

USA TODAY WEEKEND

THE NATION'S NEWS | \$3 | MAY 10-12, 2024

Behind the scenes: Vacation hot spots

Theme park, cruise ship and more: Find out what it takes to keep things running. **In Weekend Extra**

MLB teams, players on historic paces

With season a quarter way through, a look at where Shohei Ohtani, others stand. **In Sports**



VALERIE MACON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

'Doctor Who' takes style to new level

Ncuti Gatwa chats about playing political – and fashionable – 15th Doctor in sci-fi series. **In Life**

Troubled history follows pageants

Some contests reformed after harsh criticism

Jeanine Santucci
USA TODAY

This week, the reigning Miss USA and Miss Teen USA said they are handing back their crowns, another reminder for pageant spectators that the tradition, with all its extravagance and glamour, has been beset by a long series of controversies.

Noelia Voigt announced on Monday that she was stepping down after winning the Miss USA title in September 2023 and participating in Miss Universe later that year. Without describing the details of what led her to resign, Voigt told her Instagram followers: "Never compromise your physical and mental well-being. Our health is our wealth."

Two days later, UmaSofia Srivastava said she was resigning from the Miss Teen USA title as well, citing disagreement with the organization.

It's the latest trouble in an industry that in recent years has faced harsh criticism about its effects on women and girls, a decline in viewership and participation and a troubling reputation for sexism. Meanwhile, experts say some of the biggest U.S. pageants have made strides at reform, and many participants find great benefits in their confidence and opportunities.

"It is a very mentally, physically, emotionally taxing thing" to be catapulted into the spotlight as a winner of a major pageant, said Hilary Levey Friedman, the author of "Here She Is: The Complicated Reign of the Beauty Pageant in America" and the daughter of Miss America 1970.

Beauty pageants have an inextricable link to the path of feminism in the U.S., Levey Friedman said. Miss America was started the year after women got the right to vote, and the iconic sashes worn by participants in pageants large and small come from the sashes worn by suffragettes, according

See PAGEANTS, Page 3A



Miss Teen USA 2023 UmaSofia Srivastava and Miss USA 2023 Noelia Voigt resigned within days of each other. CRAIG BARRITT/GETTY IMAGES FOR SUPERMODELS UNLIMITED

Mother's Day pain turns into joy



Women who overcame infertility know heartbreak, hope

Phaedra Trethan
USA TODAY

Amy Riley remembers the time someone wished her a happy Mother's Day and she broke down in tears, right in the middle of a Wegman's supermarket.

"I found Mother's Day to be impossible," the Collingswood, New Jersey, woman said. She had been pregnant six times, but none of those pregnancies lasted. Motherhood, she worried, might never happen for her, and the realization and the reminders were painful.

A former board member of the Recurrent

Pregnancy Loss Association, Riley finally became a mom to Betty Sue 4½ years ago and, after another nonviable pregnancy in 2020, she gave birth to twins Pearl and Lucy via in vitro fertilization nearly two years ago.

Riley is among many women nationwide who know firsthand the hope and heartbreak of fertility struggles – but who will be grateful on Sunday to celebrate with families they thought they might never have.

Riley, who says Mother's Day will probably be as joyfully chaotic as any other day, credits

Amy and Brandon Riley had their daughter Betty Sue after a series of lost pregnancies. Less than two years later, they had twins. "I didn't think I could ever be a mom," Amy Riley says. "I still find it a little hard."

PROVIDED BY AMY RILEY

See MOTHER'S DAY, Page 3A

'No war is good': Christians in America struggle to navigate bloodshed in Gaza

Marc Ramirez
USA TODAY

At Northwood Church in Keller, Texas, senior global pastor Bob Roberts has heard from congregants wrestling with the Israel-Hamas war and the heightened emotions it has unleashed across the United States. Some call for more support for Israel. Others want the same for Palestinians.

"Our response is that no war is good," said Roberts, who founded the Dallas-area church in 1985. "Our goal is not to bring everybody to the same viewpoint; it's to help them understand that God created every person in the image of God, that they all have that spark of divinity and should have the opportunity of life."

As the latest Israel-Hamas war threatens to spawn wider global discord, frustrations over the toll of the conflict and growing numbers of Palestinian civilian casualties are leaving

"Christians ought to be right in the middle of it. It's an opportunity for Christians to be peacemakers."

Bob Roberts
Northwood Church in Keller, Texas

Israel increasingly isolated.

But while some among the nation's 210 million Christians strongly support one side or the other, many see themselves caught in the middle as the war strains interfaith relations, especially those between Jewish and Muslim communities, and incidents of antisemitism and Islamophobia rise.

"We're kind of on the sidelines," Chris Hall, minister of missions for

See CHRISTIANS, Page 4A



Two men mourn the loss of seven World Central Kitchen humanitarian workers who were killed by an Israeli air strike last month in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. In Rafah said the strike was a mistake. Mounting civilian casualties in the Israel-Hamas war has sparked widespread protests in the United States and around the world.

AHMAD HASABALLAH/GETTY IMAGES



©COPYRIGHT 2024 USA TODAY, A division of Gannett Co., Inc.

HOME DELIVERY 1-800-872-0001, USATODAYSERVICE.COM

Defense grills Daniels for a second day

Trump attorney portrays her as an opportunist

Aysha Bagchi, Kinsey Crowley and Bart Jansen

USA TODAY

Stormy Daniels faced more cross-examination Thursday at former President Donald Trump's New York hush money trial.

On Tuesday, the adult film star described having sex with Trump after meeting him at a golf tournament in 2006. Daniels' story of that evening formed the basis for a \$130,000 hush money payment she got from Trump lawyer Michael Cohen less than two weeks before the 2016 election. Prosecutors say that the payment violated federal campaign finance laws and that Trump falsified records to cover it up. Trump denies Daniels' story and has pleaded not guilty.

