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STARS AND STRIPES

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CONTINGENCY EDITION

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2022

Free to Deployed Areas

Experts in their fields



PAOLO BOVO/U.S. Army

An Army paratrooper from the 173rd Airborne Brigade low crawls during Expert Infantryman Badge, Expert Soldier Badge and Expert Field Medical Badge training at Caserma Del Din in Vicenza, Italy, on Oct. 28. Soldiers trained for two weeks before taking the five-day tests.

American soldiers in Italy vie for coveted badges

By NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy
Staff Sgt. Ariana Perez counted three reasons why, after two crushing failures, she'd made a third attempt at earning the Army's Expert Infantryman Badge.

"My soldiers," she said. "My career," she continued. "And my ego."

Perez got her badge Wednesday after mastering the 4-mile run in under 32 minutes that had tripped her up both times before.

Spc. James Bethea also pinned on a new badge, the Expert Soldier Badge, but on his first try and for a simpler reason.

"I was volun-told," Bethea said. "But I decided I'd put in 100% effort."

Pfc. Emily Compliment earned her Expert Field Medical Badge, considered by many to be the most difficult of the three tests, on her first try on the first anniversary of graduating from advanced individual training.

She treated pretend amputations, broken limbs, eye lacerations and more as hawk-eyed graders watched. Her one flaw: "I had the wrong knot on an (evacuation)."

The three were among more than 1,300 soldiers who trained and practiced for two weeks at Del Din before taking the five-day tests designed to recognize troops for mastering soldier skills and demonstrating fitness, as graded by expert troops who previously passed.

SEE EXPERTS ON PAGE 6



NANCY MONTGOMERY/Stars and Stripes

Staff Sgt. Ariana Perez was thrilled and relieved to earn her Expert Infantryman Badge, which was pinned on during a ceremony Wednesday in Vicenza.

VETERANS DAY

Doubek recalls struggle to build the Vietnam Wall

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Robert Doubek's role in the contentious three-year quest to construct a memorial honoring Vietnam War veterans near the National Mall began in 1979 with a voice in the back of a room.

By the time the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated on Nov. 13, 1982, Doubek, the project director, was burned out. Conflicts with the design's opponents and delays in permit approval left him feeling as if he were shouldering the weight of the monument's black granite wall engraved with the names of all who died during the decade-long war.

"I remember the day of the dedication," Doubek, 78, told Stars and Stripes by phone on Oct. 28. "I walked away, and I said to myself, I don't care if anybody likes it. If they don't like it, let 'em go build their own."

Forty years later, the strife that surrounded the memorial's design and construction has all but disappeared.

"It's become a cultural icon and had a profound effect on the soul of our nation," Doubek said.

"I think it played a role in the cultural shifts our country has made in separating the war from the warrior."

SEE DOUBEK ON PAGE 4

RELATED

Putting faces to the names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Page 3



Doubek

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Cryptocurrencies drop; Binance scraps FTX deal

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Cryptocurrency prices plunged for a second-straight day after crypto exchange Binance said it was pulling out of a deal to purchase failing rival FTX Trading.

Bitcoin sank to a two-year low after Binance confirmed earlier rumors and news reports that it was ready to back out of the FTX deal, struck between the CEOs of the two exchanges on Tuesday. The deal was pending Binance's due diligence on FTX's balance sheet.

After an initial review, Binance said in a statement Wednesday that it had significant concerns that convinced it to back out of the deal.

"In the beginning, our hope was to be able to support FTX's customers to provide liquidity, but the issues are beyond our control or ability to help," Binance said in a statement.

The price of bitcoin plunged more than 13% to \$15,840, according to CoinDesk, its lowest level since November 2020. It had been above \$20,000 earlier in the week.

The other major cryptocurrency, Ethereum, dropped 13%.

FTX had agreed to sell itself to Binance after experiencing the cryptocurrency equivalent of a bank run. Customers fled the exchange after becoming concerned about whether FTX had sufficient capital.

FTX's own crypto token, known as FTT, plunged more than 50% on the reports. The token, now worth around \$2.50, was worth 10 times that amount only a week ago.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Nov. 14)	\$0.98
Dollar buys (Nov. 14)	0.9801
British pound (Nov. 14)	\$1.17
Japanese yen (Nov. 14)	142.00
South Korean won (Nov. 14)	1330.00

South Korea (Won)	1355.01
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9672
Thailand (Baht)	31.51
Turkey (NewLira)	18.5465

(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.)

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
Britain (Pound)	1.1658
Canada (Dollar)	1.3358
China (Yuan)	7.1863
Denmark (Krone)	7.3182
Egypt (Pound)	24.3870
Euro	0.9838
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8462
Hungary (Forint)	393.16
Israel (Shekel)	3.5098
Japan (Yen)	142.10
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3079
Norway (Krone)	10.1573
Philippines (Peso)	57.35
Poland (Zloty)	4.61
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7593
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3871

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	7.00
Interest Rates Discount rate	4.50
Federal funds market rate	3.83
3-month bill	4.21
30-year bond	4.28

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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VETERANS

Photos finished

How thousands of volunteers put faces to names on the Vietnam memorial

By BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

Lorraine Johnson will never forget the day she got the phone call.

It was June 1968. Johnson, then 21, was on a break from her job at Oakwood Hospital in Dearborn, Mich., when she heard her name over the loudspeaker.

"I went to the phone, and my neighbor down the street said, 'Lorraine, I think you better come home; I think something happened to your brother,' because there was a jeep in front of my house," Johnson said.

Her brother, Marine Cpl. Michael Bard, had shipped out to Vietnam in March that year. He stepped on a landmine June 11, dying instantly.

"I had never seen my father cry before," Johnson said. "My mom — bless her heart, she's deceased now — but she's never been the same after my brother passed. She went to the cemetery every single week.

"Every time I hear a 21-gun salute or taps, it just breaks my heart," she said.

About three or four years ago, Johnson received another phone call about her brother, this time from Janna Hoehn, a florist living on the Hawaiian island of Maui.

Hoehn is one of thousands of volunteers who worked on the Wall of Faces project, an initiative spearheaded by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to find at least one photo for each of the 58,281 service members who were killed or went missing during the Vietnam War. The names are listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and its various replicas across the country, including the traveling Wall That Heals.

After more than two decades of detective work, the Wall of Faces project was completed in August, ahead of the memorial's 40th anniversary Nov. 13. The names, accompanying photos and biographical information, as well as a place for people to leave remembrances, can be found in a searchable online database at <https://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces>.

Johnson provided Hoehn with a photo of Bard and shared some details about his story. Bard died when he was 19, and being two years apart, the siblings were close growing up.

"He was a stinker, he really was," Johnson said. "He used to hang around with his friends that reminded me of the mafia. They would drive this old like a Model T, or one of those older cars back in the '60s. And he used to wear his hair in a DA, you know, the waterfall and the back in a DA and the long sideburns and everything. He was a pistol. He got himself into trouble with the police. ... Nothing major, back in the day, you know how kids got in trouble, and that's how he was."

He was 18 when he signed up for the Marines, and his parents had to sign for him. His decision to join upset the entire family.

"It broke my heart," Johnson said.

Getting started

While the work to find the photos really took off in 2009, the seeds of the idea for the Wall of Faces began with the founder of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Vietnam War veteran Jan Scruggs, following the memorial's 10th anniversary in 1992.

"I just started getting on the phone with some of these family members, and some of



Jan Scruggs

Vietnam War veteran Jan Scruggs, founder of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, cleans the memorial's wall in Washington.

them, they needed some explanation," he said. "They felt this was kind of taking advantage of the names, faces, fundraising and all this sort of thing. But I was able to start selling the project, and I concluded that 58,000-plus names was a very big hurdle. But it's the kind of project you can just kind of put on the shelf and from time to time activate it."

In the early 2000s, Scruggs started pushing the project again, visiting places such as Salt Lake City and Washington state. Despite support from lawmakers in Congress, the Senate and in the states they would visit, the project did not take off the way Scruggs hoped it would.

"The more we did these, the less effective they were — that was the strange thing," Scruggs said. "You would think that this would really kind of build, but in fact it just didn't, and I could not get to the bottom of it."

That was, until Scruggs learned about Hoehn.

In 2008, Hoehn and her husband visited Washington, D.C., and toured the memorials, starting with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

"I did not personally know anyone who died in Vietnam," Hoehn said. "However, something was drawing me to the Vietnam Memorial, and I was really not prepared how it was going to affect me. I mean, I just stood in front of it and cried."

Hoehn took a rubbing of a name on the wall: Gregory John Crossman. While most of the names had a diamond next to them to indicate the service member is known or presumed to be dead, Crossman had a cross next to his name, meaning he was missing in action or otherwise unaccounted for, as another visitor to the wall explained to Hoehn.

Once she was back home on Maui, Hoehn's curiosity got the best of her. She pulled out the rubbing and started doing research online.

"I just typed his name in and actually quite a bit came up about him," she said. "He was a pilot, he and his copilot were shot down and neither one of them have ever

been recovered."

Hoehn wanted to find Crossman's family to give them the rubbing, also thinking they might have a photo of the pilot. But her search turned up empty.

She got in touch with her cousin, her family's historian, who found a university yearbook photo of Crossman. Hoehn put together a scrapbook page with Crossman's biography, picture and the rubbing she took at the Wall, but she never found his family.

Three years later, Hoehn learned about the Wall of Faces project from a TV news report. She made a copy of Crossman's photo and sent it to VVMF. A week later, Scruggs gave her a call.

"He said, 'I understand you live on Maui.' ... He said, 'Is there any chance that you might help us find the photos of the Maui fallen?'" Hoehn said.

Six months later, after many visits to local high schools and libraries and an article in *The Maui News*, Hoehn found the photos for all 42 Maui names on the Wall. But she wasn't ready to stop. She moved on to her hometown of Hemet, Calif., and then the entire state of California, finding more than 2,000 of the photos, she said. From there, she moved up to the Pacific Northwest, and slowly made her way across the country.

Scruggs recalled meeting with Hoehn in Hawaii to discuss the project.

"She got started, and then the next thing I know she says, 'I'm gonna get all 58,000 names,'" Scruggs said. "Yeah, sure, why don't you build a space capsule and fly to the moon for a weekend too while you're at it? And she said, 'No, I can make this happen by getting volunteers throughout the country.' ... It was kind of like me with the Vietnam memorial, the whole idea of having all the names engraved."

In all, Hoehn spent about 11 years on the project, scouring websites such as ancestry.com and classmates.com. She worked with newspapers, high schools, historical societies and family members across the country alongside a team of volunteers — she estimates about 12 core team members

stuck with it to the very end.

Puerto Rico and New York state proved challenging, she said. But on Aug. 5, Hoehn and her team found their last photo.

Putting faces to names

Scruggs retired as president of VVMF in 2015. VVMF's current president, Jim Knotts — an Air Force veteran of the Persian Gulf War — helped usher the Wall of Faces project to completion alongside VVMF's Director of Outreach Tim Tetz.

"It's one thing to see all of the names, and it's hugely impactful," Knotts said. "But then when you can see faces for each one and realize that they were just like us — they had hopes and dreams and families and things they wanted to do with their lives, and all of that was given up for their country."

Tetz has worked on the project since 2012, when he became director of outreach (he volunteered with VVMF for a decade before). At the time the project was known as Faces Never Forgotten and was renamed the Wall of Faces when Knotts came on board, Tetz said.

"Thousands" of people volunteered to work on the project, Tetz said, although he couldn't give an exact number. "That's about like counting the blades of grass in a meadow," he said.

Once they started working on the project, like Hoehn, many volunteers were sucked in.

Jim Reece, who served in the Army from 1970-77 and then the Air Force Reserve from 1985-2004, started working on the project with his brother, Tom Reece, in 2005. They started in their hometown of Wilmington, N.C., eventually finding photos for all North Carolina Vietnam veterans on the Wall.

Eventually, the Reeces hooked up with Hoehn. Jim Reece, who lived on Maui for a time, helped Hoehn find the last photos from Hawaii.

"We called her the sheriff and the rest of us were referred to as her posse," Jim said of their group of volunteers.

Reece was never sent to Vietnam, but he considers the Wall of Faces part of his legacy.

"One of these days there's gonna be a great-grandchild that's gonna look up on the internet and say, 'You know, my great-granddad was in Vietnam; I'm gonna look up his name and see if I can find him,'" Jim said. "And they're gonna look, and they're gonna find [him] just by using Google."

A promise fulfilled

For Hoehn, the Reeces and others, the stories from family members were what really kept them going.

"I still — I mean, those people send me Christmas cards, and I reciprocate," said Hoehn, who became the first female and non-veteran president of the Maui County Veterans Council four years ago. "Some (family members) were very quiet when I would call. One of them said to me one time, 'I haven't heard my dad's name in 40 years.' It really takes them back; they just stop. I was so afraid at first when I started this project; I thought, what if I'm just gonna upset all of these people? Maybe they've tried to put it behind them? They haven't."

VETERANS

Study: Service improves Blacks' quality of life

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Black veterans are less likely to be chronic marijuana smokers than their white counterparts and enjoy a higher standard of living than African Americans who never joined the military, according to a new study that examined life outcomes for veterans.

The Rand Corp. report, released this week, found that in many respects past military service was associated with a high quality of life for African Americans when they return to the civilian world.

The report aimed to fill an infor-

mation gap in an area often overlooked: how military service influences the future lives of Black Americans, said Rand, a nonpartisan research group that is often commissioned by the Defense Department.

Among the positive indicators are higher income, improved ability to cover health care costs, higher rates of homeownership and decreased reliance on food assistance programs, compared with Black people who were lifetime civilians.

Black veterans also have "a substantially lower" likelihood of marijuana use disorder than Black civil-

ians as well as white veterans and civilians, the report said.

"This suggests that there might be some downstream protective effect of military service for Black veterans for this outcome or that there might be a bias against marijuana use among Black people who join the military," Rand said.

Despite their strong representation in the armed forces, "there is little research on the impact of military service on Black people," Rand said.

African Americans represent 13.4% of the overall U.S. population and 11.7% of the roughly 18 million

American veterans, according to Rand.

Another finding was that military service corresponds with higher marriage rates for Black veterans compared with Black civilians.

Still, Black veterans do not have economic equity compared with white civilians and veterans, when examining indicators like annual income and need for food assistance, the report said.

Black veterans also have higher odds of experiencing chronic pain and other ailments such as hypertension and high cholesterol, when compared with Black civilians,

Rand said.

In the area of suicide, Rand found no significant difference between Black veterans and Black civilians. Likewise, there was no significant difference between Black veterans and white veterans or civilians related to suicide, the report said.

Among whites, the income pattern was mixed, with male veterans earning less than their civilian counterparts. By contrast, white female veterans earned more than white female civilians.

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Doubek: 'There needs to be recognition of the service'

FROM PAGE 1

Doubek had been an Air Force intelligence officer, assigned to interrogating North Vietnamese prisoners of war in Danang from December 1968 to late November 1969.

By the end of his tour, Doubek was skeptical that America's intervention would succeed because of the fortitude he had seen in prisoners, some of whom had been holding out for years in the foothills and mountains. One prisoner told him each fighter subsisted on just over a pound of rice a day, with the occasional vegetable or fish. "So, my sense was that they could wait us out," he said.

He left the Air Force in July 1971 and graduated from law school in 1974 at age 30. The following year Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese.

'What about a memorial?'

American involvement in South Vietnam slowly lost public support in the late 1960s, and many were glad to leave the failed war behind. Some Vietnam veterans felt they too were left behind.

"I began to hear that Vietnam veterans were having problems readjusting," Doubek recalled of the mid-1970s. "I wasn't getting much satisfaction out of being a lawyer so I thought maybe I could help some guys with bad-conduct discharges or something."

He began providing legal assistance to members of the Vietnam Veterans of America in their pursuit for better benefits for treating post-traumatic stress.

Doubek and a cofounder of VVA decided to attend a meeting at the National Conference of Mayors in Washington, D.C., in April 1979, which roughly coincided with Vietnam Veterans Day instituted five years earlier.

"We thought maybe we could use that as a hook to get publicity for veterans' needs," Doubek said. "And while I was at the meeting,



JOE GROMELSKI/Special to Stars and Stripes

Memorial Day at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, May 30, 2022. Project director Robert Doubek said he initially envisioned "a very simple marker." It would become anything but that.

this guy who'd been sitting all alone in the back stood up and he said, 'What about a memorial?'

The idea and the voice belonged to Jan Scruggs, a decorated Army rifleman, who became the driving force behind the memorial. But on that day, fellow attendees dismissed the notion, believing that better benefits were what was needed, Doubek said.

"But it resonated with me," he recalled.

"In law school and in the social atmosphere of Washington, D.C., it was almost like a negative thing to be a Vietnam veteran," he said. "So, I thought what people needed was recognition. There needs to be recognition of the service."

Doubek approached Scruggs and helped him set up a nonprofit corporation, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, which could be used as a vehicle for fundraising and contracting.

A simple design

As they embarked on the effort, Doubek said he envisioned "a very simple marker."

It would become anything but that.

Congress authorized a two-acre site next to the Lincoln Memorial in July 1980 for its construction.

The Memorial Fund chose the design through a national competition that garnered 1,421 designs by the March 30, 1981, deadline.

In a 2019 interview with Army Times, Scruggs described most of the entries as "architecturally complex."

"One was a giant flag where you would walk down the stripes and all names would be on big lily pads, and they would be continually read over a loudspeaker system," Scruggs said. "There was the 400-foot-tall Army helmet with a bullet hole in the center and all the names on dog tags. One had a helicopter on a pole, crashing down, with all the names around it."

The selection jury, however, chose a simple design by Maya Lin, who at the time was still an undergraduate at Yale University.

Her design, a wall of black granite with inscribed names, bereft of

statues and ornamentation, met almost immediate opposition from those who envisioned a more traditional monument in the style of the Iwo Jima flag-raising depicted in the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial.

A leading critic was Texas billionaire Ross Perot, a Navy veteran who had initially supported the effort with a donation of \$171,000.

Perot described the proposed memorial to reporters as "a tombstone" and that many veterans regarded it as "an apology, not a memorial."

Some called it a "black gash of shame," Doubek said.

"The thing completely blew out of proportion, insofar as the Wall became a Rorschach inkblot test for unresolved feelings about the war," Scruggs told Smithsonian Magazine in a 2002 interview.

'Let's get this done'

Political opposition slowed the required construction approval by the U.S. Department of Interior, said Doubek, who hit his lowest point on March 10, 1982, his birthday.

"We were trying to get the building permit out of the interior secretary, James T. Watt," he said.

"And I thought, you know, what am I doing? I'm 38 years old. I don't have a career. I don't have a wife. I don't have a family. I've spent the last three years working on this. If this fails, I'm, I'm, you know, up the creek."

"That was the only day I lost faith," he said.

Interior's approval letter arrived the next day.

"Frankly, I was ashamed of myself," Doubek said.

Five days later he picked up the building permit from the National Park Service and called Scruggs from a payphone.

"I got the damn permit," Doubek recalled telling him. "Call the construction company. Call the architect. Let's get it done."

Doubek, fearing a lawsuit might delay the project, insisted the contractor begin immediately tearing up the sidewalk and grass at the site.

"Because under the law, an injunction preserves the status quo," he said. "We still had Perot, a billionaire, sitting out there with all the money in the world to hire a lawyer. He could have at any point come in and tried to screw us again. So we wanted the status quo to be 'under construction.'"

Under a compromise between the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and critics of the design, a statue of three warfighters and a flagpole were erected and dedicated in 1984 near the entry to the site.

Looking for names

Doubek recalled the wall's dedication as "hushed and quiet, and extremely reverent."

"The atmosphere in front of the wall was like being in a cathedral," he said. "I think it was sort of like an epiphany for people to go there. People just couldn't stop themselves from going to the wall and touching the wall, looking for names."

The sight of family members, friends and battlefield comrades searching for names, sometimes tracing them on paper, has over the decades become as iconic as the wall itself.

With the passing of years, Doubek has come to feel that the acrimony around the project — which had so ground down his spirit by the time it was dedicated — had probably helped get it over the finish line.

"I remember when all of the rancor began to happen over the design, we got more publicity and our fundraising actually started to increase," he said. "Maybe it was cathartic for the country to go through this debate."

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MILITARY

3 sailors get medals for rescue

By DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

Three Navy sailors have received commendation medals for saving a man's life after an accident at a U.S. military base in Italy, officials said Tuesday.

The sailors were performing routine duties and preparing for training at Naval Support Activity Naples two weeks ago when a man who'd been tying down a forklift fell off a truck and injured his head.

Two of the sailors, Petty Officer 2nd Class Xavier Escalante and Petty Officer 2nd Class Nikolas Bullock, witnessed the accident and "sprang into action immediately," the Navy said.

"The first thing I thought when he fell was to get out of our [vehicle] and see if he was OK," Bullock said in a statement.

"I saw his eyes roll to the back of his head, he wasn't breathing and he started to turn purple," Escalante added. "I started administering CPR."

Navy officials said one of the



AALIYAH ESSEX/U.S. Navy

From left, Lt. Cmdr. Alexander Lamis, U.S. Naval Support Activity Naples security officer; Petty Officer 2nd Class Xavier Escalante; Petty Officer 3rd Class Sarah Meader; Petty Officer 2nd Class Nikolas Bullock; and Capt. James Stewart, the commanding officer at NSA Naples.

men continued CPR and chest compressions while the other went to call for help. A short time later, the injured man regained consciousness and started breathing.

Around that time, Petty Officer 3rd Class Sarah Meader brought a first-aid kit and stabilized the injured man's neck until emergency medics arrived.

All three sailors were awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal on Tuesday.

"These sailors embody the courage the Navy looks for in our

fighting force," Capt. James Stewart, the base's commanding officer, said in a statement. "You never know when the call to action comes. It could be on a carrier in hostile waters or as you're driving down your home street. For that, I am proud for their performance and it was an honor to award them for their efforts."

Naval Support Activity Naples is home to U.S. Naval Forces Europe and the 6th Fleet.

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S. Korea general thanks US troops for crowd surge aid

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The top general in South Korea in a letter Friday to the commander of U.S. Forces Korea thanked American troops who rescued victims trapped in the Itaewon crowd surge that killed 156 people.

Gen. Kim Seung Kyum, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, expressed his "profound gratitude" toward the U.S. service members "for their act of valor in saving the lives of 30 Korean civilians" trapped in the fatal surge Oct. 29 in Seoul, according to the letter to U.S. Army Gen. Paul LaCamera posted on USFK's Facebook page Thursday.

Kim's letter does not identify the soldiers but states they all "are the ultimate embodiments of the word 'hero' and complete personifications of the spirit of our [South Korea]-U.S. alliance."

Jarmil Taylor, Dane Beathard and Jerome Augusta, three soldiers stationed in Camp Casey, South Korea, told Agence France-Presse that they pulled people from

the crowd after becoming aware of the danger, according to an Oct. 30 report from the news outlet.

Four days later, South Korea's Yonhap News reported that an unidentified South Korean man recognized the three Americans. One of the soldiers, according to Yonhap, "rescued him from the crowd as if pulling radishes from a field."

"While we continue to receive heartbreaking news from the incident, our people are deeply moved by the heroic tales of these USFK service members," Kim said in the letter. "The citizens who were rescued by these gentlemen are calling them lifesavers, and widespread praise from our citizens are sweeping our nation."

The crowd of revelers surged into a narrow, sloping alley during Halloween festivities in a nightlife district of the city. Twenty-six of the victims were foreigners, including two Americans.

U.S. military police stationed in nearby Yongsan Garrison were also at the scene providing first aid and assisting with crowd control, USFK spokesman Wesley Hayes previously told Stars and Stripes.

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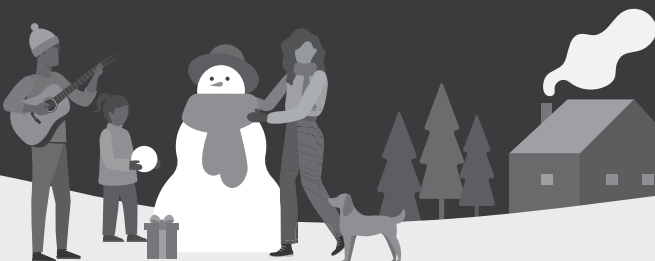
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MILITARY

Study tracks military emissions worldwide

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

The world's militaries are responsible for 5.5% of all greenhouse gas emissions and collectively produce more carbon dioxide per year than nearly every country, according to new data released Thursday.

