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STARS AND STRIPES®

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PHOTOS BY ROSE L. THAYER/Stars and Stripes

Pfc. Mitchell Wilcox weighs his salad while paying at 42 Bistro, the Army’s first privately run dining facility, at Fort Hood, Texas, on Thursday.

Army’s future of dining

Soldiers get first taste of Fort Hood’s new privately run facility

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

FORT HOOD, Texas — Excitement and a little confusion filled the main atrium of Fort Hood’s new privately run dining facility Thursday as soldiers got their first look — and taste — at the future of Army dining.

With four stations lining the walls and a self-serve, pay-by-the-weight salad bar down the center, diners can choose from burgers and grilled chicken sandwiches, deli sandwiches and wraps, pizza and pasta, or smoothies and blended bowls. A rotating station featured chicken or beef tacos with rice and beans out of gleaming, blue Le Creuset cookware.



A worker fills tacos at 42 Bistro at Fort Hood, Texas.

About a dozen employees from Fort Hood’s 42 Bistro and its parent company Compass Group greeted soldiers with wide smiles as they described the somewhat tricky ordering process: Order on one of five computer touchscreens and keep the receipt it spits out. Whichever station the person ordered from will call out the corresponding number on the receipt when the food is ready.

SEE FUTURE ON PAGE 5

Pathway to ending shutdown uncertain

BY AAMER MADHANI
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Lawmakers and the White House offered no signs of compromise Sunday in their battle over oversight of federal immigration officers that has led to a pause in funding for the Department of Homeland Security.

A partial government shutdown began Saturday after congressional Democrats and President Donald Trump’s team failed to reach a deal on legislation to fund the department through September.

Democrats are demanding changes to how immigration operations are conducted after the fatal shootings of U.S. citizens Alex Pretti and Renee Good by federal officers in Minneapolis last month.

Congress is on recess until Feb. 23, and both sides appear dug into their positions. The impasse affects agencies such as the Transportation Security Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, the Secret Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The work at ICE and CBP goes on unabated because Trump’s tax and spending cut law from 2025 provided billions more to those agencies that can be tapped for deportation operations. About 90% of DHS employees were to continue working during the shutdown without pay — and missed paychecks could mean financial hardships. Last year there was a record 43-day government shutdown.

White House border czar Tom

SEE UNCERTAIN ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Hollywood condemns AI video generator over copyright

Associated Press

A new artificial intelligence video generator from Beijing-based ByteDance, the creator of TikTok, is drawing the ire of Hollywood organizations that say Seedance 2.0 "blatantly" violates copyright and uses the likeness of actors and others without permission.

Seedance 2.0, which is only available in China for now, lets users generate high-quality AI videos using simple text prompts. The tool gained condemnation from the movie and TV industry.

The Motion Picture Association said Seedance 2.0 "has engaged in unauthorized use of U.S. copyrighted works on a massive scale."

Actors union SAG-AFTRA said Friday it "stands with the studios in condemning the blatant infringement" enabled by Seedance 2.0.

"The infringement includes the unauthorized use of our members' voices and likenesses. This is unacceptable and undercuts the ability of human talent to earn a livelihood," SAG-AFTRA said in a statement. "Seedance 2.0 disregards law, ethics, industry standards and basic principles of consent. Responsible AI development demands responsibility, and that is nonexistent here."

ByteDance said in a statement Sunday that it respects intellectual property rights.

"(We) have heard the concerns regarding Seedance 2.0. We are taking steps to strengthen current safeguards as we work to prevent the unauthorized use of intellectual property and likeness by users," the company said.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Feb. 17)	0.82
British pound (Feb. 17)	$1.33
Japanese yen (Feb. 17)	149.00
South Korean won (Feb. 17)	1406.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3744
Britain (Pound)	1.3637
Canada (Dollar)	1.3627
China (Yuan)	6.908
Denmark (Krone)	6.3003
Egypt (Pound)	46.7573
Euro	0.8433
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8151
Hungary (Forint)	318.283
Israel (Shekel)	3.0894
Japan (Yen)	153.346
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3060
Norway (Krone)	9.5002
Philippines (Peso)	57.915
Poland (Zloty)	3.5513
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7459
Singapore (Dollar)	1.2620
South Korea (Won)	1441.33
Switzerland (Franc)	0.7692
Thailand (Baht)	31.097
Turkey (NewLira)	43.7046

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

INTEREST RATES

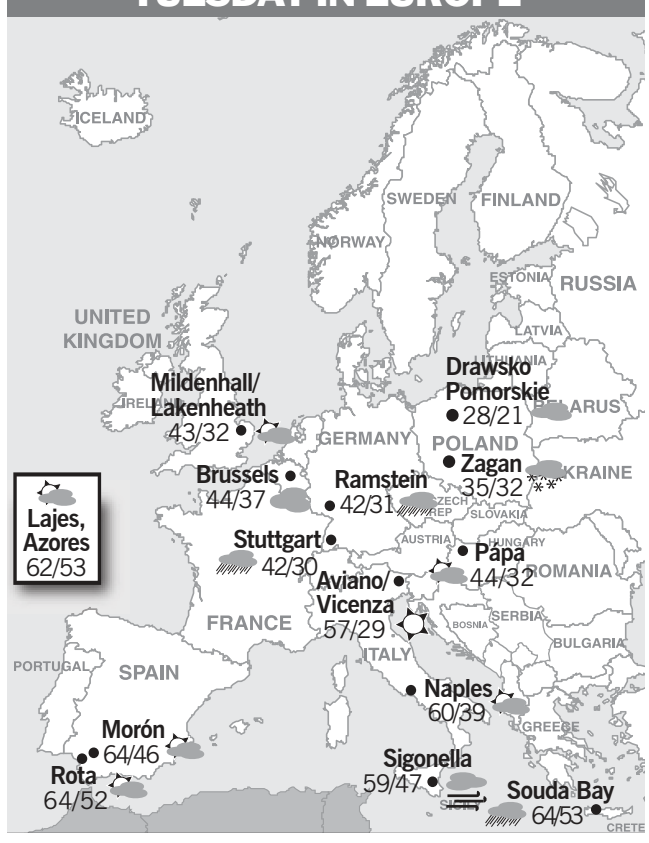
Prime rate	6.75
Interest Rates Discount rate	3.75
Federal funds market rate	3.62
3-month bill	3.68
30-year bond	4.69

WEATHER OUTLOOK

TUESDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



TUESDAY IN EUROPE



WEDNESDAY IN THE PACIFIC



This weather is compiled from weather.com reports.

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MILITARY



TAE SUNG KIM/U.S. Army

Sustainment troops train with the CROWS system, firing M249 squad automatic weapons and M240B machine guns from their vehicles at Story Live Fire Complex, South Korea, on Jan 28.

US soldiers train with remote weapon system near N. Korea

BY YOOJIN LEE
Stars and Stripes

Recent live-fire training near the North Korean border helped familiarize soldiers with a system that lets them fire their weapons from inside armored vehicles using controls and sensors, according to Eighth Army.

Troops from 84th Ordnance Company, 498th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 19th Expeditionary Sustainment Command trained Jan. 28-29 on CROWS — the Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station — said Eighth Army spokesman James Choi.

The training took place at Story Live Fire Complex, where soldiers fired M249 squad automatic weapons and M240B machine guns while learning to assemble, prepare and operate CROWS, Choi said by phone Tuesday. The complex is about three miles from the border.

CROWS increases crew protection by reducing exposure to enemy fire, Choi said.

During the exercise, troops practiced shooting targets during the day and at night, said Choi, who could not disclose the number of soldiers involved.



JACK ZIERCHER/U.S. Army

Sustainment troops familiarize themselves with the CROWS system. CROWS stands for Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station.

Choi described the event as small-scale and part of routine training aimed at enhancing readiness.

The exercise followed similar CROWS familiarization conducted about three months earlier, he said.

The first CROWS — more than 560 units — were delivered to the Army in Iraq under an urgent 2004 contract with Recon Optical, according to Defense Update, a defense information website.

In 2008, Norwegian arms manufacturer Kongsberg acquired the contract and by 2017 had supplied the Army with more than 12,000 CROWS units, according to a company news release in December that year.

The CROWS contracts are worth tens of millions annually.

Kongsberg in 2023 announced a fourth five-year contract to supply the Army at a cost of $94 million.

Army eradicates an invasive ant species at port

5-year US effort on Okinawa completed

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

After a five-year effort, the U.S. Army on Okinawa said it has eradicated an invasive ant species at its port in the island prefecture's capital city.

The browsing ant — Lepisiota frauenfeldi — is native to southern Europe and reproduces rapidly, forms super colonies and will attack and prey on other ant species and insects, according to a control plan released by the prefecture in March 2022.

The Environmental Division of the Directorate of Public Works at Torii Station declared the browsing ant finally eradicated from Naha Military Port in October 2025, according to a Jan. 23 news release from U.S. Army Garrison Okinawa.

It was first spotted in 2017 at Nagoya Port on Honshu, Japan's largest island. The country's Ministry of the Environment first recorded the ant in Naha along Routes 331 and 332 in February 2020, according to the control plan.

Nests were discovered at the Naha port in May 2020, and a control monitoring project began for the species in April 2021, according to the Army. A maximum of 62 nests were detected in May 2021.

The ants were found in grassy areas around the port's utilities buildings and in concrete cracks, Naho Ishiki, Directorate of Public Works natural resources program manager and environmental engineer, said by phone Friday.

The Army set up sugar and mealworm bait traps containing a growth regulator that causes infertility, she said. The bait was developed by the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University and the University of the Ryukyus.



Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology

Browsing ants were successfully eradicated from Naha Military Port, Okinawa, in October, according to the U.S. Army.

Four months later, nest numbers had dropped to two. No ants have been detected since December 2023, according to the Army's release.

"After 24 months, you can say it's pretty much eradicated," Ishiki said. "We double-checked with the Ministry of the Environment, and we are good."

The ants were eliminated before they could inflict any major damage, she said.

"It's not very risky to human health compared to fire ants, but it could damage utilities and structures," Ishiki said. "And biosecurity-wise, it's going to cost more to eradicate it after they completely establish within the installation."

The Army port wiped out its ant infestation more than a year after greater Naha had eradicated its infestation. As of May 17, 2024, the city was free of browsing ants for two consecutive years, the Okinawa General Bureau announced in a news release.

"This was a very rare case of successful eradication," Yoshua Andersson, spokesman for U.S. Army Garrison Okinawa, said by phone Friday. "They're still working to eradicate this ant [in Nagoya]. In Australia, it's already invasive — islandwide in Australia and causing damage to native species."

US military strikes another alleged drug boat in Caribbean, killing 3

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military said Friday that it has carried out another deadly strike on a vessel accused of trafficking drugs in the Caribbean Sea.

U.S. Southern Command said on social media that the boat "was transiting along known narcotrafficking routes in the Caribbean and was engaged in narcotrafficking operations." It said the strike killed three people. A video linked to the post shows a boat moving through the water before exploding in flames.

Friday's attack raises the death toll from the Trump administration's strikes on alleged drug boats to 133 people in at least 38 attacks carried out since early September in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth declared last week that "some top cartel drug-traffickers" in the region "have decided to cease all narcotics operations INDEFINITELY due to recent (highly effective) kinetic strikes in the Caribbean." However, Hegseth did not provide any details or information to back up this claim, made in a post on his personal account on social media.

President Donald Trump has said the U.S. is in "armed conflict" with cartels in Latin America and has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs.

But his administration has offered little evidence to support its claims of killing "narcoterrorists."

EUROPE

Cheer squad champs reach new heights

By Phillip Walter Wellman
Stars and Stripes

WIESBADEN, Germany — Stuttgart's cheer squad has been crowned this year's top Division I team at the DODEA-Europe cheerleading championships, ending a four-year winning streak by defending champions Wiesbaden.

It marks the first time since 2019 that the Panthers have claimed the championship plaque.

"I don't think it's kicked in yet," Stuttgart co-captain Chadwik Berrey said minutes after the results were announced Friday night at the Wiesbaden Sports and Fitness Center on Clay Kaserne. "We've come so close in past years, and now we finally did it."

Stuttgart finished runner-up in the Division I team competition last year and the year before.

"We were determined to not always be known as the second-best and to show everyone what we're capable of," the team's other co-captain, Micaah Evans, said.

Evans, a senior, has been cheering for Stuttgart for four years and said her teammates this year communicated better than ever and stayed determined.

"It feels like the greatest victory," she said of being crowned champions in her final opportunity.

Wiesbaden, which clinched the Division I team title every year between 2022 and 2025, had to settle for third place this year, while Ramstein High School's cheerleaders took second.

In Division II, Vicenza finished on top.

Captain Riley Brewington said the victory was a long time coming.

"This is the first first-place Vicenza has gotten since our coaches were cheering at this school," Brewington, a junior, said. "So it feels really good to have accomplished this."

Vicenza last won the Division II team title in 2020. The team placed third last year and has since welcomed new coaching staff, which Brewington credited for the turnaround.

"The team now is a lot sharper, people are more dedicated, and we're putting a lot more effort into what we're doing," she said. "I'm ready to do it again next year, the exact same thing: win first place."

Spain's Rota High School and the American Overseas School of Rome clinched second and third place, respectively, in the Division II team category.

Meanwhile, AFNORTH High School in the Netherlands was the final top team announced Friday, prevailing in Division III.

AFNORTH's squad won the division two years ago but slipped to second last year.

Captain Solina Moreno said despite setbacks this season, the team remained laser-focused on finishing on top.

"We've been through a lot of hardship, injuries and replacements, but we got through it and in the end, it worked," Moreno said. "It makes this feel even more amazing."

AFNORTH were able to edge out Alconbury, which finished second, and Spangdahlem, which secured third.

Winners are determined by a panel of judges based on routines performed during the one-day championships.

A separate title based on how teams perform throughout the cheer season was also announced during the event, as usual.

This year, the Game Day winners were Vilseck High School for Division I, Naples High School for Division II and Alconbury for Division III.

Additional awards for stunts and individual all-tournament honors for standout cheerleading are also presented.

Stuttgart, Naples, Rota, Alconbury, Hohenfels and Spangdahlem each had two all-tournament cheerleaders, the most of any school.

DIVISION I

Team: 1. Stuttgart 2. Ramstein 3. Wiesbaden

Game-day winner: Vilseck

All-Tournament: Brooklyn Hogan — Stuttgart; Mia Mathes — SHAPE; Joseph Ruffalo — Vilseck; Quinn Field — Ramstein; Chadwik Berrey — Stuttgart; James Ratkovsky — Lakenheath; Lyric Stepnay — Kaiserslautern; Hailey Stelker — Wiesbaden

DIVISION II

Team: 1. Vicenza 2. Rota 3. AOSR

Game-day winner: Naples

All-Tournament: Jalana Nelson — Naples; Nyeema Fernandez — Sigonella; Rebecca Conchaud — AOSR; Marin Storey — Naples ; Christian Cervantes — Rota ; Riley Brewington — Vicenza; Natalie Phillips — Rota; Kennedy Rose — Aviano

DIVISION III

Team: 1. AFNORTH 2. Alconbury 3. Spangdahlem

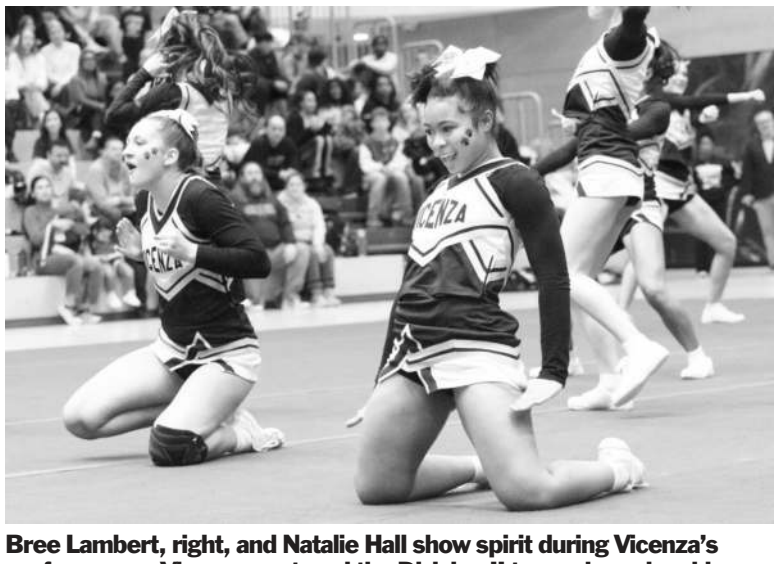
Game-day winner: Alconbury

All-Tournament: Solina Moreno — AFNORTH; Kenya Tucker — Hohenfels; Emily Castano — Spangdahlem; Abby Hudson — Alconbury; Almario Guerrero — Hohenfels; Aspen Williams — Alconbury; Ghianelle Flores — Baumholder; Trinity Burse — Spangdahlem



PHOTOS BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

Kenya Tucker, a senior at Hohenfels High School, shows her athleticism during the DODEA-Europe cheerleading championships at Clay Kaserne, Germany, on Friday. Tucker was named an all-tournament Division III cheerleader.



Bree Lambert, right, and Natalie Hall show spirit during Vicenza's performance. Vicenza captured the Division II team championship.



Braeden Doss of Sigonella High School soars through the air.



Cheerleaders from Alconbury High School are all smiles at the DODEA-Europe cheerleading championships. The team was crowned Division III game day champions.

MILITARY

Future: Firm plans to expand dining facilities to more bases in US

FROM PAGE 1

This is scanned by the cashier where barracks soldiers are asked how they want to use their meal entitlements. Everyone else can pay with cash, credit card or tap-to-pay technology.

"The food quality is higher," said Spc. Mitchell Wilcox, who was eating at 42 Bistro for the second day in a row. "They've got things I didn't even know about. You can get tofu on the salad bar."

His tray held a salad piled high with toppings — such as eggs, sliced peppers and cucumbers — a grilled chicken sandwich with bacon and cheese, and a protein smoothie. It cost $23, which is higher than the $15.86 available through the meal entitlement he's afforded for living in the barracks. But he was able to put some of his breakfast and dinner money toward the larger lunch meal. Each day, barracks soldiers' meal entitlements allow them to access up to $39 in food broken down over three meals.

After a soldier pays, a receipt shows how much of the entitlement, referred to as "freedom dollars," was spent and how much remains. This can also be spent in a traditional dining facility so long as they have not already dipped into funds allocated for that meal.

"It's way better than the other [dining facility]," Wilcox said.

With the official opening of 42 Bistro slated for next week, Compass Group has begun a soft opening to iron out the wrinkles of its first dining facility on an Army installation. Its other contracts include feeding people in airport lounges, university athletic departments, schools and health care facilities.