Tuesday and Thursday, defense attorney Susan Necheles peppered Daniels with questions aimed to undermine her credibility and portray her as a financial opportunist — as Daniels pushed back.

"A large part of your livelihood for a bunch of years now has been making money off the story that you had sex with President Trump and that you will help President Trump be convicted, right?" Necheles asked.

Necheles implied that Daniels didn't really want to share her story in 2016: She just wanted to profit and used the election for leverage.

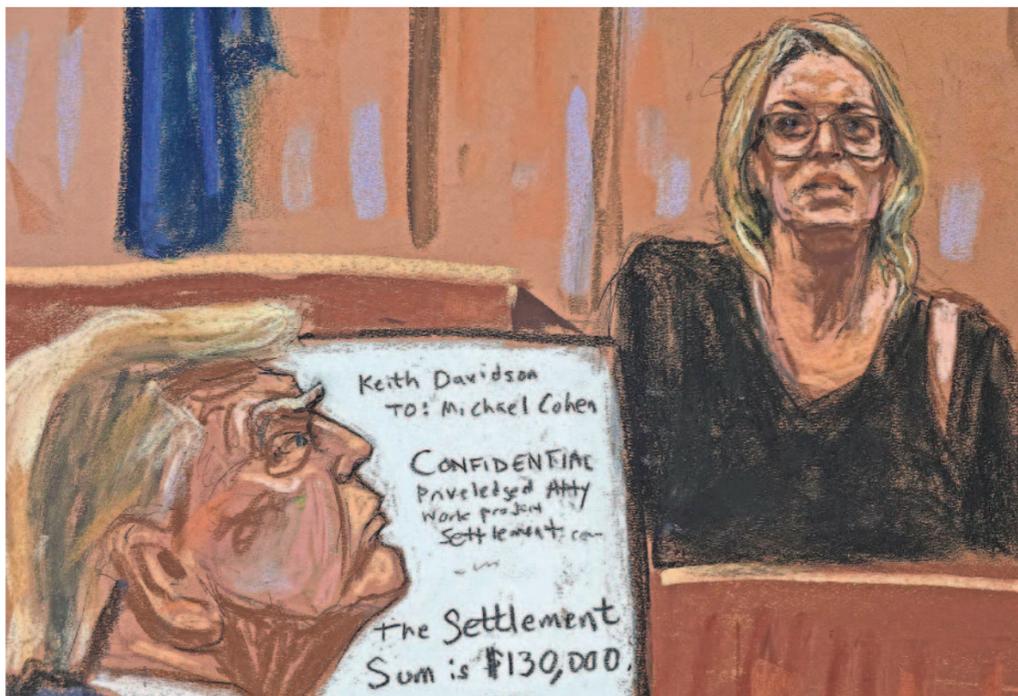
Daniels explained she took the non-disclosure deal because she chose to be "safe."

"You chose to make money, right?" Necheles shot back.

"I chose to take the nondisclosure," Daniels replied.

Daniels confirmed signing two statements in early 2018 denying having had an affair with Trump.

Necheles detailed the merchandise Daniels sells — a \$30 "Stormy Daniels: Political Power" comic book, a \$40 "Stormy Saint of Indictments" prayer candle — and her business deals.



In this courtroom sketch, former President Donald Trump watches as Stormy Daniels is questioned by the prosecution during Trump's criminal trial on charges that he falsified business records to conceal money paid to silence Daniels in 2016, in Manhattan state court in New York City on Tuesday.

JANE ROSENBERG/REUTERS

Daniels confirmed that she tweeted that she made \$1 million from her 2018 book "Full Disclosure" as well as participating on a reality TV show, "The Surreal Life." Daniels said she made \$200,000 from appearing on the show. She makes about \$7 per candle, she said.

She defended those decisions and said that she needs money to pay her legal bills — she owes Trump more than \$500,000 from a failed defamation lawsuit — and that selling merchandise was part of her job.

"That is me doing my job," Daniels said.

'Phony stories about sex'

Then Necheles began digging into Daniels' account of her interaction with Trump and what followed.

"Details of your story keep changing, right?" Necheles asked.

"No," Daniels said.

In Tuesday's testimony, Daniels said

she emerged from the bathroom in Trump's hotel suite to see the real estate mogul/reality TV star lounging on the bed in boxer shorts, and it was "so upsetting" that she "got lightheaded" and almost "fainted."

Necheles sought to use Daniels' work in the adult film industry to cast doubt on that. She asked how Daniels, who acted and had sex in movies, could have almost "fainted" from seeing Trump in his underwear.

Daniels responded that she sees her husband naked almost every day, but if she came out of the bathroom and saw someone else naked, it would shake her up.

Asked if the alleged incident with Trump was the first time someone made a pass at her, Daniels said it wasn't, but it was the first time a bodyguard was nearby.

Necheles got to the point, accusing Daniels of making up her story: "You have a lot of experience in making phony stories about sex appear to be real?"

"Wow," Daniels said, laughing. "That's not how I would put it. The sex in the films is very much real, just like what happened to me in that room."

"If that story was untrue I would have written it to be a lot better," she added.

Finally, Necheles got to the legal heart of the matter: whether Trump knew about the hush money deal.

Upon questioning, Daniels confirmed she didn't have any "personal knowledge" of his involvement — or lack thereof — in her hush money deal. "Not directly, no," Daniels agreed. And she said she didn't have personal knowledge about whether Trump falsified business records, which is the central charge in this case.

Defense lawyer Todd Blanche said he wants to resurface motions for a mistrial due to Daniels' testimony. Judge Juan Merchan rejected Blanche's Tuesday request for a mistrial, though he agreed some of Daniels' testimony went too far.