"The scale of these emissions is so large that concerted action to reduce them is necessary by all governments," the authors of the report said in a statement released with the findings.

The report concluded that military personnel in North America, and an area it refers to as Eurasia, which includes Russia and Uk-

raine, each produced an average of 13 tons of greenhouse gases per year as of 2020. The figure is expected to be higher following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February.

Personnel in Asia and Oceania, the Middle East and North Africa produced an average of 9 tons per year; and personnel in Europe produced an average of 5 tons per year. Total emissions figures also accounted for aircraft and mechanical emissions, as well as supply chains.

There is growing concern among environmentalists over the extent to which militaries contribute to climate change, which long has been difficult to determine be-

cause of a lack of data collected and distributed by the militaries themselves.

But two Britain-based organizations, Scientists for Global Responsibility and the Conflict and Environment Observatory, developed a methodology to estimate a total for the world and its main political regions.

Militaries have a combined carbon footprint larger than that of all but three countries: China, the U.S. and India, they determined.

"The world's militaries and wars are a very significant but neglected source of carbon pollution, and these emissions are almost certainly rising with the Ukraine war and the resulting internation-

al increase in military spending," said Stuart Parkinson, executive director of Scientists for Global Responsibility and the lead author of the report.

The 2015 Paris Agreement made military emission reporting voluntary, meaning there are significant gaps in the data submitted to the United Nations.

Many countries do not provide any data, including top-10 military spenders India, Saudi Arabia and South Korea.

Because militaries pollute more than any other institution in most countries, environmentalists fear that the lack of data could seriously hamper efforts to tackle climate change caused by rising emis-

sions.

Researchers acknowledged in the report that they made "a number of assumptions" because of the lack of available data.

But they did not include emissions arising from impacts of wars such as fires, other damage to infrastructure and ecosystems, post-conflict reconstruction, and health care for survivors and therefore consider their findings "conservative."

The full report, including information about the researchers' methodology, can be viewed at <http://ceobs.org>.

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PAOLO BOVO/U.S. Army

A U.S. Army paratrooper assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade prepares a M249 light machine gun for firing as part of the Expert Infantryman Badge, Expert Soldier Badge and Expert Field Medical Badge training at Caserma Del Din, Vicenza, Italy, on Oct. 28.

Experts: Soldiers undergo days of testing

FROM PAGE 1

Most were with the 173rd Infantry Brigade, which hosted the event, along with some Southern European Task Force, Africa troops, Germany-based units and some foreign NATO allies.

The soldiers undergo days of testing on weapons, navigation, medical treatment and evacuations, patrol and physical training. The three tests vary, but the troops all must complete a 12-mile ruck march in three hours or less.

"If a candidate performs a task out of sequence or fails to meet the time standard on any portion of a task, the candidate will be stopped immediately and informed why the candidate is a NO-GO," according to the Expert Soldier Badge manual. The soldier gets one more chance before being disqualified.

Just 42% of the 494 U.S. infantry-branch soldiers aiming to get their Expert Infantryman Badges did so. Of 53 foreign NATO troops, 36 earned badges.

Thirty-one percent of the 218 medical branch troops who sought the Expert Field Medical Badge succeeded, which is a relatively high showing. Capt. Rob Haake, a 173rd Brigade spokesman, said passing percentages on all three tests had been trending higher in recent years.

The 619 soldiers going for the Expert Soldier Badge, available to assorted troops since 2019, had the lowest pass rate at 29%.

Two years ago, Capt. Connor Houston, aiming for his Expert Infantryman Badge, was almost done when he failed to properly secure a mock casualty to a spine board twice. "My brain was mush," he said.

The next year he tried again. "Everything was great and then I got COVID," he said.

But this time, going for his Expert Soldier Badge since he'd switched from infantry to finance, everything came together. He literally talked himself through it. "I like to tell a story," he said. "Hey, buddy, are you alive? Oh my God, my friend's dead," Houston said during the medical portion of his testing.

Houston said he was ready for a nap following a ceremony Wednesday.

Perez was winding down with bites of rotisserie chicken still in its bag and reveling in beating the test.

"No one can ever take this away from me," she said, "and I don't ever have to do it again."

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Japan, US hold joint arms drills amid China, North Korea tensions

Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan and the United States began a major joint military exercise Thursday in southern Japan as the allies aim to step up readiness in the face of China's increasing assertiveness and North Korea's intensifying missile launches.

The biennial "Keen Sword" drills kicked off at a Japanese air base in southern Japan and were also held at multiple other locations in and around Japan. They will run through Nov. 19.

About 26,000 Japanese and 10,000 American troops, as well as 30 vessels and 370 aircraft from both sides, are to participate in the drills, according to the Japanese Defense Ministry. Australia, Britain and Canada will also join parts of the drills, it said.

Joint field training that includes amphibious landing exercises are planned on southwestern Japanese remote islands, including Tokunoshima, Amami and Tsutarajima, as Japan has been bolstering its defense capability in the region amid growing tensions over China.

China has reinforced its claims to virtually the entire South China Sea by constructing artificial islands equipped with military installations and airfields. Beijing al-

so claims a string of islands that are controlled by Japan in the East China Sea, and has stepped up military harassment of self-ruled Taiwan, which it says is part of China to be annexed by force if necessary.

The joint exercise also comes on the heels of intensifying missile firings by North Korea, which has launched more than 30 of them this year, including one on Wednesday that fell in the sea between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. Last month, an intercontinental ballistic missile flew over northern Japan.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, citing worsening security in the region, has pledged to substantially increase Japanese military capability and possibly allow pre-emptive strike capability to attack enemy missile launch sites from afar. The plans are expected to be included in a revised national security strategy and mid- to long-term defense guidelines later this year.

A move to develop strike capability is a major shift for Japan's self-defense-only principle, though the country has rapidly expanded its military's role and capability in the past decade to work more closely with the United States and other partners in the region and Europe.

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MILITARY

ISIS adherent sentenced to 17 years in bomb plot

By **KYLE ALVAREZ**
Stars and Stripes

A Pittsburgh man who plotted to bomb a local church out of a desire to show support for Islamic State was sentenced this week to a 17-year prison term.

Mustafa Mousab Alowemer, 24, who is originally from Syria and came to the United States, had shared his plan with an undercover FBI agent who he thought was an ISIS adherent.

The sentence was handed down Tuesday after he pleaded guilty to charges of providing material support to a terrorist group last year in federal court.

"Alowemer's plan to conduct an attack at a church in Pitts-

burgh and inspire other ISIS supporters in the United States was unsuccessful thanks to the effort of law enforcement officials at both the federal and state level," Robert Wells, the assistant director of the FBI's counterterrorism unit, said in a Justice Department statement Wednesday.

Alowemer's intended target was a Nigerian Christian church, which he chose because he sought to "take revenge for our (ISIS) brothers in Nigeria," according to court documents.

He told investigators he wanted to encourage other ISIS sympathizers to commit similar terrorist acts throughout the United States.

The plot began in 2019, when Alowemer gave documents about building improvised explosive devices to an undercover FBI agent. He expected the bombing to happen in July of that year.

The materials he handed over included maps of the church's location marked with routes to and

from the church, the DOJ statement said.

He also bought such items as nails and acetone, which he gave to the undercover agent with the expectation that they would be used to make the bomb, according to the statement.

Alowemer met with the agent

four times in 2019. Investigators said he insisted on one final meeting in June of that year before going through with his plan, and he was arrested then, the Justice Department said.

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Sailor indicted in Japan in July incident in which 4 were injured at beach

By **ALEX WILSON**
AND **HANA KUSUMOTO**
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Japanese prosecutors on Tuesday indicted a U.S. sailor accused of injuring several people by charging into them at a popular beach near the homeport of the U.S. 7th Fleet.

Daniel Krieger, 29, was charged with bodily injury of four people, a spokesman for the Yokohama District Public Prosecutor's Office in Yokosuka city told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday. The spokesman provided the sailor's name in Japanese but declined to specify his assigned unit and rank.

Japanese government spokespeople are customarily required to speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

A spokesman for Yokosuka Naval Base, Randall Baucom, on Oct. 25 confirmed the sailor is stationed there but declined comment Thursday on the indictment.

The charges stem from a July 9 incident in Zushi in which Krieger allegedly slammed physically into a group of five people from behind and knocked them down, according to the prosecutor's spokesman.

The indictment alleges Krieger then kicked a 33-year-old person in the back, spraining their cervical and lumbar vertebrae, the spokesman said. Kanagawa Prefectural Police on Oct. 24 identified the 33-year-old as a man from Tokyo.

The sailor also allegedly slammed into another 33-year-old, who fell backward into a 25-year-old. Those people were not identified by gender by the po-

lice or prosecutors.

Krieger then allegedly kicked the second 33-year-old in the face, causing an abrasion to their right eyelid. The 25-year-old suffered an abrasion to their right hand, the spokesman said.

Prosecutors said Krieger also allegedly knocked down a 58-year-old whom police identified as a woman. She suffered a broken upper jaw, a broken nasal bone and other facial injuries, according to prosecutors.

Kanagawa police on Oct. 21 recommended charging Krieger with bodily injury of five individuals, but prosecutors indicted him on four, the spokesman said.

The Zushi Municipal Assembly passed a unanimous resolution Sept. 6 demanding the U.S. military apologize for the incident, compensate the injured and increase oversight of service members at Zushi Beach, 7½ miles west of the naval base.

"The incident is a serious criminal act that Zushi city has not experienced in recent years," the resolution said. "It is absolutely unacceptable that it caused fear and anxiety; not just to the victims, but to Zushi citizens."

The resolution also urged the U.S. military to educate its service members on Japanese law and discourage them from visiting Zushi.

U.S. Forces Japan acknowledged a request for comment on the resolution on Thursday but didn't respond by the close of business.

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EUROPE

Russian troops begin retreat from Kherson

BY SAM MEDNICK
AND YURAS KARMANAU
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia said its troops began pulling out of a strategic Ukrainian city on Thursday amid growing signs it was following through on a retreat that would mark a turning point in the grinding war.

Ukrainian officials acknowledged Moscow's forces had no choice but to flee Kherson but remained cautious, fearing an ambush. It was difficult to know what was happening in the industrial port city, from which tens of thousands have fled in recent weeks and where remaining residents are frightened to leave their homes.

A forced pullout from Kherson — the only provincial capital Moscow has captured — would mark one of Russia's worst setbacks yet, recalling their retreat from the capital in the early days of the war.

Recapturing Kherson could allow Ukraine to win back lost territory in the south, including Crimea, which Moscow illegally seized in 2014. A Russian retreat is also almost certain to raise domes-

tic pressure on the Kremlin to escalate the conflict.

The Russian Defense Ministry reported Thursday a "maneuver of units of the Russian group" to the opposite side of the Dnieper River from where Kherson lies — a day after the minister ordered a troop withdrawal during a choreographed briefing by his top general carried on state TV.

Some Western observers, including the highest-ranking U.S. military officer, said they believed the Kremlin's forces have been forced to pull out — though a full withdrawal could take some time.

And on Thursday, Ukrainian officials appeared to soften their skepticism somewhat. The armed forces commander-in-chief, Valeriy Zaluzhny, said that "the enemy had no other choice but to resort to fleeing," since Kyiv's army has destroyed supply systems and disrupted Russia's military command in the area. Zaluzhny also noted recent Ukrainian advances, saying that Kyiv's forces have retaken 41 settlements in the Kherson region since Oct. 1, including 12 just on Wednesday.



LIBKOS/AP

A Ukrainian serviceman reacts as a self-propelled artillery vehicle is prepared to be fired Wednesday in Donetsk region, Ukraine.

Still, he said that Ukrainian military could not confirm or deny that Russian forces were indeed withdrawing.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak, meanwhile, offered another reason to be wary of any pullback: He alleged Russian forces had laid mines throughout Kherson, saying they wanted to

turn it into a "city of death."

Residents said that the city was completely deserted Thursday and that explosions could occasionally be heard from the area of the Antonivskiy Bridge — a key crossing point on the Dnieper River that has been repeatedly targeted by Ukrainian bombardment.

"Life in the city seems to have

stopped, everyone has disappeared somewhere and no one knows what will happen next," said Konstantin, who insisted that his last name be withheld for security reasons. "Only people with demining equipment are walking around in Kherson, but there are not many of them."

Russian flags have disappeared from the city's administrative buildings, and there is no sign of the Russian military personnel who earlier moved into the apartments of evacuated residents, he said.

Ukrainian officials have been cautious throughout the war in declaring any victories against a Russian force that at least initially outgunned and outmanned them.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was also guarded Thursday, insisting the West needed to wait and see "how the situation on the ground develops in the coming days."

"But what is clear is that Russia is under heavy pressure. And if they leave Kherson, it would be another victory for Ukraine," he said at a press briefing in Rome.

Army: Soldiers from 1st Cavalry, 3rd and 4th Infantry to deploy to Europe

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

Soldiers from the Army's 1st Cavalry Division and its 3rd and 4th Infantry Divisions will deploy to Europe later this year to replace other U.S.-based units deployed to the Continent amid the monthslong Russian invasion of Ukraine, service officials announced Wednesday.

The 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas, the 4th Infantry Division Headquarters and Sustainment Brigade from Fort Carson, Colo., and the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division from Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., will all deploy in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve, the service said in a series of statements. The new deployments expected in the coming months will maintain the Pentagon's increased troop presence in Europe, where U.S. troops have been training with NATO partners — especially along the alliance's eastern flank — since Russia's late February attack of Ukraine.

The deployments will keep American troop levels at about 100,000 — up about 20,000 American service members since Russia began amassing forces along Ukraine's borders. It will also maintain two armored brigade combat teams of some 4,200 soldiers each on the Continent — firepower that Europe

had not seen in decades before the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team of the 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Stewart, Ga., deployed on almost no notice in early March, just days after the invasion.

The 2nd Armored Brigade of 1st Cavalry Division will replace the division's 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, which deployed in the summer to replace the Fort Stewart brigade. In its announcement, the Army described the upcoming deployment as "a regular rotation of forces," indicating the service intends to maintain two tank brigades in Europe for the foreseeable future. The 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kan., will be the other U.S.-based tank brigade in Europe when the upcoming troop rotations happen.

The Army described the other deployments as regular troop rotations, as well.

The 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade will replace the 1st Armored Division's Combat Aviation Brigade, which will return to Fort Bliss, Texas, after completing its tour, according to Army officials.

The Fort Carson, Colo.-based 4th Infantry Division Headquarters will replace the roughly 300 soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division Headquarters, which will return to Fort Riley, the Army said. The 4th Infantry Division's Sustainment Brigade will replace the 1st Infantry Divi-

sion's Sustainment Brigade, which will also return to Fort Riley.

In separate statements, leaders of each of the units set to deploy said their soldiers were properly trained and prepared to bolster NATO's efforts to deter Russian aggression.

They deploy as the war in Ukraine has lasted more than eight months, but as Russian troops have struggled to maintain their hold on areas in the country's south and east. Russia on Wednesday announced its troops would retreat from the southern Ukrainian port city of Kherson, which it captured in early March. It's the latest win for Ukrainian forces, which have recaptured much of the nation's south and west since launching a counteroffensive in September.

Maj. Gen. David Hodne, the commander of the 4th Infantry Division, said many of the deploying troops have experience operating in Europe, where the United States has maintained the Atlantic Resolve mission since 2014, when Russia illegally annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine.

"In addition to deploying expert soldiers, leaders and formations, the division's previous experience in Europe will enable rapid partnering with allies in this dynamic security environment," Hodne said in a statement.

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Officials: US sending Ukraine an additional \$400M in military aid

BY LOLITA C. BALDOR
AND MATTHEW LEE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. will send \$400 million more in military aid to Ukraine, several U.S. officials said Thursday, amid concerns that financial assistance for the war against Russia could decline a bit if Republicans take control of Congress.

An announcement was expected Thursday, as the vote counting from Tuesday's election continues, with Republicans inching closer to a narrow House majority and with control of the Senate hinging on tight races in Arizona, Nevada and Georgia.

According to officials, the aid package will contain large amounts of ammunition and, for the first time, highly mobile Avenger Air Defense Systems. Officials said there will be ammunition for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, known as HIMARS, which Ukraine has been successfully using in its counteroffensive against Russia. There also will be mortars and missiles for the Hawk surface-to-air anti-aircraft system.

The additional ammunition and air defense capabilities come as Russian troops began pulling out of the key Ukrainian city of Kher-

son, in a widening retreat that could mark a turning point in the war. Kherson is the only provincial capital that Moscow captured, and the Russian withdrawal could allow Ukraine to win back territory in the south that it had lost. Ukrainian officials acknowledged that Moscow's forces had no choice but to flee Kherson but remained cautious, fearing an ambush.

Including the latest aid, the U.S. has committed more than \$18.6 billion in weapons and other equipment to Ukraine since Russia attacked on Feb. 24. The new package of aid will be done under presidential drawdown authority, which allows the Pentagon to take weapons from its own stock and quickly ship them to Ukraine, officials said.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss details of a package not yet made public.

When asked about ongoing aid to Ukraine on Wednesday, President Joe Biden expressed optimism that it will go on, even if Republicans take control of one or both houses of Congress.

"I hope we'll continue this bipartisan approach of confronting Russia's aggression in Ukraine," the Democratic president told reporters.

NATION

Sprawling Tropical Storm Nicole drenches Fla., Ga.

By TERRY SPENCER
AND FREIDA FRISARO
Associated Press

VERO BEACH, Fla. — Tropical Storm Nicole sent multiple homes toppling into the Atlantic Ocean Thursday and threatened a row of high rise condominiums in places where Hurricane Ian washed away seawalls and other remaining protections only weeks ago.

“Multiple coastal homes in Wilbur-by-the-Sea have collapsed and several other properties are at imminent risk,” Volusia County Sheriff Mike Chitwood said in a social media message. In the Daytona Beach area, most bridges to the beachside have been closed to all but essential personnel and a curfew was put into effect, he said.

Wilbur-by-the-Sea is an unincorporated community on a barrier island with only beachfront homes. Next door in Daytona Beach Shores, a strip of high-rise condominiums were evacuated ahead of Nicole’s landfall because their seawalls had collapsed and the beach was mostly washed away.

Nicole covered nearly the entire weather-weary state of Florida while also reaching into Georgia and the Carolinas before dawn on Thursday. Tropical storm-force winds extended as far as 450 miles from the center in some directions as Nicole turned northward over central Florida.

Initial damage assessments showed how Nicole left multiple beachfront properties teetering over the water. The Volusia Sheriff’s Office posted a photo of a house where erosion had undermined the ground up to its main ocean-facing wall. A roof-covered deck jutted out



JOE CAVARETTA, SOUTH FLORIDA SUN-SENTINEL/AP

Tropical Storm Nicole makes landfall near Vero Beach, Fla. as a hurricane early Thursday.

over the eroded slope supported on narrow timbers.

Krista Dowling Goodrich, who manages 130 rental homes in Daytona Beach Shores as director of sales and marketing at Salty Dog Vacations, witnessed the beachfront disappear behind some of the properties as evacuations were under way just ahead of the storm. She was trying to reach the scene Thursday morning to see how they fared.

In Daytona Beach Shores, where the city’s Beach Safety Ocean Rescue building collapsed onto the remaining strip of sand, officials deemed multiple multi-story coastal residential buildings unsafe, and

went door-to-door telling people to grab their possessions and leave.

“These were the tall high-rises. So the people who wouldn’t leave, they were physically forcing them out because it’s not safe,” Goodrich said.

Nicole made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane at about 3 a.m. Thursday near Vero Beach, but caused no significant damage there, officials said Thursday.

The storm left south Florida sunny and calm as it moved up the peninsula, but could dump as much as 6 inches of rain over Blue Ridge Mountains by Friday, the hurricane center said.

Navy engineer, wife sentenced in nuclear submarine espionage case

By JOHN RABY
Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Citing the “great danger” that a Navy engineer and his wife posed to U.S. security, a federal judge gave both of them lengthy prison terms Wednesday for a plot to sell secrets about nuclear submarines to what they thought was a representative of a foreign government.

U.S. District Judge Gina Groh, who in August rejected earlier plea agreements that had called for reduced sentencing guidelines, sentenced Jonathan Toebbe to more than 19 years and his wife, Diana Toebbe, to nearly 22 years. The sentences were handed down on Jonathan Toebbe’s 44th birthday.

The Annapolis, Md., couple and their attorneys described the defendants’ struggles with mental health issues and alcohol and said they were anxious about the nation’s political climate when they sold secrets in exchange for \$100,000 in cryptocurrency.

Groh said their tale “reads like a crime novel or a movie script” and that Jonathan Toebbe’s “actions and greedy self-serving intentions placed military service members at sea and every citizen of this country in a vulnerable position and at risk of harm from adversaries.”

Diana Toebbe, who admitted acting as a lookout for her husband, received an enhanced sen-

tence after the judge disclosed during the couple’s combined five-hour sentencing hearing that Diana Toebbe tried to send her husband two letters from jail.

The letters, which were read in court, were intercepted before they could be delivered. In one of them, Diana Toebbe told her husband to flush the letter down a toilet after reading it. She encouraged him to lie about her involvement in the scheme and say she “didn’t know anything about any of this.”

The judge said she lacked genuine remorse and didn’t take responsibility for her actions.

“This is an exceptional story, right out of the movies,” Groh said.



CALTRANS/AP

Traffic moves slowly through the snowy conditions along Interstate 80 near Truckee, Calif., on Tuesday.

Great Plains storm to unleash hefty snowfall

By IAN LIVINGSTON
The Washington Post

As the season’s first major winter storm system shifts out of the West and into the Great Plains, blizzard warnings have been hoisted for parts of the Dakotas. A larger area of the surrounding Northern Plains and Upper Midwest is under either a winter storm watch or warning.

Snowfall, focused in the northern Rockies on Wednesday morning, was expected to shift eastward into the Northern Plains. The storm will rage over the Dakotas on Thursday before slipping into northern Minnesota through early Friday.

By the time the storm passes, a large swath of 6-12 or more inches of snow is expected to stretch from Montana to northwest Minnesota. Areas of central North Dakota could see as much as a foot and a half.

Rain and mountain snow pounded California and parts of the intermountain west on Election Day.

Several feet of snow fell in the Sierra Nevada, including 29 inches in Wishon and 28 inches near Devils Postpile. The Central Sierra Snow Lab tweeted that it re-

ceived 34.3 inches, boosting 2022’s precipitation to 115% of normal.

At lower elevations, numerous locations in California set daily rainfall records Tuesday, including Los Angeles, with 1.31 inches.

To the east, in the Tetons and toward Yellowstone and surrounding high elevations of Wyoming and Montana, snowfall of 1-2 feet was recorded. Snow continued to fall Wednesday in many of these areas.

New areas of snow were breaking out across the prairies of Montana and western North Dakota on Wednesday morning. Freezing rain was kicking things off to the east of that, mainly focused on the eastern Dakotas borderland and into Minnesota.

“Significant snowfall accumulations will be possible in some areas, and strong gusty winds combined with heavy snow could produce blizzard conditions across the Dakotas,” wrote the National Weather Service Weather Prediction Center in an overview of the situation early Wednesday.

Blizzard warnings go into effect in Bismarck and the surrounding region at midnight Thursday and continue through the day.

Sex-trafficking victim who killed rapist back in custody

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — An 18-year-old sex trafficking victim who killed her rapist was being held in an Iowa jail Wednesday and could face a prison term after she walked away from a Des Moines women’s shelter where she was serving probation for a manslaughter conviction.

Pieper Lewis was booked into the Polk County Jail on Tuesday, said Polk County Sheriff Lt. Ryan Evans.

Iowa Department of Corrections officers located her in Des

Moines and took her into custody.

“We would like to thank law enforcement and members of Iowa’s 5th Judicial District for their efforts to safely bring Ms. Lewis back into custody,” corrections spokesman Nick Crawford said.