After the grand opening Wednesday, diners will be able to order ahead at the restaurant's website, 42bistro.com.

The Army only provided the building for Compass and will pay the company only for reimbursement of meal card entitlements redeemed at 42 Bistro, its food truck and coffee shop, according to the contract.

Roughly 6,000 soldiers have meal entitlements at Fort Hood, according to the base. So while the facility is geared toward barracks soldiers, it also aims to draw in others on post, including families looking for a more affordable dining-out option.

"I think by providing great food, great hospitality and great service, then you create a destination where you gather, belong and dine all across the garrison," said Donna Turner, vice president of government engagement and sales for Compass Group.



PHOTOS BY ROSE L. THAYER/Stars and Stripes

Soldiers select their taco toppings 42 Bistro, the Army's first privately run dining facility, at Fort Hood, Texas, on Thursday.



Sonia Gonzalez makes a cappuccino at Tradecraft, a specialty coffee shop that is part of 42 Bistro.



Pfc. Allen Nguyen and Spc. James Reeves use an ordering kiosk.

Soon Compass Group will open a facility at Fort Carson, Colo.; then at Fort Bragg, N.C.; Fort Stewart, Ga.; and Fort Drum, N.Y. The Army plans to seek contracts in the future at other posts and perhaps expand operations at the original five locations.

At each base, the senior commander can grant permission for Compass to sell beer and wine in the dining facilities and place parameters on when. So far, Lt. Gen. Kevin Admiral, commander of III Corps and Fort Hood, has not made that decision, the base said.

Though 42 Bistro did replace one traditional dining facility at Fort Hood, Army cooks are still offering everything previously available at other locations — order-ahead meal prep, a food truck and grab-and-go kiosks with hot and cold meal options, said Sgt. Maj. Kresassidy McKinney, III Corps chief culinary manager at the central Texas Army base.

In recent years, the Army has cut the number of cooks it enlists, stretching the resources of culinary units to feed soldiers in garrison and meet warfighting requirements. With one less dining facility to manage, she said the cooks assigned to Fort Hood can now focus more on their tactical training.

"Being that we do operate off of several different rotational rations, this allows them to now tap into more of the [field rations] that requires that tactical equipment," McKinney said.

Though she and her culinary team are not directly involved in 42 Bistro, McKinney said she will still see the feedback provided through the Army's standard complaint channels as well as feedback made directly to Compass.

So far the company has hired about 60 employees for 42 Bistro and is continuing to recruit, Turner said. Starting pay for food service workers was advertised in Compass Group job listings at $17.75 an hour.

Compass Group has had issues in the past with some of its contacts regarding hidden credit card fees on vending machines and overcharging public school lunches. Turner said there are accounting checks in place with the Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation contract office to mitigate those issues at its Army facilities.

Marine receives medal for life-saving actions in car crash

Stars and Stripes

A Marine stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif., on Friday was awarded a Navy and Marine Corps medal for saving another Marine's life after a severe vehicle accident two years ago.

The medal received by Staff Sgt. Billy Scafidel, an armory chief with 7th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group, is the Navy Department's highest non-combat decoration for heroism, a service news release said.



Scafidel

"Nothing really prepared me for a situation like this, it's just in my nature, when I see someone in danger, I want to help out. That's what Marines do," Scafidel said.

On Sept. 1, 2024, while working on his car outside of his home near the Del Mar Boat Basin, Scafidel heard a loud splash in the nearby water and found a truck lying on its side, half-submerged.

Scafidel and U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Andrew James, who was nearby, rushed to the scene and found a driver trapped in a vehicle being submerged in water. Without hesitation, Scafidel rushed into the water and quickly began smashing the front windshield with a hammer.

As he worked to break the windshield, Sgt. Jason Baughman, a military police officer, arrived and assisted, enabling them to pull the trapped driver to safety.

The driver was transported to the Naval Hospital and fully recovered.

The release noted that Fire Department personnel assisting Scafidel noticed his hands were cut up from the rescue effort, which Scafidel said he "didn't even realize."

"In the face of adversity when a life was on the line, Staff Sgt. Scafidel, without care for his own safety, put himself in a position to make a difference," said U.S. Marine Corps 1st Sgt. Marc McGlothlin, senior enlisted leader of Headquarters and Service Company, 7th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group.

NATION

Border czar: 'Small' force to remain in Minn.

BY BEN FINLEY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — White House border czar Tom Homan said Sunday that more than 1,000 immigration agents have left Minnesota's Twin Cities area and hundreds more will depart in the days ahead as part of the Trump administration's drawdown of its immigration enforcement surge.

A "small" security force will stay for a short period to protect remaining immigration agents and will respond "when our agents are out and they get surrounded by agitators and things got out of control," Homan told CBS' "Face the Nation."

He did not define "small."

He also said agents will keep investigating fraud allegations as well as the anti-immigration enforcement protest that disrupted a service at a church service.

"We already removed well over 1,000 people, and as of Monday, Tuesday, we'll remove several hundred more," Homan said. "We'll get back to the original footprint."

Thousands of officers were sent to the Minneapolis and St. Paul area for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's "Operation Metro Surge."



ANTHONY SOUFFLE/AP

Plain clothed federal agents tackle and arrest a man after a chase last Tuesday in the Hennepin County Government Center in Minneapolis.

The Department of Homeland Security said it was its largest immigration enforcement operation ever and proved successful.

But the crackdown came under increasing criticism as the situation grew more volatile and two U.S. citizens were killed.

Protests became common. A network of residents worked to help immigrants, warn of approaching agents or film immigration officers' actions.

The shooting deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal officers drew condemnation and raised questions over officers' conduct, prompting changes to the operation.

Homan announced last week that 700 federal officers would leave Minnesota immediately, but that still left more than 2,000 in the state.

He said Thursday that a "significant drawdown" was already underway and would continue through this week.

Homan said enforcement would not stop in the Twin Cities and that mass deportations will continue across the country.

Officers leaving Minnesota will either being required to report back to their stations or be assigned elsewhere.

When asked if future deployments could match the scale of the Twin Cities operation, Homan said "it depends on the situation."

Uncertain: ICE rules a sticking point

FROM PAGE 1

Homan said the administration was unwilling to agree to Democrats' demands that federal officers clearly identify themselves, remove masks during operations and display unique ID numbers.

"I don't like the masks, either," Homan said, But, he said, "These men and women have to protect themselves."

Democrats also want to require immigration agents to wear body cameras and mandate judicial warrants for arrests on private property.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Democrats are only asking for federal agents to abide by rules followed by law enforcement agencies around the country.

"And the question that Americans are asking is, 'Why aren't Republicans going along with these commonsense proposals?'" Schumer said. "They're not crazy. They're not way out. They're what every police department in America does."

Sen. Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., said he could back Democrats calls to equip immigration officers with body cameras and would support efforts to bolster training. But he balked at their demands that federal officers remove masks and clearly identify themselves, noting some officers taking part in immigration enforcement operations have faced doxing and other harassment.



NAM Y. HUH/AP

An information screen is displayed Sunday at O'Hare International Airport, in Chicago.

"What are you going to do, expose their faces so you can intimidate their families?" Mullins said. "What we want is ICE to be able to do their job. And we would love for local law enforcement and for states to cooperate with us."

Republican Sen. Katie Britt of Alabama, a Trump ally who had pushed for a two-week extension of DHS funding while negotiations continued, said it was "shortsighted of Democrats to walk away" from talks.

Trump made enforcement of the nation's immigration laws a centerpiece of his 2024 campaign for the White House and he promised to be aggressive in detaining and deporting people living in the United States without legal permission.

DHS reports it has deported more than 675,000 migrants since Trump's return to office last year and claims some 2.2 million others have "self-deported" as the Republican president has made his immigration crackdown a priority.

"President Trump is not going to back away from the mission, the mission that American people said they wanted him to complete, and that is securing our border and making sure that we actually do interior enforcement," Britt said.

Homan was on CBS' "Face the Nation," Schumer and Mullin appeared on CNN's "State of the Union" and Britt was interviewed on "Fox News Sunday."

Lawsuit seeks to stop Trump overhaul of a public DC golf course

Associated Press

Two golfers in Washington, D.C., sued the federal government on Friday to try to prevent the Trump administration from overhauling a more than 100-year-old public golf course, accusing the administration of violating environmental laws and polluting a park that is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The suit is the latest in a series of legal battles challenging President Donald Trump's extraordinary efforts to put his mark on public spaces in the nation's capitol, including shuttering the Kennedy Center.

At the end of last year, a group of preservationists filed a similar lawsuit seeking to prevent the administration from demolishing the East Wing of the White House in order to build a ballroom — a project slated to cost $400 million.

Trump, who is an avid golfer himself, also plans on renovating a military golf course just outside of Washington that has been used by past presidents going back decades.

The complaint filed against the Department of the Interior on Friday says that the Trump administration's reconstruction of East Potomac Park — which includes the East Potomac Golf Course — would violate the congressional act that created the park in 1897. The roughly 130-year-old act established the park for the "recreation and the pleasure of the people."

The golf course, which has since been recognized on the National Register of Historic Places in part for its efforts to racially integrate in the 1940s. Municipal golf courses make up only 18% of courses in America.

"East Potomac Golf Links is a testament to what's possible with public land and why public spaces matter," said Washington resident and plaintiff Dave Roberts. "It deserves better than becoming a dumping ground for waste and yet another private playground for the privileged and powerful."

The lawsuit came after the Trump administration in December ended a lease agreement the nonprofit National Links Trust held for East Potomac and two other golf courses in Washington. The Interior Department said it did so because the nonprofit hadn't implemented required capital improvements and failed to meet the terms of the lease.

The Interior Department press office said in an email Friday that it doesn't comment on pending litigation.

NATION



FBI/AP

Surveillance images at the home of Nancy Guthrie the night she went missing in Tucson, Ariz.

FBI: DNA recovered from glove found near Nancy Guthrie's home

Associated Press

A glove containing DNA found about two miles from the house of "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie's mother appears to match those worn by a masked person outside her front door in Tucson the night she vanished, the FBI said Sunday.

The glove, discovered in a field beside a road, was sent for DNA testing. The FBI said in a statement that it received preliminary results Saturday and was awaiting official confirmation. The development comes as law enforcement gathers more potential evidence as the search for Guthrie's mother heads into its third week. Authorities had previously said they had not identified a suspect.

On Sunday night, Savannah Guthrie posted an Instagram video in which she issued an appeal to whoever abducted her mother or anyone who knows where she is being kept. "It is never too late to do the right thing," Guthrie said. "And we are here. And we believe in the essential goodness of every human being, that it's never too late."

Nancy Guthrie, 84, was last seen at her Arizona home on Jan. 31 and was reported missing the following day. Authorities say her blood was found on the front porch. Purported ransom notes were sent to news outlets, but two deadlines for paying have passed.

The discovery was revealed days after investigators had released surveillance videos of the masked person outside Guthrie's front door. A porch camera recorded video of a person with a backpack who was wearing a ski mask, long pants, jacket and gloves.

On Thursday, the FBI called the person a suspect. It described him as a man about 5 feet, 9 inches tall with a medium build. The agency said he was carrying a 25-liter "Ozark Trail Hiker Pack" backpack.

Late Friday night, law enforcement agents sealed off a road about two miles from Guthrie's home as part of their investigation. A series of sheriff's and FBI vehicles, including forensics vehicles, passed through the roadblock.

The investigators also tagged and towed a Range Rover SUV from a nearby restaurant parking lot late Friday. The sheriff's department later said the activity was part of the Guthrie investigation but no arrests were made.

Authorities have expressed concern about Nancy Guthrie's health because she needs vital daily medicine. She is said to have a pacemaker and have dealt with high blood pressure and heart issues, according to sheriff's dispatcher audio on broadcastify.com.

Trump: Board of Peace to give $5B to rebuild Gaza

By Aamer Madhani
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump said Sunday that members of his newly created Board of Peace have pledged $5 billion toward rebuilding war-ravaged Gaza and will commit thousands of personnel to international stabilization and police forces for the territory.

The pledges will be formally announced when board members gather in Washington on Thursday for their first meeting, he said.

"The Board of Peace will prove to be the most consequential International Body in History, and it is my honor to serve as its Chairman," Trump said in a social media posting announcing the pledges.

He did not detail which member nations were making the pledges for reconstruction or would contribute personnel to the stabilization force.

But Indonesia's military said Sunday that up to 8,000 of its troops are expected to be ready by the end of June for a potential deployment to Gaza as part of a humanitarian and peace mission.

It's the first firm commitment that the Republican president has received.

Rebuilding the Palestinian territory will be a daunting endeavor. The United Nations, World Bank and European Union estimate that reconstruction of the territory will cost $70 billion. Few places in the Gaza Strip were left unscathed by more than two years of Israeli bombardment.

The ceasefire deal calls for an armed international stabilization force to keep security and ensure the disarming of the militant Hamas group, a key demand of Israel.

Thus far, few countries have expressed interest in taking part in the proposed force.

The Oct. 10 U.S.-brokered ceasefire deal attempted to halt a more than 2-year war between Israel and Hamas. While the heaviest fighting has subsided, Israeli forces have carried out repeated airstrikes and frequently fire on Palestinians near military-held zones.

It is not clear how many of the more than 20 members of the Board of Peace will attend the first meeting. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who held White House talks with Trump last week, is not expected to be there.

Trump's new board was first seen as a mechanism focused on ending the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

But it has taken shape with his ambition for a far broader mandate of resolving global crises and appears to be the latest U.S. effort to sidestep the United Nations as Trump aims to reset the post-World War II international order.

Many of America's top allies in Europe and elsewhere have declined to join what they suspect may be an attempt to rival the Security Council.

Trump also confirmed that Thursday's meeting will take place at the U.S. Institute of Peace, which the State Department announced in December it was renaming the Donald J. Trump U.S. Institute of Peace.

The building is the subject of litigation brought by former employees and executives of the nonprofit think tank after the Republican administration seized the facility last year and fired almost all the institute's staff.

Storm sweeps across Southeast triggering tornado watches, winds

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A weekend storm system sweeping across the Southeast brought tornado warnings to Mississippi and Louisiana, and then took aim at parts of Georgia and Florida, as people in the Northeast were finally getting a reprieve from weeks of bitterly cold temperatures.

Some of the fiercest weather in the South was reported near Lake Charles, La., where high winds from a thunderstorm overturned a horse trailer and a Mardi Gras float, damaged an airport jet bridge and flung the metal awning from a house into power lines. The damage was documented by National Weather Service employees who surveyed the area.

Power poles were snapped and toppled near the Louisiana towns of Jena, Cheneyville and Donaldsonville, the weather service reported.

No deaths or serious injuries were reported, but the damage reports came as the storm system continued into parts of south Georgia and the Florida Panhandle, which were under tornado watches on Sunday.

The storms led to some power outages across the southern states, but nowhere near the massive number of outages caused by ice storms late last month in northern Mississippi and Nashville, Tenn.

By Sunday evening, a few thousand customers were still without electricity in Florida, Louisiana, Kentucky and Virginia, according to PowerOutage.us, which tracks outages nationwide.

Meanwhile, the Northeast was beginning to thaw after a weeks-long stretch of uncommonly cold weather.

Boston was running nearly 7 degrees Fahrenheit below average for February last week, and the city was on pace for its coldest winter in more than a decade.

Boston remained cold on Sunday, but this week's forecast called for temperatures climbing into the high 30s and low 40s, which is closer to the seasonal average.

On the West Coast, much of California braced for a powerful winter storm that was expected to bring drenching thunderstorms, damaging winds and heavy snow in mountain areas.

Jacob Spender, a weather service meteorologist in Sacramento, urged people to take precautions in the coming days.

"So if they are traveling, packing winter safety kits. Anything to be prepared. This is a bigger system, and a major system," Spender said.

Rain that began Sunday in the San Francisco Bay Area was forecast to intensify throughout the day and overnight, bringing the risk of flooding. Forecasters said the Sierra Nevada, including ski resorts around Lake Tahoe, could see up to seven feet of snow before the storm moves through late Wednesday.

To the south, Los Angeles area residents in some neighborhoods scarred by last year's devastating wildfires were under an evacuation warning through Tuesday because of the potential for mud and debris flows.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said she's ordered emergency crews and city departments to prepare to respond to any problems.

NATION

Scientist gave himself 'Havana syndrome'

BY WARREN P. STROBEL AND ELLEN NAKASHIMA
The Washington Post

Working in strict secrecy, a government scientist in Norway built a machine capable of emitting powerful pulses of microwave energy and, in an effort to prove such devices are harmless to humans, in 2024 tested it on himself. He suffered neurological symptoms similar to those of "Havana syndrome," the unexplained malady that has struck hundreds of U.S. spies and diplomats around the world.

The bizarre story, described by four people familiar with the events, is the latest wrinkle in the decade-long quest to find the causes of Havana syndrome, whose sufferers experience long-lasting effects including cognitive challenges, dizziness and nausea. The U.S. government calls the events Anomalous Health Incidents.

The secret test in Norway has not been previously reported. The Norwegian government told the CIA about the results, two of the people said, prompting at least two visits in 2024 to Norway by Pentagon and White House officials.

Those aware of the test say it does not prove AHIs are the work of a foreign adversary wielding a secret weapon similar to the prototype tested in Norway. One of them noted that the effects suffered by the Norwegian researcher, whose identity was not disclosed by the people familiar, were not the same as in a "classic" AHI case.

But the events bolstered the case of those who argue that "pulsed-energy devices" — machines that deliver powerful beams of electromagnetic energy such as microwaves in short bursts — can affect human biology and are probably being developed by U.S. adversaries.



ISMAEL FRANCISCO/AP

The U.S. Embassy in Havana, Cuba is seen in 2023.

"I think there's compelling evidence that we should be concerned about the ability to build a directed-energy weapon that can cause a variety of risk to humans," said Paul Friedrichs, a retired military surgeon and Air Force general who oversaw biological threats on the White House National Security Council under President Joe Biden. Friedrichs declined to comment on the Norway experiment.

The Trump administration took office promising to pursue the AHI issue aggressively. But there has been little apparent movement. A review ordered by Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard is expected to focus mostly on the Biden administration's handling of the issue, and its release has been delayed, people familiar with the issue said.

In a separate development that has become public in recent weeks, the U.S. government covertly purchased at the end of the Biden administration a different foreign-made device that produces pulsed radio waves and which some experts suspect could be linked to AHI incidents, according to people familiar with the matter.

The device is being tested by the Defense Department. It has some Russian-origin components, but the U.S. government still has not determined conclusively who built it, said one of the people.

The U.S. acquisition of the device was first reported last month by independent journalist Sasha Ingber and CNN, which said it had been purchased for millions of dollars by Homeland Security Investigations, part of the Department of Homeland Security.