Contributing: Reuters



Former U.S. President Donald Trump's son Barron left, and his son-in-law Jared Kushner attend an event announcing Trump's run for president, at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Fla., on Nov. 15, 2022.

JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS

Barron Trump makes political debut as Republican delegate

Zac Anderson

USA TODAY

Politics is a family affair for former President Donald Trump and his youngest son is the latest to join in.

Trump's son Barron, an 18-year-old who will graduate from high school this year, will have a formal role in the Republican National Convention.

The Republican Party of Florida selected Barron as an at-large delegate, meaning he will be among Florida's 125 delegates to cast their votes for Trump at the July convention in Milwaukee.

Trump's family members have played integral roles in his campaign and administration, with daughter Ivanka Trump, sons Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump, son-in-law Jared Kushner and daughter-in-law Lara Trump all intimately involved.

Still a child during Trump's first two campaigns and White House stretch, Barron Trump has been less visible. The convention will be his first big ap-

pearance on the national stage.

The Florida GOP released the list of delegates late Wednesday evening. In addition to Barron, Donald Trump Jr., Eric Trump and Trump daughter Tiffany Trump (now Tiffany Boulos) also are delegates. Eric Trump is the chair of Florida's delegation.

"We are fortunate to have a great group of grassroots leaders, elected officials, and members of the Trump family working together as part of the Florida delegation," Florida GOP Chair Evan Power said in a statement.

The Trump family has come to dominate the Republican Party in recent years and continues to remake the GOP in the image of the former president and his MAGA movement.

Other notable delegates from Florida: Attorney General Ashley Moody, Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson, former Attorney General Pam Bondi, major GOP donor Ike Perlmutter and Kimberly Guifoyle, who is in a relationship with Donald Trump Jr.



Boy Scout uniforms on Feb. 18, 2020, in the retail store at the headquarters for the French Creek Council of the Boy Scouts of America in Summit Township, Erie County, Pa. PROVIDED BY CHRISTOPHER MILLETTE

Boy Scouts of America to change name to Scouting America by 2025

Emily DeLetter

USA TODAY

For the first time in its history, Boy Scouts of America is changing its name to the more inclusive Scouting America.

The scouting organization announced the name change in a release on Tuesday, noting the rebrand reflects the "ongoing commitment to welcome every youth and family in America to experience the benefits of Scouting."

The name change will take effect Feb. 8, 2025, on the organization's 115th anniversary.

The change from Boy Scouts of America to Scouting America comes after scandals and upheaval in the organization, including lawsuits from former scouts claiming sexual abuse.

The organization in recent years has opened its doors to girls, gay youth and gay leaders to join. Gay young people

were allowed to join 2013, and a ban on gay leaders ended in 2015. Then in 2017, Boy Scouts announced girls would be accepted into Cub Scouts the following year and into a separate Scouts division in 2019. In 2021, the first group of nearly 1,000 girls and young women around the country had achieved the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout.

Those changes did not stop the financial struggles for the organization, however. In 2020, amid declining membership and child sexual abuse allegations, the organization filed for bankruptcy. Last year, the organization agreed to pay \$2.46 billion to settle claims of sexual abuse to former Boy Scouts.

More than 130 million Americans have been through scouting programs since it was founded in 1910, and more than 2.75 million young adults to date have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, according to the organization.

USA TODAY

Volume 42, No. 168

Customer service

To view important information related to your subscription, visit about.yoursubscription.usatoday.com. You can also manage your subscription at account.usatoday.com.

Contact USA TODAY for questions or to report issues call 1-800-872-0001.

Operating hours are: Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. EST

Available subscriptions

Subscribe and save today by visiting subscribe.usatoday.com. The subscription below is billed monthly and includes 24/7 access to usatoday.com, breaking news on our tablet and smartphone apps, subscriber benefits at usatoday.com/subscriberguide and the eNewspaper, a digital replica of the print edition.

• Delivery of the Monday through Friday print editions: \$34.00

*Plus applicable taxes

Contact us

Customer Service 1-800-872-0001
Newsroom 703-854-3400, ext. 5
Classified advertising 1-800-397-0070
National, regional advertising 703-854-3400

Corrections and clarifications

Our goal is to promptly correct errors. Contact Standards Editor Michael McCarter at accuracy@usatoday.com to report a mistake. Describe the error, where you saw it, the date, page number or the URL.

Postal information

USA TODAY, ISSN 0734-7456, is published daily except for Saturday, Sunday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving (Observed), Christmas (Observed) and New Years Day (Observed), by Gannett Media Corp, 1575 Eye Street, NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC, 20005. Periodicals Postage at Washington, DC and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 507.1.5.2); NON-POSTAL ONE AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Please send address corrections to USA Today, Customer Service, PO Box 1387, Fort Smith, AR 72902.

Mother's Day

Continued from Page 1A

"IVF doctors who were willing to take a chance on science" to help make her family complete.

The day still brings up some complicated feelings. "I still feel very emotional about it, because I didn't think I could ever be a mom. I still find it a little hard."

Riley, a researcher with Population Media Center, understood the good intentions behind people telling her not to lose faith through her reproductive journey, but it didn't always bring comfort.

"People would say 'Be hopeful,' and I would think, this is such BS, but it's true," she said. "If you really want to be a parent, there are so many kids out there who need you. There are ways to do it. There is hope – it just may not be along the path you thought it would be."

'The dark years in between'

Stacy Schwab had her daughter, Kelsey, when she was young, and she desperately wanted to give her a sibling. She would tell Kelsey she'd be a big sister, then go into a spiral of depression and despair each time she lost a pregnancy – and, when she gave birth to a full-term stillborn boy she named Levon James, that pain seemed almost unbearable.