Lewis had faced a 20-year prison sentence after pleading guilty last year to involuntary manslaughter and willful injury in the June 2020 killing of 37-year-old Zachary Brooks, a married father of two. Lewis was 15 when she stabbed Brooks more than 30 times in a Des Moines apartment.

NATION

Stunning draw as Democrats hold their own

By STEVE PEOPLES
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Facing tremendous headwinds and weighty history, Democrats fought Republicans to a stunning midterm draw.

Many Democrats went into election night dreading how bad their losses could be and pondering how to explain them. By Wednesday, they had quickly shifted into day-after hoping that they could actually maintain a voting majority in the Senate, celebrating victories in key governors' races, and aware that control of the House was still not declared.

Republicans were left grumbling about "candidate quality." Several candidates refused to concede in races that The Associated Press had called for their opponents.

The final numbers might not be known for weeks. There's still a chance Republicans could take unified control of Congress, and President Joe Biden's ambitions for the next two years would instantly shrink. The nation's fractious political divides remained on vivid display.

Democrats had plenty to savor in the morning light. But as they exhaled and Republicans lamented big gains that didn't materialize, there were larger problems that both political parties will

need to address — and soon.

For the Republicans, Donald Trump and his conspiracy-laden politics were exposed anew as a problem, one that this time likely blocked his party from achieving much bigger gains in a nationwide election. Instead of celebrating a red tsunami on Wednesday, Republicans faced a new round of infighting over Trump's role in the GOP and the red wave that wasn't.

"Every Republican in America this morning is waking up sick to their stomach," said Republican strategist David Urban, a former Trump adviser. "Live by Trump, die by Trump."

Whether that assessment is overheated will play out in the coming weeks, starting next Tuesday, when Trump has promised a "major" announcement. Most available evidence shows he is still the most powerful figure in his party.

Given the political and economic climate, it should not have been difficult for Republicans to make major gains Tuesday. Polling showed voters were deeply pessimistic about the state of the economy and the direction of the nation. Biden's approval ratings were anemic. And history strongly suggested that any party holding the White House would bear the brunt of voter discontent.

But in several key races, the candidates backed by Trump stumbled.



MARIAM ZUHAIB/AP

With the U.S. Capitol in the background, people walk down steps on Election Day in Washington, on Tuesday.

In battleground Pennsylvania, Democrats won contests for Senate and governor against a pair of Trump loyalists who embraced his lies about the 2020 election. Democrat John Fetterman pushed past concerns about his health and his progressive policies to defeat Mehmet Oz, the celebrity TV doctor Trump picked from a crowded Republican primary field this spring. Trump defender Doug Mastriano was headed toward double-digit defeat in the governor's race.

Colorado Rep. Lauren Boebert, one of Trump's loudest cheerleaders in Congress, was locked in a close race with the final votes being counted.

It was much the same in Georgia, where Trump's hand-picked Senate nominee, former football star Herschel Walker, was running essentially tied with Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock

even as Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, whom Trump opposed, cruised to reelection.

"Clearly, we lost races we should have won because Trump picked flawed candidates," said Republican strategist Alex Conant. "Georgia should have been a slam dunk."

"Trump's challenge," Conant added, "is that with every loss, his opposition grows stronger."

Indeed, as Trump-backed candidates flailed, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a potential 2024 presidential rival who was not endorsed by Trump, scored a resounding victory.

But for Democrats, a could-have-been-worse election night was not the same as a great one.

With several key races still too early to call, the Republican Party may still win control of the House of Representatives for the next two years of Biden's presidency.

US sees consumer inflation ease slightly

By PAUL WISEMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Price increases moderated in the United States last month in the latest sign that the inflation pressures that have gripped the nation might be easing as the economy slows and Americans grow more cautious.

Consumer inflation reached 7.7% in October from a year earlier and 0.4% from September, the government said Thursday. The year-over-year increase, down from 8.2% in September, was the smallest rise since January. Stripping out volatile food and energy prices, "core" inflation rose 6.3% in the past 12 months and 0.3% from September.

The numbers were all lower than economists had expected.

Helping to ease inflation from September to October were used car prices, which dropped for a fourth straight month. Clothing and medical care also fell. Food price increases slowed. By contrast, energy prices rebounded in October after declines in August and September.

Consumer inflation reached 7.7% in October from a year earlier and 0.4% from September, the government said Thursday. The year-over-year increase, down from 8.2% in September, was the smallest rise since January. Stripping out volatile food and energy prices, "core" inflation rose 6.3% in the past 12 months and 0.3% from September.

"We expect this to mark the start of a much longer disinflationary trend that we think will convince the Fed to halt its (hikes) early next year," said Paul Ashworth, chief North American economist at Capital Economics, a consulting firm. "With supply shortages normalizing, deflationary pressure is now finally showing up."

Many economists have warned that in continuing to tighten credit, the central bank could spark a recession by next year. The Fed has already raised its benchmark interest rate six times in sizable increments this year, heightening the risk that prohibitively high borrowing rates homes for homes, autos and other big-ticket items, will tip the world's largest economy into recession.

Some economists believe the most recent data shows the hikes are beginning to achieve their purpose, though the Fed needs to see further evidence.

"The data will be welcome news for the (Fed), finally showing some response in prices" to the rate increases, said Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics.

Defense rests in 1/6 trial of Oath Keepers leader

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Lawyers for Oath Keepers leader Stewart Rhodes rested their case Wednesday in his Capitol riot trial after a man described as the far-right extremist group's "operations leader" for Jan. 6, 2021, told jurors that he never heard anyone discussing plans to storm the building.

Michael Greene, who is also facing charges in the insurrection, waived his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination to testify in Rhodes' defense in the seditious conspiracy trial. He was the final witness for the defense before Rhodes' team rested its case, which included

testimony from Rhodes himself.

Greene, an Army veteran who served in Iraq, said he came to Washington to oversee the Oath Keepers' security services for right-wing figures such as Roger Stone, longtime Donald Trump confidant, at events before the siege.

Seeking to counter the testimony of government witnesses, Greene told jurors that there wasn't even an "implicit" plan to attack the Capitol.

"Did you put anyone on a mission that day to enter the Capitol?" defense lawyer James Lee Bright asked him. "No," said, Greene, 39, of Indianapolis.

Greene took the stand in the sixth week of testimony in the

case accusing Rhodes and four co-defendants of a violent plot to keep Joe Biden from the White House. Prosecutors have argued that the Oath Keepers came to Washington intent on stopping Biden from becoming president at all costs and sprang into action when the pro-Trump mob started storming the Capitol on Jan. 6.

Messages read to jurors show Rhodes in the weeks leading up to Jan. 6 repeatedly warning of violence and the rallying his followers to fight to keep Trump in power. Authorities say Rhodes continued plotting even after the insurrection, presenting testimony that shows the extremist group leader was trying in mid-January to get a message to then-Presi-

dent Trump urging him to continue fighting to hold his office.

In a risky move, Rhodes chose to take the witness stand in his defense, telling jurors there was no plan to attack the Capitol. Rhodes tried to distance himself from the Oath Keepers who did go inside, saying he believed doing so was "stupid." On cross-examination, prosecutors questioned Rhodes about his own messages and statements, including when he lamented days after the riot that the Oath Keepers "should have brought rifles" on Jan. 6.

Lawyers for the four other defendants still get to call witnesses and the government has the right to introduce rebuttal testimony.

WORLD

Iran protests rage on streets as officials renew threats

By JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Protests in Iran raged on streets into Thursday with demonstrators remembering a bloody crackdown in the country's southeast, even as the nation's intelligence minister and army chief renewed threats against local dissent and the broader world.

The protests in Iran, sparked by the Sept. 16 death of a 22-year-old

woman after her detention by the country's morality police, have grown into one of the largest sustained challenges to the nation's theocracy since the chaotic months after its 1979 Islamic Revolution.

At least 328 people have been killed and 14,825 others arrested in the unrest, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that's been monitoring the protests over their 54 days. Iran's govern-

ment for weeks has remained silent on casualty figures while state media counterfactually claims security forces have killed no one.

As demonstrators now return to the streets to mark 40th-day remembrances for those slain earlier — commemorations common in Iran and the wider Middle East — the protests may turn into cyclical confrontations between an increasingly disillusioned public and security forces that turn to

greater violence to suppress them.

Online videos emerging from Iran, despite government efforts to suppress the internet, appeared to show demonstrations in Tehran, the capital, as well as cities elsewhere in the country. Near Isfahan, video showed clouds of tear gas. Shouts of "Death to the Dictator" could be heard — a common chant in the protests targeting Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

It wasn't immediately clear if there were injuries or arrests in this round of protests, though Iran's state-run IRNA news agency acknowledged the demonstrations near Isfahan. They commemorated the Sept. 30 crackdown in Zahedan, a city in Iran's restive Sistan and Baluchestan province, in which activists say security forces killed nearly 100 people in the deadliest violence to strike amid the demonstrations.

People rally for justice after Indonesian stadium deaths

Associated Press

MALANG, Indonesia — Thousands of people in Indonesia rallied Thursday demanding justice and a thorough investigation into those they blame for the stampede at Kanjuruhan soccer stadium that left 135 people dead last month.

Supporters of Arema FC started the rally with a prayer in East Java's Malang city as they commemorated 40 days since the tragedy that occurred after police fired tear gas at a domestic league soccer match and caused a deadly crush as spectators attempted to flee.

Protesters from regions outside of the Malang area joined the rally. Organizers have described the events leading up to the deaths of

the football spectators as human rights violations.

"Do arrest and judge all actors behind and the executors on the field from the Kanjuruhan tragedy on October 1," the Arema fans, known as "Aremania," said in a written statement Thursday. "Make the Kanjuruhan tragedy a serious human rights violation and not just a minor human rights violation.

"Pay for all losses suffered by the victim and the victim's family through compensation and restitution mechanisms."

The protesters planned to visit several landmarks in Malang, including the Gajayana soccer stadium, Malang city square and Malang City Hall.

Report finds war-triggered gas boom threatens world climate crisis mission

Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt — The war-inspired natural gas boom is undermining already insufficient efforts to limit future warming to just a few more tenths of a degree, a new report says.

Planning and build-up of liquified and other natural gas — due to an energy crisis triggered by Russian's invasion of Ukraine — would add 1.9 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent a year to the air by 2030, according to a report released Thursday by Cli-

mate Action Tracker at international climate talks in Egypt.

That's enough greenhouse gas to "hinder if not catastrophically hinder chances of achieving 1.5 degrees" Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, the international warming-limiting goal, said climate scientist Bill Hare, chief executive officer of Climate Analytics, one of the groups behind Climate Action Tracker, which monitors and analyzes climate promises and action.

The world has already warmed

2 degrees Fahrenheit since pre-industrial times, leaving little room to keep below the 1.5 limit set in Paris in 2015.

The sheer amount of liquified natural gas projects in the pipeline for construction shocked the analysts, Hare said. The report calculates that if it all goes through, the build-up would produce five times the amount of gas it is supposed to replace from Russia.

"This reaction to the energy crisis is an over reach that must be scaled back," the report says.

Are you in the picture?



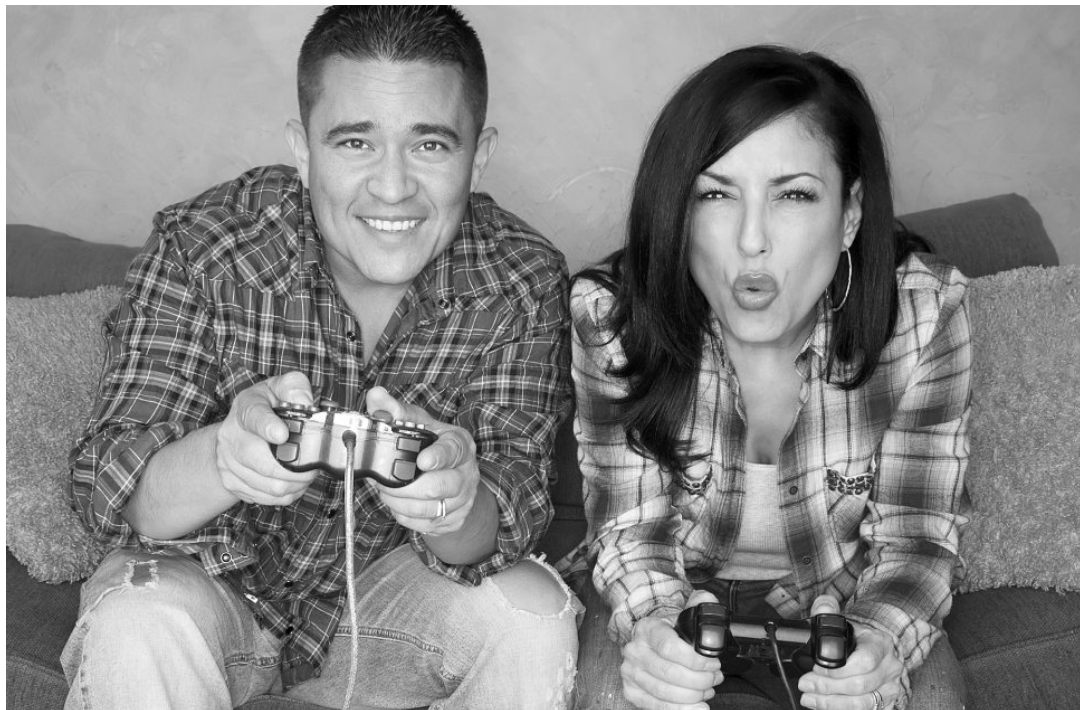
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HEALTH & FITNESS

Climbing with added confidence

Hikers divided over using trekking poles: Is increased stability worth carrying extra gear?

By AMANDA LOUDIN
The Washington Post

Hiking is a shared passion for Ellen and Keith Dobbins. Over their 25 years of marriage, they've hiked in more than 100 national parks and climbed many states' highest peaks. It's what they do together on vacation. But as they've aged — Ellen is 56 and Keith is 55 — they've diverged in how they hike. Ellen is a fan of trekking poles. Keith is not.

Trekking poles stir up surprisingly strong emotions among their proponents and opponents.

For many hikers, they provide much-needed stability and security, in addition to giving them the strength to ascend sometimes long climbs. Opponents, on the other hand, often eschew them in favor of simplicity. They like paring down the gear they tote and keeping their hands free to scramble over rocks. The question is, which camp is right?

By and large, it's a matter of personal preference, but there are benefits to using them for some populations. For those who would rather not, there are ways to prevent dependence on them, if you're willing to put in some work.

Ashley L. Hawke, a biomedical engineer at the National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health, became interested in the value of trekking poles when she sprained an ankle on a hike.

"Someone handed me a pair to use, and I was surprised by how much they helped in that moment," she says. "I've always thought people looked silly using them."

After that experience, in 2020, Hawke and a colleague reviewed scientific literature on the topic from 1980 to 2019. They looked at the relationship of using trekking poles on joint forces, physiological responses and balance, among other factors, publishing the results in *Wilderness & Environmental Medicine*. "All of the studies came to the conclusion that there is a general net positive to using poles versus not using them," she says.

Like Ellen Dobbins, 67-year-

old Julie Baker, a retiree from Columbia, Md., considers her trekking poles a favorite piece of hiking gear.

"I started using them about a year ago when I began taking serious hiking trips," Baker says. "I immediately realized they gave me a sense of security on rocky and uneven terrain."

Baker has taken several active vacations around the world over the past year, toting her poles for every one involving hikes.

"As I've aged, balance has become more of a central concern, and poles give me the sense of confidence I need," she says. "There is no doubt they allow me to do more in terms of difficulty and distance."

Ellen Dobbins likewise discovered the value of poles for her stability about 10 years ago when hiking through the Narrows at Zion National Park.

"We couldn't see the bottom of the river where we were hiking, and I knew it could get deep," she says. "We weren't on stable ground so I felt more comfortable having poles to guide every step."

Balance, which begins to decline as early as your 40s, is improved with trekking poles, Hawke says. "For many aging hikers, balance can be a limiting factor to getting outside and exercising, so the poles can be a gateway to the outdoors," she says.

Other benefits turned up from Hawke's review include a reduction in the ground reaction forces that extend up to joints when hiking, especially while descending hills — the poles take on some of that force.

"This was especially true on knees," Hawke says. "If you are taking 5,000 steps on a hike, that can add up."

Ellen Dobbins appreciates this. "They're particularly helpful on the downhills," she says. "Psychologically, they feel like a friend helping you up and down climbs."

Hawke's review also revealed that delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) after long hikes was much lower for users of trekking poles than for those



iStock

going without. Baker has appreciated the strength boost she gets from her poles. "On rigorous hikes, I use them to hoist myself up and over rocks," she says.

Despite all the literature supporting the use of trekking poles, plenty of people still would rather not, including Keith Dobbins.

"I don't want another complexity to my gear," he explains. "I've already got a backpack, water, snacks, and I don't want to add in poles."

Even proponents admit trekking poles can sometimes be a hassle. "When you hit a smooth or flat part of a trail, it's a bit of a hindrance to carry them or stop to put them in your backpack," Baker says. "You might want them 15 minutes later, so it can be a lot of back and forth."

On a physical level, Hawke's review found that using poles will actually elevate your heart rate more than leaving them behind, especially when going uphill, because they engage your upper body, as well.

"Some people might find that a bonus because they're getting a

better workout," Hawke says, "but others don't like the sensation of working harder."

For those who prefer to hike without poles, with exercise, you can offset some of the age-related declines and other issues that make them appealing.

"Every senior I work with talks about having bad balance," says Meghan Wieser, a certified strength and conditioning specialist at Maryland-based Recharge Modern Health & Fitness. "I'd argue strength and balance deficits are equal in the equation."

Aging affects the vestibular, muscular and vision systems, all of which play a role in balance. Wieser recommends working all three with simple exercises.

"Start with movements that work your single-leg stance capacity, like slow marches, first in place and then forward and back," she says. "Then add load with handheld dumbbells or kettlebells."

You can also add moves called "farmer's carries," "suitcase carries" and "farmer's marches"

to the mix. For a "farmer's carry," hold a heavy dumbbell in each hand hanging at your side. Walk forward, keeping the weights a few inches out from your thighs. The same goes for a "farmer's march," only you're slowly marching, not walking. A "suitcase carry" involves holding only one weight at a time, offsetting your balance as you move.

Squats, weighted step-ups/step-downs from a bench and working on foot strength can all make you a more confident hiker, Wieser says. With consistency, all will improve both strength and balance, making you steadier on your feet. Then it's up to you if you'd like to wean yourself off the poles, or not, remembering that the longer you hike, the more fatigued your body will become.

For Baker, who does some strength training, there's probably no going back.

"When I look around the trails and see people not using them, I'm amazed," she says. "On these trips, the poles are my buddies."

MOVIES



VIANNEY LE CAER, INVISION/AP

From left, Florence Kasumba, Danai Gurira, Letitia Wright and Lupita Nyong'o pose Nov. 3 at the premiere of the film "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" in London. In the film, the Wakandans must protect their nation from a new nemesis after the death of King T'Challa.

Pushing the nation of Wakanda forward

'Black Panther' cast, crew integrate their grief over loss of star Boseman into plot, performances of film's sequel

By JONATHAN LANDRUM JR.
Associated Press

Letitia Wright hit the Marvel Cinematic Universe scene as King T'Challa's joyfully witty younger sister in 2018's blockbuster "Black Panther." But in the new sequel, the actor's usual easygoing character delivers a more serious tone while dealing with grief.

Wright's character takes center stage as Shuri, who ventures into womanhood after the death of T'Challa. She'll be looked upon to take the iconic Black Panther mantle in "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," now in theaters. Chadwick Boseman, who played T'Challa, died in August 2020.

In between "Panther" films, Wright took on a few movie projects that exercised her dramatic acting chops.

"I always try to do things that are outside the box and what people wouldn't expect," said Wright, who starred in dramas "The Silent Twins" and "Aisha." She also stars in "Surrounded," which releases next year. The actor said each of those projects challenged her enough to "stretch me as an artist."

"That naturally helped me grow a lot more," said the actor, whose Shuri character also appeared in "Avengers: Infinity War" and "Avengers: Endgame" as Wakanda's princess and chief scientist. "We know Shuri as the fun, vibrant sister of the first film. ... But in [this] film, we really followed that journey of womanhood for her."

Wright credits director Ryan Coogler for ushering Shuri's maturation along in his rewritten script following Boseman's unexpected death from colon cancer. The director carried an even heavier burden to deliver a strong script — especially after "Black Panther" broke box-office records, earned \$700 million domestically during its theatrical run and became the first superhero film nominated for best picture at the Academy Awards.

For the "Black Panther" sequel, Coogler had developed

a screenplay centered around T'Challa grieving lost time following Thanos' snap in "Avengers: Infinity War," which caused a five-year "blip." But after Boseman's death, Coogler and filmmaker Joe Robert Cole went back to the drawing board. They worked up a script that delved more into the concept of Wakanda's grief in the wake of T'Challa's death.

Coogler said Boseman's family signed off on his character's "respectful" death in "Wakanda Forever." In the new film, the Wakandans are put in a peculiar spot to protect their nation, without T'Challa, against a new nemesis, Namor, a sub-marine Talocan leader who has extraordinary mutant-like abilities and can fly with the aid of tiny wings on his ankles. Namor is played by Tenoch Huerta.

"This script was born of the truth in our lives that we had lost Chadwick Boseman," said Lupita Nyong'o, who plays Nakia, a war spy and T'Challa's lover. She said the characters dealt with T'Challa's loss differently in the film.

"For me personally, I was relieved that we got to speak our truth," Nyong'o said. "We got to express the grief that we were feeling and put it to good use."

Wright and Nyong'o said they used their grief over Boseman to fuel their performances, while Coogler said his mournful remembrance of the late actor helped motivate him through his writing and directing process. The director said several photos of Boseman were posted on set, and a prop master put inside Coogler's trailer a shield and spear that T'Challa held during a duel with Michael B. Jordan's Killmonger at Warrior Falls in "Black Panther."

Before filming the project, the entire cast — including the newcomers — visited Boseman's burial site. It turned into a bonding moment.

"We tried to make a movie to honor the legacy of Chad-

wick," Huerta said. "The movie is about grieving. It was happening at the same time as reality. They were able to integrate what was happening in real life into fiction. Art is kind of therapy. It helped us deal with the reality and things we can't understand."

The cast leaned on each other during the filming process, which had several setbacks and obstacles. Production took longer than expected after Wright was injured while filming a stunt and several cast and crew members tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Wright was attacked for sharing an anti-vaccination video, and Coogler was briefly handcuffed by Atlanta police after being mistaken for a bank robber earlier this year.

"We certainly had bumps in the road, but people pulled together," said Nate Moore, the vice president of production and development at Marvel Studios. He was a producer on "Captain America: The Winter Soldier" and "Eternals" and executive producer on "Black Panther."

Moore said the filming experience of "Wakanda Forever" was the toughest, but he said the whole cast and crew showed resilience through adversity.

"They didn't pull apart," Moore said. "If it were a different filmmaker, who didn't have such great relationships with everybody, we would've seen a lot more partition from the crew, which we didn't really. The cast could've gotten frustrated with the stopping and starting that we were forced to do, but they didn't. They believe in what this movie was about and Ryan's vision. As hard as it was, we had each other."

Nyong'o said cast members comforted each other in grieving Boseman while attempting to keep the kingdom of Wakanda moving forward.

"It was joyful and sometimes it was hard," she said. "But there was a lot of levity as well, because we had so many powerful, joyful memories of Chadwick to share with one another."

VIDEO GAMES



Activision

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 adds a weapon platform system that players may use to level up weapons.

6 tips to level up Modern Warfare 2 guns

You'll have to grind in multiplayer if you want to unlock the new Call of Duty's 49 weapons across 18 platforms

By **HAWKEN MILLER**
The Washington Post

Weapon customization has been a mainstay of Call of Duty, with 2019's Modern Warfare adding the Gunsmith feature that gave players greater choice on how they wanted their favorite gun to look and feel. In Modern Warfare 2, developer Infinity Ward created a new system for leveling up weapons and tuning attachments, adding countless ways to kit out your favorite rifle, submachine gun, sniper or light machine gun.

The idea behind the revamped Gunsmith 2.0 centers on the addition of a weapon platform system. A platform, such as the M4, can have up to five variants (or receivers, as they are called in the game) that turn them into a completely different gun type (i.e., battle rifle).

