into his orbit.

"Sterling didn't want nobody to know what he did," Butler told The Associated Press. "He didn't want other receivers mimicking him. His edge was his physicality and his brain."

Around: Gates' innovative strategies now common among many tight ends

FROM PAGE 48

and in my second year was considered nontraditional. I would play well, but grade out bad because I creating a lane. And unfortunately, when you're creating something that's never been done or seen, it gets scrutinized. I would use my instinct to make the play."

Many of the things Gates did with shape routes, pivot routes over the ball and tight ends releasing at the line of scrimmage are commonplace today with Kansas City's Travis Kelce and San Francisco's George Kittle. Gates utilized his basketball skills on the football field, as catching the ball at its highest point is similar to rebounding in the paint, as well as

boxing out on the hardwood and trying to get open against a defensive back.

Gates might have been outsized as a power forward, but he had an advantage going up against defensive backs who often were smaller than he was.

Gates' career flourished under Norv Turner, the Chargers coach from 2007 through '12. Turner lined Gates up in different spots and also used more two tight end sets. Gates' route-running also improved under Turner and with Philip Rivers as the quarterback.

"He had to win on his route-running and his ability to separate and his understanding of coverages and all those things," Turner

said. "Philip is as good a passer as there's been in a long time, but Philip wasn't going to move around and make a lot of plays off schedule."

Gates finished with 955 receptions for 11,841 yards. He had 21 multi-touchdown games, the most among tight ends.

Of his 116 touchdowns, 39 came on third down, which is tied for third all time.

He had eight seasons with at least eight touchdowns and was a member of the NFL's All-Decade Team of the 2000s.

Gates said the biggest thing he is looking forward to is being able to thank the people who helped him get to Canton.



RYAN SUN/AP

Former Los Angeles tight end Antonio Gates holds up a jacket as he goes into the Chargers Hall of Fame on Dec. 10, 2023, in Inglewood, Calif.

"I've always been in a space where from a popularity standpoint, people know my name. It's my chance to thank everyone else," he said. "Although you are

the face and the focus point, it's truly not about you. You're letting everybody understand what it took to get to this point and who were influential."

FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME



STACY BENGS/AP

Former Minnesota Vikings player Jared Allen greets fans while riding a Friesian horse before being inducted into the Ring of Honor during halftime against the Arizona Cardinals on Oct. 30, 2022, in Minneapolis.

Jared Allen's 136 sacks, fun style have him Canton-bound

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Jared Allen will be wearing a cowboy hat next weekend in Canton for his Hall of Fame induction, the signature apparel that inspired his celebratory calf-roping act after each sack and still serves as a fitting snapshot of his off-the-field life.

Raised on a horse ranch in Northern California, Allen was audacious enough at age 8 to tell his father he planned to become a professional football player.

He fulfilled that vision with a relentless vengeance on the offensive tackles tasked with blocking him and the quarterbacks who tried to escape, using exceptional quickness, creative moves and pure strength to accumulate 136 sacks and four first team All-Pro selections as a defensive end over a 12-year career in the NFL.

"When you're doing what you love to do, you want to honor the game by being great, not in an arrogant way but in a way to show respect and gratitude for all those who came before you," said Allen, who will be honored at the ceremony this weekend along with Antonio Gates, Eric Allen (no relation) and Sterling Sharpe. "I always wanted to go out there and let people know I genuinely loved playing this game."

First making his mark with the Kansas City Chiefs and then reaching another level with the Minnesota Vikings, Allen was one of the most fun-loving players of his generation.

That went all the way down to his routine of running away from the play, dropping to one knee, twirling his hand as if he had a lasso and

pretending to catch a calf in a rodeo before extending both arms outward to the crowd. He was a showman who had plenty to show for it.

The crossroads of Allen's career came upon consummation of the 2008 trade that sent him from Kansas City to Minnesota, his promising start in the NFL tainted by off-the-field trouble that followed him from Idaho State.