The losses "were heart-wrenching," she said. "I would see other moms with strollers and cry. People would say, 'But you have Kelsey,' and I wanted to say, 'Which of your children would you give back?' There was no offer of emotional support back then. I felt unseen and undervalued." Mother's Day brought memories of loss and guilt over her grieving.

When Schwab, who lives in Buffalo, New York, got pregnant in 1999, she didn't tell anyone at first, worried she might again suffer a loss.

Soon, though, her son Cassidy was born, named for a song by her favorite band, The Grateful Dead:

What you are, and what you're meant to be

Speaks his name, though you were born to me

Born to me

Cassidy ...

Blow the horn, and tap the tambourine

Close the gap of the dark years in between

You and me

Cassidy ...

There were dark years in between for Schwab and both her children; she struggled with depression and substance abuse and escaped an abusive marriage. She tried to hide her pain from her daughter especially, until Kelsey, searching for mementos to create a Mother's Day gift, found old sonograms, clothing and a blanket.

"She came to me and said, 'I had another brother, didn't I?'" Schwab recalled. "It was a beautiful moment." Kelsey made ornaments for Schwab to honor Levon, and mother and daughter bonded anew.

Schwab is years into her recovery and



Megan Hanson and Ben Burnham, co-founders of the Recurrent Pregnancy Loss Association, struggled with their own loss before they had Maren and Sam. "We always hope," Megan says. "It's part of human nature." PROVIDED BY MEGAN HANSON

tries to help others through her own harm-reduction and outreach; she calls her children "my best friends and my adult roommates" and said Mother's Day is "a glorious day."

With age came experience

Tracy Bach Gillespie knew the man who had become her husband in high school, but the New Jersey couple didn't really connect until several years later.

After marrying in 2017, they wanted to start a family, but Gillespie soon realized, "Mentally, you think you're young, but your body says otherwise."

Fertility treatments, and bitter disappointment, would follow. "I peed on so many sticks," she remembered, but as she would approach her second trimester, she'd be told the pregnancy wasn't viable. Her husband thought they could adopt but also waited until she was at peace with the decision, too.

She threw herself into research, chose an adoption agency – and waited.

On Nov. 2, 2019, the Gillespies flew to Utah and had dinner with a pregnant young woman and her mother; the following day, the agency called them to the hospital because the woman had gone into labor. "We connected with her from the first Skype call, and when we met her, it was just such an easy, natural conversation," she said.

"I have a 4-year-old and I'm about to turn 50," Gillespie said. "I'm well aware of being the oldest mom in the group."

With that age comes experience, and Gillespie believes that has helped her be a better mother. She has maintained a relationship with her daughter's birth mother as well.

"I hate when people say someone 'gave a child up' for adoption," she said. "The love she had, the emotions she showed, the magnitude of it all, I'll never forget it. It makes her every bit a mother, too." The Gillespies send her a card and flowers each year for Mother's Day, and a short video with their daughter.

"I never want my daughter to think of

her birth mother as someone who just gave her up," she said. "I want her to know that she was and is loved by her birth mother; I don't want her to ever question that. Her birth mother has a very special place in my heart. After all, she gave me the gift of motherhood."

'My son saved my life'

When Christine Burnette was a teen, a medical diagnosis led her to believe she would never have kids. Being young, she didn't really think much about it.

But two semesters into her college career, a family member who was struggling to raise his children asked her for help. She agreed to take custody of her 1-year-old cousin, a baby girl with colitis, asthma and other medical struggles.

"I didn't know what it would take to raise a child independently," she said. At just 19, suddenly she had to consider day care, rent (moving out of her dorm and into her own place), reliable transportation. "All those things had to just happen, but I did it and I stayed in school."

She earned two degrees, got married and continued raising her cousin, but as her friends started having babies, she realized she, too, wanted a baby. Her sister who was in their native Camden, New Jersey, saw a pregnant woman she knew was living on the streets and addicted to drugs, so she approached the woman, asking whether she considered adoption. Burnette's sister got her food, made sure she was getting medical care and did her best to make sure she had a safe place to stay. Eventually, Burnette and her husband adopted the child to whom she gave birth.

Burnette, 37, who works for the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, fostered and later adopted another child, then had a baby through IVF in 2017 – and that pregnancy revealed Stage 3 ovarian cancer. She underwent treatment while caring for her newborn, who has Down syndrome.

"My son saved my life," she said, because doctors told her they probably

would not have otherwise found her cancer until it was too late. She and her husband adopted a fourth child as well, bringing their family to seven. Three of their five children have special needs.

Burnette celebrates Mother's Day differently from most: She buys her kids presents. "I celebrate them, because if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be a mom."

Joking that she has "been momming so long, I don't know how to do anything else," Burnette said her life "is nothing like I thought it would be, but it's better than what I could have ever imagined."

'A beautiful, healing experience'

Megan Hanson is a co-founder of the Recurrent Pregnancy Loss Association, so even though she now has two children (one through surrogacy and one via her own pregnancy), she's fully aware of how painful Mother's Day can be for some women.

"I got there in the end, but it was not easy going for a long, long time," the Seattle resident said. After several pregnancy losses, including two via IVF, Hanson and her husband opted to have a child with the help of a surrogate. In 2021, they became parents of a baby girl.

A year later, Hanson had a successful pregnancy and gave birth to a son.

"Having my daughter was a beautiful, healing experience," she said. She hadn't given up hope for her own pregnancy but still understands how difficult that can be for many women.

"We always hope. It's part of human nature, especially with people who've had recurrent loss," she said. "Everyone is different, but people want to hope – even if that hope is so fragile and feels so scary."

Mother's Day for many women she has worked with is "a big, personal sorrow," a reminder of what they don't have even as others celebrate. It's a feeling of "I'm happy for them but sad for myself," Hanson said. She advises women to put their own feelings first, feel free to withdraw for the day and to lean on their support systems for help.