The device that the scientist constructed in Norway was not identical to the one that the U.S. government covertly acquired, one of the people familiar with the events said. The Norwegian device was built based on "classified information," suggesting it was derived from blueprints or other materials stolen from a foreign government, this person said.

At about the same time the U.S. became aware of the two pulsed-energy machines, two spy agencies altered their previous judgment and concluded that some of the incidents involving AHIs could be the work of a foreign adversary, delivering that verdict in an updated U.S. intelligence assessment issued in January 2025 during the Biden administration's final weeks.

"New reporting," the assessment said, led the two agencies "to shift their assessments about whether a foreign actor has a capability that could cause biological effects consistent with some of the symptoms reported as possible AHIs."

One was the National Security Agency, which intercepts and decodes foreign electronic communications, several people familiar with the issue said. The other, said two of those people, was the National Ground Intelligence Center, a U.S. Army intelligence agency in Charlottesville that produces intelligence on foreign adversaries' scientific, technical and military capabilities.

The majority of U.S. intelligence agencies, including the CIA and four others, said they continued to judge it "very unlikely" that the attacks were the result of a foreign adversary or that a foreign actor had developed a novel weapon. In conversations intercepted by U.S. spy agencies, American adversaries were heard expressing their own surprise at the AHI incidents and denying involvement, U.S. officials have said.

The CIA declined to comment on the Norwegian test or how it impacted the agency's analysis. Norway's embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment.

Some former officials and AHI victims have pointed to Russia as the prime suspect in the AHI incidents because of its decades of work in directed-energy devices. So far, no conclusive proof has publicly emerged, and Moscow has denied involvement.

Taken together, the two known directed-energy devices along with other research appear to have prompted a reconsideration by some of the causes of Havana syndrome, so named because of the mysterious 2016 outbreak of symptoms reported by personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Havana.

In subsequent years, U.S. personnel reported hundreds of cases globally, in China, Eastern Europe and elsewhere. A top aide to then-CIA Director William J. Burns reported symptoms while traveling in India in 2021.

Regulator faces criticism over whale protection changes

BY PATRICK WHITTLE
Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — The U.S.'s ocean regulator plans to make industry-friendly changes to a long-standing rule designed to protect vanishing whales, prompting criticism from environmental groups who cite the recent death of an endangered whale.

The rules protect the North Atlantic right whale, which numbers less than 400 and lives off the East Coast. The giant animals are protected by a vessel speed rule that requires large ships to slow down at certain times to avoid collisions, which is a leading cause of death for the whales.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said in a Thursday statement to The Associated Press that it plans to soon announce proposed new rules designed to "modernize" the whale protections. The proposal will be a "deregulatory-focused action" that will seek to "reduce unnecessary regulatory and economic burdens while ensuring responsible conservation practices for endangered North Atlantic right whales," the statement said.

A notice of rulemaking about the right whale rules is listed on the U.S. Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs website, but it does not include any details about the proposal. NOAA said in its statement that more information about the rules was forthcoming and that the agency was focused on "implementing new technologies, engineering approaches and other advanced tools" to protect the whales.

Several environmental groups criticized the move away from vessel speed rules. Some cited the Feb. 10 confirmation of the death of a 3-year-old female whale off Virginia. The cause of the animal's death was not yet determined, but it died at a far younger age than typical.

"Another female right whale — the future of this species — has lost her life. We urgently need more right whale protections, not fewer. The Trump administration's apparent determination to weaken the vessel speed rule could not come at a worse time," said Jane Davenport, senior attorney at conservation group Defenders of Wildlife.



ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

A North Atlantic right whale surfaces on Cape Cod Bay in Massachusetts in March 2023.

Right whales migrate every year from calving grounds off Florida and Georgia to feeding grounds off New England and Canada. Along the way, they are vulnerable to collisions with ships and entanglement in commercial fishing gear. They were once numerous off the East Coast but were decimated during the commercial whaling era and have been federally protected for decades.

The Biden administration planned to expand slow zones off the East Coast to protect the whales. It also planned to expand the classes of boats required to slow down. However, the federal government withdrew the proposal in the final days of the administration, with officials saying it didn't have time to finalize the regulations due to the scope and volume of public comments.

Some shipping businesses and other marine industries have long pushed back at vessel speed rules. The National Marine Manufacturers Association has described speed restrictions as "archaic" and advocated for solutions that rely on technology.

NATION

Coffee prices changing morning routines

By Matt Sedensky
Associated Press

NEW YORK — For years, it was a daily McDonald's trip for a cup of coffee with 10 sugars and five creams. Later, it was Starbucks caramel macchiatos with almond milk and two pumps of syrup.

Coffee has been a morning ritual for Chandra Donelson since she was old enough to drink it. But, dismayed by rising prices, the 35-year-old from Washington, D.C., did the unthinkable: She gave it up.

"I did that daily for years. I loved it. That was just my routine," she says. "And now it's not."

Years of steadily climbing coffee prices have some in this country of coffee lovers upending their habits by nixing café visits, switching to cheaper brews or foregoing it altogether.

Coffee prices in the U.S. were up 18.3% in January from a year ago, according to the latest Consumer Price Index released on Friday. Over five years, the government reported, coffee prices rose 47%.



Erin Hooley/AP

Coffee prices in January were up 18.3% from last year.

That extraordinary rise has brought some to take extraordinary measures.

"Before, I thought, 'There's no way I could make it through my day without coffee,'" says Liz Sweeney, 50, of Boise, Idaho, a former "coffee addict" who has cut her consumption. "Now my car's not on automatic pilot."

Sweeney used to have three cups of coffee at home each day and stop at a café whenever she left the house.

As prices climbed last year, though, she nixed coffee shop visits and cut her intake to a cup a day at home.

To make up for the caffeine, she pops open a can of Diet Coke at home or rolls through McDonald's for one.

Dan DeBaun, 34, of Minnetonka, Minn., has likewise trimmed back on coffee shop visits, conscious of the increasing expense as he and his wife save up for a house.

"What used to be a $2 coffee, it's now $5, $6," says DeBaun, who now buys ground coffee at Trader Joe's and fills up a travel mug to bring to the office.

Data from Toast, a payment platform used by more than 150,000 restaurants, found the median price of a regular hot coffee in the U.S. had climbed to $3.61 in December, with wide variation by location. The median price of cold brews was $5.55.

Virtually all coffee consumed in the U.S. is imported. Though tariffs affected some imports of coffee in 2025, they ultimately were removed. Climate issues — drought in Vietnam, heavy rain in Indonesia and hot, dry weather in Brazil — are blamed for reducing yields of coffee crops and driving up global prices.

Two-thirds of Americans drink coffee daily, according to the National Coffee Association. For many, it is such an indispensable part of their routine, the soaring price has led to nothing more than grumbling.

The coffee association says its surveys show coffee consumption is broadly holding steady despite price hikes. But, squeezed by the cost of everything from rent to beef, others are shaking up their habit.

Sharon Cooksey, 55, of Greensboro, N.C., was visiting her local Starbucks most weekday mornings for a caramel latte until scaling back last year. First, she switched to brewing Starbucks at home. Then, she discovered Lavazza coffee was about 40% cheaper and switched to it.

"I can buy a bag of coffee for $6?" she said to herself. "It was like I had just discovered another world. The multiverse opened up to me in the coffee aisle of Publix."

She has noticed her home-brewed costs tick upward, too, but it's nothing compared to her café habit.

A bag of beans that lasts weeks costs her about the same as one latte.

Cooksey misses the social aspect of visiting the café, where baristas greeted her by name. But she's been surprised to find she actually prefers the way her homemade coffees taste.

"I'll be damned if it didn't taste so good," she says.

White Castle transforms restaurants for Valentine's Day

By Corey Williams
Associated Press

DETROIT — Valentine's Day dinner at White Castle with candles, attentive wait staff and white tablecloths was a treasured experience for Krystal Gray and her mother, Cornelia Murphy.

This year, Gray will bring along a photo of her mother, who died last spring at age 80, and place it on the table she has still reserved at one of the fast-food chain restaurants in the Detroit suburb of Ferndale.

"It wouldn't be the same without her," Gray said. "I wanted something to make me feel better about her not physically being able to come."

For 35 years, White Castle has invited lovers, loved ones and the soon-to-be in love to have an intimate meal at its restaurants. This year the 325 White Castles with a dining room in the U.S. are taking part in the promotion, according to Jamie Richardson, chief marketing officer of the Columbus, Ohio-based restaurant chain.

"That one day White Castle becomes love castle," Richardson said. "It's something our customers look forward to. Many are repeat visitors on Valentine's Day."

The promotion started in 1991 and was only offered at White Castles in St. Louis and Minneapolis. Richardson said the goal was to offer "something kind of fun and quirky and see if anyone wants to come out have a fancy Valentine's Day dinner at White Castle."

Each participating eatery is given a budget for decorations which can include red balloons, garland and flowers. Reservations are required and opened in early January. About 32,000 people celebrated Valentine's Day dinner at a White Castle in 2025. Richardson expected more than 35,000 this year.



Michael Conroy/AP

Valentine's decorations and signage promoting Valentine's Day dining are shown at a White Castle location in Indianapolis, Thursday.

"Some people show up in limousines," he said. "We'll have people dress like it's their wedding. We had over 200 White Castle weddings over the years."

There's just something about the thin slice of steam-grilled beef, slathered in mustard and ketchup with diced onions, cheese and a pickle slice on a dinner roll that many can't resist. Crinkle-cut French fries and a soft drink typically fill out orders. The onion chips and chicken rings also are popular.

"It's all the ambience, all the love and all the great memories for a fraction of the price," Richardson said. "For a couple, if they are really splurging, it's right around $20, or $25 if you're getting dessert on a stick."

Ann Tubbs, district supervisor of nine "Castles" in the Detroit and mid-Michigan areas, said customers tell her the cost helps but people keep coming because of the tradition and memories.

"I've had a couple who announced their pregnancy," Tubbs said. "We've had people come in with their children just to make those moments and others who have gotten engaged."



Krystal Gray/AP

Krystal Gray of Detroit treasures memories of enjoying a Valentine's Day meal at White Castle with her mother, Cornelia Murphy.

Amy Richardson, 41, of Lincoln Park near Detroit, makes sure that she, her three children and her significant other also dress the part, wearing something pink or red and at times matching each other.

She said she has spent Valentine's Day at a White Castle every year since 2012.

"I had just gotten into a new relationship and I had a 3-year-old daughter," she said of the first time. "We wanted to make it somewhere kid-friendly. All three of us packed up and went out on our date."

The couple has since added two younger children and spend about $30 on their Valentine's Day meals for a family of five.

"We usually get the sliders and the chicken rings and the mozzarella cheese sticks," Amy Richardson added. "It's more of a nostalgia thing. It may be fancied up, but it's not a fancy restaurant where people frown on you bringing a young child or children."

Waffle House, another national restaurant chain, also will mark its 18th year of offering a special themed dinner on Valentine's Day. This was the first year online reservations were taken and many of the 218 Waffle House locations taking part were booked by the end of last week, according to spokesperson Kelly Bruner.

Gray has made Valentine's Day at White Castle sort of a tradition, having done it about 10 times. Gray will be among 14 fans inducted in May into the White Castle "Craver's Hall of Fame." They were selected after submitting their White Castle stories.

This year, she also will share the day with her two young daughters as a tribute to her mother's memory.

NATION

Obama puts end to buzz, denies alien contact

Associated Press

Former President Barack Obama said he did not see evidence that aliens "have made contact with us," after sending social media abuzz by saying aliens were real on a podcast over the weekend.

During a lightning round of questions with podcast host Brian Tyler Cohen, Obama was asked, "Are aliens real?"

"They're real," he answered, continuing: "But I haven't seen them. And, they're not being kept in Area 51."

On Sunday, the former president released a statement on Instagram, appearing to clarify what he meant by his comments that have since gone viral.

"I was trying to stick with the spirit of the speed round, but since it's gotten attention let me clarify. Statistically, the universe is so vast that the odds are good there's life out there. But the distances between solar systems are so great that the chances we've been visited by aliens is low, and I saw no evidence during my presidency that extraterrestrials have made contact with us. Really!"

Secrecy around Area 51, a top-secret Cold War test site in the Nevada desert, has long fueled conspiracy theories among UFO enthusiasts.

In 2013, the CIA acknowledged the existence of the site, but not UFO crashes, black-eyed extraterrestrials or staged moon landings.

Declassified documents referred to the 8,000-square-mile installation by name after decades of U.S. government officials refusing to acknowledge it.

The base has been a testing ground for a host of top-secret aircraft, including the U-2 in the 1950s and later the B-2 stealth bomber.



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Barack Obama talks to Julius Erving during the NBA All-Star basketball game Sunday, in Inglewood, Calif.

Mardi Gras eyes sustainability with biodegradable beads

BY TRAVIS LOLLER AND STEPHEN SMITH
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — It is Carnival season in New Orleans. That means gazillions of green, gold and purple Mardi Gras beads.

Once made of glass and cherished by parade spectators who were lucky enough to catch them, today cheap plastic beaded necklaces from overseas are tossed from floats by the handful. Spectators sometimes pile dozens around their necks, but many are trashed or left on the ground. A few years ago after heavy flooding, the city found more than 46 tons of them clogging its storm drains.

The beads are increasingly viewed as a problem, but a Mardi Gras without beads also seems unfathomable. That is why it was a radical step when the Krewe of Freret made the decision last year to ban plastic beads from their parade.

"Our riders loved it because the spectators don't value this anymore," Freret co-founder Greg Rhoades said. "It's become so prolific that they dodge out of the way when they see cheap plastic beads coming at them."

This year, beads are back, but not the cheap plastic ones. Freret is one of three krewes throwing biodegradable beads developed at Louisiana State University.

The "PlantMe Beads" are 3D-printed from a starch-based, commercially available material called polylactic acid, or PLA, graduate student Alexis Strain said. The individual beads are large hollow spheres containing okra seeds. That is because the necklaces can actually be planted, and the okra attracts bacteria that help them decompose.



GERALD HERBERT/AP

A 3D printer in a lab at Louisiana State University, creates biodegradable Mardi Gras beads Jan. 27, in Baton Rouge, La.

2.5M pounds of trash

Kristi Trail, executive director of the Pontchartrain Conservancy, said plastic beads are a twofold problem. First, they clog the storm drains, leading to flooding. Then those that aren't caught in the drains are washed directly into Lake Pontchartrain, where they can harm marine life. The group is currently preparing to study microplastics in the lake.

The trend toward a more sustainable Mardi Gras has been growing for years and includes a small but growing variety of more thoughtful throws like food, soaps and sunglasses.

Trail said there is no good data right now to say if those efforts are having an impact, but the group recently got a grant that should help them answer the question in the future.

"Beads are obviously a problem, but we generate about 2.5 million pounds of trash from Mardi Gras," Trail said.

PlantMe beads

Strain works in the lab of Professor Naohiro Kato, an associate professor of biology at LSU. He first got the idea to develop biodegradable beads in 2013 after talking to people concerned about the celebration's environmental impact. As a plant biologist, Kato knew that bioplastics could be made from plants and got curious about the possibilities.

The first iteration of the lab's biodegradable beads came in 2018, when they produced beads made from a bioplastic derived from microalgae. However, production costs were too high for the algae-based beads to offer a practical alternative to petroleum-based beads. Then Strain started experimenting with 3D printing, and the PlantMe Bead was born.

For the 2026 Carnival season, LSU students have produced 3,000 PlantMe Bead necklaces that they are giving to three krewes in exchange for feedback on the design and on how well they are received by spectators.

One funny thing, Kato said, is that people have told him they love how unique the PlantMe Beads are and want to keep them.

"So wait a minute, if you want to keep it, the petroleum-plastic Mardi Gras bead is the best, because this won't last," he said.

'Things that people value'

The lab is still working on ideas for a more sustainable Mardi Gras. Strain is experimenting with a different 3D printer material that biodegrades quickly without needing to be planted. Kato is talking with local schools about turning Mardi Gras bead-making into a community project. He envisions students 3D printing necklaces while learning about bioplastics and plant biology. And he is still exploring ways to make algae-based bioplastic commercially viable.

Ultimately, however, Kato said, the goal should not be to replace one plastic bead with a less harmful one. He hopes Mardi Gras embraces the idea of less waste.

Rhoades said Freret is moving in the same direction.

"In 2025, we were the first krewe — major parading organization — to say, 'No more. No more cheap beads. Let's throw things that people value, that people appreciate, that can be used year-round,' " Rhoades said.

One of the most coveted items they throw is baseball hats with the Freret logo. He sees people wearing the hats around the city, and he says other krewes have noticed.

"I really believe that we, and other krewes, are able to inspire your larger krewes," he said. "They want people to like their stuff. They want people take their stuff home, and use it, and talk about it, and post it on social media, and say, 'Look what I just caught!' "

TECHNOLOGY

Olympic drones are creating a buzz

BY RICK MAESE
The Washington Post

LIVIGNO, Italy — They go higher than any aerialist, faster than a downhill skier and send a stronger signal than ever about how the Winter Games want to be seen.

At these Olympics, broadcast drones have given new life to the decades-old Olympic motto — *faster, higher, stronger* — translating it for the technological age. They sweep across mountain courses and dive into turns once visible only to competitors. In the early days of these Games, the army of drones spread across Northern Italy have provided panoramic views of the Alps while placing viewers closer to the action than ever before, racing alongside luge sliders down icy chutes, trailing skiers at more than 80 mph and hovering near snowboarders and freestyle skiers as they twirl through the air.

Their whirring can be heard across outdoor venues, a literal buzz that now accompanies winter sport — and a metaphoric one as audiences marvel at a perspective never before possible.

"It brings a whole new element to Olympic sports," U.S. bobsled pilot Kaillie Armbruster Humphries said.

The visuals have drawn widespread admiration. But their proximity to the action has also raised tricky questions: In sports where athletes already operate on the thinnest of margins, are the drones a potential distraction — or even safety hazard — in the most consequential moments of their lives?

Armbruster Humphries, a six-time Olympian, said some athletes did have early hesitations. During a World Cup event and training runs in Italy earlier this season, drones were tested along sliding tracks, raising questions about safety.

"But I think everyone is a bit more at peace now knowing it's a professional drone pilot."

The drones have drawn attention for the new levels of visual storytelling they provide, quickly becoming a talking point among viewers.

Several athletes, however, say the cameras have been far more noticeable on screens than they are during competition.

For elite athletes, tuning out distractions is part of the job. They train to narrow their focus, blocking out crowd noise, public-address announcers and the chaos that surrounds them — a kind of competitive tunnel vision that, many say, now extends to flying, buzzing cameras.