As you play, you unlock attachments that improve your guns. If you want all attachments for a platform, you have to level up the base weapon and then its receivers by using them in-game. With the exception of a few snipers and shotguns, you will start with a base assault rifle, and move to a submachine gun, battle rifle or assault rifle receiver. That means, for example, you'll have to play with a submachine gun to get attachments for an assault rifle. (Don't ask. This doesn't make much sense to us either.) This particular mechanic has drawn some ire from players owing to the fact they have to use a weapon type they dislike to improve the one they actually want to use.

Each weapon only goes up 20 levels, which is far fewer than the approximately 70 levels for each weapon in Vanguard. To unlock all attachments for some platforms you have to go through at least three weapons, adding up to 60 levels. Overall, it's not that much of a change, but at least you'll save up to 10 levels.

At launch, there are 49 guns to unlock across 18 platforms in Modern Warfare 2, which means you'll need to grind in multiplayer if you want to have everything maxed out and ready for Warzone 2.0 or DMZ.

We've compiled a few ways to level up quickly and strategically:

1. Farm the bots

No, I'm not talking about players who have zero awareness. In Invasion, a new mode that functions like a large-scale team deathmatch, developers have added comput-

er-controlled soldiers that become progressively more difficult to kill as time goes on.

When it comes to gun leveling, these bots give about the same experience as normal kills. They are also a lot easier to kill than human-controlled soldiers.

James "JGOD" Godoy, a content creator known for his loadout guides and Warzone casting, recommended that players traverse the outskirts of the map and find where bots spawn. Create a loadout with a munition box to refill ammunition and a tactical insertion to spawn close by, and spray away.

2. Take the hardpoint, and XP with it

Hardpoint is a classic Call of Duty game mode that is a mainstay of competitive play. It's also a nice way to rack up tons of kills and thus weapon experience. Every 60 seconds, a new hardpoint, a small area of the map, becomes available. As long as you or one of your teammates is in that location, you capture it and start racking up points. If an enemy enters the point, it becomes contested and no one scores.

Hardpoint is five minutes long, but the clock stops every time a point is captured. That means actual game time increases, leaving you more time to use your selected weapon and level it up.

Once you get comfortable with a map and its hardpoint rotations, you can start preparing and holding the choke-points. I find that I can get up to 60 kills per game; others who are better than me can find more than 80 eliminations. Additionally, any kill you get near the point grants you extra experience.

3. Level up with Kill Confirmed

Kill Confirmed is another classic game mode that can help you level up weapons. The goal of Kill Confirmed is to eliminate enemies and confirm that elimination by running over their dog tags, which drop when they die.

According to Modern Warzone, a Call of Duty Twitter news account, the Kill Confirmed game mode grants you experience for the kill and any dog tag that you recover. You also get points for denying an enemy from collecting your friends' dog tags by collecting them first. This is a great way to level up weapons if you prefer the classic team deathmatch feel. The games aren't as long as Hardpoint, making this my second favorite base game mode to help unlock attachments.

4. Grind smarter

Chances are you aren't going to be using every pistol, shotgun and battle rifle available in Modern Warfare 2. I plan on taking many, but not all, of the weapons I level in multiplayer over to Warzone 2.0.

Based on the first Warzone, I know assault rifles, snipers, light machine guns and submachine guns will be king. And you can narrow that down to weapons that are already strong in multiplayer, such as the M4, Tac-V56 and Kastov 762 in the assault rifle category, or the Fenec 45, MX9 and Lachmann Sub in the submachine gun category.

If you only have a certain amount of time to play and can't grind these out, you are better off prioritizing a few weapons you know will be good in the future and coming back to the rest when you can.

5. Newly discovered glitches can help

I'm hesitant to include this because I'm not a huge fan of exploiting in-game glitches, but a player recently discovered a cheeky way to get weapon experience in the Invasion game mode.

You first equip a suppression mine as your field upgrade. Once you have it available in a match, you set it on top of a bot in an enemy tank. Since they can't get out they are constantly suppressed, earning nearly 100 experience a second. For some reason, that experience goes to your weapon and it levels up in no time.

That said, I tried to replicate this and it is a lot harder than it sounds. You have to make it to the enemy tank without being killed by the enemy team. By the time I successfully sneaked around to the enemy base (dodging snipers), the game had finished and there was no tank in sight.

6. Remember to use your tokens

Those who bought the \$100 vault edition version of the game will have 10 hours of double experience tokens and 10 hours of double weapon experience tokens. When Season 1 starts on Nov. 16, I'm sure you'll have more opportunities to either buy more double weapon experience or earn it through the battle pass.

As you can imagine, having double experience makes the weapon-leveling process a lot easier. Despite the game's fussy user interface, the tokens are surprisingly easy to find. It's to the right of the "searching for match" section.

TELEVISION



Netflix photos

From left: Imelda Staunton and Jonathan Pryce as Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip; Lesley Manville as Princess Margaret; Dominic West and Elizabeth Debicki as Prince Charles and Princess Diana on Season 5 of “The Crown.” The new season opens in 1991, in the thick of one of the ugliest periods of the royal family’s recent history.

Royal trouble brewing on ‘The Crown’

Season 5 of the sumptuous and compulsively watchable Netflix show casts Charles, Diana in a different light

BY ASHLEY FETTERS MALOY
The Washington Post

Early in the first season of Netflix’s “The Crown,” Queen Elizabeth II’s grandmother advises the newly anointed 25-year-old royal in a moment of uncertainty to remember that the monarchy answers not to the British public, but to God himself.

“Monarchy is God’s sacred mission to grace and dignify the Earth,” Queen Mary says sternly. “To give ordinary people an ideal to strive toward.” Elizabeth, inscrutable even in her younger years, gives her a long look.

If it was wishful thinking in Season 1, it’s a joke by Season 5. The new season, which premiered Wednesday, finds the royal family in 1991, in the thick of one of the ugliest periods of its recent history; almost everyone is up to no good. But in a major feat for creator-writer Peter Morgan and the third iteration of the show’s cast — keeping the tradition of replacing actors every two seasons as the characters age — “The Crown” nevertheless remains as sumptuous and compulsively watchable as ever. As the story creeps ever closer toward current events, however, storylines tread on recent-enough ground (read: the tabloid spectacle of Charles and Diana’s divorce) to potentially rankle some who lived through the original scandals.

As Netflix tells it, the royal family’s hobbies in the 1990s included sailing, carriage driving, watching horse races, having affairs, grousing about one another (in private and on television) and asking for favors from a Britain with which they share an increasingly strained relationship. Elizabeth (Imelda Staunton), now in her 60s, pesters one prime minister and then another about a £15 million repair job for her royal yacht. Her husband,

Prince Philip (Jonathan Pryce), spends conspicuous amounts of time aboard private jets with the wife of one of Prince Charles’ friends. Charles (Dominic West) and Princess Diana (Elizabeth Debicki) squabble on vacations and sulk in separate castles while Charles carries on his yearslong extramarital relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles (Olivia Williams) and Diana airs the royal dirty laundry to anyone who will listen.

Virtually every marriage in the family that’s still standing is miserable, and it is Prime Minister John Major — played with understated magnetism by Jonny Lee Miller — who gives the sea-

takes a fascinating detour into Philip’s pivotal participation in a 1993 effort to confirm the identities of bodies suspected to be those of the murdered Russian Romanov family. (As a descendant of the Romanovs, Philip gave a DNA sample that proved the link.) Diana’s brief post-Charles relationship with a British-Pakistani cardiac surgeon earns its short, sweet arc. And Princess Margaret — imbued with equal parts whimsy and dignity by the wonderful Lesley Manville — anchors a masterful episode about love lost and changing social mores: She shares a tender reunion with Peter Townsend, the royal equerry she was en-

reinforced that version: Diana’s struggles with depression and self-harming behaviors were portrayed as outgrowths of the royal family’s chilly demeanor and tacit approval of her husband’s infidelity. But Season 5 presents a reversal. Charles? Less evil than you think, it seems to say. Diana? Kind of a little twerp, now and again.

Debicki, an Australian actress arguably best known for playing untrustworthy beauties (“The Great Gatsby,” “The Man from U.N.C.L.E.”) and the often long-suffering wives and girlfriends of bad guys (“Widows,” “The Night Manager,” “Tenet”), is perfectly cast as a Diana whom the show seems to see as a little bit of both. Her pain at the betrayal of her husband and the subsequent failure of their marriage manifests itself as pettiness. She does a tell-all, “her side of the story” interview with BBC reporter Martin Bashir and informs the royal family only when it’s taped and well on its way to airing; alone at home, she watches a debate on whether Britain still needs a monarchy and repeatedly calls in to vote “no.” Sure, Diana visits a hospital here and there. But she also loudly complains throughout the 10 new episodes about the royal family’s “unsympathetic” treatment to so many near- and literal strangers that by the time she quips her famous “I’d like to be queen of people’s hearts” line to Bashir, it feels almost duplicitous.

Which leaves Charles (played winsomely here by the ever-winsome West) and his paramour Camilla at the beleaguered end of all this, seeking comfort in each other. Williams’ performance as Camilla may be the best thing to happen to real Camilla since Emerald Fennell’s portrayal a few years back: While Fennell offered a gregarious, entertaining (and occasionally mean) antithesis to “shy Di,”

Williams plays Camilla as a likably no-nonsense woman with a few meaty scenes that remind the viewer that by the late 1990s, her enduring love for Charles had cost her dearly. As a result, even the famously filthy phone call between the two that caused a scandal when it was taped and released to the public feels surprisingly tender, a moment of idle romantic mischief between two middle-aged adults yearning for each other.

It doesn’t hurt that the show finds Charles continually fighting an uphill battle to modernize the monarchy. Or that it spends a good chunk of one episode on the Prince’s Trust, Charles’ charity for young people, as though emphasizing that Charles, too, did charity work and cared about helping people. “The Crown” even extends one of its rare epilogue sequences to it: “Don’t Sweat the Technique” plays over an outro montage of West as Charles laughing and clapping with a horde of diverse young people, a few of them break-dancing. Since 1976, the text reads, “The Prince’s Trust has assisted 1 million young people to fulfill their potential and returned nearly £1.4 billion in value to society.”

“The Crown” has always seemed to relish the opportunity to knock historical figures beloved by Americans down a peg or two. John Lithgow’s Winston Churchill in the first season was a press-savvy egotist; the Kennedys, in Season 2, boorish and rude. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin appear briefly in the third season after their Apollo 11 moon landing, their groundbreaking accomplishments conspicuously dulled by their boring personalities.

Diana, it seems — in the grand scheme of “The Crown’s” targeted iconoclasm — is next in line.

All 10 episodes of Season 5 of *The Crown* are now on Netflix.

“The House of Windsor should be binding the nation together. Setting an example of idealized family life. Instead, the senior royals seem dangerously deluded and out of touch. The junior royals, feckless, entitled and lost.”

Jonny Lee Miller as Prime Minister John Major
“The Crown”

son its thesis early on when he meets the royal clan in all its sprawling, decadent chaos.

“The House of Windsor should be binding the nation together. Setting an example of idealized family life,” he remarks to his wife as they retire to their bedroom. “Instead, the senior royals seem dangerously deluded and out of touch. The junior royals, feckless, entitled and lost.”

And yet, as always with “The Crown,” the strokes of genius lie in the selection of anecdotes, and the new season finds compelling stories to tell even about characters it has soured on. One episode

gaged to decades before but was forbidden by Elizabeth from marrying because he was divorced.

Curiously, while the show seems to have to dig deep sometimes to find affection for its characters, it seems to have the easiest time with Charles. Conveniently for the real-life king, who awaits coronation to officially ascend to the throne, the show’s depiction of the dissolution of his marriage to Diana presents a challenge to the version of events that has calcified into the American collective memory over the past three decades. Season 4

MUSIC

11 years in the making

How Lainey Wilson became one of country music's brightest new stars

BY MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

Lainey Wilson's first paying gig as a singer was the grand opening of a convenience store in her tiny hometown of Baskin, La. She was 9 years old, and the job paid 20 bucks. "My daddy took me up there — no guitar, no microphone, no nothing — and I just sang a cappella," Wilson, now a country star with two No. 1 radio hits to her name, recalls in her thick Louisiana accent. Later she'd sing in the aisles of Walmart after her parents would stop fellow shoppers to show off their gifted daughter with the preternaturally soulful voice. These days you can imagine a video of one of these performances going viral à la Mason Ramsey's famous Walmart yodel. But this was the early 2000s, before every human with a smartphone became an amateur talent scout.

"Where was TikTok when I needed it?" Wilson asks with a laugh. "Would've saved me a lot of damn time."

Minus the internet shortcut, Wilson took the scenic route to her dreams, moving to Nashville in 2011 in a 20-foot bumper-pull camper trailer she called home for years — "The heater couldn't keep up in the winter," she says, "so I was sleeping in coats and four pairs of socks" — as she sang in bars and knocked on doors. The old-fashioned approach paid off. On Oct. 28 she released her vivacious new album, "Bell Bottom Country," which follows those two chart-toppers: "Things a Man Oughta Know," about the down-home wisdom she inherited from her folks, and "Never Say Never," a glossy toxic-romance duet with Cole Swindell.

SEE WILSON ON PAGE 17

Lainey Wilson describes the vibe of her latest album, "Bell Bottom Country," as "country with a flair."

Red Light Management

"They told me if you don't make it by the time you're 23 or 24, you need to take your ass back to the house."

Lainey Wilson



MUSIC

Wilson: Singer's success is reflective of a change in Nashville

FROM PAGE 16

What's more, Wilson, 30, led the field with six nominations at Wednesday night's Country Music Association Awards, where she was up for new artist of the year and female vocalist of the year as well as song of the year (for "Things a Man Oughta Know") and album of the year (for her breakout 2021 LP, "Sayin' What I'm Thinkin'"). According to the CMA, Wilson was just the fourth artist — after Glen Campbell, Brad Paisley and Kacey Musgraves — to be nominated for half a dozen prizes in his or her first appearance on the ballot for Nashville's most prestigious awards ceremony. (Wilson won the trophies for new artist and female vocalist.)

"I guess I've tricked a lot of people," she says, grinning slyly beneath one of the flat-brimmed cowboy hats she's made part of her signature look. Dressed in a brightly patterned Western shirt and flared trousers, Wilson — who's set for a recurring role as a musician in the upcoming season of the smash TV series "Yellowstone" — is kicked back at her manager's office in Nashville on a recent afternoon as she sips a LaCroix, the flavored sparkling water she used to hate until she got COVID. "I don't know if my taste buds changed or what, but now I love this stuff," she says. "Makes me feel like I'm drinking something bad when I'm not."

Asked how it feels to be feted as the country industry's shiniest new act after grinding it out for more than a decade, Wilson chuckles. "What do they call it? The 11-year overnight sensation?" she says. "There's definitely been times when I was like, 'Dang, I wish this would've happened sooner.' But I feel like I've got more to say now. I've been through more life. I've been through more heartbreaks."

Her experience is easy to hear on the beautifully lived-in "Bell Bottom Country," her second full-length for Broken Bow Records, which signed her in 2019 on the strength of two independent projects. Produced by Jay Joyce (known for his work with Miranda Lambert and Eric Church), the album blends crusty guitars, juicy bass lines and funky, hard-hitting drums in songs Wilson co-wrote about family, religion, young love and the blessing-slash-curse of bone-deep wanderlust.

That's the subject of the album's lead single, "Heart Like a Truck," which showcases the emotional range of the singer's voice — from a pleading murmur to a full-throated yowl — and which is steadily climbing Billboard's country airplay chart.

"You hear the title and you think, OK, here we go, another truck song," Wilson says, punctuating the thought with a sad-trombone sound. "But it's actually got nothing to do with a truck. It's about finding freedom and strength and not being ashamed of the scratches and dents you get along the way."

Joyce compares Wilson to Dolly Parton — Wilson's idol, as it happens — and says he finds her "realness" refreshing. "There's nothing put-on about Lainey," says the producer. "She's not store-bought."

Yet Wilson's success also reflects a moment of incremental change in Nashville, which after years of largely neglecting female artists is starting to make more room for women.

In April, Lambert and Elle King's



MARK HUMPHREY, INVISION/AP

Lainey Wilson performs "Wait in the Truck" during the CMA Awards on Wednesday night at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville. Wilson, the leading nominee at the CMAs with six, won trophies for new artist and female vocalist.

"Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home)" became the first track by two women to reach No. 1 at country radio since 1993; then Carly Pearce and Ashley McBryde got there again in May with "Never Wanted to Be That Girl." At the CMAs, Lambert and Carrie Underwood were both nominated for the third year in a row for the night's top prize, entertainer of the year (it went to Luke Combs); before 2020, it had been two decades since more than one woman was nominated in the category. (That no woman has won since Taylor Swift in 2011 shows an imbalance still persists.)

Wilson — who has a second hit on the radio with "Wait in the Truck," a stark duet with Hardy about domestic violence — says that when she came to town, "They told me if you don't make it by the time you're 23 or 24, you need to take your ass back to the house." After she passed that age and an interviewer would ask how old she was, she'd smile and say, "Didn't your mama teach you better than that?" Now, though, "I'm like, 'Hell yeah, I'm 30 years old,'" she says. "This is the best year of my life, and I'm proud of that."

Wilson, whose dad is a farmer and mom a teacher, grew up in Baskin (population: approximately 250) listening to Lee Ann Womack, the Judds and Tim McGraw. "I didn't realize when I was little that country music was a genre," she says. "In that area — no spotlight, just a bunch of cornfields — it was just a way of life." Her grandmother was the first person to recognize that she could carry a tune, though it was a childhood trip to Dollywood, she says, that convinced her she wanted to be a musician. By 11, Wilson was playing guitar and writing songs "about tequila

and cigarettes"; in high school she worked as a Hannah Montana impersonator, sometimes opening shows with a set of her own material under her real name.

Does she have a favorite Hannah Montana song? "I mean, 'The Best of Both Worlds,' of course," she says. "Everybody knows it. But I'll tell you — and I know it's technically a Miley Cyrus song — 'The Climb' is up there." Today the power ballad's co-writer Jessi Alexander is one of Wilson's best friends; she even has a cut on "Bell Bottom Country."

Wilson describes the new album's vibe as "country with a flair"; Joyce, she says, "figured out how to make the music almost sound the way that I dress." In the studio they thought about "classic rock and old country," says the producer, and went for "arrangements that aren't blueprint verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-chorus." There's wah-wah guitar in "Grease" and a quasi-reggae breakdown in "Road Runner," and the LP closes with an unexpected cover of 4 Non Blondes' early-'90s hippie-grunge hit "What's Up?"

"I used to sing it with a cover band back at home, and it was one of those that killed every time," Wilson says.

For all the enthusiasm around "Bell Bottom Country," it's not hard for Wilson to remember the indifference she encountered on her first radio tour in 2019, "visiting six or seven stations a day, playing to people on their cellphones." Given how long she'd worked just to get signed, she was happy to put in the work; her approach back then was "to be nice to everybody — to basically run for mayor," she says. "But I remember this one guy telling me I was no good and how he hoped I wouldn't cry when I left the station. I

leaned over his desk and I said, 'With all the years I've been in Nashville, you saying that to me ain't s—.'" She laughs at the memory. "This is probably a psycho trait of mine, but that just made me want it that much more."

Her work ethic pushed her again this past summer when she traveled to Montana to shoot "Yellowstone" even as her father was in the hospital after suffering a stroke. "We thought we were gonna lose him," she says. "I told the show I couldn't come. But then I found out they'd hired a bunch of people to be on set, and I was like, Daddy is the hardest-working man I know — he would want me to go do my job. So I changed my mind and I went. But I was crying in between takes." (Wilson recently told fans that her dad is recovering after a series of surgeries.)

Wilson views "Yellowstone," whose fifth season premieres Sunday, as one reason that "country is kind of becoming cool again. For a minute there, I don't know if it was cool. But now you see all these kids on TikTok acting like cowboys when they ain't never rode a horse in their life."

Even so, Nashville has been riven lately by a kind of culture war between young liberal acts such as Maren Morris and slightly older conservative stars like Jason Aldean. In September, Morris — who's traded barbs online with Aldean and his wife, Brittany, over issues related to trans youth — told The Times that perhaps country music had split into two factions and that she might be fine with that.

Asked if she thinks of it that way, Wilson says, "Well, first of all, I hope that whole situation gets resolved in some kind of way," referring to the feud between Morris (with whom she shares a management firm) and Aldean (with whom she's toured and shares a label). "But if there are two sides, I feel love from both and I love both." Does she see an increasing willingness among historically tight-lipped country stars to speak out on politics?

"It's split," Wilson says. "Some people are like, 'Speak up for what you believe in,' and other people are like, 'Keep your mouth shut.' I remember a time when my parents made me feel like it was rude to ask somebody who they were voting for. I just feel like my business is my business. And my job is to get onstage and make sure everybody in that room feels loved."

Jon Loba, president of Broken Bow, thinks Wilson bridges a common gap in Nashville. "She's one of the very few artists who have the cool kids and the very mainstream audience," he says, adding that the widespread interest in Wilson reminds him of the demand for a young Taylor Swift during his earlier stint at Swift's old label, Big Machine.

The prospect of that kind of reach excites Wilson, though she has mixed feelings about the loss of privacy that accompanies true celebrity. "Country-music people like seeing a little inside scoop of your life," she says — one explanation for the countless covers of People magazine showing some bearded country bro or another posing with his lovely wife. "Even if I'm married one day, I don't know if I'd be posting about my husband all over social media. I mean, Dolly's husband — there's like one picture of him on the internet. She's kept that private, and I think that's OK."

"There's nothing put-on about Lainey. She's not store-bought."

Jay Joyce

producer of "Bell Bottom Country"

GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



Too convenient to be true

How to avoid falling for and spreading misinformation online

BY HEATHER KELLY
The Washington Post

Anyone with an internet connection can watch breaking news unfold in real time, or at least some version of it. Across social media, posts can fly up faster than most fact-checkers and moderators can handle, and they're often an unpredictable mix of true, fake, out of context and even propaganda.

This kind of misinformation spikes before, during and after elections, including this week's midterms.

How do you know what to trust, what not to share and what to flag to tech companies? Here are some basic tools everyone should use when consuming breaking news online.

Know what to look out for. Think about who would benefit from spreading confusing information during a news event, and brush up on specific narratives going around.

Slow down. Do not hit that share button. Social media is built for things to go viral, for users to quickly retweet before they're even done reading the words they're amplifying. No matter how devastating, enlightening or enraging a TikTok, tweet or YouTube video is, you must wait before passing it on to your own network. Assume everything is suspect until you confirm its authenticity.

Check the source. Look at who is sharing the information. If it's from friends or family members, don't trust the posts unless they are personally on the ground or a confirmed expert. If it's a stranger or organization, remember that a verified check mark or being well-known does not make an account trustworthy. There are plenty of political pundits and big-name internet characters who are posting inaccurate information right now, and it's on you to approach each post with skepticism.

If the account posting is not the source

of the words or images, investigate where it came from by digging back to find the original Facebook, YouTube or Twitter account that first shared it. If you can't determine the origin of something, that's a red flag. Be wary of screenshots, which can be even harder to trace back, or anything that elicits an especially strong emotional reaction. Disinformation can prey on that type of response to spread.

When screening individual accounts, look at the date it was created, which should be listed in the profile. Be wary of anything extremely new (say, it started in the past few months) or with very few followers. For a website, you can see what year it was started on Google. Search for the name of the site, then click on the three vertical dots next to the URL in the results to see what date it was first indexed by the search engine. Again, avoid anything too new. And don't skip the basics: Do a Google search for the person or organization's name.

Make a collection of trusted sources. Doing mini background checks on every random Twitter account is extremely time-consuming, especially with new content coming from so many places simultaneously. Instead, trust the professionals. Legitimate mainstream news organizations are built to vet these things for you, and often do report on the same videos or photos taken by real people after they've confirmed their origin.

Use a dedicated news tool such as Apple News, Google News or Yahoo News, which choose established sources and have some built-in moderation. On social media, make or find lists of vetted experts and outlets to follow specifically for news about the topic you're following. If you consume breaking news on Twitter, be especially careful to follow confirmed reporters from trusted outlets who are on the ground. New changes coming to Twitter's verification system could make this more difficult.