For those who might have a loved one going through infertility, she said: "Acknowledge and let them know you're there. There's nothing you can do to fix, it but let them know, 'I know this day might be hard for you and I'm here if you ever want to talk about it.' It doesn't need to be more complicated than that."

Her own Mother's Day will be spent with her family, she said, but with her thoughts on women who have struggled as she did.

"My whole behavior has shifted," she said. "I don't post pictures of my kids, because I remember how seeing those photos was so difficult for me."

She's grateful, too, to her daughter's gestational carrier, the woman who helped her become a mother. "I have a beautiful, wonderful relationship with her," an unexpected surprise.

"I thought it would be transactional, but it's ended up being this wonderful friendship. I send her a Mother's Day card; I say thank you because she helped me get to this place."

"She's got her own child, and she's a mother in her own right."

Pageants

Continued from Page 1A

to Levey Friedman, who teaches a course on beauty pageants in American society at Brown University.

In the past, pageants were a way for a woman to boost her academic and occupational opportunities in ways she couldn't otherwise, though they were first started by men to make money off women's bodies, she said.

Fame and scholarships awaited winners in some contests; a small-town girl could make it big on the stage with a boost from a pageant win. Today, barriers to jobs and college educations have eased, and women don't need pageants to make those moves, Levey Friedman said. But over the years, participation in pageants has fallen off.

Viewership has also plummeted, and once widely televised competitions have gone off the air. Pageants have faced waves of criticism for seeming to hyperfocus on women's appearances and bodies, causing some rebranding over the years, including the introduction of all-women judges for competitions like Miss Universe.

Beauty contest industry has shifted gears, somewhat

In 2018, then-Miss America board chairwoman and former title holder Gretchen Carlson announced the organization was axing its bathing suit judging round: "We are no longer a pageant. We are a competition," she told

Good Morning America. The focus shifted to onstage interviews of the participants.

Miss USA is a separate competition and still features a bathing suit round. At the local level, pageants for young girls and women across the country fall into different categories, some called "glitz pageants" that focus more on physical beauty, and others that have an emphasis on interviews and academic scholarship prizes.

Today, "there's much more of a focus on, 'this is for women, and not for the male gaze,'" Levey Friedman said. "On the ground, it seems less sexist, but I don't think the public narrative has changed."

Experts say beauty pageants can also have a negative impact on the mental health and body image of not just participants, but also spectators.

Brandyn Churchill, a professor of resource economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, found in a study published last year that there was a link between increased media coverage of pageant winners in their home states and increased body image issues in young girls in those states between the 1990s and early 2000s.

"It's extending a pretty strong signal about what is the ideal body type that ... does contrast with what individuals are viewing when they look in the mirror," Churchill said.

The study found that in the home states of Miss America or Miss USA winners, there was increased media coverage of the pageants, and at the same time, young women and girls were more likely to report they were

trying to lose weight or have a skewed image of their weight. Teen girls were also 5% more likely to report taking steps to try and lose or maintain their weight. The results were more pronounced in the South and Midwest, Churchill said.

Toddler girls to adult women across the U.S. participate in pageants. From a young age, participants don elaborate outfits and makeup. As they get older, hair extensions, fake nails and even dental veneers come into play, Levey Friedman said. Some girls are told they are beautiful while looking far from their natural selves.

"That sort of dissonance, I think is potentially very damaging as well," Levey Friedman said.

Miss USA 2019 Cheslie Kryst died by suicide in 2022 and her family said she struggled with depression behind the scenes of her pageant wins.

Why pageant culture stays strong in many communities

Still, pageant participants often cite the benefits they get from participating, including increased public speaking skills, confidence and opportunities to receive academic scholarships or professional connections, Levey Friedman said.

The Miss America and Miss USA organizations didn't immediately respond to requests for comment, but their websites both say they provide opportunities for women to empower themselves and become leaders.

"(W)e celebrate beauty, intelligence, and empowerment," the Miss USA

website says.

Leilanni Redd is a 28-year-old Californian who participated in pageants from the time she was 6 years old. She now works full time as a coach, training school-age girls on aspects of competitions including their wardrobes and pageant routines. Her students are from all over the country, and she said pageant culture is particularly strong in southern states like Alabama and Texas.

"Growing up, I was a very shy kid," she said. "It did give me confidence that I didn't know I could have when performing."

Redd said she never felt some of the negative pressures on her self-esteem that the industry is known for, but she knows her experience isn't universal. Though she said her body never looked like the other girls competing, "I never once felt uncomfortable. I never once wanted to change my appearance because I saw other people look a certain way."

Her students may go on to compete on a national stage, but their paths are wide open and many will pursue other opportunities and treat pageantry similarly to other kids who play a sport.

Still, Redd said it's hard to see so much turmoil in the industry.

"It's a little tough right now to see that these girls are stepping down because a lot of girls work for the title of Miss USA and Miss Teen USA," Redd said. "To see it crumbling at the moment is a little heartbreaking because it's like, what's the future going to look like for these girls?"

Aid groups warn of ‘unbearable’ toll

Thousands flee Rafah; humanitarian efforts cut

John Bacon
USA TODAY

About 80,000 people have fled the southern Gaza city of Rafah this week as Israeli tanks mass on the edge of the city and humanitarian aid is choked off by border closures, U.N. agencies said Thursday.

“The toll on these families is unbearable,” the U.N. Relief Works Agency posted on social media. “Nowhere is safe.”

Talks in Cairo were paused Thursday as hopes dimmed that a cease-fire agreement would be reached. Matthew Hollingworth, Palestine director of the World Food Program, said no aid had entered through the southern border crossings in two days.

UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell said the intensification of Israel’s military operations and the closure of key border crossings have severed access to fuel, threatening to grind humanitarian operations to a halt.