American snowboarder Maddie Mastro listens to music as she zigzags across the halfpipe, earbuds in either ear — "full blast" — and says the buzzing drone has no impact on her runs, "if they're flown at a safe distance."



JOHN LOCHER/AP

Switzerland's Marco Odermatt, followed by a drone, speeds down the course of an alpine ski men's downhill portion of a team combined race, at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Bormio, Italy, Feb. 9.

For Avery Krumme, 17, American freestyle skier, the mental shift happens the moment she drops in. She listened to Rihanna as she took the course for Monday's slopestyle competition but was otherwise locked in on her board beneath and her run in front of her.

"Your mind goes to a different place," she said. "Everything is just kind of there."

Others say awareness depends on timing.

Swiss freestyle skier Giulia Tanno said the drones are more noticeable at the top of the course or during practice but tend to disappear once competition begins. "As soon as I drop, I don't hear," she said. "I'm just focused."

Still, not all athletes are entirely comfortable with how close the technology can appear. Snowboarders are used to drones following them in the pipe or along race and obstacles courses at big events, like the X Games or an Olympics.

American snowboarder Bea Kim, 19, said in some situations, they've flown too close to athletes.

"I think that might just be because the people who are flying them are somewhere else and they don't realize how close they are," Kim said.

When drones are flown high enough and down the center of the course, she added, they're easier to ignore. "We're kind of in our own head and focusing on our riding."

The concern is not theoretical.

In 2015, Marcel Hirscher, the Austrian slalom and giant slalom champion, narrowly escaped injury when a camera-carrying drone fell from the sky during a World Cup slalom in Madonna di Campiglio, Italy, smashing into the snow just meters behind him as he raced down the course. Hirscher appeared not to notice at the time, but afterward was blunt. "This is horrible," he said. "This can never happen again. This can be a serious injury."



LUCA BRUNO/AP

A drone operator prepares to cover the men's 5,000 meters speedskating race at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan on Feb. 8.

"When a camera is chasing the athlete down the hill — right in front of them or right behind them — you truly get the sense of how fast they're going."

Michael Sheehan
NBC coordinating director

The incident prompted the International Ski and Snowboard Federation to ban drones for several years, underscoring how little margin for error exists in sports defined by speed and proximity.

But the technology has evolved significantly.

The drones at these Games are operated by Olympic Broadcasting Services, the IOC's in-house production arm, which relies on more than 800 cameras to broadcast the Olympics. Of those, OBS has deployed 10 traditional drones and more than two dozen first-person-view drones designed to deliver immersive, athlete-level perspectives.

Each drone is operated by a three-person team — a pilot, a director and a technician — working in constant communication via a dedicated channel to manage flight paths, timing and technical adjustments, a level of coordination OBS says is designed to prioritize safety while capturing dynamic shots.

Pierre Ducrey, the IOC's sports director, said the organization believes the drones can be integrated without interfering with athletes' performance.

"The images you see are innovative, and we make sure they don't get in the way of performance," Ducrey said. "It is part of an evolution of technology. Some people are not used to seeing the shadows on the field of play or the noise, but the integration is something we can manage, and the results could be seen over the weekend."

Michael Sheehan, the coordinating director for NBC's Olympic coverage, called the drone footage a "game changer," saying drones offer an intimacy that traditional cameras cannot.

"When a camera is chasing the athlete down the hill — right in front of them or right behind them — you truly get the sense of how fast they're going," Sheehan said. "That's virtually impossible to capture with a wide shot shooting from the side. The drone coverage takes us to a place we've traditionally never been."

He said the shift said has fundamentally changed how speed and difficulty are conveyed on television, a type of visual storytelling that wasn't possible until very recently.

"Traditional sports coverage is perpendicular — cameras shooting as action moves left to right," Sheehan said. "The drones let us be parallel to the athlete, right in front of them or right behind them, and that changes everything."

Veteran U.S. bobsled pilot Elana Meyers Taylor said she isn't concerned about the drones, but admitted the perspective can be a lot — even for fellow athletes.

She watched some of the early Olympic luge races, which featured a drone buzzing not far from the athletes down the track.

"I was like, this is slightly nauseating," Meyers Taylor said. "I don't know if I could watch that all the way down the run."

WORLD

Expectations low for latest US-brokered Ukraine talks

By Illia Novikov
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A Ukrainian delegation was headed to Geneva on Monday for another round of U.S.-brokered talks with Russian officials, ahead of next week's fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

There was no anticipation of any significant progress on ending the war at the Tuesday-Wednesday meeting in Switzerland as both sides appear to be sticking to their negotiating positions on key issues, despite the United States setting a June deadline to reach a settlement. The future of Ukrainian land that Russia occupies or still covets is a central issue.

Ukrainian defenders remain locked in a war of attrition with Russia's bigger army along the roughly 750-mile front line. Ukrainian civilians endure Russian aerial barrages that repeatedly knock out power and smash homes, while Ukraine has developed drones that can fly deep into Russian territory and strike oil refineries and arms depots.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday that the talks in Geneva will deal with a "broader range of issues related to the territories and other issues connected to the demands that we have." He didn't elaborate on the issues.

A year of peace efforts by President Donald Trump's administration has failed to stop the fighting. Western officials and analysts say Russian President Vladimir Putin believes that time is on his side, that Western support for Ukraine will peter out and that Ukraine's resistance will eventually collapse under pressure.

Gen. Kyrylo Budanov, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff, posted a photograph on Telegram showing himself standing next to a train with other members of the negotiating team, which is due to be led in Geneva by Rustem Umerov, Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council chief.

Entering or leaving Ukraine entails a long overland journey, even for VIPs, as the country's airspace is closed because of the war.

Putin's adviser Vladimir Medinsky, who headed Moscow's team of negotiators in the first direct peace talks with Ukraine in Istanbul in March 2022 and who has forcefully pushed Putin's war goals, is returning to lead Moscow's delegation.

Igor Kostyukov, the head of Russian military intelligence, and Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin, along with other officials, will also be in the delegation, Kremlin spokesman Peskov said.

It was not clear which American officials would be in Geneva. At recent talks in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, the Trump administration was represented by envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner.

The Russian and Ukrainian delegations were to report back to their leaders before any possible compromises discussed in Geneva could be accepted.



Sergei Grits/AP

Activists and relatives hold a rally Sunday in Kyiv, Ukraine, demanding the release of Ukrainian soldiers who were captured by Russia during the war.

N. Korea opens housing area for families of soldiers killed in Ukraine

By Kim Tong-Hyung
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said Monday it completed a new housing district in Pyongyang for families of North Korean soldiers killed while fighting alongside Russian forces in Ukraine, the latest effort by leader Kim Jong Un to honor the war dead.

State media photos showed Kim Jong Un walking through the new street — called Saeppyol Street — and visiting the homes of some of the families with his increasingly prominent daughter, believed to be named Kim Ju Ae, as he pledged to repay the "young martyrs" who "sacrificed all to their motherland."

In recent months, North Korea has intensified propaganda glorifying troops deployed to fight in Russia's war against Ukraine, such as establishing a memorial wall and building a museum. Analysts see it as an effort to bolster internal unity and curb potential public discontent.

Kim in recent months has sent thousands of troops and large quantities of military equipment, including artillery and missiles, to fuel Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine, as the leaders align in the face of their separate confrontations with Washington.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service told lawmakers last week it estimated 6,000 North Korean troops have been killed or wounded during their deployment in the war, but did not provide a breakdown of fatalities. The agency said last year it believed roughly 600 had died.

The spy agency believes North Korean forces are gaining modern combat experience and Russian technical support that could improve the performance of their weapons systems, according to lawmakers who attended last week's closed-door briefing.

The construction of the new street comes as North Korea prepares to open a major ruling party congress later this month, where Kim is expected to announce his major goals in domestic and foreign policy over the next five years and take further steps to tighten his control.

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

Transportation 944

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WORLD

Rubio plugs Orbán's bid for another term

Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary — Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday enthusiastically endorsed Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán 's bid to serve a fifth straight term after upcoming elections in April, emphasizing during a visit to Budapest the strong personal relationship between the nationalist leader and President Donald Trump.

Orbán, who has led Hungary since 2010, is one of Trump's most vocal supporters in the European Union, and has actively curried the U.S. president's favor leading up to the April 12 vote in which he will face the toughest challenge of his last 16 years in power.

Rubio was in the Hungarian capital for meetings with Orbán and his government where he signed an agreement on U.S.-Hungarian civilian nuclear cooperation that includes the possible purchase of compact nuclear reactors — known as small modular reactors or SMRs — as well as U.S.-supplied nuclear fuel and spent fuel storage technology.

At a news conference in Budapest, Rubio said U.S.-Hungary relations — which both he and Orbán described as experiencing a "golden age" under Trump — go beyond mere diplomatic cooperation.

"President Trump is deeply committed to your success because your success is our success," said Rubio, addressing Orbán.

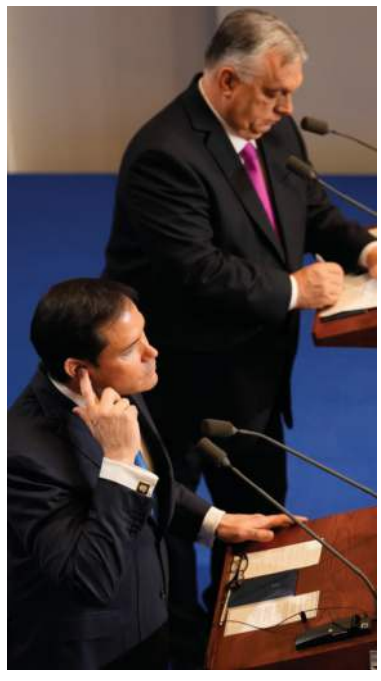
Rubio's stop in Hungary followed a visit to Slovakia on Sunday after he previously attended the Munich Security Conference in Germany.

Led by euroskeptic populists who oppose support for Ukraine and vocally back Trump, Slovakia and Hungary are both friendly territory for Rubio in his push to shore up energy agreements with both Central European countries.

Widely considered Russian President Vladimir Putin's most reliable advocate in the EU, Orbán has maintained warm relations with the Kremlin despite its war against Ukraine while building ties with Trump and his MAGA movement.

Orbán has remained firmly committed to purchasing Russian energy despite efforts by the EU to wean off such supplies, and received an exemption from U.S. sanctions on Russian energy after a November meeting in the White House with Trump.

Apparently trusting that his political and personal affinity with Trump could pay even greater dividends, Orbán and his government have sought to woo the U.S. leader to Hungary before the pivotal April elections — hoping such a high-profile visit and endorsement would push Orbán over the finish line.



ALEX BRANDON/AP

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, left, and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban hold a joint news conference Monday in Budapest, Hungary

Iran envoy, UN nuke watchdog head meet

Associated Press

GENEVA — Iran's top diplomat met with the head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency on Monday, ahead of a second round of negotiations with the United States over Tehran's nuclear program.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Rafael Grossi, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and said he would also meet with Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi of Oman, which is hosting the U.S.-Iran talks in Geneva on Tuesday.

"I am in Geneva with real ideas to achieve a fair and equitable deal," Araghchi wrote on X. "What is not on the table: submission before threats."

As President Donald Trump ordered an additional aircraft carrier to the region, Iran on Monday launched a second naval drill in weeks, state TV reported. It said the drill would test Iran's intelligence and operational capabilities in the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

Just before the talks, Iran announced its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard started the drill early Monday morning in the waterways that are crucial international trade routes through which 20% of the world's oil passes.

The Trump administration is seeking a deal to limit Iran's nuclear program and ensure it does not develop nuclear weapons. On Sunday, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi signaled that Tehran could be open to compromise on the nuclear issue, but is looking for an easing of international sanctions led by the United States.

"The ball is in America's court. They have to prove they want to have a deal with us," Takht-Ravanchi told the BBC.

Oman hosted a first round of indirect talks between the U.S. and Iran on Feb. 6.

Trump initially threatened military action over Iran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests last month, but then shifted to a pressure campaign in recent weeks to try to get Tehran to make a deal over its nuclear program.

The direct meeting with Grossi is a significant step after Iran suspended all cooperation with the IAEA following the June war with Israel.



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

7 couples tied the knot at Reading Terminal Market

PHILADELPHIA — Tucked in between a fish market, a bakery, and a honey stand, seven couples tied the knot among family, friends and perfect strangers on Saturday.

"It's amazing," said Beth Esposito-Evans, who officiated the ceremony. "What could be more Philly than Reading Terminal Market?"

Esposito-Evans, a vendor at the market, said she helped relaunch the "Married at the Market" Valentine's Day wedding last year after she became an ordained minister.

Fifty-seven couples applied, according to event promoter London Faust. The seven lucky couples selected for the wedding were treated to decor, a violin player and the location, all paid for by Reading Terminal Market.

Faust said "the Reading Terminal team began an outreach process loosely prioritizing those who had strong ties to the market in their love story." The celebration is free of charge for those accepted.



TYGER WILLIAMS, THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER/TNS

Memorable matrimony

David Skillman kisses his bride, Daysi Morales, during their wedding day at the Reading Terminal Market's Married at the Market on Valentine's Day in Philadelphia on Saturday.

Authorities bust sprawling network of brothels

LOS ANGELES — A massive Southern California brothel ring was busted by authorities, leading to two arrests, officials said.

Detectives from the Ventura County Sheriff's Office Special Crimes Unit conducted a yearlong investigation into a brothel ring, according to a Ventura County Sheriff's Office news release.

Kebin Dong and Wei Nie, Los Angeles residents, were identified as the owners and operators of a sex services website, according to the release. Detectives found more than 30 residential and hotel brothels throughout California. More than 60 female sex workers were also found on the website.

Dong and Nie allegedly helped schedule appointments at the brothels.

Dong and Nie were arrested at their home in Hacienda Heights and booked on suspicion of pimping, pandering and conspiracy. They are being held on $200,000 bail.

Agency flags safety faults that led to plant explosion

HARRISBURG — A federal safety agency investigating an August blast at a U.S. Steel plant near Pittsburgh that left two workers dead said it found a series of incomplete, outdated or inadequate procedures and practices that "exposed" employees to the explosion, which happened as workers were flushing a gas valve.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration fined the company a total of $118,214 and issued 10 citations.

The blast also injured 11 others, including contractors, according to the Chemical Safety Board, a federal agency investigating the explosion.

Before the August blast, Clairton Coke Works had a history of accidents and explosions, and some current and former workers there say poor management and underinvestment have exacerbated air pollution and undermined workplace safety, Pittsburgh's Public Source and The Associated Press have found.

Teachers and district reach deal to end strike

SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco teachers reached a tentative agreement Friday with the school district to end their strike, the first such walkout in nearly 50 years.

The strike by about 6,000 public schoolteachers started Feb. 9 and the district closed all 120 of its schools and said it would offer independent study to some of its 50,000 students.

The two-year tentative deal will give teachers the equivalent of a 5% raise over two years and, in a big win for the United Educators of San Francisco, the district will offer fully-funded health care for dependents starting on Jan. 1, 2027.

The union said San Francisco teachers receive some of the lowest contributions to their health care costs in the Bay Area, with some having to pay at least $1,200 a month for a family health care plan, pushing many to leave.

Zoo announces its new baby elephant's name

WASHINGTON — The Smithsonian's National Zoo announced Friday that its less than 2-week-old female Asian elephant has been named Linh Mai, Vietnamese for spirit blossom.

The 308-pound calf was the first elephant born at the zoo in almost 25 years and only the third elephant birth in the zoo's 136-year history.

The calf's parents are 12-year-old mother Nhi Linh and 44-year-old father Spike.

Zoo fans were invited to vote for their favorite name by making a donation of $5 or more on the zoo's website. Linh Mai won, with donations of $22,885, the zoo said in a statement. The total raised was $58,892.

States reliant on river fail to find consensus

PHOENIX — The seven Western states that depend on the Colorado River missed a deadline for the second time Saturday to agree on a plan addressing record drought and water shortages.

Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Nevada Gov. Joe Lombardo released a joint statement calling on Upper Basin states to offer more concessions. Those states include Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

"The Colorado River is essential to our communities and economies, and our states have conserved large volumes of water in recent years to stabilize the basin's water supplies for years to come," the governors said.

"Our stance remains firm and fair: all seven basin states must share in the responsibility of conservation."

Arizona, California and Nevada have offered to decrease Colorado River allocation by 27%, 10% and 17%, respectively, according to those states.

Schools struggling to pass funding levies

HELENA — It's getting harder for Montana schools to win voter approval for discretionary funding levies, according to an analysis by the Montana School Boards Association.

School districts ask voters to approve school levies — a fixed-term increase in property tax — to cover schools' operational expenses that aren't fully funded by the state.

The data, presented Thursday to a study commission examining school funding issues in advance of the 2027 Legislature, indicates that the passage rates for routine funding requests, once higher than 90%, have plummeted in recent years.

That's despite fewer districts putting those requests before voters.

4 dead in small plane crash near ski resort

DENVER — Four people are dead after a small plane crashed Friday on a mountain near the Colorado ski resort community of Steamboat Springs, authorities said.

An Epic E1000, a six-seat turboprop plane, crashed around 12:20 a.m. with four people on board, the Federal Aviation Administration said. Four people died at the scene, Routt County coroner Mitch Locke said.

The plane crashed in a very remote part of Emerald Mountain, a mountain with hiking and biking trails just across the Yampa River from Steamboat Springs, Routt County Sheriff Doug Scherar said.

The plane crashed into mountainous terrain in unknown circumstances, according to preliminary information, the National Transportation Safety Board said.

The FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board both said they are investigating the crash.

From wire reports

FACES

Forever young in Springfield

'Simpsons' creators discuss show's longevity

BY LIAM MCEWAN
Associated Press

Eight hundred episodes, 37 seasons and one four-fingered family that refuses to age.

As "The Simpsons" hit a milestone over the weekend that few series have ever glimpsed, the architects behind Springfield are reflecting on the choices that turned crude 1987 shorts from "The Tracey Ullman Show" into a cultural juggernaut.

"We've done 800 episodes, and I'm really glad we didn't do a big overarching story," said Al Jean, executive producer and former showrunner. "You always return to square one at the end of the show. And there's no question that was a big influence on the longevity."

For Matt Selman, the current showrunner, the Simpsons' refusal to age is a liberation that simultaneously raises questions about the weight of their long history: "Do these characters have the emotional memory of the 800 things that have happened to them? ... I don't really know the answer to that."

Meanwhile, show creator Matt Groening views reaching nearly four decades' worth of production as a triumph tinged with perfectionism.

"I've spent 38 years now trying to get them to draw the characters correctly," Groening said. "We've got to figure out how to shift perspective and do it more cinematically and we're always trying to improve."