Chiefs general manager Carl Peterson, who drafted Allen in the fourth round in 2004, soured on the prodigious pass rusher after two different citations for drunken driving in 2006 and declared him a "young man at risk." Allen was irked by the lack of front-office support and asked to be dealt, absent a new contract.

After accumulating 15½ sacks in 14 games in 2007 after serving a two-game suspension, Allen finally got his wish. Having given up alcohol after the second arrest, he redoubled his conditioning efforts in determination to prove his worth.

"I loved Kansas City. I wanted to spend my whole career there. Unfortunately, you learn the business side of the game can be a little ruthless, and I'm just stubborn enough to want to get my way," Allen said.

The Vikings sent their first-round pick and two third-round picks in 2008 to the Chiefs, then signed Allen to a six-year, \$73 million deal that at the time was the largest in history for a defensive player. He earned every penny, too, without any salary reductions or early releases that often follow big-money contracts in a league that has little patience for declining production by players with

large cap hits.

"With a contract like that and a trade like that comes a lot of pressure," Allen said. "It's not in my saddle to rest on my laurels. The most impressive thing was I was able to play it out. I think I represented myself well."

Allen averaged more than 14 sacks per season over six years with the Vikings, including a career-best 22 sacks in 2011 that came within one-half of the record set by Michael Strahan and later matched by T.J. Watt.

Allen is officially 12th on the career sacks list, a statistic the NFL didn't compile until 1982. Research by Pro Football Reference on all games played before then produced a comprehensive list that has Allen with the 16th-most sacks in history, after winding down his career with the Chicago Bears in 2014 and being traded to the Carolina Panthers the following season.

While he ditched his drinking problem and cleaned up off the field, Allen never lost his thrill-seeking lifestyle, once running with the bulls in Spain and killing a wild boar in Texas with a knife. He was a joke-cracking, wide-smiling life of the locker room with Minnesota, where he forged lifelong friendships.

Picked up at the airport in Minneapolis after the trade by defensive line coach Karl Dunbar and the alpha males of the position group, Kevin Williams and Pat Williams, Allen quickly knew he was in the right place.

Allen formed the center of those Vikings teams with the Williamses on one of the best defensive lines in the league.

Eric Allen turns 14 years as standout CB into HOF nod

BY JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

Among all of the impressive accomplishments that helped Eric Allen make it to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, the fact that he maintained his elite level of play so he never had to move from cornerback in his 14 seasons stands out.

From his first game as a rookie as part of Buddy Ryan's fierce defenses in Philadelphia in 1988 to his final game as a savvy veteran for the Oakland Raiders in 2001, Allen shut down opposing receivers as well as anybody.

"I take tremendous pride in that," Allen said. "But to be able to be on the corner from day one to the last game of my career, being a starter and being an effective player, it means a lot. ... I'm not a DB, I'm a corner. I'm not going to be all snobby. But it's different positions."

Few played it as well as Allen, and he'll get the ultimate recognition when he will be officially inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, on Saturday.

"I played against a lot of really good corners. I think Eric was one of the smartest I've played against," said Rich Gannon, who played against Allen early in his career and was a teammate at the end with the Raiders when Allen and Charles Woodson would match up against Jerry Rice and Tim Brown in heated practice sessions.

"He was really clever. He jumped certain routes, recognized certain things. He's one of those guys, if you're going to throw in his direction, you better see him. You just can't put your foot in the ground and think the receiver's got separation. He'd bait you. He'd act like he got beat or he was off. He had great recovery skill, good recovery speed. There just wasn't a lot of weakness in his game."

Allen credits his preparation for his success that included six Pro Bowl berths, one All-Pro selection in 1989, two second-team selections and 54 interceptions.

His career started in Philadelphia in 1988 with his rookie season ending with a playoff loss in the famous "Fog Bowl" game at Chicago. It ended with another famous playoff loss when Oakland lost to New England in the "Tuck Rule" game following the 2001 season.