Seek out context. Many news events will include information from the ground, like smartphone videos and first-person narratives. Even if you see only real posts, it can still be confusing or misleading. Try to augment any one-off clips or stories with broader context about what is happening. They may be the most compelling pieces of a puzzle, but they are not the whole picture. Mix in information from established experts on the topic, whether it's foreign policy, cyberwarfare, history or politics. You can also turn to online or television outlets that add this context for most stories.

Vet videos and images. If you're interested in doing deeper dives into unverified reports, start with this extensive guide on how to screen videos. Look for multiple edits and odd cuts, listen closely to the audio and run it through a third-party tool such as InVid, which helps check the authenticity of videos. This can be harder on live-streamed videos, like what's on Twitch or any other live social media option.

To check images, put them into Google's image search by grabbing a screenshot and dragging it to the search field. If it's an old image that's circulated before, you may see telling results.

Use fact-checking sites and tools. Social media sites do have some of their own fact-checking tools and warning labels, and many have added special sections to promote official election results. However, given the sheer volume of posts they're dealing with, a problematic video or post can still be seen by millions before ever getting flagged.

Keep an eye out for content warnings on social media sites for individual posts, which can appear as labels below links or as warnings before you post something that could be misleading. Look up individual stories or images on fact-checking sites such as Snopes and PolitiFact.

Great audio at a modest price

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Monoprice DT-3BT versatile desktop Bluetooth speakers aren't fancy, but they sure do produce great sound.

Inside each is a 3.5-inch polypropylene woofer and a 0.75-inch silk dome tweeter totaling 40 watts. And all are exposed in the uncovered front, without any grill or mesh, giving them a vintage look.

Audio can be sent to the primary speaker via Bluetooth or a wired connection. There are inputs for unbalanced stereo RCA, 3.5 mm TRS and stereo 0.75-inch TRS.

For \$99.99, the sound produced makes them a great choice. They aren't going to produce head-banging music like a more advanced and expensive system, but the Monoprice DT-3BT speakers offer clear and crisp sound with an instant setup.

Everything is built into a 5.5-by-8.0-by-5.9-inch cabinet with rounded edges. You can sit the speakers on flat surfaces, hide them on the floor or elevate them on a shelf. A power cord is included, as is a mat to prevent the speakers from sliding.

Online: [monoprice.com](https://www.monoprice.com)

OneOdio Monitor 60 over-the-head professional wired headphones are also price-friendly at \$79.99.

The first thing you notice about the ergonomically designed Monitor 60s is their comfort, which doesn't waver even after long periods. At first glance, they appear a little bulky, but once the breathable memory-protein earmuffs are on your ears, you'll appreciate their size. Each ear cup also swivels 90 degrees forward and backward.

Behind the earmuffs are 50 mm dual dynamic drivers, which produce high-resolution audio ideal for top audio professionals, audiophiles and DJs.

I tested them while watching TV and listening to music, and the sound was clear and crisp with a nice amount of bass. The audio was also clear at high and low volume levels while watching television.

The headphones have an adjustable padded headband; they are made with jewelry-grade stainless steel and fold up for easy storage in an included bag. They only weigh 11.5 ounces. There's some plastic in the construction, but they feel solid and durable.

On the bottom of each ear cup are jacks (3.5 mm/6.35 mm stereo) to connect to the included wired connection of your choice. A cable with an inline microphone adds the option for hands-free calls.

The Shareport function allows another user to daisy-chain and simultaneously listen to the same source.

Online: [oneodio.com](https://www.oneodio.com)



MONOPRICE/TNS

Each Monoprice DT-3BT desktop speaker has a 3.5-inch polypropylene woofer and a 0.75-inch silk dome tweeter inside.

CROSSWORD AND COMICS

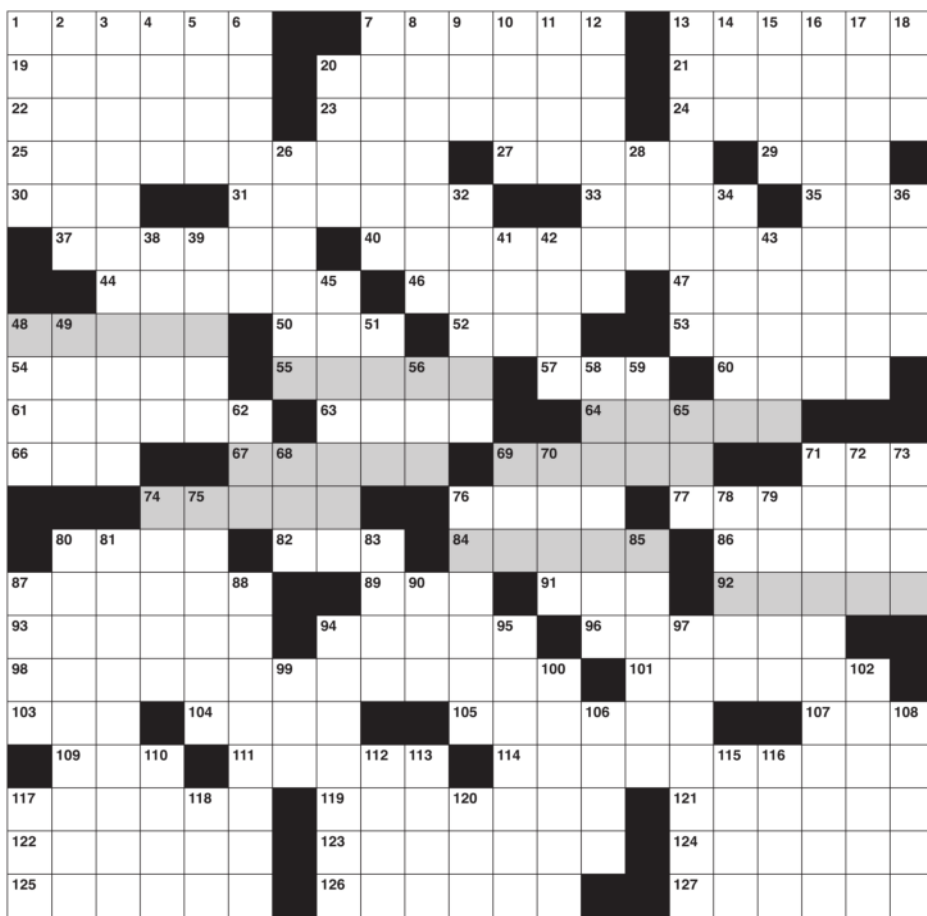
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

SENDING A MESSAGE

BY ADDISON SNELL / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

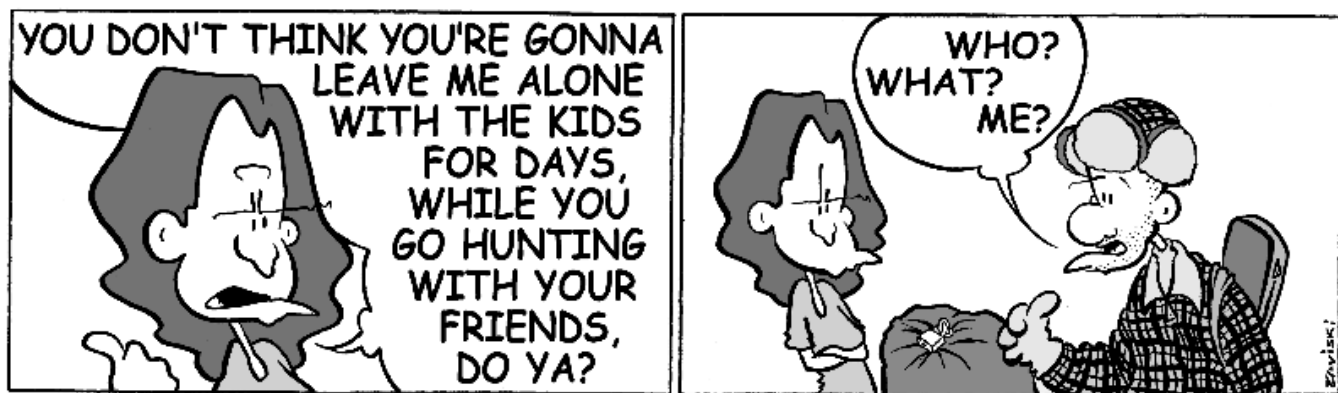
Addison Snell, of Mountain View, Calif., is the C.E.O. of Intersect360 Research, a consulting firm in high-performance computing. This is his second New York Times crossword, and his first Sunday. Note: This completed puzzle contains a 114-Across, comprising the eight shaded answers. Put these in order, one after the other. Then use the following key to get a line spoken by 25-Across in "The 40-Across": A = R, B = I, C = J, D = P, E = A, G = H, I = O, J = C, K = L, L = U, N = T, O = Z, P = Y, R = M, S = E, T = D, U = S, V = G, X = N, Y = K.

- ACROSS
1 Flight path?
7 Pain in the neck?
13 Wish
19 Climbed, as 1-Across
20 TV-schedule info
21 Early online forum
22 Pacific harbinger of wet West Coast weather
23 Some tiki bar orders
24 Out in the sun too long, maybe
25 English computer scientist who pioneered the breaking of ciphers generated by the 98-Across
27 Driver of some engines
29 Bind
30 Part of a seat assignment
31 Observed during
33 ___-Seltzer
35 Ready to blow
37 Leaf producer
40 2014 movie portraying the work of 25-Across, with "The"
44 Fission locales
46 Set of clubs
47 "The Merchant of Venice" character who favors wordplay
48 Brazilian jiu-___
50 Prey for a lion
52 Fitting
53 Connect with on social media, maybe
54 How some popcorn is popped
55 Gradually slid (into)
57 Lead-in to dermis
60 Location of the Chair of St. Peter within St. Peter's Basilica
61 Thin porridges
63 Modern prefix with health
64 Appearance
66 "My dear man..."
67 Civil rights leader Medgar
69 Troublesome engine sound
71 Hoover, for one
74 One way to segment demographic data
76 Tibia's place
77 Sly plan
80 Space-oriented engineering discipline, informally
82 What "... " sometimes means
84 Troublesome engine sounds
86 Arrive at, as an idea
87 Ones without owners
89 What a "Wheel of Fortune" contestant might buy when looking for ___NSP___RAT_ON
91 Startled squeal
92 Forthrightly asserts
93 Genghis Khan, notably
94 Herbert Hoover's middle name
96 Many a maid of honor
98 W.W. II-era encoding device
101 Currant-flavored liqueur
103 Itsy-bitsy
104 Santa ___ (desert winds)
105 Wear for a Sufi scholar
107 Hello in São Paulo
109 One with an inside job
111 Takes seemingly forever
114 Sort of encoded message found in this puzzle's grid [SEE NOTE]
117 From long, long ago
119 Express momentary uncertainty over
121 Classified cost?
122 Icon to click for more icons
123 Eeyore's creator
124 Tidy
125 Radial patterns
126 Failed to maintain a poker face, perhaps
127 Figure the worth of
DOWN
1 Curse
2 Rat out
3 Longtime media figure suspected of being the inspiration for "The Devil Wears Prada"
4 Have ___ for
5 Wilbur is one, in "Charlotte's Web"
6 Like some insurance benefits
7 Designer Versace
8 It's for paper shapers
9 Cousin of Gomez Addams
10 Some quinceañera gift-givers
11 Send off
12 Moves from a table to a booth, say
13 Dunderhead
14 Ending with legal or Senegal
15 ___-service
16 Implies
17 Go over, as a cold case
18 When you should be off, in brief
20 Cosette, to Marius, in "Les Misérables"
26 Pull out
28 Comedian Wong
32 Soapbox rant
34 Polar expedition attire
36 Out of juice
38 Frequent victim of Calvin's pranks in "Calvin and Hobbes"
39 Crew vessel
41 Add chocolate sauce and a cherry to, say
42 Pre-deal payment
43 Come to ___
45 Rude way to break up with someone
48 Celebratory dances
49 Letters on a crucifix
51 One accepting the terms and conditions
56 Transports from Midway Airport to the Loop
58 Nose-dives
59 Na +, for one
62 Its in French
65 Rubber-stamps
68 Migration formation
69 Ho ___ Minh
70 Word after party or date
71 Worsen significantly
72 Emotion felt con el corazón
73 ___ Wearhouse (retail chain)
74 Alvin ___, first African American to be elected Manhattan's district attorney
75 Cellist who performed at the Biden-Harris inauguration
76 Attitude
78 Some back-and-forths
79 They generate a lot of buzz
80 Makes right
81 Pulitzer Prize-winning W.W. II correspondent
83 Class for which trig is a prereq
85 Mountain cover
87 Bird of the Baltic
88 Runs down, in a way
90 "I'm good, thanks"
94 Honeydew relatives
95 One of 14 in a fist
97 Carlos in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame
99 End of Q1, on co. reports
100 Bank run, perhaps
102 Some writing surfaces
106 Memory part
108 Affirmations from the congregation
110 Sci-fi character who was originally a puppet before C.G.I.
112 Rock subgenre associated with David Bowie and Elton John
113 ___ Valley, Calif.
115 Laudatory works
102 Some writing surfaces
116 French for "fat"
117 O'er and o'er
118 Side in checkers
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120 Love of soccer?

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



The story of the U.S. military's role in Afghanistan, as seen through the eyes of Stars and Stripes journalists covering America's longest war. Over 100 pages of stunning images and stories from the front lines. Only \$14.99 with Free Shipping. ORDER NOW at www.stripesstore.com

FACES

Combs on top at CMAs

Lynn, Lewis, Jackson honored; Stapleton, Wilson also winners

Associated Press

Luke Combs was crowned entertainer of the year at Wednesday's Country Music Association Awards, the second year in a row that he's taken home the night's top honor.

"I want to thank country music for making my dreams come true," Combs said, dedicating the award to his wife and newborn child. His win came after a performance-packed three-hour show that honored country icons and new voices.

"Country is sounding more country than it has in a long time tonight," Combs said. He also won album of the year for "Growin' Up."

The show opened with Carrie Underwood, Miranda Lambert and Reba McEntire playing tribute to the late country queen Loretta Lynn.

The superstar trio performed a medley of Lynn's hits including "You Ain't Woman Enough," "Don't Come Home A-Drinkin'" and "Coal Miner's Daughter" as images of Lynn were projected behind them and audience members sang along.

Rock pioneer Jerry Lee Lewis, who like Lynn died last month, was honored with a fiery tribute by Elle King and the Black Keys.



Chris Stapleton won his sixth male vocalist of the year award.



Lainey Wilson, shown with her new artist of the year award, also won the female vocalist trophy.

Alan Jackson accepted the lifetime achievement award, recounting how a movie about Hank Williams inspired him to move to Nashville when he was flat broke. He teared up during his speech, ending it by telling the audience, "I'm still living that honky tonk dream, y'all."

Brothers Osborne won vocal duo of the year and Old Dominion won the trophy for vocal group.

Chris Stapleton won male vocalist of the year, his sixth win in the category. Bryan, Combs, Eric Church and Morgan Wallen were also nominated.

"All the guys in this category deserve this award," Stapleton said.

He dedicated the honor to his 12-year-old daughter, whose birthday was Wednesday.

Emerging country superstar Lainey Wilson was the leading nominee with six nods, taking home trophies for new artist and female vocalist.

Jordan Davis' "Buy Dirt" won song of the year. The song featured CMA Awards host Luke Bryan. Bryan co-hosted the show at Bridgestone Arena along with NFL great Peyton Manning.

Joining country's biggest stars for the evening were Katy Perry and actors Jessica Chastain and Michael Shannon, who are playing Tammy Wynette and George Jones in an upcoming Showtime limited series and presented Combs the night's top honor.

Perry took the stage and performed "Where We Started" with Thomas Rhett during the show.



PHOTOS BY MARK HUMPHREY, INVISION/AP

Luke Combs accepts the award for entertainer of the year during the 56th Annual CMA Awards in Nashville on Wednesday.

Universal developing a Snoop Dogg biopic

From wire reports

Snoop Dogg is getting a big-screen biopic.

Universal Pictures announced Wednesday that the studio is developing a film about Snoop Dogg's life to be produced by the 51-year-old rapper. The film will be written by Joe Robert Cole, who co-wrote the two "Black Panther" films, and directed by Allen Hughes, the filmmaker of "Menace II Society."

"I waited a long time to put this project together because I wanted to choose the right director, the perfect writer and the greatest movie company I could partner with that could understand the legacy that I'm trying to portray on screen, and the memory I'm trying to leave behind," Snoop said in a statement.

Universal previously turned the story of rap group N.W.A into the hit 2015 film "Straight Outta Compton" and also released the acclaimed Eminem biopic "8 Mile" in 2002. Cole said the studio "has proven they can guide a movie like this to something special."

Snoop Dogg broke through in

the early '90s as part of the West Coast rap scene as a collaborator of Dr. Dre's. He's sold more than 35 million albums worldwide in his three-decade career. He'll produce the film along with Sara Ramaker and Hughes.

Aaron Carter sitcom to be finished in his memory

Aaron Carter's final project will move forward in his memory, writer-director Brian Farmer announced Tuesday.

According to Deadline, Carter's management team has given Farmer and his team permission to complete "Group" — an independent sitcom about mental health and group therapy — after the singer was found dead last week at his home in Lancaster, Calif. Carter was set to star as a fictionalized version of himself.

"Aaron was so excited about the show and helping raise awareness for mental health, a topic he was very passionate about," Farmer said. "He said being a part of the show gave him something positive to work toward, and I'll forever cherish that."



AP

Universal Pictures is planning a film about Snoop Dogg's life to be produced by the rapper.

After it wraps production, the series will be shopped to TV networks, Deadline reports.

Other news

■ Ryan Murphy's "Monster" will become an anthology series now that it's been renewed for two seasons at Netflix, the streaming service announced. The show, whose controversial debut season centered on serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, will center on "stories of other monstrous figures who have impacted society," according to Netflix. Those real-life subjects have not yet been named.

Michelle Obama shares stories of coping in 'The Light We Carry'

Associated Press

Michelle Obama said she struggled with a "crushing sense of hopelessness" after the 2020 presidential election that was brought on by the death and isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, a summer of political and racial unrest and the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

"I was in a low place," she said. Then she got an idea.

"Everyone was searching for some answers of how to cope. And for some reason they were asking me, 'What do you do?' I had to start thinking about that," Obama told People magazine ahead of the Nov. 14 release of her second book, "The Light We Carry: Overcoming in Uncertain Times."

In the book, former President Barack Obama's wife tells how she steadies herself during these anxious times and how she works at overcoming her lifelong fear of change and doubts about herself.

"Over the 58 years that I've lived, I can look back and I can say, 'This is how I deal with fear. These are the things I say to myself when I need to pick myself up. This is how I stay visible in a world that doesn't necessarily see a tall

Black woman,'" she said. "This is how I stay armored up when I'm attacked. The book is that offering."

"I think people learn not through edict, but through stories," she said.

Obama opens up in the book about everything from how awkward it is to make new friends to her experiences with racism, marriage, parenting and menopause.

She also writes about leaning on a "kitchen table" of close girlfriends, led by her 85-year-old mother, Marian Robinson.

In 2018, Obama released her best-selling memoir, "Becoming." The book has sold more than 17 million copies worldwide, surpassing the sales of any memoir by a previous first lady or modern president, including her husband.

In her new book, Obama said that one of her coping mechanisms is to indulge in what her husband calls "lowbrow TV."

"You name it, I watch it," she said, naming HGTV, anything on the Food Channel and dating shows like "Married at First Sight" among her favorites.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man guilty but mentally ill in intentional crash

IL WOODSTOCK — A judge has found a Chicago man guilty but mentally ill of first-degree murder for purposely crashing his SUV into an oncoming van, killing its driver and injuring a passenger.

McHenry County Judge Michael Coppedge on Monday also found William Bishop, 44, guilty but mentally ill of aggravated battery and aggravated driving under the influence in connection with the May 18, 2020, crash near Hebron.

The crash killed Jason Miller, 41, of McHenry, and critically injured Rory Fiali, 58, also of McHenry. Bishop's SUV was traveling at least 80 mph, The Northwest Herald reported.

"The evidence is clear he drove his Jeep directly at Miller's vehicle," Coppedge said.

Bishop had pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity.

Bishop had left his apartment in Chicago hours earlier, was feeling paranoid and hearing voices, and had smoked marijuana that day, according to trial testimony and recorded interviews of Bishop by police.

Frat parties on hold amid police investigations

NY ITHACA — Cornell University has announced the temporary suspension of fraternity parties after a student reported being sexually assaulted Sunday and four others were reportedly drugged at off-campus housing in recent weeks, university leaders said this week.

All of the incidents occurred at residences affiliated with registered fraternities, according to a statement to students Monday by President Martha Pollack and Vice President Ryan Lombardi.

Police investigations are ongoing. The suspension of fraternity parties and other social events at the Ivy League university follows an emergency meeting Sunday between the Interfraternity Council, which governs recognized fraternities, and staff, the statement said. IFC student leaders made the decision voluntarily.

"Fraternity leaders will take this time to implement stronger health and safety plans," the university statement said. "No IFC-affiliated social events will resume until student leaders and Cornell staff are confident activities can take place responsibly and safely."

College student accused of assault, racial slurs

KY LEXINGTON — A white University of Kentucky student is accused of physically assaulting a Black student worker while repeatedly using racial slurs, officials said.

The student was arrested Sunday at a residence hall and charged with assault, alcohol intoxication in a public place and disorderly conduct, according to the Fayette Coun-



JORDAN OPP, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH/AP

A united response to tragedy

Central Visual & Performing Arts High School senior Veronica Russell leads a march with students, faculty, family and friends during "Family Undivided," an event organized by CVPA students, Sunday at the St. Louis school. A student and teacher were killed at the school last month.

ty jail. She pleaded not guilty during an arraignment Monday afternoon.

The university said in a statement Sunday that a "disturbing incident" was captured on video in a residence hall. In the video, the female student worker says the other woman hit her multiple times and kicked her in the stomach.

An arrest citation filled out by campus police said the suspect repeated a racial slur to a group of Black females and kept repeating the slur after she was detained, the Lexington Herald-Leader reported.

The student employee was working an overnight shift at the front desk of Boyd Hall, the university said.

University President Eli Capiluto said he has reached out to offer support to the victims while officials conduct an immediate review.

Police officer arrested after firing shots into air

CA SAN BERNARDINO — A Southern California police officer was arrested for firing his gun into the air several times in a tavern's parking lot after drinking with his friends, authorities said.

San Bernardino Police Officer Fidel Ocampo-Rodarte, who was off-duty at the time, fired his service weapon multiple times about 2 a.m. Sunday, then fled the tavern in Blue Jay, the San Bernardino Police Department said in a tweet Monday night.

Ocampo-Rodarte turned himself

in hours later and was arrested on suspicion of negligent discharge of a firearm, the police department said in a news release. He was put on administrative leave.

The shooting was captured on surveillance cameras, police said.

Boy, 9, to be charged with having gun at school

AZ QUEEN CREEK — Pinal County authorities said Monday that they are bringing felony charges against a 9-year-old student who brought a loaded gun to school in August.

County Attorney Kent Volkmer said his office is charging the boy with being a minor in possession of a firearm and interfering with or disruption of an educational institution.

According to court documents, the student took a gun to Legacy Traditional Academy on Aug. 25 and there were 16 rounds of ammunition in the magazine.

The boy told authorities he put the weapon in his backpack for protection from some older kids who were bothering him on his way to school, according to Phoenix TV station ABC15.

TSA: Handgun found in raw chicken in luggage

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — Security officers at a South Florida airport have reported finding a handgun hidden inside raw chicken packed in a traveler's

luggage.

The Transportation Security Administration posted photos of the gun and poultry Monday on its official Instagram account. The weapon was recovered at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.

The post didn't identify the traveler who was transporting the weapon or whether any arrests were made.

According to the TSA, fresh meat, seafood and other non-liquid food items are permitted in both carry-on and checked bags, as long as they are packed in ice. Unloaded firearms are allowed to be transported in checked bags, but they must be declared at the ticket counter and packed in a locked hard-sided container.