Hospitals, primary health care centers, water desalination plants, water wells and sewage pumps could run out of fuel “within days, if not hours,” Russell said.

Israel, which has said about 100,000 people live in the area of Rafah where it plans a “limited” military operation, is directing evacuees to Khan Younis and Al-Mawasi.

Russell said neither is suitable: Khan Younis has been nearly destroyed and Al-Mawasi is a narrow strip of beach that lacks basic infrastructure such as toilets and running water.

White House warned Israel ahead of weapons pause

White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby stressed Thursday that President Joe Biden’s public promise to pause the delivery of certain weapons to Israel was first communicated to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Israeli government “has under-



Tents are set up by displaced Palestinians in Al-Mawasi near the border with Egypt in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on May 9. AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

stood this for some time now,” Kirby told reporters. Biden remains committed to ensuring Israel has what it needs to defend itself against all enemies, he said. But the president does not want American weapons to cause significant civilian casualties.

“We’re going to keep working with them on our part to develop alternative approaches that we think will have a better chance of strategic success,” Kirby said. “The arguments that somehow we’re walking away from Israel fly in the face of the facts.”

Biden has taken severe criticism for pledging to curb the sale of certain weapons to Israel if the southern Gaza city of Rafah is invaded.

Former President Donald Trump on Thursday accused Biden of “leading the world straight into World War III,” and Israel’s National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir posted “ Hamas loves Biden” on social media early Thursday.

But Israeli president Isaac Herzog urged Israelis not to make “irresponsible and insulting statements and tweets that harm the national security.” Allies – including Israel and its “greatest ally, the U.S.” – can work through disputes,

he said.

“I would like to say thank you to President Biden, who is a great friend of the state of Israel, and who proved as such from the first day of the war,” he said.

Some nations already have cut off some or all weapons supplies to Israel:

- Italy, one of Israel’s biggest arms suppliers, halted new export approvals when the war began.
- Canada stopped licensing arms exports to Israel in January pending assurances the weapons are used in accordance with humanitarian law.
- The Dutch government halted shipments of F-35 jet parts to Israel in February after an appeals court ruled there was a risk they were being used for violations of humanitarian law.

Ireland, Spain poised to recognize Palestinian state

Ireland Prime Minister Simon Harris told Ireland’s national broadcast station RTE on Thursday that he and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez have a “clear plan” for recognizing the state of Palestine.

The Spanish newspaper El Pais reported that Spain could join Ireland, Slovenia and Malta in announcing formal recognition of Palestine on May 21.

“There is never a wrong time to do the right thing and the right thing to do right now is to recognize the State of Palestine,” Harris told RTE.

The two-state solution is the only way to achieve peace and stability in the region, Sanchez said earlier this week.

Ship carrying aid sets sail for US-built pier

A ship carrying aid to a pier built by the United States off Gaza set sail Thursday from Cyprus, Cypriot officials said. The U.S. flagged Sagamore, which left the port of Larnaca, will be used to offload supplies onto a floating pier built to expedite aid into the besieged enclave.

Cyprus opened a sea corridor in March to ship aid directly to Gaza, where deliveries via land have been severely disrupted by border closures and Israel’s military offensive.

Contributing: Francesca Chambers, USA TODAY; Reuters

Christians

Continued from Page 1A

Houston Northwest Church in Texas, said at a recent interfaith gathering. With tensions among groups increasingly fragile, Hall said, “how I respond to my neighbor now has more depth than it has in years past.”

Some Christian faith leaders say it’s more important than ever to shift from being bystanders into more active roles as arbiters.

“Christians ought to be right in the middle of it,” said Roberts, who is also co-founder of Texas-based interfaith organization Multi-Faith Neighbors Network. “It’s an opportunity for Christians to be peacemakers, to build bridges and keep the conversation going.”

Some of the most influential Christian voices amid the conflict, he noted, have belonged to evangelical Christians who strongly support Israel’s war effort and U.S. Republican leadership. For instance, John Hagee, the San Antonio, Texas-based founder of the Christian Zionist organization Christians United for Israel, delivered the opening ceremony benediction when President Donald Trump relocated the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem in 2018; he also gave the invocation when former presidential hopeful Nikki Haley launched her campaign early last year.

Robert Jeffress, senior pastor of the 14,000-member megachurch First Baptist Dallas in Texas, was also among the speakers at the Jerusalem embassy ceremony, and House Speaker Mike Johnson is a Southern Baptist and a onetime denomination official.

Nonetheless, Roberts said, “a lot of Christians are working quietly behind the scenes, doing everything they can to work for peace.”

An opportunity and obligation

Todd Deatherage, a Christian who is executive director of the Telos Group, a peace organization based in Washington, D.C., said that while peacemaking is central to what it means to be Christian, “it’s probably the most neglected aspect of Christian discipleship. Christians have a central compelling theology of being peacemakers and agents of

healing, but we are not known for that in the way we could and should be.”

Today’s atmosphere, he said, offers not just an opportunity but an obligation to fulfill that calling. That the conflict is taking place in what’s known as the Holy Land, a region fraught with overlapping significance for multiple religions, complicates the situation.

“It really requires us to think outside the binary view that for one side to win the other has to lose,” Deatherage said. “That’s the activist frame that has existed for so long, and we’ve imported this conflict into our culture – and now, as we’ve seen, our college campuses. When you reduce it to that binary, you’re missing the fundamental truth that there’s not a good future for anyone there unless there’s a good future for everyone there.”

Christians have stood by Israel

Conservative evangelical Christians have been among Israel’s staunchest supporters.

“Christians who understand the Bible realize there are two sides to the war in Gaza,” said Jeffress, of First Baptist Church in Dallas. “To side with Israel as they defend themselves against those who would seek to destroy them is to be on the right side of history and, more importantly, the right side of God.”