"That's crazy," Allen said. "I talk about that a lot too. Two things that were definitely beyond our control."

Allen's biggest memory of the Tuck Rule game came just before that fateful play when he overheard Tom Brady and offensive coordinator Charlie Weiss discuss the play call that had a slant as the first option.

Allen told linebacker William Thomas to cover the first open window and Allen was there to jump the route if Brady waited — which is exactly what happened, but Woodson forced what was called a fumble on the field only to get overturned on a replay that still haunts the Raiders from that game today.

When coach Jon Gruden was traded away from Oakland a few weeks later, Allen decided it was time to retire and missed the Raiders' run to the Super Bowl in 2002.

"I just thought that was maybe the perfect time to book end my career," he said.

All that was left was the wait for the call from the Hall of Fame that came earlier this year when former Arizona State teammate Randall McDaniel delivered the news.

"The people around me, my circle, it really kind of relieved for them," Allen said. "I was never panicked or ever in a situation where, oh, man, I'm not going to get in. I came to peace about this a long time ago. Whenever I get in will be perfect."



AMY SANCETTA/AP

Eric Allen, top, was one of the most dominant cornerbacks during his playing career from 1988 to 2001 with the Eagles, Saints and Raiders.

SPORTS



Making moves
Miller, Suárez, Bieber among trade
deadline highlights » **MLB, Page 43**



Arizona Cardinals cornerback Bené Benwikere fails to tackle Los Angeles Chargers tight end Antonio Gates after a reception and run in the first half Nov. 25, 2018, in Carson, Calif.

An end around to Canton

Gates’ unique path to NFL, HOF began with college basketball stardom

By Joe Reedy
Associated Press

Antonio Gates thought his path to a Hall of Fame career would have been in basketball.

Instead, he became one of the best tight ends in NFL history.

Gates will be enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame on Saturday, getting elected to Canton without playing college football.

He played his entire 16-year career for the Chargers, first in San Diego and then in Los Angeles, and finished with 116 receiving touchdowns, the most by a tight end in NFL history.

“My journey was probably the most unique journey in all of football because I came in as a former basketball player, not knowing what to expect,” Gates said. “Some of those guys who are in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, they wanted to be Pro Football Hall of Famers when they were 14 years old. I wanted to play in the NBA. That was my dream. Like I said, I still haven’t wrapped my head around it all.”

Gates played both football and basketball during high school at Detroit Central. Nick Saban recruited Gates to play football at Michigan State, but he didn’t play

as a freshman. Gates also wanted to play basketball, but Saban disagreed.

Gates transferred to Eastern Michigan, then to two junior colleges, and eventually to Kent State. It was at Kent State that Gates reached national prominence. He led the Golden Flashes to the Elite Eight in the 2002 NCAA Tournament as a junior and an Associated Press All-America honorable mention selection as a senior after averaging 20.6 points, 7.7 rebounds and 4.1 assists per game.

Even though Gates was convinced he would get drafted in the NBA, at 6-foot-4, scouts saw him as

an undersized post player. But Tim Brewster, who was the Chargers’ tight ends coach in 2003, saw in Gates the size and speed that he thought would make him a great tight end.

Brewster saw Gates during a private workout and immediately began making his pitch to Marty Schottenheimer and the Chargers’ front office to sign him as a free agent.

“A lot of people like to take credit, but Tim is the number one reason why I am in the Hall of Fame,” Gates said. “He found me, believed what I could become, and was around me constantly. He

really got me into a position where I look up, and I was All-Pro my second year in the field.”

After having 24 receptions for 389 yards and two touchdowns as a rookie, Gates had a career-high 13 touchdowns in 2004 en route to the first of three straight Associated Press All-Pro honors and eight consecutive trips to the Pro Bowl. He also had 81 catches for 964 yards.

Even though he was catching a lot of passes, Gates’ route-running didn’t always get high marks from coaches.

“What I was doing as a rookie

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