4 men facing child sex trafficking charges

MA BOSTON — Four Massachusetts men who authorities say tried to arrange sexual encounters with underage girls have been arrested, federal prosecutors said Monday.

All four men are charged with attempted sex trafficking of a child, according to a statement from the U.S. attorney's office in Boston.

Sadeq Ali Quraishi, 45; Dmitri McKenzie, 27; and David Cannon, 59, were being held pending detention hearings. Misael Fabian Medina, 37, agreed to voluntary detention.

Quraishi is an anesthesiologist

who was fired by Tufts Medical Center last week, the hospital said.

According to court documents, the suspects responded to an advertisement on a website often used to advertise commercial sex acts, then traveled to meet with undercover agents who said they were offering 12- and 14-year-old girls for sex acts in exchange for cash payments.

Arson suspect arrested in state capital fires

MS JACKSON — Authorities have arrested a suspect in connection with seven fires set across Mississippi's capital city early Tuesday.

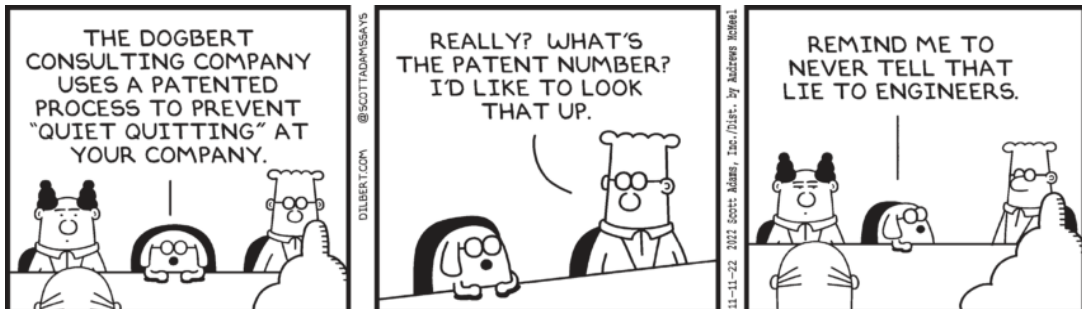
At least two of the buildings set ablaze in Jackson were churches; one was burned to the ground. Another fire broke out on fences surrounding the baseball practice field at Jackson State University, a historically Black public university. No injuries were reported.

After a search that lasted several hours, the Hinds County Sheriff's Office announced Tuesday afternoon that they had arrested Devin McLaurin in connection with the arsons. They did not provide any information about McLaurin's motivation. A spokesperson for the Jackson Police Department said he is being charged with felony malicious mischief. He is being questioned by FBI agents and may face additional charges.

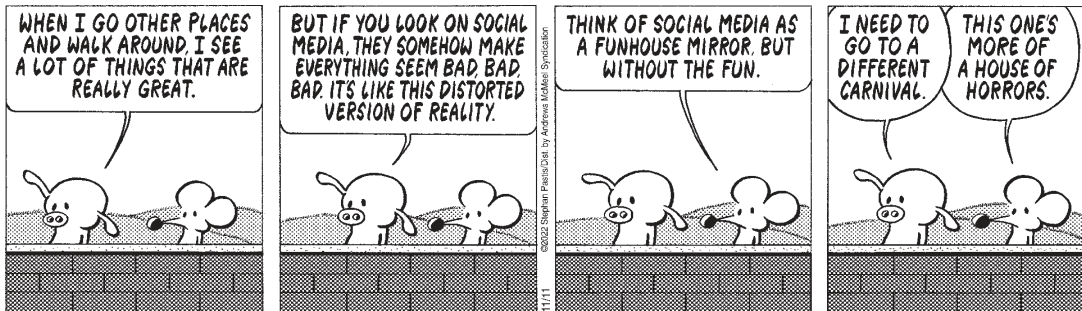
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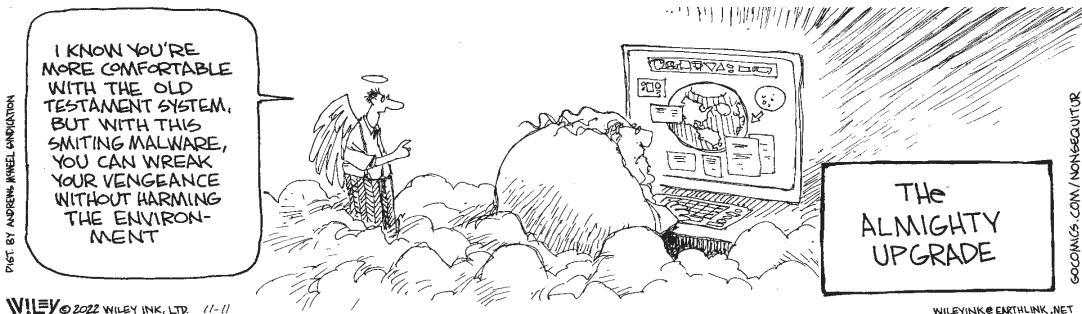
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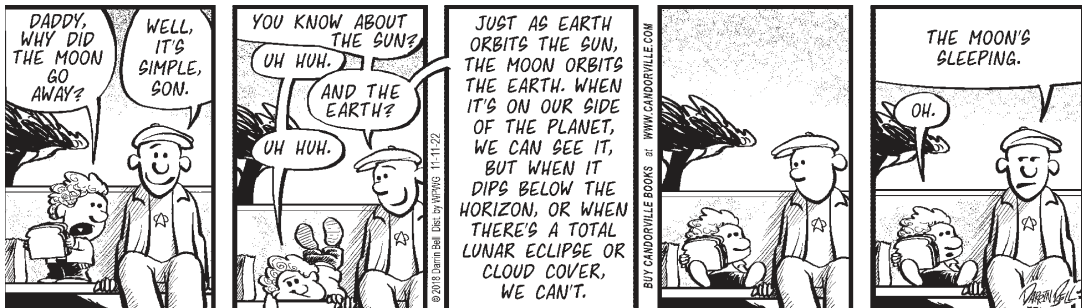
Pearls Before Swine



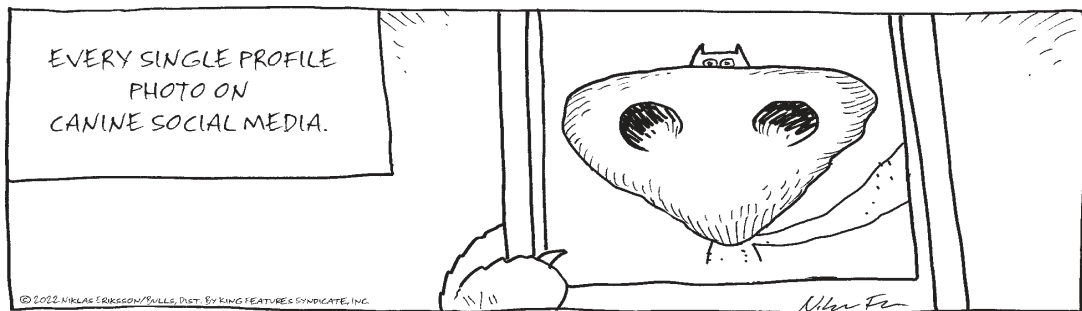
Non Sequitur



Candorville



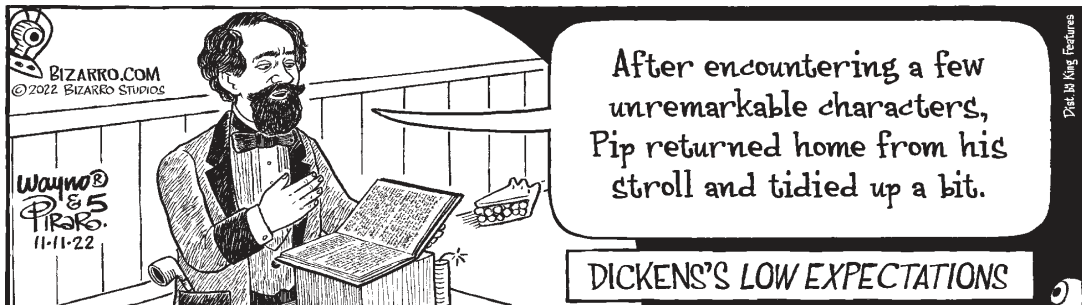
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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38				39	40		41	42	43	44
			45			46		47		
48	49	50	51					52		
53					54			55		
56					57			58		

ACROSS

- 1 Nov. honoree
- 4 Foot rub response
- 7 Parisian river
- 12 Expert
- 136 on a phone
- 14 "Be silent," in scores
- 15 Bagel topper
- 16 Courage
- 18 Toronto's prov.
- 19 Trivial
- 20 Optimistic
- 22 Profit
- 23 "Coffee Cantata" composer
- 27 Ballpark fig.
- 29 Sound system
- 31 World record?
- 34 Sped
- 35 Finds out
- 37 Tampa Bay NFLer
- 38 Fido's feet
- 39 French pal
- 41 Soccer star Mia
- 45 Blueprints
- 47 Runner Sebastian
- 48 Thanks
- 52 Wee bit
- 53 Like some rites
- 54 Lawn coating
- 55 JFK info
- 56 Hybrid utensil
- 57 Hesitant sounds
- 58 ISP alternative

DOWN

- 1 Bravery
- 2 Low-budget prefix
- 3 Modern messages
- 4 Bands on radios
- 5 Consecrate with oil
- 6 "Stormy Weather" singer Lena
- 7 Commotion
- 8 Have dinner
- 9 Post-op area
- 10 Composer Rorem
- 11 Paris summer
- 17 Youngsters
- 21 Decade parts
- 23 Sand castle site
- 24 Rainbow shape
- 25 Bee follower
- 26 Scuttle
- 28 Tax form ID
- 30 Capote nickname
- 31 Jungfrau, e.g.
- 32 Earl Grey, for one
- 33 Order partner
- 36 Pretzel topper
- 37 School paper holder
- 40 Bea Arthur sitcom
- 42 Played a part
- 43 Castle barriers
- 44 Military award
- 45 Flamingo's hue
- 46 Gives a darn?
- 48 Family docs
- 49 Knock
- 50 In the past
- 51 Roofing goo

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

11-11

CRYPTOQUIP

HMAJ QMAB CALKA QMLAA
 HUIFB YUQB JAHTOZOALT UJQD
 DJA, QMAB TMDRVF JZCA UQ
 QMA YMUYZKD QLURJA.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCE CONTRIBUTING TO AN OUTCOME: THE BEST SUPPORTING FACTOR.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals P

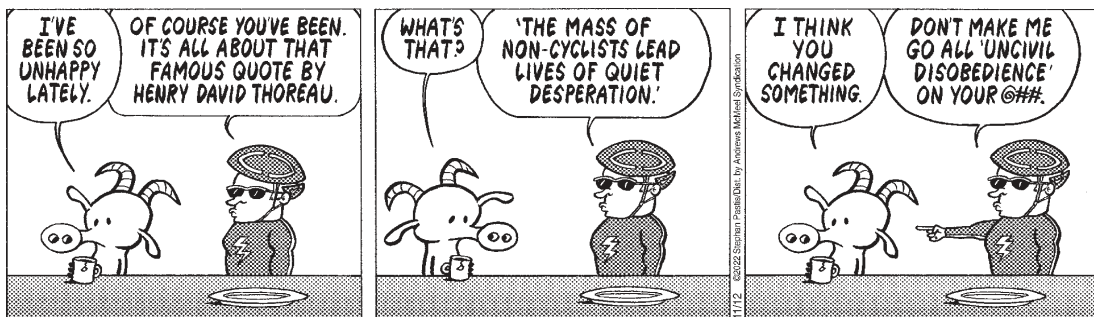
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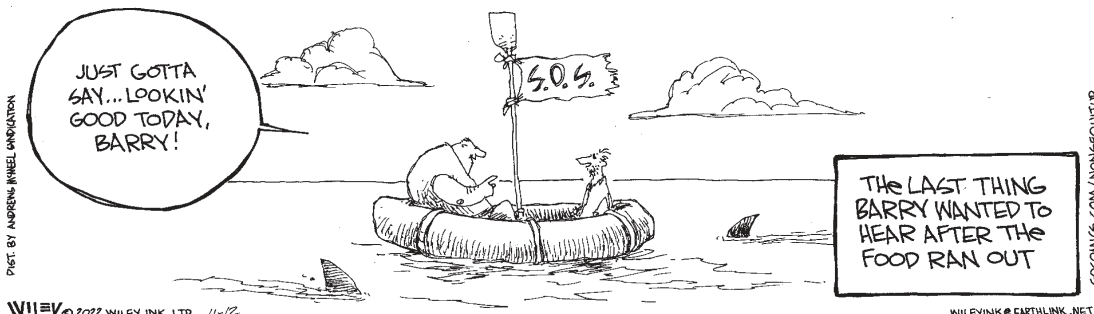
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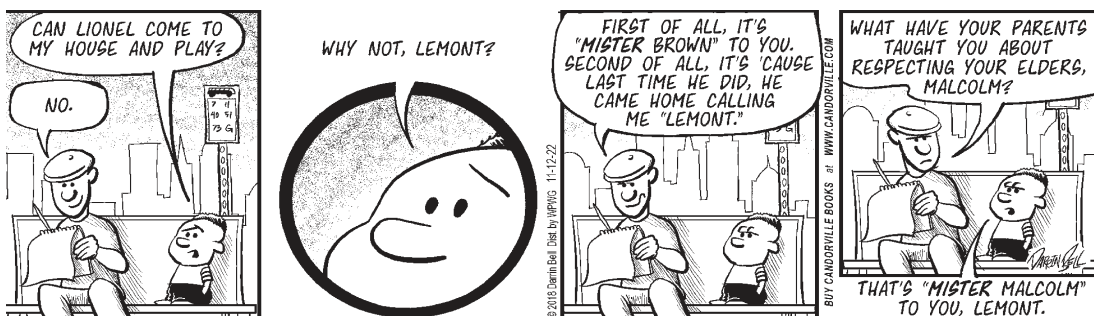
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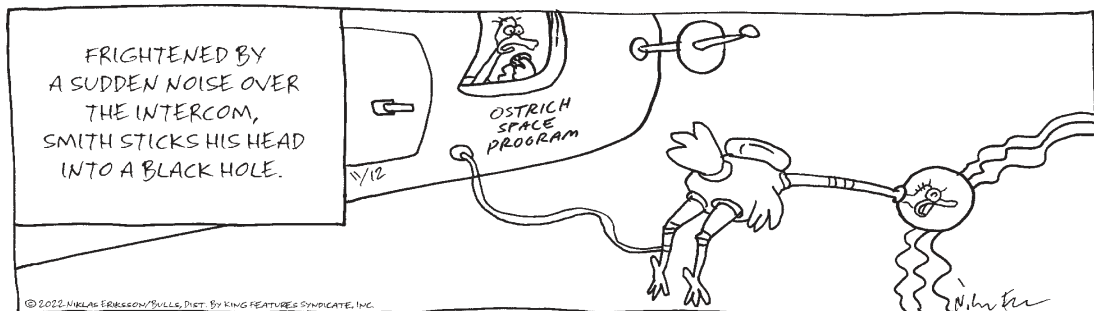
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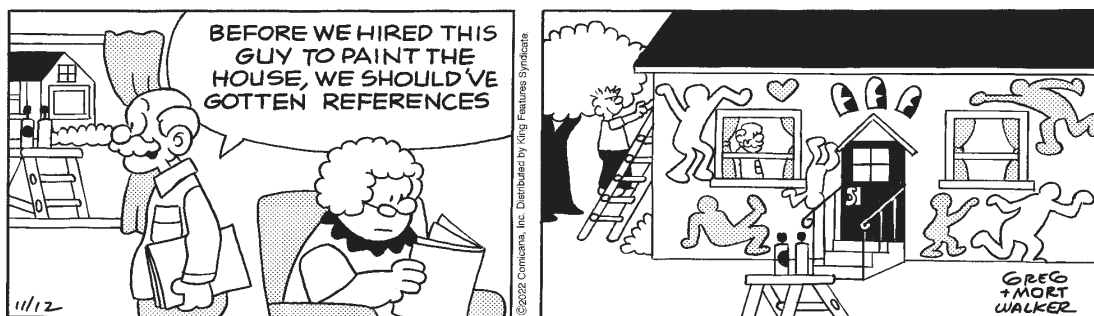
Candorville



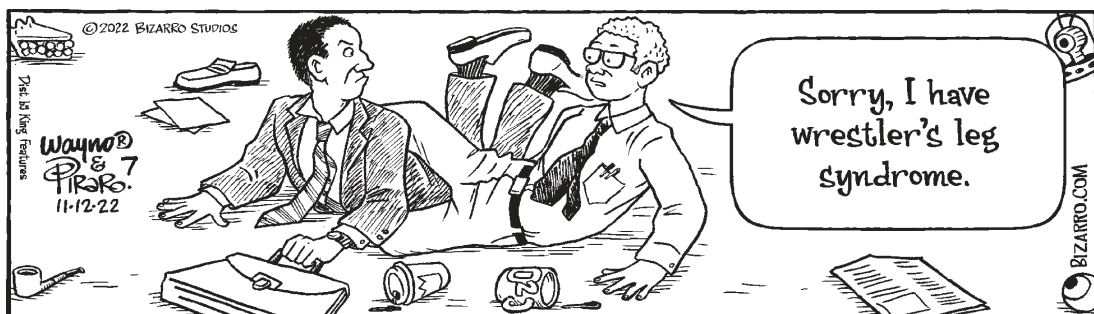
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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48						49				50		
51						52				53		

ACROSS

- 1 Dyeing vessel
- 4 Cain's dad
- 8 Collins of Genesis
- 12 Chopper
- 13 Type of dancer
- 14 Sultry Horne
- 15 Ran into
- 16 Military no-show
- 17 Sacred chests
- 18 "After you!"
- 21 Oahu, for one (Abbr.)
- 22 Actor Jeong
- 23 Klum of "Project Runway"
- 26 Scoundrel
- 27 Inlet
- 30 To be, in Tours
- 31 — chi
- 32 Demolish, in Dover
- 33 Talk and talk
- 34 Lad
- 35 Bottle stoppers
- 36 Melody
- 37 Curator's concern
- 38 "Wait ..."
- 45 Grad
- 46 Eager
- 47 Group of seals
- 48 Wrinkly fruit
- 49 Nitwit

- 50 Dos Passos trilogy
- 51 Pretzel topper
- 52 Singles
- 53 Bashful

- 24 JFK info
- 25 Annoy
- 26 Archipelago part
- 27 Soap unit
- 28 Request
- 29 "You bet!"

DOWN

- 1 Coquette
- 2 Skater's leap group
- 3 Head, to Henri
- 4 Tennis great Andre
- 5 Wooden peg
- 6 Enthusiastic
- 7 Maui neighbor
- 8 Unadorned
- 9 Frau's mate
- 10 Pen fluids
- 11 Endure
- 19 Staffer
- 20 Nourished
- 23 "Yoo-hoo!"
- 31 Twister
- 32 Campus mil. group
- 34 Life story
- 35 Beliefs
- 36 Fess up
- 37 "All kidding —"
- 38 Residence, in Bonn
- 39 Gymnast Korbut
- 40 Temporary calm
- 41 Bard's river
- 42 Piece of work
- 43 Snack
- 44 June 6, 1944

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

11-12

CRYPTOQUIP

JP CMKQ MP XMLN HLKMIMCJTVE

HNV PJTTVS BJKQ KNHEQ, BQHK

WMLTS XML WHTT KQHK?

KBM - WHN OHNCHOV.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN THEY MERGE THREE WINDY CITY NEWSPAPERS INTO ONE, THEY SHOULD NAME IT THE CHICAGO TRIUNE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals B

STARS AND STRIPES

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Ernie Gates

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Midterms results should inspire introspection all around

BY GEORGE F. WILL

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON

In a pre-election flourish, President Joe Biden bragged to Floridians that this year's 8.7% increase in Social Security benefits is the largest in four decades. That is true — because of the cost-of-living adjustment. Inflation is the highest in four decades. Biden's thank-me-for-inflation plea exemplified his autumn struggles, which called to mind the title of Stevie Smith's poem "Not Waving but Drowning."

Yet even a president dramatically more disapproved than approved, and who a majority of his party wishes would not seek another term, did not provoke even a red wavelet. Could it be that the label "Republican," from an association with something or someone, carries an aroma of putrefaction? If so, the electorate's discernment should be celebrated. Elections are increasingly nationalized and president-centric, even ex-president-centric.

Tickling a message from Tuesday's muddy results is risky, but here is a tentative one: The immediate future can be won by a party prudent enough to offer a "deep breath, everybody" presidential candidate. One who says that to the nation, and adds, from Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address, "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies."

Which means turning down the hysteria rheostat. The nation was not built by fragile people and is not fragile, and it is safe to suppose that Biden's reiterated rubbish to the contrary ("democracy is on the ballot") motivated few voters. His implicit "Democracy

c'est moi" message surely seemed highfalutin' to Americans reluctant to believe that he is the thin reed on which the institutions bequeathed by the Founding now lean.

The nation's immediate predicament is more banal. Republicans cannot win with former President Donald Trump defining them or inflaming their nominating electorates to select preposterous candidates. Democrats cannot win without invoking Trump's specter to stifle debates about some of their policies ("no cash bail"; "greed" causes inflation) that stroke their base's erogenous zones.

In this centennial of T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," recognize Trump as "dry sterile thunder without rain." When, however, he is scrubbed from the public square — an entertainer with a stale act is as perishable as vaudeville — this cleansing will be welcomed by an exhausted electorate but will be discomfiting to both parties. Republicans will be forced to articulate an agenda beyond retrospective grievances and prospective pugnacity, and Democrats will be at first speechless, then forced to defend their agenda.

For example, Biden's election-eve promise of a "fundamental shift" on the economy was, coming from the head of the party that controls the executive and legislative branches, a repudiation of the rascals who implemented his policies.

Although culture conflicts are still at a rolling boil, they come and go, and none are forever. In 2004, President George W. Bush's re-election campaign worked to drive conservatives to the polls by getting anti-same-sex marriage measures on the ballots in 11 states. All passed. Eighteen years and a 2015 Supreme Court decision later, calm has de-

scended where controversy had raged, which is evidence of two encouraging facts: The source of the court's power, its prestige, is not as attenuated as some suppose, and the American mind is more accommodating than some anger-mongers would prefer.

When Tuesday's results are sifted, it will be interesting to see how much has changed since 2020, when the gimlet-eyed Dave Wasserman of the Cook Political Report noticed this: Biden won 85% of counties with a Whole Foods and 32% of counties with a Cracker Barrel. Excluding counties that have both, Biden won 95% that have only a Whole Foods and 18% with only a Cracker Barrel. America's class conflicts, arising from society's allocation of status, also are not forever, and in this continental country, the Whole Foods and Cracker Barrel cohorts can coexist.

Tuesday's elections should move both parties to introspection. Journalists could benefit from emulation. Many of them believe that the nation does not just have problems but has "existential" crises: Democracy is a guttering candle, dying before climate change snuffs out the remainder of life. Progressives, because of their mind meld with journalists, talk to voters a tad too much about existential this and that, and too little about voters' existence.

Journalism, of sorts, did, however, provide comic relief, of sorts. Five days before the election, MSNBC, interviewing Mandela Barnes, the Democrats' U.S. Senate nominee in Wisconsin, ran this banner at the bottom of the screen: "Extreme Gerrymandering Taints Wisconsin Senate Race." If Republicans managed *that* — by redrawing the shape of the state? — they really are clever rascals.

Voters make clear they aren't impressed with either party

BY GARY ABERNATHY

Special to The Washington Post

The great question of this year's midterm elections was which issues would resonate with voters — the Democrats' warning that "democracy is on the ballot" and their alarm over the Supreme Court ending federal abortion rights, or the Republicans' focus on inflation, energy costs, crime and the porous southern border? The answer? All of the above, depending on the candidate, the state and the race.

The mixed messages voters sent in the midterms reflected a nation still deeply divided and leery of both major political parties. Most Americans haven't embraced the rhetoric that "extreme MAGA Republicans," as President Joe Biden began labeling them, are on a mission to destroy democracy. The New York Times reported that as of noon Wednesday, more than 210 Republicans "who questioned the 2020 election" had so far won House and Senate seats, along with races for governor, secretary of state and attorney general. That number is certain to grow.