A survey conducted in March by researchers at Boston University and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke found nearly 1 in 5 (18%) evangelical Christians had heard their pastor discuss the war during services, compared with 13% of Catholics and 10% of mainline Christians.

Nearly 3 of 10 respondents – including 36% of evangelicals – said their church had prayed for Israel, and just 17% said their church had prayed for Palestinians.

“The most vocal organized Christian voice has been the one of the Christian Zionist movement, which sees this as a classic good and evil battle,” Deatherage said. “That’s the dominant voice, but there are dissident voices within mainstream evangelicalism that are asking questions and wrestling with the conflict that say the violence on both sides is wrong and leading us to ever darker places.”

Author and journalist Sarah Posner said the most prevalent version of

Christian Zionism is promoted by groups like Christians United for Israel.

“It’s the notion that other countries, especially America, have a biblical duty to love Israel and support Israel and that God will bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel,” said Posner, author of “Unholy: How White Christian Nationalists Powered the Trump Presidency, and the Devastating Legacy They Left Behind.”

“They say they support Israel, but what it means is that support Israel’s far right, the Netanyahu government, the settlements and occupation. So they cannot claim to represent the wide spectrum of political ideology among Israelis.”

Driving that conservative evangelical position, she said, are beliefs that Israel is central to biblical prophecies about Jesus’ return to wage a final battle at Armageddon to vanquish the Antichrist. Hagee, founder and chairman of Christians United for Israel, has delivered sermons as recently as last month that tie today’s conflict to such prophecies.

“The theological view is driving the political view,” Posner said. “They equate any view of Israel that doesn’t align with theirs with antisemitism.”

That position is now being used to condemn the college campus demonstrations against Israel’s handling of the war in Gaza, she said.

Conversely, more progressive Christian voices have denounced both Hamas’ deadly attack on Oct. 7 and Israel’s response, calling for a mutually agreed-upon solution to the conflict. Another important voice, Deatherage said, belongs to Black churches; in January, more than 1,000 Black pastors united to pressure President Joe Biden to call for a cease-fire in the war.

“They have their own experience with silence in the face of injustice, and they’re troubled by what’s happening,” he said.

‘A lot of nuances here’

A national survey of 1,252 U.S. Christians in November, nearly two months into the war, found most understood the complexity of the conflict, even if they didn’t necessarily agree.

“Christians are aware that there’s a lot of nuances here,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research, which carried out the survey

sponsored by The Philos Project, a coalition of Christian leaders advocating for pluralism in the Middle East.

While respondents acknowledged suffering and reason to act out on both sides, McConnell said, most agreed military action was not the way to achieve lasting peace. Nearly 9 in 10 said that depended on a mutually agreed-upon solution between Israel and Palestinians.

The Rev. Mae Elise Cannon, executive director of Churches for Middle East Peace in Washington, D.C., said many church leaders have been reluctant to talk about the war, dreading the divisions such discussion might sow among their congregations.

“They are immobilized by fear,” she said.

Deatherage agreed. “This is a complex and divisive topic,” he said. “Talking about it is really hard, and so they’ve probably been more silent than vocal.”

At the same time, he said, others are leaning into the issue even if they don’t feel they have the necessary command of the issues and history behind a conflict that stretches back decades.

“It’s important as Christians to weep with those who weep and to recognize the humanity in all, Palestinians and Israelis,” Deatherage said. “A lot are taking seriously the gospel imperative to feed the hungry and are trying to find ways to get humanitarian aid to Gaza and lift the blockades. There’s a line some are connecting in those ways.”

Some say Christian intervention is necessary at home as well, given the deep polarization that has pushed many interfaith bonds to their breaking point.

Cannon said some church communities are shy about expressing concerns with Israel, fearful of severing ties with local synagogues and Jewish communities. One pastor, she said, recently told her that after decadeslong relationships, he felt Christian pastors had done their Jewish communities a great disservice.

“He said, ‘We’ve kept our mouths shut about Palestine and didn’t tell them what we really think, because we didn’t want to offend Jewish rabbis and friends,’” she said. The pastor, she said, continued: “‘Now,’” he said, “‘we’ve known each other for years and come to find out we really haven’t been honest with one another. What kind of friendship is that?’”

Week in review

Recapping the most important and talked about news this week from around the world – ICYMI

NEWS

Danger: Black hole ahead

NASA is giving you a look at what would happen if you fell into a black hole, and it isn't pretty. The Goddard Space Flight center's YouTube page offered a 360-degree perspective this week on two scenarios: In one, the spacefarer flies past the black hole as space appears to bend and morph. In the second, the astronaut is pulled in and suffers what's known as "spaghettification" – when unimaginable gravitational forces stretch the traveler out like a noodle.

OPINION

Ugly truth about the Met Gala

Whether it intends to or not, the Met Gala this year came across as a real-life "Hunger Games." While the rest of the "districts" of Panem – the United States and the world – struggle with consequences like poverty, inflation, homelessness and war, the Met Gala – the "Capitol" – has one focus: raising money for costumes. About 450 attendees paid an average ticket price of \$75,000 – a table for 10 goes for \$350,000. Beauty and art can be a salve in difficult times, but the Met Gala and attendees are too oblivious to recognize they aren't providing this service. – *Nicole Russell, Opinion columnist*

MONEY

Americans dread tip pressure

"Tipflation" has been in the American lexicon for a while now, ever since it became a thing during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a new survey shows why it still has people griping. Americans give up almost \$500 year – on average, \$37.80 a month – in reluctant tips, the survey from the polling agency Talker Research reports, and guilt has everything to do with it. More than a quarter of the 2,000 respondents said they have felt the pressure of tip options presented to them, "whether it's the watchful eyes of a barista, the hastily swiveled tablet or the waiter handing you the card machine." So it's not just you.