Nancy Cartwright arrived at her 1987 audition expecting to read for Lisa Simpson. She soon developed another idea.

"Hi Matt. Nice to meet you. I was out there and I noticed that there's Lisa, that's fine, 8-year-old middle child, but then there's this Bart," Cartwright recalled saying. "I'd kind of like to do him."

Groening agreed to the "switcheroo" immediately. "She completely channeled him," he said.

Nearly four decades later, Cartwright notes that "there are still people that yet don't know that it's a woman that does the voice."

Lisa Simpson's defining characteristic emerged just as spontaneously. Animator David Silverman, who drew the original outline for the show's iconic opening sequence, recalled a production meeting where the middle Simpson child lacked a signature moment.

"We don't have a gag for Lisa; we have a gag for everybody else. What should we do for Lisa?" Silverman reflects. "And I suggested, 'Well, maybe she's in the band and maybe she plays a tuba.' And so Jim (James L. Brooks) said, 'Well, I don't know about the tuba, but what if she played the baritone saxophone? In fact, what if she played it really well? That could be her character; she could be the genius kid of the family that nobody appreciates.'"

The show's path to becoming a global institution was paved with early outrage. Groening remembers when Bart Simpson was deemed a threat to American classrooms — he relished every moment of it.

"That was the best move ever when the culture decided 'The Simpsons' was too outrageous," Groening said. "And if you wear a Bart Simpson 'Underachiever' T-shirt to school, you got kicked out. That was the best thing for us."

When Fox executives asked whether the show targeted kids or adults, Groening said the creative team made an immediate choice that defined everything that followed. "We said it's for adults," he recalled. "And that was the best instantaneous decision that we made because it meant that we could do a wide range of jokes."

As the internet arrived, so did a new breed of critic. Groening admits the "Comic Book Guy" character — Springfield's perpetually dissatisfied nerd — was created as a direct response to early online fans declaring every new episode the "worst episode ever."

"I like analysis and I like criticism," Groening said. "But 'That's not funny' and 'That's boring,' that annoys me. Those are to me the laziest reactions you can get."

His prediction for the show's future carries characteristic sarcasm. "Well, I can tell you this because we are time travelers," Groening joked. "'The Simpsons' will be on in a thousand years. Still on. Unfortunately, fans are going to say the show's been going downhill for the last 500 years."

Guest stars have become a hallmark of the series, from Michael Jackson to Lady Gaga to the Rolling Stones.

One prestigious group has consistently declined invitations to Springfield. "The ones that never said yes were U.S. presidents, and I don't think we're ever going to do that," Jean said.

For Groening, the future remains as open-ended as the series itself: "Believe it or not, there's still stories that we haven't gotten around to that are just in my head that I want us to do."



ANDREW PARK, INVISION/AP

Matt Groening (left), Nancy Cartwright and Matt Selman attend a Feb. 6 showing of the 800th episode of "The Simpsons" in Los Angeles.

Oscar-winning actor Robert Duvall dies at 95

BY BOB THOMAS
Associated Press

Robert Duvall, the Oscar-winning actor of matchless versatility and dedication whose classic roles included the intrepid consigliere of the first two "Godfather" movies and the over-the-hill country music singer in "Tender Mercies," has died at age 95.

Duvall died "peacefully" at his home Sunday in Middleburg, Va., according to an announcement from his publicist and from a statement posted on his Facebook page by his wife, Luciana Duvall.

"To the world, he was an Academy Award-winning actor, a director, a storyteller. To me, he was simply everything," Luciana Duvall wrote.

The bald, wiry Duvall didn't have leading-man looks, but few character actors enjoyed such a long, rewarding and unpredictable career, in leading and supporting roles, from an itinerant preacher to Josef Stalin. Beginning with his 1962 film debut as Boo Radley, the reclusive neighbor in "To Kill a Mockingbird," Duvall created a gallery of unforgettable portrayals. They earned him seven Academy Award nominations and the best actor prize for "Tender Mercies," which came out in 1983. He also won four Golden Globes, including one for playing the philosophical cattle-driver boss in the 1989 miniseries "Lonesome Dove," a role he often cited as his favorite.



Duvall

In 2005, Duvall was awarded a National Medal of Arts.

He had been acting for some 20 years when "The Godfather," released in 1972, established him as one of the most in-demand performers of Hollywood. He had made a previous film, "The Rain People," with Francis Coppola, and the director chose him to play Tom Hagen in the mafia epic that featured Al Pacino and Marlon Brando, among others. Duvall was a master of subtlety as an Irishman among Italians, rarely at the center of a scene, but often listening and advising in the background, an irreplaceable thread through the saga of the Corleone crime family.

In another Coppola film, "Apocalypse Now," Duvall was the embodiment of deranged masculinity as Lieutenant Colonel Bill Kilgore, who with equal vigor enjoyed surfing and bombing raids on the Viet Cong. Duvall required few takes for one of the most famous passages in movie history: "I love the smell of napalm in the morning. You know, one time we had a hill bombed, for 12 hours. When it was all over, I walked up. We didn't find one of 'em. ...

"The smell, you know that gasoline smell, the whole hill. Smelled like — victory."

'Wuthering Heights' has strong debut with $34.8M

Associated Press

Emerald Fennell's bold reimagining of "Wuthering Heights" brought crowds of women to movie theaters this weekend. The Warner Bros. release topped the box-office charts and nabbed the title for the year's biggest opening with $34.8 million in ticket sales in its first three days in North American theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday. According to PostTrak polling, an estimated 76% of those ticket buyers were women. By the end of Monday's Presidents Day holiday, the total could rise to $40 million.

The romantic drama starring Margot Robbie and Jacob Elordi as the star-crossed Catherine and Heathcliff won out over the weekend's other newcomers, including the animated "GOAT" and the heist thriller "Crime 101." Its biggest day was Saturday's Valentine's Day holiday, where it earned $14 million. "Wuthering Heights" is performing even better internationally, where it's expecting to rake in an additional $42 million from 76 territories.

"Wuthering Heights" is Warner Bros.' ninth No. 1 opening in a row.

Fennell's version of "Wuthering Heights," which takes many liberties with Emily Brontë's novel, largely divided critics. It's currently sitting at a mixed 61% on Rotten Tomatoes.

"GOAT," a family-friendly animated Sony release produced by basketball star Stephen Curry, landed in second place with an estimated $26 million. It was projected to bring in another $6 million on Monday, which would bring its four-day total to $32 million — the biggest animated debut since "Elemental" in 2023. It also made $15.6 million internationally, bringing its global total to $47.6 million.

Honors for 'Adolescence,' 'Train Dreams' awarded

Clint Bentley's lyrical Denis Johnson adaptation "Train Dreams" won the top film award at the Film Independent Spirit Awards on Sunday in Los Angeles, while "Adolescence" dominated the television categories. Both were released on Netflix.

Bentley also won best director.

The top acting prize, which is awarded in a gender-neutral category, went to Rose Byrne for "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You."

"Adolescence" won new scripted series, best actor for Stephen Graham, best supporting actor for Erin Doherty and the breakthrough prize for Owen Cooper.

"The Secret Agent" won the international feature prize.

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OPINION

Trump's death-row revenge gambit hits a snag

By Jason Willick
The Washington Post

The pardon power is different from other presidential prerogatives because it's irreversible. A president's grant of clemency can't be second-guessed by a future president of the opposing party. Or can it? An unfolding legal drama involving the death penalty, due process and executive power deserves more attention.

In the waning days of his presidency, Joe Biden used the pardon power to commute the sentences of 37 out of 40 federal prisoners awaiting execution. Instead, they will serve life in prison. Donald Trump was outraged at this decision and set out to roll it back.

Ironically, if Biden had pardoned the murderers altogether or had them released (which would have been constitutionally possible but politically scandalous), Trump couldn't have done anything about it. But because they remain under life sentences, his administration can still influence their fates. It can't lawfully kill them, but it can dictate the conditions of their confinement.

Trump issued an executive order his first day back in office to "ensure that these offenders are imprisoned in conditions consistent with the monstrosity of their crimes." The Justice Department implemented this directive by condemning them to the most isolating imprisonment possible, at ADX Florence in Colorado — a "supermax" facility that cuts off inmates from most human contact. Twenty of the prisoners sued to stop their transfer, and on Wednesday U.S. District Judge Timothy J. Kelly, a Trump appointee in the District of Columbia, ruled that the retributive scheme violates the Constitution's guarantee of due process, at least in their cases. It's an important statement that cuts to the heart of the rule of law.

Supporting due process for innocent people is easy, after all, just as everyone supports free speech for conformist ideas. To say that even people who have been convicted of what Kelly called "some of the most horrific crimes imaginable," and had those convictions upheld on appeal — to say that even they are protected by the Constitution from arbitrary punishment — is not intuitive. Commitments to fundamental rights are tested only when their application is unpopular.

ADX Florence is for "inmates who have demonstrated an inability to function in a less restrictive environment without being a threat to others," according to the Bureau of Prisons. The government is supposed to consider other options before sending a prisoner there. Prisoners don't have anything like the due-process rights of free people, but before being transferred to ADX, Kelly concluded, they are entitled at least to "notice and an opportunity to be heard."

To the extent the 20 plaintiffs in this case received that process, the judge determined, it was essentially a sham with a predetermined result dictated by the Justice Department's top brass. After all, the decision was the same for every one of them — including one who had no disciplinary record in 23 years on death row — and justified with the same bureaucratic boilerplate.

That's because the Bureau of Prisons was following political commands rather than its professional protocols. The prisoners were housed in the "special confinement unit" at a prison in Terre Haute, Ind., where the federal government executes people. Once the clemency came down in December 2024, prison officials started planning to transfer them. A lawyer for the bureau initially said most of the plaintiffs were unlikely to be sent to ADX; some might move to other parts of the Terre Haute facility and some might go to other prisons. He said "there was no way" that the oldest prisoner in the group would be assigned to the supermax facility.

Once the Trump Justice Department got up and running in 2025, the Bureau of Prisons changed course. It held "hearings" that led to an ADX assignment in every instance. Prisoners received notifications that their "notoriety" meant that their "well-being would be jeopardized in a less secure setting," the lawsuit says. Kelly wrote that he was hesitant to "wade into prison administration," but couldn't ignore that the process had been a charade. "It is likely that there was no genuine opportunity for Plaintiffs — at their hearings, during their appeals, or at any other time — to oppose their transfers to ADX Florence," he wrote.

The case has an uncertain fate on appeal. Kelly's ruling persuasively applies the Fifth Amendment's due-process clause, but it could run into problems with the Supreme Court's recent presidential power precedents. The effort to punish these inmates is an assertion of raw political control over the Bureau of Prisons — and the Supreme Court has been increasingly emphatic that the president supervises the entire executive branch.

Trump's attempted retaliation for Biden's clemency is also a warning about where an increasingly out-of-control pardon power may lead. As presidents wield the power more assertively, their successors of the opposing party might reach for more boundary-pushing ways to get around past pardons.

But the fact remains that the Biden death-row clemencies are entirely constitutional and valid. The case is an opportunity to quote the conservative philosopher Peter Viereck, who once wrote memorably: "The lynching of the guilty is a subtler but no less deadly blow to civilization than the lynching of the innocent." Though execution is off the table, Trump in this case is targeting the guilty — the very, very guilty — for a terrible fate. Even when it's popular, allowing punishment without process erodes civilization.

Jason Willick is a Washington Post columnist focusing on law, politics and foreign policy.

Kids spend hours in school on screens. And for what?

Bloomberg Opinion Editorial Board

U.S. schools spent $30 billion on educational technology in 2024, roughly 10 times the amount they spent on textbooks. By one estimate, this sum could double in six years. Yet as children spend more time on school-issued screens, learning is deteriorating. Before spending another dime, school districts should rethink this "edtech" experiment.

For more than a century, IQ scores across the West climbed steadily as schooling increased. This trend reversed about two decades ago. Gen Z, recent findings show, is the first generation to be less cognitively capable than their parents — by IQ as well as other measures including numeracy and creativity — despite spending more time in school. What changed?

One potential factor is that class time has become increasingly screen-based. Almost 90% of schools give students a device, some as early as kindergarten, and almost two-thirds of elementary-age children spend up to four hours parked in front of a laptop. Many districts have signed edtech contracts that require kids to be online.

Some screen time is defensible for students learning computer skills, especially older ones. But there's an important distinction between edtech — software that teaches traditional subjects on a device — and technical education, such as learning to code.

Until recently, educators were relatively sanguine about the former. Students who appear engaged must be learning, they reasoned. A different picture is now emerging. Although edtech purveyors argue that their products can boost results — and some research shows potential benefits under certain conditions — the bulk of independent studies suggest that learning online is often less effective than using paper text and may even be harmful. Edtech, as one researcher puts it, is "fundamentally incompatible with how human beings actually learn."

Consider the biology involved. When reading a word on a page, the brain maps the physical spot of that word, strengthening recall and deepening retention. When scrolling on a screen, this process doesn't seem to work as well: After a few minutes, the brain wants to start skimming, jumping vertically down the page instead of across. The learning that results may thus be much shallower. The trade-offs between typing and handwriting are similar: By engaging more parts of the brain, the latter reinforces the learning process.

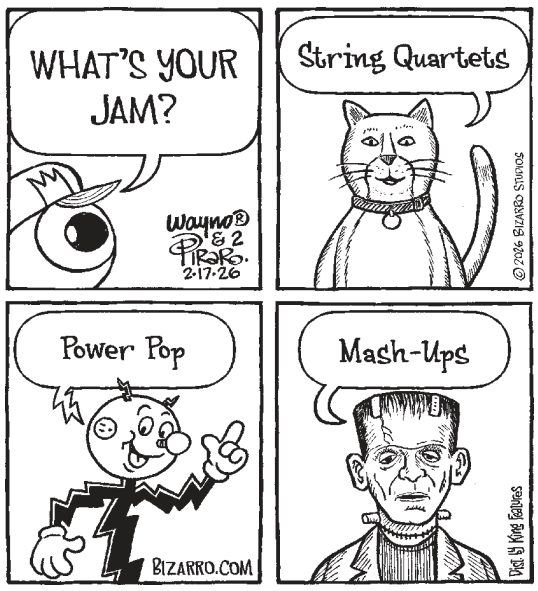
The impact of edtech — for young children, above all — could be profound. As lessons move online, the worry is that students will learn less and develop weaker skills. Cognitive development may be impaired by diminished interactions with adults. Distractions may proliferate. And the perils of excessive screen time — anxiety, depression, weakened social skills — may be worsened.

More research is needed. But what's clear is that the benefits of edtech are often oversold and the downsides overlooked. For years, companies in the field promised that personalized learning would improve academics, develop "future-ready learners" and relieve teachers of administrative drudgery. Many schools now hope that AI can help students offload "rote memorization." Such thinking fundamentally misunderstands the learning process. In important respects, friction is the learning: Tools that make it easier could well be counterproductive.

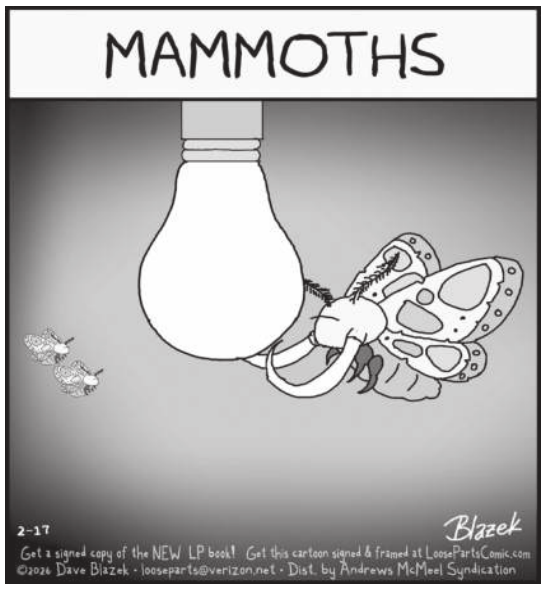
Parents are starting to push back. Many are frustrated that efforts to limit screen time at home are undone the moment their children walk into school. Other families have simply asked for more transparency. Some states have proposed legislation that would allow students to opt out.

These approaches make sense to an extent. But school districts should recognize what many scientists have concluded: There's too little evidence that edtech improves learning and many reasons to think the opposite. Combined with the concerning effects of screen time more generally, that suggests the default should be prohibiting technology from the classroom unless it's proven to be effective.