Even a series of high-profile, televised congressional Jan. 6 committee hearings failed to persuade most Americans to be afraid of the big bad wolf. It was always a perplexing argument, considering that the MAGA candidates in question were pursuing power the old-fashioned way — through democratic elections.

The Democrats' other big election message, on GOP threats to abortion rights, had mixed results. Some Republican candidates, including Ohio congressional incumbent Steve Chabot, bit the dust after being hammered in ads as being "obsessed" with taking away abor-

tion rights, but pro-life Senate candidate J.D. Vance cruised to victory in the same state. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis had one of the biggest and widest GOP wins of all while embracing various antiabortion views.

While control of the Senate might very well be decided again by a runoff election in Georgia, Republicans seemed likely to at least win the House, even if by a much narrower margin than predicted. As The Washington Post reported in September, Republicans have promised that, if given the reins, they intend to open countless investigations, including into spending by the House select committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection, the Justice Department's search of Mar-a-Lago, and the Biden administration's "deliberations over weapons sales to Ukraine."

But focusing too much time and resources on endless "revenge investigations" risks accusations of bait and switch. If, as Wednesday morning trends suggested, the GOP is poised to regain the House, it was by tailoring campaigns to highlight pressing economic and domestic issues. Addressing those topics is what Republicans have now been hired to do.

But the biggest takeaway for Republicans is that what should have been a big red wave nearly turned into a disaster. What happened? While voters didn't buy into the notion that MAGA candidates are a dire threat to democracy, they also weren't particularly impressed with their quality or their messaging. Republicans were good at identifying Democrats' failures, bad at suggesting remedies.

Donald Trump, meanwhile, has promised a "big announcement" next week, and he is widely expected to declare his candidacy for

president in 2024. But the midterms' results should provide Republicans with all the evidence they need that Trump's day has passed. Some are already realizing it. Tellingly, Vance, whose campaign was propelled by the former president's endorsement and rallies, didn't mention Trump in his victory speech.

Make no mistake, Trump's issues motivated millions of Americans, and his legacy as the person who remade the Republican Party and restored it to competitiveness after lopsided losses in 2008 and 2012 is secure. "Trumpism" is the GOP's future, a direction that has been decided not by party leaders, but by rank-and-file Republicans who believe in energy independence, an "America First" foreign policy, cracking down on those crossing the border illegally and a devotion to the kind of God-and-country generational traditions that an increasingly progressive world calls outdated or even "intolerant." But Trump's star power is fading. DeSantis is ready for his close-up.

In the meantime, a weary country needs a break — from political drama, from never-ending election cycles and from the accusatory rhetoric unmoored from reality that has been emanating from both sides. Republicans should stop accusing Democrats of rigging past elections. Democrats should stop accusing Republicans of rigging future elections. While party leaders clearly have work to do, millions of grass-roots Americans should tune it all out and remind themselves that there's more to life than fighting over politics. We used to know that. We need to remember it.

Gary Abernathy, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post, is a freelance writer based in the Cincinnati region.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

After winning NAIA title, ex-teammates making giant leap

BY STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — They overcame the ravages of a hurricane to win a national title at their old school.

Now, former Loyola New Orleans teammates Zach Wrightsil, Myles Burns and Brandon Davis are aiming for one more improbable achievement as they attempt to make the leap from their NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) program and succeed at the NCAA Division I level.

Burns is at Mississippi, Davis at Texas State and Wrightsil at Marquette.

"I've always known I could play at this level," said Wrightsil, a 6-foot-7 forward. "That was never a question in my head."

The NAIA doesn't keep track of how many players transfer from one of its schools to the NCAA Division I level. But the moves Burns and Wrightsil are making seem particularly rare as they go straight to one of the six major conferences.

None of the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big 12, Big Ten, Big East, SEC and Pac-12 schools that responded to an Associated Press survey could recall an example of their school adding a player directly from the NAIA.

Boston College forward CJ Penha Jr. began his college career at NAIA program Taylor University, but transferred to NCAA Division II school Trevecca Nazarene before coming to the ACC with the Eagles.

"I personally believe that I'm more than capable of playing on this level," said Burns, a 6-7 forward.

Stacy Hollowell, who coached Loyola to the NAIA championship, said there is talent at that level. As an example, he cited EJ Onu, who was at NAIA program Shawnee State from 2017-21 and now plays for the NBA G League's Memphis Hustle.

Hollowell believes the three former Loyola players can fare well at their new schools.

He remembered how Davis' arrival last season gave Loyola what it

needed to win a national title after falling short a year earlier. He believes Burns and Wrightsil both have the athleticism to thrive in a high-major program.

"What people don't understand is they have a high-major will to win," said Hollowell, who now works as Ole Miss' associate athletic director for men's basketball. "You can't really quantify that by watching a guy. You've got to kind of be around him and feel that out, I think."

Hollowell was around those guys enough to understand what they went through last year.

When Hurricane Ida hit New Orleans in August 2021, the storm ripped off a corner of the roof of the Loyola building that housed the basketball court.

Loyola practiced in Dallas for a couple of weeks while much of New Orleans was without power. After the players returned to campus, Loyola played home games at other local colleges. The players practiced whenever there was an open time slot, sometimes as early as 5 a.m.

"We basically lost everything, so that brought us together," Davis said. "When we played other teams, we had a common goal — not to let the stuff we'd been through hinder us from winning games."

They went 37-1 and won the school's first national championship since 1945. Earlier in the season, Wrightsil scored 26 points, Burns 18 and Davis 11 in an exhibition victory over NCAA Division I program New Orleans.

Wrightsil was named the NAIA player of the year. Burns was a second-team NAIA All-America selection and Davis earned honorable mention. Burns also won the Marques Haynes Award for having the most steals of any player in any level of college basketball.

Their success led to NCAA Division I offers. They couldn't pass up the opportunity.

"I've definitely had dreams of playing at a big Division I school," Burns said. "Every basketball player I think wants that."



Marquette's Zach Wrightsil defends during the first half of a game against Radford on Monday in Milwaukee.

MORRY GASH/AP



SCOTT STRAZZANTE, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE/AP

Stanford's Fran Belibi prepares to dunk against Montana State's Taylor Janssen during the second quarter of an NCAA Tournament first-round game on March 18 in Stanford, Calif.

Playing above rim more common among women

BY DOUG FEINBERG
Associated Press

Fran Belibi joined an exclusive club when she dunked in the NCAA Tournament last season.

While she was just the third woman ever to do it in the tournament and eighth overall in college history, the Stanford forward knows there will be more to come soon.

"There are definitely more girls coming up who can play above the rim," Belibi said.

Her historic dunk capped off a great basketball play where she had a block on one end and then finished it off with the one-handed slam. Belibi, who has dunked three times in college, knows there are others already in college who can do it, but may not want to because they are afraid to miss.

"They just don't try to do it. I think that in me doing it and seeing other dunks in the NBA, a lot more people are like, 'If they can do it, let me try it,'" she said. "To do it in a game is dependent on your athletic ability and also time and score of the game."

Belibi's well aware of the history of dunks in women's college basketball, reciting Georgeann Wells as the first to ever do it in a game. Elon coach Charlotte Smith was the second to dunk back when she played for North Carolina.

Smith recalls three of her Tar Heels teammates, including former track star Marion Jones, also could dunk. The quartet of players would get in layup lines behind each other before games and put on a show that awed fans and their opponents.

"We would literally line up back to back to back to back," the 6-foot Smith recalled. "We'd dunk four times in a row. It was exciting for us and exciting for our opponents, who would stop their warmups to watch us dunk."

There have been only eight women's players who have dunked in a college game. Joining Wells, Smith and Belibi are Michelle Snow, Sancho Lyttle, Candace Parker, Sylvia Fowles and Brittney Griner, who holds the record with 18 of the nearly three dozen college dunks that have occurred.

That number is poised to grow soon. Dawn Staley has her own dunker in freshman Ashlyn Watkins, who won the high school dunk contest last spring.

"We're going to see it a lot more," South Carolina's coach said. "Ashlyn is an incredible athlete. It doesn't take much for her to dunk in one of our drills. It's nothing for her to do it. I do think she's going to do it in a game, not necessarily off a fast break. She can do it

in somewhat of a crowd."

Staley said two of her other players can also dunk, though they haven't done it in a game yet. She said she sees a lot of high school players at AAU tournaments in the summer playing above the rim. Staley knows that dunks definitely add excitement to the game and will help it grow, but aren't why most fans tune in to watch the women play.

Watkins is shy and quiet talking about her dunking ability. She credits the Gamecocks strength and conditioning coaches for helping her get stronger so that she can play above the rim.

"They've been helpful," said Watkins, who recalled dunking on a nine-foot rim in fifth grade and a 10-footer in eighth. "Making my quads, calves and glutes stronger so I can still get up when I'm tired."

Watkins said she thought about dunking in the Gamecocks' exhibition game last week, but saw two girls closing in on her and didn't want to risk getting injured in the game.

Smith hopes to see more women do it soon and she'll be happy to welcome them into the group.

"It really is exciting to have been one of the founders of the dunk club," said Smith. "We'll have to get t-shirts made up and give it to anyone who does it."

WORLD CUP/NHL



DAVE THOMPSON/AP

Fulham's Tim Ream, left, tries to block a shot from Manchester City's Ilkay Gundogan during an English Premier League match Saturday at Etihad stadium in Manchester, England.

Ream, Wright selected to play for Americans

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The U.S. World Cup team is truly of the video generation. Players who received a FaceTime from coach Gregg Berhalter were headed to Qatar and those given audio calls missed the cut.

"I think the best part of it the last couple of days was really seeing genuine smiles from the guys when I told them, and that's priceless," Berhalter said Wednesday night after the televised announcement of his 26-man roster.

Tim Ream, Haji Wright, Joe Scally and Sean Johnson made it. Ricardo Pepi, Zack Steffen, Paul Arriola and Jordan Pefok fell short.

Norwich's Josh Sargent and Antalyspor's Wright beat out Pepi, the 19-year-old whose three goals in qualifying were second behind Christian Pulisic's five. Berhalter rated Sargent playing in England's second-tier League Championship higher than Pepi in the Dutch Eredivisie, especially with the U.S. opening the tournament against Wales on Nov. 21 and facing England four days later before finishing group play against Iran on Nov. 29.

"The Dutch League is a great league, but it doesn't bring the same physicality that the Premier League brings and the Champion-



Berhalter

US World Cup roster

Goalkeepers: Ethan Horvath (Luton, England), Sean Johnson (New York City), Matt Turner (Arsenal, England).

Defenders: Cameron Carter-Vickers (Glasgow Celtic, Scotland), Sergiño Dest (AC Milan, Italy), Aaron Long (New York Red Bulls), Shaq Moore (Nashville), Tim Ream (Fulham, England), Antonee Robinson (Fulham, England), Joe Scally (Borussia Mönchengladbach, Germany), DeAndre Yedlin (Miami), Walker Zimmerman (Nashville).

Midfielders: Brenden Aaronson (Leeds, England), Kellyn Acosta (Los Angeles), Tyler Adams (Seattle), Christian Pulisic (Chelsea, England), Gio Reyna (Borussia Dortmund, Germany), Josh Sargent (Norwich, England), Tim Weah (Lille, France), Haji Wright (Antalyaspor, Turkey).

Forwards: Jesús Ferreira (Dallas), Jordan Morris (Seattle), Christian Pulisic (Chelsea, England), Gio Reyna (Borussia Dortmund, Germany), Josh Sargent (Norwich, England), Tim Weah (Lille, France), Haji Wright (Antalyaspor, Turkey).

ship brings," Berhalter said. "Ricardo Pepi could have a great argument for why he should be there, and I can understand that argument."

Players started getting texts from Berhalter on Sunday afternoon: "Are you available?" He spent three days going through the roster, then turned to just over a dozen dealt the devastation of fall-in short.

On what figures to be the youngest of the 32 teams by average age, 29-year-old right back DeAndre Yedlin is the only holdover from the 2014 World Cup. Yedlin, Pulisic, Kellyn Acosta and Ream are remaining players from the infamous loss at Trinidad that prevented the Americans from reaching the 2018 tournament.

"This could be a little bit of a redemption or revenge tour if you want to call it that," Yedlin said. "This is now our time to really — I don't want to say apologize for

that, but show how much we do want it."

With central defenders Miles Robinson and Chris Richards sidelined by injuries, the 35-year-old Ream returns to the national team for the first time since the opening window of qualifying in September 2021. Ream didn't play in the final four qualifying windows as Berhalter preferred more mobile options, then was selected over Mark McKenzie and Erik-Palmer Brown.

"He's playing in the best league in the world and he's playing at a very high level," Berhalter said.

Cameron Carter-Vickers, the son of former NBA player Howard Carter, also was picked as a central defender. Carter-Vickers, Johnson, Scally, Wright and goalkeeper Ethan Horvath did not appear in any of the 14 qualifiers.

Shaq Moore was picked as a backup over Reggie Cannon at right back and Cristian Roldan ahead of Malik Tillman in midfield, where Berhalter called Arriola "the odd man out."

"These past few days have been extremely difficult. Some of the hardest I've had in a while," Arriola wrote on Twitter. "I am heartbroken."

Johnson, 33, was a surprise pick over Steffen, who started six qualifiers. He received the news at his home in Hoboken, N.J.

Nine players are from Major League Soccer; eight are with English clubs; two each are based in Germany, Italy and Spain; and one apiece plays in France, Scotland and Turkey.

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	13	11	2	0	22	54	31
Detroit	13	7	3	3	17	39	38
Florida	14	8	5	1	17	46	42
Toronto	14	7	4	3	17	40	38
Tampa Bay	13	7	5	1	15	42	41
Montreal	14	7	6	1	15	42	44
Buffalo	13	7	6	0	14	50	42
Ottawa	12	4	8	0	8	42	44

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
New Jersey	13	10	3	0	20	47	33
N.Y. Islanders	14	9	5	0	18	49	36
Carolina	13	8	4	1	17	39	37
Philadelphia	12	7	3	2	16	33	29
N.Y. Rangers	14	6	5	3	15	39	43
Washington	15	6	7	2	14	41	46
Pittsburgh	13	5	6	2	12	46	45
Columbus	12	3	9	0	6	30	55

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Winnipeg	12	8	3	1	17	38	28
Dallas	13	8	4	1	17	47	32
Colorado	11	6	4	1	13	40	31
Minnesota	13	6	6	1	13	39	42
Chicago	12	5	5	2	12	34	39
Arizona	12	5	6	1	11	35	46
Nashville	13	5	7	1	11	35	45
St. Louis	11	3	8	0	6	23	43

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	14	12	2	0	24	50	30
Seattle	14	8	4	2	18	50	41
Los Angeles	15	8	6	1	17	50	53
Edmonton	14	8	6	0	16	53	49
Calgary	12	5	5	2	12	37	40
Vancouver	14	4	7	3	11	49	58
San Jose	14	3	8	3	9	36	49
Anaheim	14	4	9	1	9	40	65

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

Wednesday's games

Florida 3, Carolina 0
Pittsburgh 4, Washington 1
Montreal 5, Vancouver 2
Minnesota 4, Anaheim 1

Thursday's games

Calgary at Boston
Edmonton at Carolina
N.Y. Rangers at Detroit
Ottawa at New Jersey
Philadelphia at Columbus
Vegas at Buffalo
Arizona at N.Y. Islanders
San Jose at St. Louis
Nashville at Colorado
Chicago at Los Angeles

Friday's games

Pittsburgh at Toronto
Tampa Bay at Washington
San Jose at Dallas
Minnesota at Seattle

Saturday's games

Ottawa at Philadelphia
Edmonton at Florida
Arizona at New Jersey
Boston at Buffalo
Pittsburgh at Montreal
Vancouver at Toronto
Columbus at N.Y. Islanders
N.Y. Rangers at Nashville
Carolina at Colorado
Chicago at Anaheim
St. Louis at Vegas
Winnipeg at Calgary
Detroit at Los Angeles

Sunday's games

Dallas at Philadelphia
San Jose at Minnesota
Vancouver at Boston
Arizona at N.Y. Rangers
Washington at Tampa Bay
Winnipeg at Seattle

Scoring leaders

Through Wednesday

	GP	G	A	PTS
Connor McDavid, EDM	14	14	15	29
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	14	9	17	26
Nikita Kucherov, TB	13	6	15	21
David Pastrnak, BOS	13	8	12	20
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	11	3	16	19
Artemi Panarin, NYR	14	5	14	19
Jason Robertson, DAL	13	9	10	19
Erik Karlsson, SJ	14	10	9	19
Jesper Bratt, NJ	13	5	13	18
Elias Pettersson, VAN	14	6	12	18
Matthew Tkachuk, FLA	12	5	12	17
Troy Terry, ANA	14	5	12	17
Roope Hintz, DAL	13	5	12	17
Martin Necas, CAR	13	7	10	17
Nick Suzuki, MTL	14	9	8	17

Penguins end slide at seven

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Already down two defensemen to injury, the Pittsburgh Penguins were in desperation mode when Jeff Petry skated off in pain and left them with just three healthy players at the position.

Veteran forward Jeff Carter to the rescue. Carter skated a shift on defense in his 1,313th NHL game Wednesday night to fill the void before Petry returned and the Penguins pieced enough together to beat the Washington Capitals 4-1 and snap their seven-game losing streak.



Carter

"Couldn't have more confidence in Carts," said goaltender Casey DeSmith, who made 24 saves for his first win of the season. "Monkey off the back. Obviously the team win means everything. Safe to say we needed it, and we earned it."

The Penguins earned it by going a perfect 4-for-4 on the penalty kill against an opponent that was 4-for-5 on the power play in its last game. They also took advantage of Darcy Kuemper's struggles in net, getting soft goals by Jason Zucker and Brock McGinn on shots that squeaked through.

"I don't like letting in goals like that, and I'm not used to letting in goals like that," said Kuemper, who allowed three goals on 27 shots. "I hate to lose, so tonight was a bad night."

It could have been a bad night for Pittsburgh after losing Pierre-Olivier Joseph and Jan Rutta to injuries in the second period. Instead, No. 1 defenseman Kris Letang skated a game-high 28:28 and the Penguins won for the first time since Oct. 22, ending the organization's longest skid since losing 10 in a row in 2006, during Sidney Crosby's rookie season.

"Everybody in here's happy about that," said McGinn, who scored short-handed. "We've been taking some good strides the last couple games to try and get this win, and I think everybody's a little relieved and happy that we came out tonight and got one."

The Penguins were relieved Petry, who beat Kuemper clean on a shot from just inside the blue line for the third goal of the game, returned after a brief absence because, as Marcus Pettersson said, being down to three defensemen is a lot different than four. Coach Mike Sullivan in the meantime was just looking for a forward who could skate backwards and chose 37-year-old Carter.

BASKETBALL



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

The Brooklyn Nets' Kevin Durant shoots over the Knicks' Julius Randle during the second half of Wednesday's game in New York.

Nets pound Knicks in Vaughn's opener

BY BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — New coach, same result in a New York basketball rivalry that's become no rivalry at all.

Kevin Durant had 29 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists, becoming the first player since Michael Jordan to score at least 25 points in his team's first 12 games, and the Brooklyn Nets routed the Knicks 112-85 on Wednesday night after making Jacque Vaughn their head coach.

It was the second romp in the last four games for a Nets team that has responded so well to Vaughn that it decided not to pursue suspended Boston Celtics coach Ime Udoka.

"We don't want this to be a honeymoon stage for us," Durant said. "We want to continue to keep pushing through, keep finding ways to get better, finding ways to turn those weaknesses to strengths and keep pushing from here."

Durant beat the Knicks for the 13th straight time, and he's had triple-doubles in the last two of them. His rebounds and assists were both season highs, and his usual scoring extended a streak that is the longest since Jordan opened the 1988-89 season with 16 consecutive games of 25 points.

The Nets beat the Knicks for the eighth straight time. It matches their second-longest winning streak ever against the Knicks, three shy of an 11-game run from 1984-86.

Seth Curry added a season-high 23 points and Edmond Sumner, in his fourth straight start in place of the suspended Kyrie Irving, finished

with a season-best 18.

The Nets decided to stick with Vaughn earlier Wednesday after showing signs of progress since he replaced Steve Nash after a 2-5 start.

They are 3-2 since and have held their last four opponents below 100 points, the first time Brooklyn has done that since an eight-game stretch in the 2014-15 season. He pointed to their rebounding, after outrebounding the Knicks 55-46.

"So if we can focus on defensive rebounding, we can take a big jump on the defensive end," Vaughn said. "We've already taken a big jump last four games, teams under 100 points, which has been great. So definitely concerted effort."

Julius Randle had 24 points and 11 rebounds for the Knicks, who were coming off an impressive performance in Minnesota on Monday but trailed by as much as 35 in this one.

"We weren't ourselves tonight," Knicks forward RJ Barrett said. "Over the course of 82 games, game like this is going to happen, but we can't make this a habit."

Brooklyn jumped to a 24-8 lead on Sumner's three-pointer and kept the margin there after one quarter, leading 38-22. Curry's three-pointer gave the Nets their first 20-point lead at 50-30, and another three-pointer by Joe Harris gave them a 69-44 lead, matching the largest halftime margin in the team's history.

Durant improved to 20-3 in games he's played against the Knicks, who haven't beaten him since 2013 when he was still in Oklahoma City.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	8	3	.727	—
Toronto	7	5	.583	1½
New York	5	6	.455	3
Philadelphia	5	6	.455	3
Brooklyn	5	7	.417	3½

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	7	4	.636	—
Washington	5	6	.455	2
Miami	4	7	.364	3
Orlando	3	9	.250	4½
Charlotte	3	9	.250	4½

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	10	1	.909	—
Cleveland	8	3	.727	2
Chicago	6	7	.462	5
Indiana	5	6	.455	5
Detroit	3	9	.250	7½

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	8	4	.667	—
Dallas	6	4	.600	1
New Orleans	6	5	.545	1½
San Antonio	5	7	.417	3
Houston	2	10	.167	6

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Utah	10	3	.769	—
Portland	8	3	.727	1
Denver	8	3	.727	1
Minnesota	5	7	.417	4½
Oklahoma City	4	7	.364	5

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	8	3	.727	—
L.A. Clippers	7	5	.583	1½
Sacramento	4	6	.400	3½
Golden State	4	7	.364	4
L.A. Lakers	2	9	.182	6

Tuesday's games

No games scheduled.

Wednesday's games

Orlando 94, Dallas 87
Portland 105, Charlotte 95
Denver 122, Indiana 119
Utah 125, Atlanta 119
Brooklyn 112, New York 85
Boston 128, Detroit 112
Toronto 116, Houston 109
Phoenix 129, Minnesota 117
New Orleans 115, Chicago 111
Memphis 124, San Antonio 122, OT
Milwaukee 136, Oklahoma City 132, 2OT
L.A. Clippers 114, L.A. Lakers 101
Sacramento 127, Cleveland 120

Thursday's games

Dallas at Washington
Charlotte at Miami
Philadelphia at Atlanta
Portland at New Orleans

Friday's games

Denver at Boston
Phoenix at Orlando
Detroit at New York
Milwaukee at San Antonio
Toronto at Oklahoma City
Minnesota at Memphis
Cleveland at Golden State
Sacramento at L.A. Lakers

Saturday's games

Brooklyn at L.A. Clippers
Utah at Washington
Boston at Detroit
Toronto at Indiana
Atlanta at Philadelphia
Charlotte at Miami
Houston at New Orleans
Portland at Dallas

Sunday's games

Oklahoma City at New York
Memphis at Washington
Minnesota at Cleveland
Utah at Philadelphia
Denver at Chicago
Golden State at Sacramento
Brooklyn at L.A. Lakers

Denver Nuggets at Boston Celtics

AFN-Sports

1 a.m. Saturday CET
9 a.m. Saturday JKT

US one win from spot in World Cup

BY TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

Jim Boylen has not spent any time thinking about what the World Cup qualifying standings might look like after USA Basketball's game against Brazil on Friday.

He just keeps thinking how the Americans have four qualifying games left.