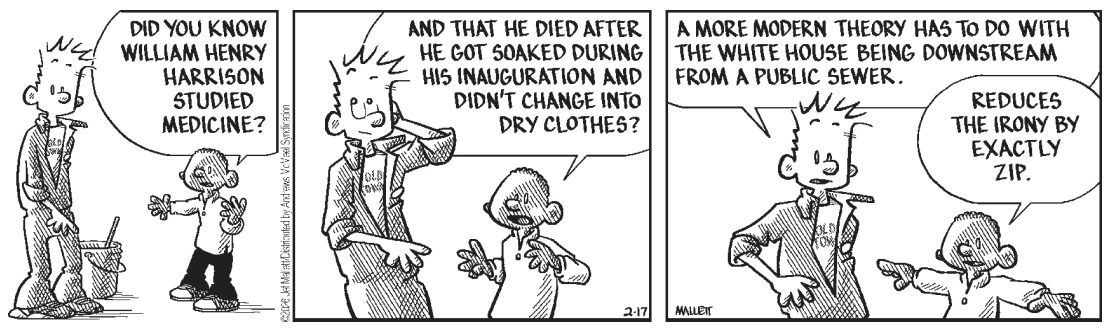
Bizarro



Loose Parts



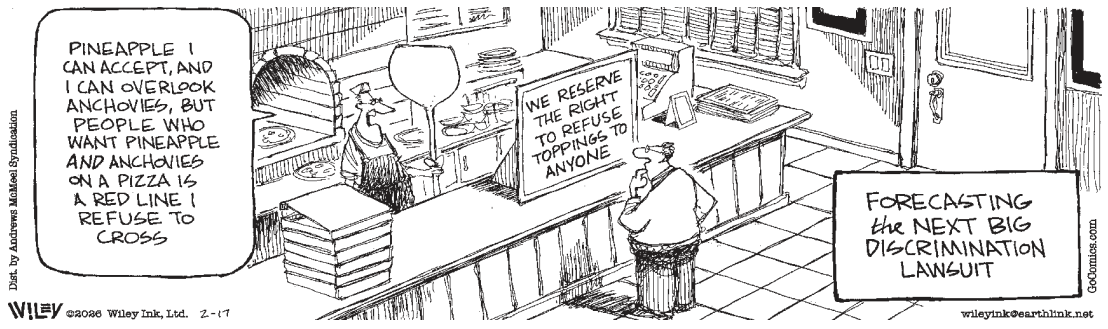
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



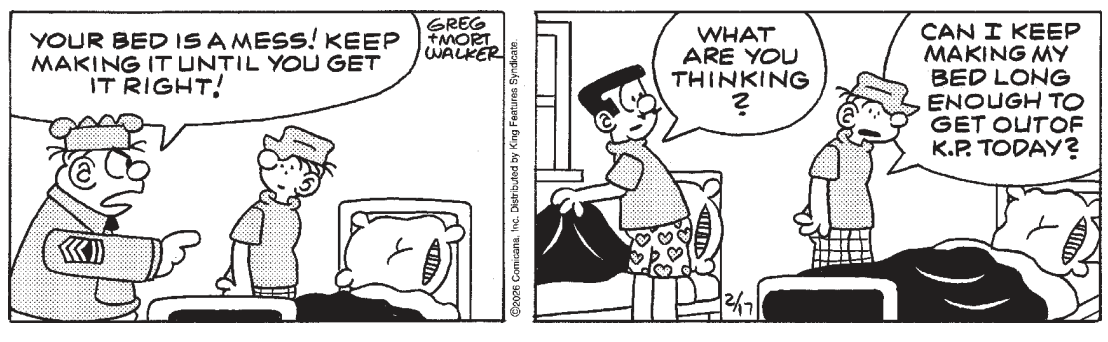
Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12				■	13			■	14			
15				■	16			17				
18				19			■	20				
■	■	■	21			■	22			■	■	■
23	24	25			■	26				27	28	29
30			■	■	31			■	■	32		
33			34	35			■	36	37			
■	■	■	38			■	39			■	■	■
40	41	42			■	43				44	45	46
47					48			■	49			
50				■	51				52			
53				■	54			■	55			

ACROSS

1 Ernie's "Sesame Street" pal
5 NYC airport
8 Prayer ender
12 Biblical grain measure
13 Bit of physics
14 "I did it!"
15 "Rent" role
16 Toothbrush features
18 Accepting kickbacks, say
20 Insurance giant
21 Historic time
22 Coffee vessel
23 Stab
26 "Blue Bloods" actress Moynahan
30 Small batteries
31 JFK Library architect
32 Dallas hoopster, briefly
33 French roll
36 Compote fruits
38 Doze (off)
39 Tic-tac-toe loser
40 "Psycho" setting
43 "Billy Budd" composer
47 Military units
49 Roof overhang
50 Italian wine region
51 "Game of Thrones" airer
52 Russian denial
53 Any time now
54 Football great Dawson
55 Till bills

DOWN

1 Broadway flop
2 Mideast ruler
3 Notes after "do"
4 Teams on "Survivor"
5 Sign after Virgo
6 Like slasher films
7 Singer DiFranco
8 Be there
9 Beer ingredient
10 Genesis garden
11 "Apollo 13" org.
17 Rani's dress
19 Hosp. areas
22 Swiss canton
23 Prattle
24 Former Mideast org.
25 "Washington Black" author — Edugyan
26 Spell-off
27 "Today" alternative, briefly
28 Hearing thing
29 Sports bar sets
31 Prof's degree
34 Pushkin's "Eugene —"
35 Pop choice
36 Luau bowlful
37 Range
39 Director Welles
40 New corp. hires
41 Roughly
42 Bandleader Puente
43 Actress Neuwirth
44 Diggs of "Private Practice"
45 Divisible by two
46 Tennis barriers
48 FedEx rival

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

2-17

CRYPTOQUIP

IALRAE NBCLHZWHDHPT HP GAEOHPT CPIKEHPT NOZWW, RHTQR LKEWN HP BCABWC'N QZHE: Z GEHDDHLHZP.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT KINDS OF VEHICLES DO YOU THINK PODIATRISTS SHOULD ALWAYS PREFER TO DRIVE? TOE TRUCKS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals G

SCOREBOARD/COLLEGE BASKETBALL

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Sunday's men's scores

EAST

Loyola (Md) 83, Holy Cross 73
Manhattan 69, Canisius 65
Merrimack 56, Quinnipiac 49
Monmouth 72, Towson 71
Niagara 70, Iona 68
North Texas 65, Temple 62
Robert Morris 93, Oakland 69
Rutgers 68, Maryland 57
Sacred Heart 86, Rider 75
Saint Peter's 83, Fairfield 74
Siena 67, Marist 63

SOUTH

Belmont 87, Murray State 70
Charleston 62, Campbell 57
North Alabama 84, Eastern Kentucky 78, OT
South Florida 83, Florida Atlantic 81, OT
Tulane 55, UAB 54
UTSA 88, Charlotte 79

MIDWEST

Bradley 70, Southern Illinois 60
Cincinnati 69, Utah 65
Dayton 70, Davidson 59
Detroit Mercy 76, Youngstown State 70
Illinois 71, Indiana 51
Milwaukee 75, Green Bay 72
Northern Iowa 86, Drake 62
Omaha 83, Denver 76
Purdue Fort Wayne 83, IU Indianapolis 78
Seton Hall 63, Butler 56
UIC 83, Illinois State 56
Valparaiso 76, Indiana State 75
Wright State 102, Cleveland State 90

FAR WEST

San Francisco 92, San Diego 79
Seattle 60, Oregon State 50

Sunday's women's scores

EAST

Miami (FL) 82, Boston College 70
Monmouth 69, Charleston 57
Northeastern 73, Stony Brook 60
Penn State 81, Northwestern 71
Syracuse 68, Clemson 64

SOUTH

Baylor 93, UCF 63
Belmont 77, Valparaiso 37
Campbell 54, UNC Wilmington 52
Duke 72, North Carolina 68
Georgia 76, Vanderbilt 74
Hofstra 60, North Carolina A&T 51
Kentucky 74, Ole Miss 57
Louisville 88, Florida State 65
Murray State 79, UIC 77
Oklahoma 79, Alabama 71
Texas 65, Tennessee 63
William & Mary 75, Towson 70

MIDWEST

Bradley 56, Southern Illinois 53
Illinois State 88, Evansville 75
Iowa State 76, Kansas State 72
Maryland 76, Ohio State 75
Michigan 86, Michigan State 65
Minnesota 83, Wisconsin 60
North Dakota State 87, North Dakota 51
Notre Dame 79, North Carolina State 67
Villanova 74, Creighton 64
Youngstown State 69, IUPUI 65

SOUTHWEST

SMU 79, Pittsburgh 78
TCU 59, West Virginia 50
Texas A&M 81, Auburn 63

FAR WEST

Fresno State 73, Utah State 59
UCLA 92, Indiana 48
Virginia 75, Stanford 69
Virginia Tech 68, California 58
Washington 51, Oregon 43

DEALS

Sunday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
American League

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Acquired RHP Jackson Kowar from Minnesota for cash considerations.

HOUSTON ASTROS — Agreed to terms with INF Cavan Biggio on a minor league contract.

TEXAS RANGERS — Agreed to terms with OF Mark Canha on a minor league contract.

National League

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS — Claimed RHP Grant Holman off waivers from the Athletics. Agreed to terms with RHP Zac Gallen on a one-year contract. Placed LHP A.J. Puk and RHP Corbin Burnes on the 60-day IL.

CHICAGO CUBS — Agreed to terms with RHP Shelby Miller on a two-year contract. Designated INF Ben Cowles for assignment.

MIAMI MARLINS — Agreed to terms with RHP Calvin Faucher on one-year contract, settling in arbitration.

NEW YORK METS — Placed RHP Dedniel Núñez on the 60-day injured list. Claimed C Ben Rortvedt off waivers.

SAN DIEGO PADRES — Agreed to terms with OF Nick Castellanos and RHP Germán Márquez on one-year contracts.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Agreed to terms with OF Will Brennan on a one-year contract. Placed RHP Rowan Wick on the 60-day injured list.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Agreed to terms with LHP Cionel Perez on a minor league contract.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Hired Rob Leonard as Defensive Coordinator.

COLLEGE

KENT STATE — Released Basketball Head Coach Jerome Tang, effective immediately

AUTO RACING

Daytona 500

At Daytona International Speedway
Daytona Beach, Fla.
Lap length: 2.50 miles
(Start position in parentheses)

1. (26) Tyler Reddick, Toyota, 200 laps, 58 points
2. (16) Ricky Stenhouse Jr, Chevrolet, 200, 35
3. (3) Joey Logano, Ford, 200, 36
4. (4) Chase Elliott, Chevrolet, 200, 33
5. (9) Brad Keselowski, Ford, 200, 32
6. (30) Zane Smith, Ford, 200, 41
7. (41) Chris Buescher, Ford, 200, 39
8. (28) Riley Herbst, Toyota, 200, 35
9. (14) Josh Berry, Ford, 200, 28
10. (27) Bubba Wallace, Toyota, 200, 37
11. (25) Noah Gragson, Ford, 200, 27
12. (39) William Byron, Chevrolet, 200, 25
13. (15) Daniel Suárez, Chevrolet, 200, 31
14. (34) Ty Dillon, Chevrolet, 200, 23
15. (1) Kyle Busch, Chevrolet, 200, 29
16. (8) Kyle Larson, Chevrolet, 200, 21
17. (33) Cody Ware, Chevrolet, 200, 20
18. (6) Carson Hocevar, Chevrolet, 200, 27
19. (35) AJ Allmendinger, Chevrolet, 200, 18
20. (37) Ross Chastain, Chevrolet, 200, 17
21. (24) Erik Jones, Toyota, 200, 16
22. (10) Michael McDowell, Chevrolet, 200, 19
23. (20) Ty Gibbs, Toyota, 200, 14
24. (23) Cole Custer, Chevrolet, 200, 13
25. (19) Ryan Preece, Ford, 200, 15
26. (11) John H. Nemechek, Toyota, accident, 199, 19
27. (5) Ryan Blaney, Ford, accident, 199, 27
28. (29) Corey Heim, Toyota, 199, 0
29. (31) Jimmie Johnson, Toyota, accident, 199, 8
30. (13) Shane Van Gisbergen, Chevrolet, 199, 7
31. (22) Denny Hamlin, Toyota, 198, 6
32. (17) Casey Mears, Ford, 195, 5
33. (32) Connor Zilisch, Chevrolet, 195, 4
34. (36) Austin Cindric, Ford, 193, 12
35. (12) Christopher Bell, Toyota, accident, 191, 2
36. (2) Chase Briscoe, Toyota, 188, 1
37. (7) Austin Dillon, Chevrolet, accident, 137, 1
38. (40) Justin Allgaier, Chevrolet, accident, 123, 0
39. (18) Todd Gilliland, Ford, accident, 123, 1
40. (21) Alex Bowman, Chevrolet, accident, 123, 3
41. (38) BJ McLeod, Chevrolet, accident, 4, 1

Race statistics

Average speed of race winner: 147.11 mph.
Time of race: 3 hours, 23 minutes, 56 seconds
Margin of victory: 0.308 seconds
Caution flags: 5 for 32 laps
Lead changes: 66 among 25 drivers
Lap leaders: K.Busch 0-3; J.Nemechek 4-7; K.Busch 8-11; J.Logano 12-13; J.Nemechek 14-18; J.Logano 19; J.Nemechek 20-28; J.Logano 29; J.Nemechek 30; J.Logano 31-34; C.Briscoe 35-57; C.Elliott 58; T.Gilliland 59; Z.Smith 60-68; A.Allmendinger 69; R.Blaney 70-71; A.Cindric 72-74; D.Hamlin 75-76; B.Wallace 77-79; C.Ware 80-81; R.Chastain 82-83; J.Allgaier 84; T.Dillon 85-87; J.Allgaier 88; R.Stenhouse 89; R.Chastain 90-95; A.Cindric 96-97; R.Chastain 98-100; S.Van Gisbergen 101-103; K.Larson 104; K.Busch 105-108; K.Larson 109-112; K.Busch 113; K.Larson 114; K.Busch 115-116; K.Larson 117; K.Busch 118-121; D.Hamlin 122; J.Allgaier 123; B.Wallace 124-130; R.Stenhouse 131-133; B.Wallace 134-136; C.Heim 137-138; B.Wallace 139; C.Bell 140; C.Heim 141; B.Wallace 142-144; C.Bell 145; B.Wallace 146; C.Bell 147-148; C.Heim 149; C.Bell 150-151; B.Wallace 152; C.Heim 153-156; C.Bell 157; B.Wallace 158-162; C.Bell 163-164; B.Wallace 165-180; C.Buescher 181-184; K.Busch 185; R.Chastain 186; C.Elliott 187; J.Logano 188; M.McDowell 189-198; C.Hocevar 199; T.Reddick 200; J.Berry 201

GOLF

AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am

Saturday
Pebble Beach, Calif.
a-Pebble Beach Golf Links
6,989 yards; Par 72
b-Spyglass Hill Golf Course
7,071 yards; Par 72
Purse: $20 million
Final Round

C. Morikawa	69b-68a-62a-67a	—266 -22
Min Woo Lee	67b-65a-70a-65a	—267 -21
Sepp Straka	66a-66b-67a-68a	—267 -21
T. Fleetwood	67b-68a-67a-66a	—268 -20
S. Scheffler	72a-66b-67a-63a	—268 -20
Akshay Bhatia	65a-64b-68a-72a	—269 -19
Sam Burns	63a-67b-72a-67a	—269 -19
J. Bridgeman	67a-65b-68a-70a	—270 -18
N. Echavarria	69b-69a-65a-67a	—270 -18
R. Hisatsune	62a-67b-74a-67a	—270 -18
Jake Knapp	66b-67a-66a-71a	—270 -18
Shane Lowry	67a-69b-67a-67a	—270 -18
H. Matsuyama	67a-67b-67a-69a	—270 -18
Patrick Cantlay	66a-71b-69a-65a	—271 -17
M. Fitzpatrick	66b-68a-70a-67a	—271 -17
Tom Hoge	65a-68b-70a-68a	—271 -17
Rory McIlroy	68b-67a-72a-64a	—271 -17

No. 8 Illinois beats Indiana

By Steve Stein
Associated Press

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — David Mirkovic had 25 points and seven rebounds and No. 8 Illinois rebounded from back-to-back overtime losses with a 71-51 victory over Indiana on Sunday.

Kylan Boswell, the Fighting Illini's second-leading scorer and top defensive player, returned and played nearly 33 minutes after missing seven games with a broken right hand, his dominant hand, which was heavily taped and padded.

Boswell had nine points and seven rebounds and committed one of Illinois' two turnovers.

Keaton Wagler scored 18 points and Tomislav Ivisic had 14, including 12 in the second half, for the Illini (21-5, 12-3 Big Ten), who were coming off OT losses to Wisconsin and No. 10 Michigan State. Ben Humrichous went 0 for 7 from the field but led Illinois with eight rebounds.

Lamar Wilkerson had 21 points for Indiana (17-9, 8-7), 14 in the first half. He has scored at least 20 points in 10 Big Ten games this season.

Tucker DeVries scored 13 and Sam Alexis had 11 points and eight rebounds for the Hoosiers, who were outscored 33-20 in the second half after trailing 38-31 at halftime.

The Fighting Illini pulled down 15 offensive rebounds, which led to 17 second-chance points, and outrebounded Indiana 38-25.

The Hoosiers came into the game with five wins in six tries after a four-game losing streak.

Former Illinois players and NBA rookies Kasparas Jakucionis (Miami Heat) and Will Riley (Washington Wizards) were at the State Farm Center to watch the game during the All-Star break. The two are the Illini's first one-and-done players.



CRAIG PESSMAN/AP

Illinois' David Mirkovic catches a pass during the first half against Indiana on Sunday in Champaign, Ill. The Fighting Illini won 71-51.

TOP 25 BRIEFS

BYU guard Saunders exits with torn ACL

By John Coon
Associated Press

PROVO, Utah — BYU guard Richie Saunders will miss the remainder of the season with a torn ACL, the school announced Sunday.

Saunders was injured Saturday on the No. 22 Cougars' first possession only 45 seconds into its 90-86 overtime victory over Colorado. He fell awkwardly after driving to the rim and kicking a pass back out to Keba Keita. He grabbed his right calf and stayed down under the basket for several minutes before being helped to his feet by BYU trainers.

Saunders has appeared in 128 games over four seasons with the Cougars.

He earned first-team All-Big 12 honors last season and was also voted the league's Most Improved Player after averaging 16.5 points and shooting 43.2% from 3-point range in 35 games.

"To end my BYU career like this is heartbreaking," Saunders wrote on Instagram. "I've loved every moment and every challenge that came with representing the school I love. These past four years have shaped who I am — on and off the court."



TYLER TATE/AP

BYU guard Richie Saunders is helped off the court during the first half against Colorado on Saturday in Provo, Utah.

K-State fires coach Tang

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Kansas State fired basketball coach Jerome Tang on Sunday night, four days after many Wildcats fans showed up with bags over their heads for a home blowout.

Athletic director Gene Taylor announced the move in a statement.

"This was a decision that was made in the best interest of our university and men's basketball program," Taylor said. "Recent public comments and conduct, in addition to the program's overall direction, have not aligned with K-State's standards for supporting student-athletes and representing the university. We wish Coach Tang and his family all the best moving forward."

The school said an interim head coach will be announced soon, and that a national search for a replacement has started.

Providence suspension

NEW YORK — Providence forward Duncan Powell was suspended two additional games by the Big East on Sunday, meaning he will miss three games for his flagrant foul that sparked a fight in a game against St. John's.

It started when Powell flagrantly fouled Bryce Hopkins from behind as he went up for a fast-break layup.

Powell was automatically ejected for the flagrant 2 foul.

The Big East said in its ruling that officials determined that Powell "engaged in additional combative actions that constituted a fighting act subsequent to the flagrant foul."

He will sit out next Saturday at DePaul, followed by a Feb. 24 home game against Xavier and a game at Creighton on Feb. 28.

DAYTONA 500

Drama: Reddick snaps 38-race winless streak

FROM PAGE 24

Reddick, in a Toyota, led only one lap Sunday: the one to the checkered flag. He was the 25th different driver to lead a lap for a new Daytona 500 record.

"Just incredible how it all played out. Just true Daytona madness," Reddick said. "I've already lost my voice from screaming. Never thought I'd be Daytona 500 champion."

Reddick, a 30-year-old from Corning, Calif., won for the ninth time in the Cup Series and first time since late in the 2024 season. Winless last year, Reddick was primarily focused on his infant son, who was found to have a tumor in his chest that affected his heart. Reddick opened last year with a runner-up finish in the Daytona 500.

> **"Just true Daytona madness."**
>
> **Tyler Reddick**
> Daytona 500 champion

He snapped the 38-race losing streak by finishing one place higher Sunday and winning to start a celebration that included multiple stars of NASCAR. It included Jordan, a global icon, and Hamlin, at 45 the oldest full-time driver in the Cup Series.

Reddick is teammates with Bubba Wallace, who went to victory lane in tears after leading a race-high 40 laps before finishing 10th. Jordan wrapped his arms around Wallace from behind and spoke closely into Wallace's ear in a brief speech of encouragement.

"I don't want my emotions to take away from the monumental day they just accomplished. Happy birthday, MJ. That's a massive birthday present," Wallace said. "I thought this was our week, the best 500 I've ever had, and come up short, sucks.

"Led a lot of laps, lap leader, I believe. It was a good day for us, but damn. Try again next year."

Hamlin, who drives for Joe Gibbs Racing, was involved in the final caution when he and teammate Christopher Bell collided with nine laps remaining. It set up the final push to the finish over the final four laps.

Elliott grabbed the lead at the start of the final lap when Carson Hocevar was spun off the track. Reddick made a huge surge with an assist from teammate Riley Herbst, made contact with Elliott that caused Elliott to crash, then sailed past to give Jordan a victory in NASCAR's biggest event of the year.

"It's stuff you dream of as a kid," said Reddick. "Now, I definitely didn't look into the future and know that I would drive for Michael Jordan. But to be able to have someone like Michael Jordan believe in me enough, someone like Denny Hamlin.

"I'm just trying to do my best to live on the promises that I made to them and vice versa."

Jordan was the face of the December federal antitrust lawsuit that NASCAR settled on the ninth day of trial.

The settlement changed the revenue-sharing model in the United States' top motorsports series.

Jordan watched the win from a suite overlooking the superspeedway built by the France family — NASCAR founders and private owners — that he just beat in federal court. NASCAR chairman Jim France, who was personally a defendant in the suit, went to victory lane to congratulate the winners.

"I can't even believe it. It was so gratifying," Jordan said of the victory. "You never know how these races are going to end. You just try to survive. We hung in there all day. Great strategy by the team, and we gave ourselves a chance at the end. Look, I'm ecstatic."

The victory marked a Daytona sweep for three team owners heavily involved in the trial. Bob Jenkins, who joined 23XI in suing NASCAR, opened the weekend with a victory when Chandler Smith won the Truck Series opener on Friday night for Front Row Motorsports.

Richard Childress, who testified on behalf of 23XI and Front Row and was the subject of disparaging text messages by since-departed NASCAR chairman Steve Phelps, was the winning team owner Saturday when Austin Hill won.

Then it was time for Jordan and Hamlin, the two front-facing litigants, as they got their first Daytona 500 victory together.

"All we do is win," shrugged Hamlin, who called the trio of weekend winners "coincidence."

Former race winners Ricky Stenhouse Jr. and Joey Logano finished second and third as Toyota, Chevrolet and Ford each placed a driver on the podium. Elliott wound up fourth and sat dejected and in disbelief on the outside wall of the track after climbing from his car.

"We ended up kind of getting gifted the lead ... and then at that point in time, you're just on defense. Man, that's a really, really tough place to be, truthfully," Elliott said.

"Obviously looking back, you can run it through your mind 1,000 times, do you do something different?"



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Cars, including Chase Elliott's No. 9 Chevrolet, crash ahead of the checkered flag during the Daytona 500 at Daytona International Speedway on Sunday in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Crash on final lap ends Elliott's bid for victory

BY DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Chase Elliott climbed from his car and sat on the outside wall of the track in stunned disbelief that the Daytona 500 victory that was his — his first one, only a few feet from the finish line — was wiped out in a wreck.

NASCAR's most popular driver, Elliott needed a moment to collect his thoughts outside the No. 9 Chevrolet. Fireworks exploded behind Elliott for race winner Tyler Reddick. Elliott could only think of how close that celebration — and the victorious pool hall siren in Dawsonville, Ga., being sounded— was to being for him.

"We were leading the Daytona 500 off (turn) four coming to the checkered flag," Elliott said, "and didn't win."

About the only Daytona 500 victory that could have been more popular than an Elliott winning the race would have been a checkered flag for team owner Michael Jordan. Jordan co-owns 23XI Racing and certainly his team's victory infused NASCAR with splashy headlines and needed buzz coming out of the sport's version of the Super Bowl when Reddick emerged from the wreck Sunday to top Elliott.

"He had a great shot at it coming off four," Hendrick Motorsports teammate William Byron said. "It's a bummer for sure."

The Daytona 500 feels like one big bummer for Elliott.

Elliott, the 2020 NASCAR champion, won a qualifying race for the third time in his career leading into the race. He has started from the pole twice in his career.

Again, early Daytona success meant nothing on race day: Elliott finished fourth and fell to 0 for 11 at the Daytona 500.

"I'm not the type of person that ever lets myself get there in the first place," Elliott said. "I knew it wasn't over. That's part of this style of racing."



Elliott

Elliott joins a long list of hard-luck losers at Daytona, including Fireball Roberts (1961), Donnie Allison (1979) and Mark Martin (2007). In 1990, Dale Earnhardt cut a tire less than mile from the finish line, allowing Derrike Cope to steal one.

Elliott had control on the final lap after leader Carson Hocevar was spun off the track and it appeared he would finally win his first Daytona 500. Elliott instead was clipped by Riley Herbst, and the nose of the Chevy tagged the wall. Elliott, who finished as runner-up in 2021, crashed and Reddick sailed past to take Jordan to the Daytona International Speedway victory lane.

"I just felt like Tyler was coming so quick," Elliott said. "I kind of blocked one direction. He went the other way."

Jeff Gordon, the three-time Daytona 500 champion who now serves as an executive at Hendrick, stood atop the pit box and seemingly tried to push Elliott to victory lane. He rocked back in his seat and threw his hands on his headset once the crash erupted and marred Elliott's race.

Elliott, the 30-year-old son of Hall of Fame driver and two-time Daytona 500 champion Bill Elliott, found little consolation in having a great shot at the end at winning.

"You can run it through your mind 1,000 times, do you do something different," Elliott said. "I feel like if I had thrown a double block on (Reddick), probably would have just crashed us at that point in time. I felt like you had to pick your battles. I thought maybe if somebody would pick me up on the top, you might have one more run to the line but unfortunately ended up getting turned around."

Elliott, who has 21 career Cup wins, has yet to win NASCAR's biggest prize. Even though Elliott doesn't have a win in the Daytona 500, he has shown promise. He has finished inside the top 20 seven of the last eight years, including a second place showing in 2021.

The losing streak goes on — even as confidence remains high he'll join his dad one day in the select group of Daytona 500 champions.

"I think you have to trust in that a little bit; keep your head down, stay working, and if there's a day and a time for us, then there is," Elliott said. "We'll enjoy that moment if it ever comes."

NBA

Edwards, 'Stars' secure All-Star win

By Greg Beacham
Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Anthony Edwards has said it boldly and confidently for years. He intends to be the best basketball player in the world.

The Minnesota Timberwolves guard got to beat the World on Sunday, thanks to the NBA All-Star Game's intriguing new format — and then he also beat a team of his fellow Americans to cap an MVP performance.

Edwards led his "Stars" team past a "Stripes" squad featuring LeBron James and Kawhi Leonard 47-21 to win the final in this mini-tournament comprising the entertaining main event of All-Star weekend at the Los Angeles Clippers' Intuit Dome.

The NBA's fourth All-Star format in four years matched two teams of Americans against a team representing everywhere else, hoping to stoke nationalistic passion from players and fans during an Olympic year.

The results were solid, with three exciting mini-games in the round-robin tournament all going down to the buzzer before the blowout finale.

"I like this format," Edwards said. "I think it makes us compete because it's only 12 minutes, and the three different teams separate the guys. I think it was really good."

Along with the late-game theatrics, the event generally appeared to be played at a higher level of competitiveness than most All-Star Games in recent years, suggesting the league might have finally cracked the code on the long-standing question of how to make this midseason showcase more entertaining.



Ronald Martinez/AP

USA Stars guard Anthony Edwards drives past USA Stripes forward Kawhi Leonard in the NBA All-Star game Sunday in Inglewood, Calif. Edwards was named All-Star MVP for the new USA vs. World format.

Edwards forced overtime with a clutch 3-pointer before Scottie Barnes hit a game-ending, overtime 3-pointer for his team in the opening mini-game against the World.

De'Aaron Fox hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer to win the second game for the slightly older Stripes over the slightly younger Stars.

Leonard then thrilled his home crowd with a 31-point barrage for the Stripes in the final round-robin game, including a tiebreaking 3-pointer with 3.5 seconds left.

The Stripes appeared to be gassed in the finale, but Edwards and his teammates didn't let up.

When asked to identify his most satisfying moment Sunday, Edwards replied: "Probably beating the World team."

Why?

"Because they say they're the best players in the world," he replied. "So beating them is the best feeling in the world."

Already a four-time All-Star at 24 years old, the six-year NBA veteran has been on the world stage before, winning an Olympic gold medal two years ago in Paris. He has also led Minnesota to the Western Conference finals in two straight seasons.

Edwards claimed his first All-Star MVP trophy — an award named for Kobe Bryant — with that tying 3-pointer to cap a 13-point effort in the first game, an 11-point performance in the second, and eight points in the anticlimactic final.

Victor Wembanyama effectively challenged his fellow All-Stars to take this game seriously, and they largely appeared to do it. Despite going 0-2, Wembanyama led the World team in scoring in both games with 14 points in the opener and 19 in the third game.

"It felt good to be out there with greats, new and old, and even international guys, too," Kevin Durant said. "Hopefully we just build upon this and the weekend becomes more and more competitive."

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	35	19	.648	—
New York	35	20	.636	½
Toronto	32	23	.582	3½
Philadelphia	30	24	.556	5
Brooklyn	15	38	.283	19½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	28	25	.528	—
Miami	29	27	.518	½
Charlotte	26	29	.473	3
Atlanta	26	30	.464	3½
Washington	14	39	.264	14

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	40	13	.755	—
Cleveland	34	21	.618	7
Chicago	24	31	.436	17
Milwaukee	23	30	.434	17
Indiana	15	40	.273	26

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	38	16	.704	—
Houston	33	20	.623	4½
Memphis	20	33	.377	17½
Dallas	19	35	.352	19
New Orleans	15	41	.268	24

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	42	14	.750	—
Denver	35	20	.636	6½
Minnesota	34	22	.607	8
Portland	27	29	.482	15
Utah	18	38	.321	24

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	33	21	.611	—
Phoenix	32	23	.582	1½
Golden State	29	26	.527	4½
L.A. Clippers	26	28	.481	7
Sacramento	12	44	.214	22

Sunday's games

2026 All-Star Round Robin — Game 1
Stars 37, World 35

2026 All-Star Round Robin — Game 2
Stripes 42, Stars 40

2026 All-Star Round Robin — Game 3
Stripes 48, World 45

2026 All-Star Game Championship
Stars 47, Stripes 21

Opening intensity helps another new All-Star format click

By Beth Harris
Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Victor Wembanyama brought the energy from opening tip of the NBA All-Star Game, and it proved infectious.

Some were crediting the 7-foot-5 San Antonio Spurs star for doing more to save the midseason showcase in mere minutes than anything the league has done in years.

"It was a pretty good display of basketball," Wembanyama said. "Better than last year, in my opinion. It was fun."

Wembanyama had been confident going in that setting the tone with competitive fire would make a difference in the league's 75th annual showcase on Sunday at Intuit Dome, the Los Angeles Clippers' year-old arena.

"If you share that energy," he said, "people feel like they have a responsibility to share it back to you."



Jae C. Hong/AP

World center Victor Wembanyama, of France, celebrates next to USA Stripes forward LeBron James during the NBA All-Star Game Sunday.

This year featured yet another new format. Two teams of U.S. players and one team of international players competed in a round-robin tournament consisting of three 12-minute games, all of which had exciting finishes. The top two teams by record advanced to the title game.

"I liked it," Wembanyama said. "I wouldn't be against this format in the future, and I wouldn't be against the regular East versus West either."

The U.S. Stars team beat the U.S. Stripes 47-21 for the championship, with Anthony Edwards earning MVP honors.

Retired Spurs player Manu Ginobili on X called it the "most fun NBA All-Star Game in a loooong time!"

World team player Karl-Anthony Towns said, "I feel that after today I think you all can see the competition is there, and I think that we all brought it today and a sense of effort. I hope that the fans and all of you appreciate it."

The first All-Star Game in 1951 debuted an East vs. West format that continued until 2018, when it was replaced with a player draft, where that year's top vote-getters acted as captains and selected their teams from the pool of available starters, regardless of conference.

That lasted until 2024, when East vs. West returned for one year.

Last year, in San Francisco, the game was played tournament-style, with three eight-player teams and a fourth team of rising stars. Games were played to 40 points to decide a winner.

Next year a U.S. vs the rest of the world format is on tap for the game in Phoenix.

Portland Trail Blazers forward Deni Avdija, who is from Israel and played on the World team, called the latest change a fun format.

"People are about to understand that it's fun watching the All-Star Game," he said. "It's going to be a little more competitive, try to bring it back."

WINTER OLYMPICS

Swiss Meillard wins slalom after McGrath clips gate, trudges off

By Pat Graham
Associated Press

BORMIO, Italy — Loic Meillard of Switzerland used a strong second run to win the men's slalom Monday on a day that saw Brazilian ski racer Lucas Pinheiro Braathen fall in the first run, ending his bid for another Olympic gold.

The event closes out the men's Alpine program at the Milan Cortina Games.

Meillard adds gold to a silver he won in the team combined and bronze from the giant slalom.

Meillard finished in a two-run combined time of 1 minute, 53.61 seconds. He edged Fabio Gstrein of Austria by 0.35 seconds, while Henrik Kristoffersen of Norway took bronze. It was quite a contrast of runs, too, with snow and fog in the morning and the sun peeking out for the afternoon.

Norway's Atle Lie McGrath, the first-run leader, straddled a gate and was out. He was so irate that he threw his ski poles over the netting on one side. He then went outside the netting on the other side, trudging along the snow. He sat down and then fell back, breathing heavily. A medical person came over to check on him.

McGrath later arrived in the finish area and walked away without talking.

"It's just heartbreaking," said his teammate, Timon Haugan, who finished fourth.

"He's doing everything perfect. He did a very good first run, put himself in a position to win the Olympic gold. He does everything right and then that happens in 15 seconds."

McGrath has been racing with a heavy heart, with his grandfather dying the day of the opening ceremony. McGrath wore an armband as a tribute.

Pinheiro Braathen made history by winning the giant slalom Saturday, becoming the first athlete from South America to win a medal at a Winter Olympics. But his ski slipped out on a fast first run and his bid for another medal was over. Pinheiro Braathen represented Norway before switching to Brazil, his mom's home country.

Switzerland led the men's Alpine skiing medal table in Bormio with eight (four gold, two silver and two bronze). Austria (two silvers) and Italy (silver, bronze) each had two, while Brazil (gold), U.S. (silver) and Norway (bronze) brought home one apiece.

The heavy snow led to a tricky morning of racing. The competition featured 96 racers in the field, with many representing nontraditional ski nations. Of the 96 racers, there were 49 who didn't finish the course, two who were disqualified and another who didn't start.

It was a ceremonial slalom run for AJ Ginnis of Greece. He said an ankle surgery didn't heal properly and he couldn't compete the way he wanted to. This was his farewell run.

"To be able to stand here today and just everything ski racing has given me in life, a college degree, security, and most importantly friends and people that will stay with me forever, it's just something that you could have told that to a 10-year-old AJ and his parents and they would have never believed it," Ginnis said.

Among the skiers in the field were Henri Rivers IV of Jamaica; Faiz Basha of Singapore and Lasse Gaxiola of Mexico. Gaxiola's mom, Sarah Schleper, competed in the super-G and giant slalom in Cortina.



Rebecca Blackwell/AP

Switzerland's Loic Meillard celebrates after a strong second run helped him win the men's slalom in Bormio, Italy on Monday.



Nathan Denette, The Canadian Press/AP

Canada's Tom Wilson, left, and France's Pierre Crinon, center, fight in the third period during a preliminary round game in Milan on Sunday. Fights aren't as common in international hockey as in the NHL.

Wilson's willing to fight; Canada happy to see it

By Stephen Whyno
Associated Press

MILAN — Who says there's no fighting in hockey at the Olympics? Tom Wilson clearly does not care that it's shunned in international play.

Wilson dropped the gloves late in Canada's 10-2 rout of France on Sunday, going after the player who delivered a forearm to the head of teammate Nathan MacKinnon minutes earlier.

"Obviously fighting isn't a big thing in this tournament, but when a guy takes a run at one of our big guys, that's what Willy does," three-time Olympian Drew Doughty said. "I mean, he does a lot more than that, but it was great to see him step up."

Wilson fought Pierre Crinon, who was given a two-minute minor penalty and apologized to MacKinnon after the hit in the third period. Scoring 25 seconds into the ensuing power play was not good enough punishment in the eyes of Canada's players.

"We didn't like the hit: felt like it was late and high," tournament leading scorer Connor McDavid said.

"Willy just finishes a check and the guy jumps him, and Willy's just protecting himself. That's all he can do. That's the type of guy he is, type of teammate he is. Nothing but respect for him."

Unlike the NHL, where it is a 5-minute major penalty, fighting is a game misconduct under International Ice Hockey Federation rules, so Wilson and Crinon were ejected. The outcome was already long determined, and Wilson only missed the final seven minutes of the game.

"We're used to a lot more than that happening, so it was pretty harmless in the grand scheme of things," coach Jon Cooper said. "Sticking up for his teammates, that's an easy one for him."

Wilson also had a goal and an assist, along with the fight giving him what is known in hockey as a "Gordie Howe hat trick."

The 31-year-old winger is one of just a few new players for Canada who did not play at the 4 Nations Face-Off a year ago, when there were three fights in the first nine seconds of the team's first game against the U.S.

Wilson's fight came exactly a year after those, when Canada's Brandon Hagel, Sam Bennett and Colton Parayko fought Americans Matthew Tkachuk, Brady Tkachuk and J.T. Miller.

"Listen, I don't think we can go through this tournament without seeing one," Hagel said, smiling. "It was probably the talk about him coming to the tournament. But that's just what Willy does: He sticks up for teammates."

MacKinnon, who was slow to get up and spent some time on the bench before returning, appreciated Wilson standing up for him.

"That guy obviously didn't want to fight Tom," MacKinnon said. "He just wanted to wrestle. I wouldn't want to fight Tom either."

Wilson was undoubtedly picked for his physicality and ability to retrieve pucks, along with producing at a high level back in North America with the Washington Capitals. He is their leading scorer with 49 points in 50 games this season.