"And in my brain, I'm acting like we've got to win four to get in," Boylen said.

He knows differently. The U.S. (7-1 in qualifying) can clinch a berth in next year's World Cup with a win Friday, when it hosts Brazil (5-3) in Washington. The national team will be wearing the nation's colors in the nation's capital on Veterans Day, with a chance to lock up one of the 32 spots for the tournament to be played next summer in the Philippines, Japan and Indonesia.

For the U.S., qualifying started nearly a full year ago in late November. For some teams in the FIBA Americas region, it started in April 2021.

It's been a long road, but Boylen and the Americans are finally in position to clinch.

"It's never easy," said Boylen, who has coached the eight previous U.S. qualifying games — all held in two-game windows, often with a different roster each time. "Expect the unexpected. Expect to make adjustments. You just roll with it, keep it simple. I believe we have to be superior at the defensive end of the floor. You hope shots go in, but we have to defend and rebound. That's what we can control."

The World Cup provides the most direct path for teams to qualify for the 2024 Paris Olympics. The Americans have used primarily G League players in qualifying games; those players know top NBA players will take their roster spots in the World Cup and the Olympics.

"It's very humbling when we have repeat guys and they said, 'Yeah, Coach, I loved it and I want to be part of it,'" Boylen said. "It's really hard. It's almost a thankless job. If we win, nobody talks about it and if we lose, it's on the ticker. But I don't sell it like that. I sell it as, in the last 30 years, there are 293 guys who have worn the senior men's national jersey. They're part of the most elite group of guys in the history of the game. People don't realize that."

The Americans have used 37 different players so far in the qualifying cycle. That number will rise Friday; only five players on the roster for both the Brazil game and Monday's game against Colombia have appeared in 2023 qualifying.

Langston Galloway, DaQuan Jeffries, David Stockton, Will Davis II and Michael Frazier II all have played with the U.S. previously in this qualifying cycle; Galloway has the most appearances with six. The rest of the roster is Charlie Brown Jr., Chris Chiozza, Rodney Hood, Alize Johnson, Elijah Pemberton, Henry Sims and Craig Sword.

There are 12 teams remaining — two groups of six — from the Americas region, all vying for seven World Cup spots.

The U.S. leads its qualifying group (Group F) by two games with four remaining on the qualifying schedule; the last two-game window of qualifiers is in February. Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay are all 5-3; Puerto Rico is 4-4 and Colombia is 3-5.

Canada leads Group E at 8-0, followed by Venezuela (7-1), Argentina (6-2), the Dominican Republic (5-3), Panama (2-6) and the Bahamas (2-6).

The top three teams in each group, along with the best fourth-place team, will receive World Cup berths. The World Cup draw takes place in Manila in March and the tournament runs from late August through mid-September.



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Coach Jim Boylen and USA Basketball can clinch a spot in the 2023 World Cup by beating Brazil in a qualifying game on Friday.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



RON JENKINS/AP

TCU running back Emari Demercado catches a touchdown pass against Texas Tech during the second half on Saturday in Fort Worth, Texas.

No. 4 TCU's bid for playoff, Big 12 lands at No. 18 Texas

By JIM VERTUNO
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — The big picture is laid out before No. 4 TCU, and the Horned Frogs have everything to play for.

They are undefeated and in striking range of clinching a berth in the Big 12 title game. Even bigger, they are No. 4 in the College Football Playoff rankings, meaning a bid for a national title could cap a remarkable debut season for coach Sonny Dykes.

Standing in the way? Texas. The No. 18 Longhorns would like nothing better than to derail Max Duggan and the Horned Frogs and announce their own resurgence in the Big 12.

Duggan has been the engine in a remarkable turnaround season for the Horned Frogs (9-0, 6-0 Big 12), who have complemented one of the explosive offenses in the country with the grit needed to rally from behind several times this season.

"We haven't always won pretty. There's been some struggles. We've had to make some second-half comebacks," Dykes said.

With a win Saturday night, TCU would clinch a berth in the Big 12 title game. Even if they lose, the Horned Frogs still own the inside track since every other team in the league has at least two losses.

The Horned Frogs do not have a kind playoff history. The program felt snubbed in 2014 when the Horned Frogs were 11-1 and tied for the Big 12 title, only to get left out of the final playoff rankings.

TCU was No. 3 in the CFP rank-

No. 4 TCU (9-0, 6-0 Big 12)
at No. 18 Texas (6-3, 4-2)
AFN-Atlantic
1:30 a.m. Sunday CET
9:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

ings going into the final weekend and closed with a 55-3 rout of Iowa State. Still, the Horned Frogs were passed by Ohio State, which beat Wisconsin 59-0 in the Big Ten title game that day. The Buckeyes went on to win the CFP title.

The Big 12 hasn't had an undefeated champion since Texas in 2005. TCU will likely need to be perfect to get to the playoff.

Texas (6-3, 4-2) can't be perfect, but they can play spoiler and sweeten their own conference title hopes in coach Steve Sarkisian's second season.

Sarkisian endured a miserable 5-7 debut in 2021 and Texas still struggles to finish games. But last week's 34-27 win at Kansas State could be a huge boost for a team led by Bijan Robinson, the Big 12's leading rusher.

"We've got more work to do, and I think our guys recognize that. They're hungry. It's always good when you get a win like that and then here comes a top-five team coming in to your own stadium on a Saturday night who's in first place in your league," Sarkisian said.

Analyze this

Former TCU head coach Gary Patterson, who turned the program into a Big 12 power but was pushed out last season as the Horned Frogs faded, landed at Texas this season as a special as-

sistant. His job is to scout opposing offenses and his fingerprints will figure to be all over the Texas game plan Saturday. Patterson was regarded as a defensive guru at TCU and he'll be savoring the chance to shut down his former team.

Big backs

The game features two of the best running backs in the country. Robinson's combination of speed and elusiveness can leave defenders spinning on their heels. TCU's Kendre Miller has chewed up defenses in the second half. Robinson's 1,219 yards lead the Big 12. Miller's 1,009 yards rank second. Both have 12 rushing touchdowns.

Second-half swoon

TCU has thrived in the second half this season, while Texas has not. The Longhorn surrendered late leads in losses to Alabama, Texas Tech and Oklahoma State and nearly did it again last week. Texas has scored 31 points in the first half of the last two games and just three points after halftime. TCU trailed both Oklahoma State and Kansas State by double digits before rallying to win.

Special teams

TCU has a special scoring weapon in punt returner Derius Davis. His two punt returns for touchdowns this season, including one last week against Texas Tech, make him the TCU career record holder with five. Texas has three punt blocks this season.

No. 6 Oregon has left opening rout behind with 8-game streak

By PAT GRAHAM
Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. — Dan Fouts is a big fan of Oregon quarterback Bo Nix. He's also a big fan of new coach Dan Lanning.

He's a big fan, in general, of this version of the sixth-ranked Ducks, especially the way they rebounded from a disastrous start.

Put the former standout Oregon quarterback and Pro Football Hall of Famer on the spot, though — expect this team to be in the College Football Playoff? — and he nimbly scrambles away from the pressure.

"I don't expect anything other than they'll kick it off against Washington," cracked Fouts, who plans to be front and center this weekend at Autzen Stadium when Oregon (8-0, 6-1 Pac-12, No. 6 CFP) faces the 24th-ranked Huskies (7-2, 4-2, No. 25 CFP). "I'm not into prognostication. I'm hoping, obviously, but there's a lot of football to be played."

Just to work their way back into the national conversation has been impressive. Behind Nix, the Ducks have reeled off eight straight wins, averaging more than 40 points per game in the process, after opening with a 49-3 loss in September to now No. 1 Georgia. That lopsided loss — new coach, new QB, in Georgia's backyard — feels so long ago. But it still seems to linger with some viewers.

There's still ample time and opportunity to distance themselves even more from that performance, beginning this weekend against Michael Penix Jr. and the high-powered Huskies offense. It's the start of a difficult stretch that sees Oregon host No. 13 Utah (Nov. 19) along with traveling up the road to rival Oregon State (Nov. 26). Take

No. 6 Oregon (8-0, 6-1 Pac-12)
at No. 24 Washington (6-3, 4-2)
AFN-Sports
1 a.m. Sunday CET
9 a.m. Sunday JKT

care of business, and a fourth straight Pac-12 championship appearance awaits, possibly against No. 8 USC.

"We've been doing something right for the last eight weeks, so we don't want to change," Nix said. "Continue to do what we do."

Given how it's going, that's a sensible enough plan.

This team was listed at +12000 to win a national title at the start of the season, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. Then, after that loss to Georgia, the Ducks dipped to +30000. Now, they're at +2500, behind only Georgia, Ohio State, Michigan and Tennessee.

"They just kept working and they got it figured out," said Fouts, an All-Pac-8 QB at Oregon before being drafted by the Chargers and later going into the broadcast booth. "They've got some momentum now."

Lanning is in his first year on the Oregon sideline and has already seen his name mentioned at other places. On Monday, he was asked about reports of being linked to Auburn's opening.

"I think there's a little bit of a problem in society today with people looking for what's next," Lanning said. "The reality is, the grass is not always greener. In fact, the grass is damn green in Eugene."

"This place has everything I could possibly ever want, my family could ever want. I've got an 11-year-old that's lived in eight states. The last thing I ever want to do is leave. I want to enjoy this opportunity here."



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Oregon head coach Dan Lanning, left, congratulates Noah Sewell after he rushed for a 1-yard touchdown against Colorado on Saturday.

NFL

Fox pregame show will take place in Qatar

BY JOE REEDY
Associated Press

Fox's NFL pregame show is going international for the first time in 13 years for the annual Veterans Day show.

This week's "Fox NFL Sunday" will originate from Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. The last time the pregame crew went outside the United States was 2009, when the show was at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan.

"It is our favorite show of the year and one of the cool things I hear from people, even this week, is that viewers also tell me it is their favorite show," said "Fox NFL Sunday" host Curt Menefee. "It means a

lot to the people. One of the things I remember from when we did 2009 was that it meant so much to the troops there because I think they feel forgotten when they're on the other side of the world."

The show — which also includes Terry Bradshaw, Howie Long, Michael Strahan, Jimmy Johnson and Jay Glazer — has originated from service academies two of the past three years. It was at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., last year and the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., in 2019.

The two-hour program, which will begin at 11 a.m. EST, will spotlight the 75th anniversary of the Air Force featuring General

Charles Q. Brown Jr. It will include features on Hall of Fame coach Tom Landry and former Dallas Cowboys defensive back Chad Hennings.

Landry, who passed away in 2000, flew B-17 Bomber missions during World War II before his playing and coaching career. Hennings graduated from the Air Force Academy and was drafted in the 11th round by the Cowboys in 1988, eventually being a part of three Super Bowl teams during a nine-year career.

Glen Powell of "Top Gun: Maverick" will narrate the show's opening at the top of the first and second hours.

Qatar is eight hours ahead of New York,

meaning the show will take place during the evening.

The program will serve as an unofficial kickoff to Fox's coverage of the FIFA Men's World Cup, which begins Nov. 20. U.S. coach Gregg Berhalter and lead FOX analyst Alexi Lalas will make appearances.

"From a company standpoint, having everybody kind of together is big," said Fox Sports EVP Bill Wanger. "I don't think there's anything that as a group we're more proud of."

Fox has the doubleheader on Sunday, with the featured game of the Dallas Cowboys at the Green Bay Packers.



MICHAEL SLAVIN/Stars and Stripes

Former Tampa Bay Buccaneers fullback Mike Alstott warms up with soldiers before the longest throw event Wednesday as part of the NFL Salute to Service Boot Camp in Vilseck, Germany.

US soldiers in Germany enjoy competing in NFL Boot Camp

BY MICHAEL SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

VILSECK, Germany — Soldiers at this Bavarian base got their football fix this week courtesy of an NFL-style skills challenge and some face time with two visiting league luminaries of earlier decades.

After the meeting with the retired pros, 100 soldiers divided into five-person teams competed Wednesday in the NFL Boot Camp, a test modeled on the combine, a showcase for collegiate players aspiring to be drafted by one of the league's 32 franchises.

The competition consisted of a long throw, the broad jump, the 40-yard dash, the three-cone drill and a receiving gauntlet.

"I signed up with my friends just to have some fun and play some football," said Staff Sgt. Nathen Gimlin. "It was a lot of fun even though my team didn't perform as

well as we thought we were going to."

In addition to the skills camp, soldiers got to talk with 2005 MVP Shaun Alexander, a former Seattle Seahawks running back, and former Tampa Bay Buccaneers fullback Mike "A-train" Alstott.

Alexander said such events mean a lot to him because he has an older brother who served in the Army for 22 years.

He said it was great to be in Germany, adding that he remembers a phone call his brother made from the country during his time overseas.

"We wanted to give the military out here an experience they have never had before," Alexander said.

The event was a prelude to Sunday's matchup between the Buccaneers and Seahawks in the first-ever NFL game played in Germany.

"It was a great day for them to

come out and enjoy some camaraderie," said Michael Hurley, a USAA military affairs representative for Europe and New England. "They came out a little quiet, but boy were they pumped up by the end."

Wednesday's event was part of the NFL's Salute to Service initiative in partnership with USAA.

Gimlin said it was cool to meet players he grew up watching. Soldiers took pictures with Alexander and Alstott and obtained autographs from them before interacting with the two former NFL standouts on the field.

The day wrapped up with a trophy ceremony for the top three finishers in the skills challenge as well as a raffle in which four lucky soldiers won tickets to Sunday's game at Allianz Arena in Munich.

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Crazier: Seahawks may be biggest surprise of all

FROM PAGE 32

before or after the game, we know that we can play with anybody just based off our confidence, off our skill level and really based off the ability to understand the game," Jets linebacker C.J. Mosley said. "I feel like we're a young group, but we're very wise in a lot of areas, and it makes up for a lot of things."

The Dolphins and Giants last reached the postseason in 2016. Before then, Miami hadn't earned a postseason bid since 2008. The Giants' last playoff berth before 2016 was its 2011 Super Bowl championship season.

Moreover, the Baltimore Ravens and Seattle Seahawks are leading their respective divisions after finishing in last place a year ago. The NFC North-leading Minnesota Vikings (7-1) have bounced back from an 8-9 season.

If Baltimore or Seattle maintain their leads, this would mark the 18th time in the last 20 seasons that at least one team has won its division after either tying for last or finishing last outright the previous year.

Seattle may be the biggest surprise of all. The Seahawks have capitalized on quarterback Geno Smith's emergence after trading Russell Wilson to the Denver Broncos.

"I thought they might be a three-win team going into the season," said NFL Network analyst and former executive and scouting director Marc Ross. "I had Geno in New York, loved the guy, but just didn't think he had this in him anymore after so much time, and just rolling the dice with all the young guys they had and losing Russell. It just seemed as if this was a complete rebuilding year. They started out as a feel-good story — oh, this is cool — and now when you look at them, they're a legitimate team when you look at the talent they have at every position group, really."

There also have been plenty of unwelcome surprises, most notably the last two Super Bowl champions.

The Rams (3-5) have lost four of their last five. They're coming off a loss to Tampa Bay (4-5), which is tied for first in the NFC South only because every team in that division is below .500.

The three-time defending NFC North champion Packers (3-6) have lost five straight games for the first time since 2008.

There's a common thread with those three teams. They're all aging teams with veteran quarterbacks who aren't playing up to their usual standards.

One year after leading the Rams to a Super Bowl title, Matthew Stafford has thrown an equal number of interceptions (eight) and touchdown passes. Rodgers is coming off a three-interception performance at Detroit. Tom Brady ended his brief retirement to return to Tampa and has 10 touchdown passes with one interception, but the Bucs continue to struggle.

"The reign of Brady and Rodgers being the top quarterbacks in football, it's over," Simms said. "It's been over. But people didn't want to get off of that. I think that's part of it. Those two, they're not even in the same stratosphere as somebody like Josh Allen or Patrick Mahomes anymore. They're in a different world. Joe Burrow's in a different world than they are. Justin Herbert's in a different world than they are. Lamar Jackson's in a different world than they are."

Simms doesn't see how Rodgers or Brady could reverse that trend, which is bad news for the long-term prospects of the Packers and Bucs.

"I think there's a little bit of a changing of the guard, not only with teams to a degree, but certainly at the quarterback position throughout the NFL," Simms said.

NFL



MARK HUMPHREY/AP

Tennessee Titans cornerback Elijah Molden landed on injured reserve with a groin injury earlier this season.

New NFL injured reserve rule forcing teams to be choosy

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee Titans cornerback Elijah Molden is used to the business of pro football as a second-generation NFL player.

Molden didn't worry that the injured groin putting him on injured reserve Sept. 9 would cost him a full season even after an offseason NFL rule change limiting teams to bringing back only eight players from injured reserve to the active roster this season.

"It is definitely a game that the front office plays, you know chess, not checkers," Molden said. "So I talked with my agent, talked with the coaches and front office and let them work it out."

As the NFL hits the halfway point of the season, Molden remains on injured reserve as one of 13 Titans sidelined by injury. That's the most in the league per Spotrac.com, a year after the Titans set an NFL record last season using 91 different players in a non-strike season.

The Titans are already halfway to the 26 placed on injured reserve a year ago and used the unlimited return rule to help earn the AFC's No. 1 seed.

They are among at least eight teams with at least 10 players on IR as of Monday, a number that changes daily. That includes the defending champion Rams at 11 after finishing last season with only nine. Among that group is starting left tackle Joseph Noteboom, who replaced Andrew Whitworth after his retirement.

The rule changes means every NFL team has to think very careful-

ly about injuries. Not only did the NFL limit the number that can return, but players must now spend four games instead of three on injured reserve. Practice squads stayed at 16 to ensure available players in shape to provide needed help when injuries hit.

Buffalo general manager Brandon Beane likes the rule changes.

"There's a line that the league worries about roster stashing, just putting guys on to get another guy so I think you want to make sure that people aren't stashing," Beane said. "That's going to be what the league stance is. I think it's come to a pretty good medium."

Under early injured reserve rules, a player was out for a year. Then in 2012, the NFL allowed teams to designate one player to return before doubling that in 2017. The coronavirus pandemic led the NFL to allow teams to bring back an unlimited number of players from injured reserve for 2020 and 2021.

"Now it's down to four weeks, and I think that's more reasonable because fans pay to see these good players," Beane said. "And if you put a good player down, you want to be able to bring him back."

Dallas (6-2) hopes to get left tackle Tyron Smith back in December after tearing a hamstring late in training camp. The Cowboys, with 12 on injured reserve, also lost long snapper Jake McQuaide (torn triiceps) and slot corner Jourdan Lewis (broken foot) for the season.

San Francisco (4-4) has nine on injured reserve and has been hit hard.

Quarterback Trey Lance is out for the season, while both starting

defensive tackles, including Javon Kinlaw, are out. Niners coach Kyle Shanahan said everyone gets frustrated with the injuries, especially those that have decimated the defensive line.

"It just makes it harder to perform at the level we need them to the more they're out there, but that's part of the NFL," Shanahan said. "And it's why you want depth, and it's why you hope guys can return and not have too bad of injuries."

Teams also have to balance risk versus reward when deciding whether to put a player on injured reserve. Bring someone back too soon, it could cost a team the chance to bring back another player. Keeping a player on the roster also gets expensive.

"A, you potentially could get the player back sooner than the four-week mandate and B, there's cap implications because you're going to be paying two players to really do one job and you've got to account for that, salary cap-wise," Titans general manager Jon Robinson said.

Deciding when to bring a player back starts with opening a 21-day practice window. Robinson said the player has to tell team officials how he really feels along with feedback from team doctors and watching how the player practices.

"Ultimately, you're going to err on the side of caution when it comes to the health and safety of the player," Robinson said.

AP pro football writers Josh Dubow and Schuyler Dixon and AP sports writers John Wawrow, Greg Beacham, Tom Canavan and Steve Megargee contributed.

Confident Vikings now thriving with Cousins' let-it-loose approach

By DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — After the Minnesota Vikings hired a head coach with a player-first approach and a quarterback-friendly background, while keeping the entire starting offense intact, the 2022 season was shaping up well for Kirk Cousins.

Questions about whether Cousins would find a higher level of comfort this year, his fifth with the Vikings, have been answered by the NFC North standings.

Recent video evidence from the team plane — of Cousins dancing shirtless with diamond-studded chains draped around his neck, gold wristwatches glistening on his bobbing arms and an ear-to-ear grin — put any lingering doubt to rest.

"It was lit," rookie cornerback Akayleb Evans said. "Kirk was turning me up. He was turning all us up with all the chains. I just enjoyed that. He's not afraid of doing that. I like that a lot."

Calculating, disciplined and studious, Cousins has used those attributes to overachieve along the way as an afterthought recruit at Michigan State and a fourth-round draft pick by Washington.

Those traits can also impede success at times on the field, when it comes to leaning more on confidence and instinct to let the ball rip for, say, Justin Jefferson even if the coverage dictates a pass should go elsewhere. That style also doesn't seamlessly translate to leadership, and Cousins spent much of his first couple of seasons with the Vikings feeling out his place within the team.

Winning makes all the difference, though, especially when supported by a pass-first playbook installed by Kevin O'Connell and a more relaxed environment around team headquarters following the change in coaching staffs.

"I definitely enjoy seeing Kirk enjoying himself like that," O'Connell said. "Because a special part about it is his teammates know what he pours into it each and every week."

After the Vikings rallied from a 10-point deficit to beat the Commanders on Sunday in the stadium where he first got his start in the NFL, stretching their winning streak to six games, Cousins and his self-deprecating nightclub act became the talk of the league.

He was a guest with the Manning brothers on their Monday night talk show alternative to the standard game broadcast, and his appearance included plenty of discussion about his dance moves and good vibes.

Cousins said Wednesday that he never expected the attention — which goes back to Minnesota's win over New Orleans in London on Oct. 2, the first time he tried on a teammate's necklace during the celebratory hangout before the flight home — because of an unofficial rule about no social media posts from the charter plane.

"Once it got out and the train gets down the tracks, it's hard to stop at that point, as evidenced by me not wearing a shirt last week," Cousins said.

The first-place Vikings (7-1) face their most daunting road trip yet this week.

They play Sunday at preseason Super Bowl favorite Buffalo (6-2), having beaten only one team (Miami) that currently has a winning record, so a victory over the Bills would probably trigger another party on the plane afterward and feature more moving and grooving by the quarterback.

"He's got his own version of everything, and that's just who he is," running back Dalvin Cook said. "I think that's why I love him so much. He's just who he is."



BRUCE KLUCKHOHN/AP

Minnesota Vikings running back Alexander Mattison, left, celebrates with quarterback Kirk Cousins after scoring during the second half against the Arizona Cardinals on Oct. 30 in Minneapolis.

SPORTS



Roster revealed

US coach Berhalter announces team for World Cup in Qatar » Page 27



JOHN MINCHILLO/AP

New York Jets linebacker C.J. Mosley separates Buffalo Bills running back James Cook from the ball during the first half of Sunday's game in East Rutherford, N.J.

'Crazier than normal'

Many positive, negative surprises mark season's first half



BY STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

The New York Jets, New York Giants and Miami Dolphins could end long playoff droughts while the Super Bowl champion Los Angeles Rams and reigning MVP Aaron Rodgers' Green Bay Packers are well below .500

These aren't the NFL standings anyone envisioned before the season. "I guess I would say it's a little crazier than normal," former NFL quar-

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Injured reserve rule: Teams must be choosy
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terback and current NBC "Football Night in America" analyst Chris Simms said.

It's not unusual for each NFL postseason to have a few new faces. Seven of the 14 playoff teams each of the last two seasons hadn't reached the

postseason the previous year. Every postseason since 1990 has featured at least four new playoff teams.

What makes this season stand out is that several playoff contenders are relevant for the first time in several years.

The Dolphins (6-3), Jets (6-3) and Giants (6-2) are on pace to earn wild-card playoff berths. The Jets haven't reached the postseason since 2010, the longest absence of any team.

"Whoever we're playing, whether it's

SEE CRAZIER ON PAGE 30

Veteran Geno Smith stepped into the starting quarterback role in Seattle after the Seahawks traded Russell Wilson. **MATT YORK/AP**

Women playing above rim becoming more common » College basketball, Page 26