He's likely to be the Capitals' captain when Alex Ovechkin retires, and Cooper called Wilson "outstanding in the locker room." Fighting at the Olympics only gives Wilson, who did not speak to reporters afterward, more street cred with his teammates.

"We know Willy's got our backs," Bennett said. "He's going to protect all our guys and bring the energy. We love that from Willy. He's going to do anything for our team."

Feisty goaltender Jordan Binnington, who has been known to jab a player or two with his blocker when he's displeased, loved it, too.

"I definitely wasn't surprised," Binnington said. "That's hockey, right? That's hockey."

WINTER OLYMPICS

US advances to women's hockey final

By John Wawrow
Associated Press

MILAN — Aerin Frankel stopped 21 shots for her third shutout of the Olympic women's hockey tournament and the favored United States advanced to the gold-medal game by defeating Sweden 5-0 at the Milan Cortina Games on Monday.

Abbey Murphy, Kendall Coyne Schofield and Hayley Scamurra scored on consecutive shots over a 2:47 late in the second period to blow the game open and put the Americans up 5-0. Cayla Barnes opened the scoring and Taylor Heise also scored.

The Americans continued their roll through the tournament by improving to 6-0, and outscoring their opponents by a combined 31-1. The U.S. has yet to trail or be tied after 0-0, and is in position to become the third women's team to do so over the entire tournament, joining Canada in 2006 and 2010.

The U.S. also extended its shutout streak to 331 minutes, 23 seconds, going back to the Czech Republic's Barbora Jurickova beating Frankel on a breakaway in the second period of a tournament-opening 5-1 win.

The win over Sweden sets up what could well be a seventh gold-medal showdown against Canada on Thursday. The defending Olympic champion Canadians played Switzerland in the day's other semifinal game.

The U.S. already beat Canada 5-0 in a preliminary round game last week. The Americans won Olympic gold in 1998 and 2018, with Canada winning the other five tournaments.



HASSAN AMMAR/AP

The United States' Taylor Heise celebrates with the bench after scoring the Americans' second goal during a women's hockey semifinal victory over Sweden in Milan on Monday.

Sweden will play for bronze Thursday in an effort to medal for the third time in team history, and first since winning silver at the 2006 Turin Games after upsetting the U.S. in the semifinals.

Ebba Svensson Traff stopped 19 of 23 shots before she was pulled after Coyne Schofield tipped in Laila Edwards' shot from the blue line with 3:50 left in the second period.

Emma Soderberg took over in goal, and was beaten by Scamurra, who tapped in Britta Curl-Salemme's centering pass 1:49 later. Soderberg finished with 10 saves.

Though the Swedes kept the game close through 35 minutes, the Americans eventually wore them down.

And the U.S certainly didn't resemble a team that didn't want to play Sweden, as coach Ulf Lundberg suggested after the Swedes beat Czechia in the quarterfinals.

Though the Swedes kept the U.S. mostly to the perimeter in the opening period, they were still outshot 13-2.

Barnes scored with a snap shot from the top of the right circle and beat Svensson Traff high on the short side. Barnes' goal was her first point of the tournament, leaving seventh defender Rory Guilday as the lone American skater to not yet register a point through six games.

Heise made it 2-0 at the 9:08 mark of the second period by one-timing in Hannah Bilka's backhand pass through the middle. Svensson Traff got her glove on the shot, but the puck deflected across her body and into the net off the inside of her stick.

Germany's Lochner starts fast in 2-man bobsled

By Tim Reynolds
Associated Press

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy — The two-man bobsled competition at the Milan Cortina Olympics is four runs over two days, the same format the event has used for nearly a century.

Germany's Johannes Lochner might have ended this year's event in exactly 54.68 seconds.

That was Lochner's time in the first run Monday, giving him a lead that only got bigger — much bigger — as the day went along. Lochner and brakeman Georg Fleischhauer finished their two runs in 1 minute, 49.90 seconds, and nothing short of a disaster on their end should keep them from winning gold in the final two runs Tuesday night.

"Such a big lead," Fleischhauer said. "We didn't really expect that."

Their margin at the midway point is 0.80 seconds. Here's some historical perspective of how absolutely one-sided that is: If you add up the halftime leads in the last nine Olympic two-man races, combined, it comes out to 0.58 seconds. And the average halftime lead since 1964 — just 0.25 seconds.

This is a bobsled blowout.

"He might be perfect," U.S. pilot and medal contender Frank Del Duca said.

It's Germany-Germany-Germany in the top three spots, though Del Duca is right there, just one-tenth of a second from the bronze medal position.



Lochner

Reigning world and Olympic two-man champion Francesco Friedrich, who has been looking up at Lochner all season in the World Cup rankings, finished two runs in 1:50.70 seconds. He's the only one within a second of Lochner; Germany's Adam Ammour is third in 1:51.14, with Del Duca and Josh Williamson fourth in 1:51.24.

Friedrich is at the Milan Cortina Games trying to become the first five-time gold medalist in Olympic bobsled history, after sweeping the two- and four-man races at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games and the 2022 Beijing Games.

"We have to give all what we can do," said Friedrich, widely considered the best bobsledder ever. "We want to make the best push times, the best drives tomorrow. ... The race is over when four runs are in the finish."

Technically, that's true.

In reality, though, it might be over. The race might really be for third between Ammour and Del Duca.

"Frankie Del Duca is right behind us," Ammour said. "So, yeah, there's no room for error tomorrow."

Del Duca is bidding to be the first U.S. medalist in two-man since Steven Holcomb and Steven Langton grabbed silver at the 2014 Sochi Games.

"I left quite a bit of time out there," Del Duca said. "I mean, as drivers, we always do. I don't know if someone can really walk away and say it was a perfect run. I haven't seen Lochner's runs. ... But for us to be this close, it's really just a testament to our whole system, our people behind us, how hard everybody's been working."

Del Duca, one of the two U.S. flagbearers entering the Olympics, is driving the only two-man sled the Americans have in the competition, after officials would not let pilot Kris Horn compete because he finished four — one shy of the minimum — out of seven World Cup races this winter.

Horn will race in the four-man event later this week.

Lochner is in what he has said is his final season and won the World Cup two- and four-man overall titles this winter. He won medals in all 14 World Cup races — nine gold and five silver, never finishing worse than second. And in two-man, he was especially dominant with six wins in seven races.

He will not reconsider retirement, he said.

"I have a wife and child waiting for me at home," Lochner said.

A trip to the top of the Olympic medal podium seems to be waiting for him as well.

Scoreboard

Medals Table

At Milan-Cortina
Monday
70 of 116 total events

Nation	G	S	B	Tot
Norway	12	7	8	27
Italy	8	4	10	22
United States	5	8	4	17
Japan	3	5	9	17
France	4	7	4	15
Germany	4	6	5	15
Austria	4	7	3	14
Netherlands	6	5	1	12
Sweden	5	5	1	11
Switzerland	5	2	3	10
Canada	1	4	5	10
Australia	3	1	1	5
South Korea	1	2	3	6
Czech Republic	2	2	0	4
Slovenia	2	1	1	4
China	0	2	2	4
Great Britain	3	0	0	3
Poland	0	2	1	3
Finland	0	0	3	3
Latvia	0	1	1	2
New Zealand	0	1	1	2
Bulgaria	0	0	2	2
Brazil	1	0	0	1
Kazakhstan	1	0	0	1
Belgium	0	0	1	1

Medals List

Monday
SHORT TRACK SPEED SKATING
WOMEN'S 1000

Xandra Velzeboer, Netherlands — gold
Courtney Sarault, Canada — silver
Gilli Kim, South Korea — bronze

ALPINE SKIING
MEN'S SLALOM

Loic Meillard, Switzerland — gold
Fabio Gstrein, Austria — silver
Henrik Kristoffersen, Norway — bronze

Men's hockey

Group A

Country	W	L	OTW	OTL	Pts
Canada	3	0	0	0	9
Switzerland	1	1	1	0	5
Czech Republic	1	1	0	1	4
France	0	3	0	0	0

Group B

Country	W	L	OTW	OTL	Pts
Slovakia	2	1	0	0	6
Finland	2	1	0	0	6
Sweden	2	1	0	0	6
Italy	0	3	0	0	0

Group C

Country	W	L	OTW	OTL	Pts
United States	3	0	0	0	9
Latvia	1	2	0	0	3
Germany	1	2	0	0	3
Denmark	1	2	0	0	3

Thursday, Feb. 12

Switzerland 4, France 0
Canada 5, Czech Republic 0
Germany 3, Denmark 1
United States 5, Latvia 1

Friday, Feb. 13

Finland 4, Sweden 1
Slovakia 3, Italy 2
Czech Republic 6, France 3
Canada 5, Switzerland 1

Saturday, Feb. 14

Latvia 4, Germany 3
Sweden 5, Slovakia 3
Finland 11, Italy 0
United States 6, Denmark 3

Sunday, Feb. 15

Switzerland 4, Czech Republic 3, OT
Canada 10, France 2
Denmark 4, Latvia 2
United States 5, Germany 1

Tuesday, Feb. 17
Qualifiers

Germany vs. France
Italy vs. Switzerland
Czechia vs. Denmark
Sweden vs. Latvia

Women's hockey

Quarterfinals
Friday, Feb. 13

Sweden 2, Czech Republic 0
United States 6, Italy 0

Saturday, Feb. 14

Canada 5, Germany 1
Switzerland 1, Finland 0

Semifinals
Monday, Feb. 16

United States 5, Sweden 0
Canada vs. Switzerland

Thursday, Feb. 19

Bronze Medal Game: Sweden vs. TBD
Gold Medal Game: United States vs. TBD

WINTER OLYMPICS



STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH/AP

Minerva Fabienne Hase and Nikita Volodin of Germany are the surprise leaders after the short program in the pairs competition on Sunday.

Favorites stumble as Hase, Volodin capture comfortable pairs lead

BY DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

MILAN — Minerva Fabienne Hase and Nikita Volodin were the beneficiaries of another unpredictable night of Olympic figure skating.

The German pair, who have struggled with consistency themselves, made it through their short program cleanly while all of the other favorites faltered Sunday night, giving them a comfortable lead going into the free skate at the Milan Cortina Games.

Performing to "El Abrazo" by French composer Maxime Rodriguez, Hase and Volodin opened with a brilliant triple twist, landed their side-by-side triple salchows, and their throw triple loop put an exclamation mark on a program that earned them 80.01 points.

"Our goal was to go out there and feel like we do in practice and just do our job," Hase said. "So we tried to do that and then after the program we were happy that everything worked out. The crowd was amazing. They supported us a lot. So we are happy overall. But it was just the first part. So tomorrow we have to do the same again."

Anastasiia Metelkina and Luka Berulava, who made a mistake on their throw triple flip but were otherwise solid, were well behind in second place with 75.46 points as they try to give Georgia its first ever medal at the Winter Games.

Lia Pereira and Trennt Michaud of Canada were third with 74.60 in what could be a tight competition for the podium Monday night.

Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara, the world champions from Japan and heavy favorites to win gold, will have to stage a big comeback after a major mistake on their lift cost them nearly six points. Miura awkwardly slid off Kihara's shoulders near the end of the element, and that error was enough to send them tumbling all the way to fifth place with 73.11 points.

By comparison, Miura and Kihara scored a career-best 82.84 points for the same program during the team event last weekend.

The defending Olympic champions, Sui Wenjing and Han Cong, went long before the rest of the favorites because the order is based partly on world rankings. And because they only began a comeback last June after a two-year retirement brought on by Han's injuries, their ranking had suffered, and they wound up being the second pair to take the ice.

They also became the first of the favorites to stumble, as Sui fell on their opening triple toe loop and they finished with 72.66 points.

"This is a good memory because this is our third time at the Olympics," Han said. "We wanted to show what we have now."

Former world champions Deanna Stellato-Dudek, the 42-year-old from the Chicago area, and her Canadian partner Maxime Deschamps weren't even sure they would compete at these Olympics when she sustained a head injury in a recent practice fall.

They had a strong program going until Stellato-Dudek's fluke fall at the end of their reverse lasso lift. They scored just 66.04.

"That has never happened before. It was the first time," Stellato-Dudek said. "I guess it cost us around 10 points."

Ellie Kam and Danny O'Shea, who helped the United States capture team gold last week, were the top American pair in seventh place with 71.87 points. Emily Chan and Spencer Akira Howe, a private first class in the U.S. Army, were ninth with 70.06 points.

"Everybody's goal is to go out there and skate clean and nail all the elements," Howe said. "For me, a big goal has always been getting out there and feeling good. Because if you can feel good, then you have your best chances of delivering what you need to do."

Trio eyes figure skating gold while serving as role models

BY DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

MILAN — The trio of U.S. women targeting Olympic figure skating gold Tuesday night are not the dainty ice princesses of yesteryear.

There's Amber Glenn, a 26-year-old powerhouse and LGBTQ+ rights activist whose career took off just when most figure skaters are contemplating retirement. The three-time and reigning U.S. champion's unvarnished opinion on everything from politics to the trading card game "Magic: The Gathering" have made her a polarizing figure at the Milan Cortina Games.

Then there's Alysa Liu, the one-time phenom who retired at 16 only to launch a comeback that resulted in the first world title for an American woman in nearly two decades. Liu's blond-and-brunette striped hair, prominent frenulum piercing and nonconformist aura have made the 20-year-old a hero of the alt, punk and emo crowd.

And there's Isabeau Levito, perhaps the closest thing to the innocent image of teen predecessors like Tara Lipinski and Sarah Hughes, right up until you get the 18-year-old away from the cameras, and her searing wit and biting sarcasm shine through.

"I really like that we're all different," Levito said, "and we all have our own strengths and personalities, and our own ways we want to look and appear. I think it's really great, because while we all have the same passion for the sport, and we have very aligned goals."

Glenn grew up in Plano, Texas. Her father, Richard, is a police sergeant and her mom, Cathlene, a fitness instructor. She's represented the United States internationally for nearly 15 years, which all makes it seem hard to get more unabashedly American. Yet some critics nevertheless questioned her allegiances on the eve of the Milan Cortina Games, when Glenn answered a question about the political climate for the LGBTQ+ community under President Donald Trump.

"I hope I can use my platform and voice throughout these Games to help people stay strong during these hard times," she said. "A lot of people will say, 'You're just an athlete. Stick to your job. Shut up about politics.' But politics affect us all."

Glenn probably wouldn't have taken such a bold stance a decade ago, when she nearly quit the sport.

But over the course of her career, she's tackled an eating disorder, which is all-too common in the sport. She spent time in a mental health facility to get a handle on her depression. She learned to cope with ADHD. And she came to understand her sexuality; Glenn identifies as pansexual, meaning she is attracted to people regardless of sex or gender.

"I've been through a lot," Glenn told The Associated Press. "It's taken many, many years to get to this point."

Liu is the only member of the U.S. women's team with any previous Olympics experience. But much like Glenn, she had come to loathe the sport by the time she finished sixth at the Beijing Games, so much so that she quit entirely. She was 16 at the time.

"I really hated skating when I quit. Like, I really didn't like it," Liu told the AP. "I didn't care about competitions. I didn't care about places. I didn't care about skaters. I didn't care about my programs. I just wanted to, like, get away. I want nothing to do with that. I hated fame. I hated social media. I didn't like interviews. Like, I hated all of it."

It took walking away for Liu to finally find herself.

The same kid who'd get dropped off at the rink by her father in the morning and picked up at night, and who thirsted for friends her age while living and training alone in Colorado, began to explore: Liu climbed to the base camp of Mt. Everest, ticked off items on her ever-growing bucket list, and enrolled at UCLA to study, perhaps fittingly, psychology.

"I learned so much. Met so many new people," Liu said. "I had to exercise my free will and push myself in different ways."

She began contemplating a comeback two years ago, after she went skiing and experienced an adrenaline rush unlike anything she'd felt since hanging up the skates. Liu didn't know where it would lead — certainly not the first world title for an American since Kimmie Meissner in 2006, and definitely not another Winter Games — but she knew that she loved the feeling of skating again.

"I used to feel like a puppet or a canvas that other people were using," she said. "Now I do things for myself."

There is a sense of purity surrounding Levito, whose mother, Chiara, immigrated to the U.S. from Milan three decades ago, and whose grandmother still lives in the host city of the Winter Games. But pull her away from the TV cameras, photographers and the prying eyes of the world, and her sarcastic-bordering-on-vulgar sense of humor bubbles to the surface.

"I think it's so funny," Levito said later, reflecting on that day. "The internet is like, 'Our Isabeau is not a baby anymore,' when they have no idea what you're actually like. I just don't want to say the wrong things in front of the media."

So Levito plays it safe. She wears a sort of mask for the public, projecting the image she thinks people want to see.

Much like Glenn and Liu have people who can relate to them, there are a whole lot of people who can relate to that.



STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH/AP

From left to right, Alysa Liu, Amber Glenn and Isabeau Levito pose after the women's free skating competition at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships on Jan. 9 in St. Louis.

SPORTS

One win away

US women advance to gold medal hockey game ›› Winter Olympics, Page 22



DAYTONA 500

‘It’s stuff you dream of as a kid’



NIGEL COOK/AP

Tyler Reddick celebrates with his team after winning the Daytona 500 at Daytona International Speedway on Sunday in Daytona Beach, Fla. Right: Reddick does a burnout celebration on the track after his victory.

Last-lap drama as Reddick races to win in Jordan-owned car

BY JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. Michael Jordan, six-time NBA champion, is now a Daytona 500 winner, too.

Tyler Reddick won “The Great American Race” on Sunday with a last-lap pass at Daytona International Speedway that sent Jordan into a frantic celebration. The NBA Hall of Famer bear-hugged Reddick in victory lane and then jointly hoisted the Harley J. Earl trophy with the 23XI Racing driver.



Jordan

Jordan, who turns 63 on Tuesday, will get a Daytona 500 ring for his birthday and made it known in victory lane he wears a size 13.

“It feels like I won a championship, but until I get my ring, I won’t even know,” Jordan said.

The moment captured the message team co-owner Denny Hamlin — who finished 31st in Sunday’s bid to become the third driver in history to win four Daytona 500s — delivered to 23XI employees in a team meeting ahead of NASCAR’s season opener.

“He loves his race team,” Hamlin said, adding he reminded the team of the fulfillment they saw in Jordan when Reddick won at Talladega in 2024. “I was like ‘You know, you guys understand the responsibilities you have, that you have the power to bring joy to Michael Jordan. You have that power and nobody else can do it.’

“There’s nothing else that can bring him the joy that seeing what his team can do and they took it to heart.”

SEE DRAMA ON PAGE 19



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Edwards, ‘Stars’ take win in All-Star Game

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