IMAGE OF THE WEEK

In memory of the 6 million

Daniel Weinreb holds a Torah, or the holy text of Judaism, that escaped the Holocaust at a commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day on Monday in White Plains, N.Y.

TANIA SAVAYAN/
USA TODAY NETWORK

LIFE

Gaga's 'Chromatica' is coming soon

It's all for you, little monsters: Lady Gaga's new concert film, "Gaga Chromatica Ball," arrives this month, and a trailer dropped this week reveals an iconic superstar in her element, with all the eye candy and energy befitting a Gaga spectacle. The HBO special, which she directed and produced, chronicles a show at LA's Dodger Stadium during her 2022 Chromatica Ball Tour. "I hope you will feel seen when you watch this film," Gaga wrote to fans on X. "And know that I edited it carefully to honor you." The film airs on HBO May 25 at 8 p.m. EDT/PDT.

SPORTS

Mystik Dan's next move still a mystery

Last weekend's Kentucky Derby was so close – a three-horse photo finish – it took two minutes to declare Mystik Dan the winner. Now it has taken all week to find out whether Dan will enter the next stage in the Triple Crown, the Preakness Stakes, on May 18, and there's still no answer. "An old guy told me a long time ago, 'Never make a decision until you absolutely, positively have to,'" said trainer Kenny McPeck, who has been wary of racing his horse in such a quick turnaround. As for Dan himself, McPeck said, "We'll let him tell us." – *Compiled by Robert Abitbol*

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Popular CoQ10 Pills Leave Millions Suffering

Could this newly-discovered brain fuel solve America's worsening memory crisis?

Millions of Americans take the supplement known as CoQ10. It's the coenzyme that supercharges the "energy factories" in your cells known as mitochondria. But there's a serious flaw that's leaving millions unsatisfied.

As you age, your mitochondria break down and fail to produce energy. In a revealing study, a team of researchers showed that 95 percent of the mitochondria in a 90-year-old man were damaged, compared to almost no damage in the mitochondria of a 5-year-old.

Taking CoQ10 alone is not enough to solve this problem. Because as powerful as CoQ10 is, there's one critical thing it fails to do: it can't create new mitochondria to replace the ones you lost.

And that's bad news for Americans all over the country. The loss of cellular energy is a problem for the memory concerns people face as they get older.

"We had no way of replacing lost mitochondria until a recent discovery changed everything," says Dr. Al Sears, founder and medical director of the Sears Institute for Anti-Aging Medicine in Palm Beach, Florida. "Researchers discovered the only nutrient known to modern science that has the power to trigger the growth of new mitochondria."

Why Taking CoQ10 is Not Enough

Dr. Sears explains, "This new discovery is so powerful, it can multiply your mitochondria by 55 percent in just a few weeks. That's the equivalent of restoring decades of lost brain power."

This exciting nutrient – called PQQ (pyrroloquinoline quinone) – is the driving force behind a revolution in aging. When paired with CoQ10, this dynamic duo has the power to reverse the age-related memory losses you may have thought were beyond your control.

Dr. Sears pioneered a new formula – called **Ultra Accel II** – that combines both CoQ10 and PQQ to support maximum cellular energy and the normal growth of new mitochondria. **Ultra Accel II** is the first of its kind to address both problems and is already

creating huge demand.

Over 47 million doses have been shipped to men and women across the country and sales continue to climb for this much sought-after brain fuel. In fact, demand has been so overwhelming that inventories repeatedly sell out. But a closer look at **Ultra Accel II** reveals there are good reasons why sales are booming.

Science Confirms the Many Benefits of PQQ

The medical journal *Biochemical Pharmacology* reports that PQQ is up to 5,000 times more efficient in sustaining energy production than common antioxidants. With the ability to keep every cell in your body operating at full strength, **Ultra Accel II** delivers more than just added brain power and a faster memory.

People feel more energetic, more alert, and don't need naps in the afternoon. The boost in cellular energy generates more power to your heart, lungs, muscles, and more.

"With the PQQ in Ultra Accel, I have energy I never thought possible at my age," says Colleen R., one of Dr. Sears's patients. "I'm in my 70s but feel 40 again. I think clearly, move with real energy and sleep like a baby."

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, and Dr. Sears receives countless emails from his patients and readers. "My patients tell me they feel better than they have in years. This is ideal for people who are feeling old and run down, or for those who feel more forgetful. It surprises many that you can add healthy and productive years to your life simply by taking **Ultra Accel II** every day."

You may have seen Dr. Sears on television or read one of his 12 best-selling books. Or you may have seen him speak at the 2016 WPBF 25 Health and Wellness Festival in South Florida, featuring Dr. Oz and special guest Suzanne Somers. Thousands of people attended Dr. Sears's lecture on anti-aging breakthroughs and waited in line for hours during his book signing at the event.



MEMORY-BUILDING SENSATION: Top doctors are now recommending new Ultra Accel II because it restores decades of lost brain power without a doctor's visit.

Will Ultra Accel II Multiply Your Energy?

Ultra Accel II is turning everything we thought we knew about youthful energy on its head. Especially for people over age 50. In less than 30 seconds every morning, you can harness the power of this breakthrough discovery to restore peak energy and your "spark for life."

So, if you've noticed less energy as you've gotten older, and you want an easy way to reclaim your youthful edge, this new opportunity will feel like blessed relief.

The secret is the "energy multiplying" molecule that activates a dormant gene in your body that declines with age, which then instructs your cells to pump out fresh energy from the inside-out. This growth of new "energy factories" in your cells is called mitochondrial biogenesis.

Instead of falling victim to that afternoon slump, you enjoy sharp-as-a-tack focus, memory, and concentration from sunup to sundown. And you get more done in a day than most do in a week. Regardless of how exhausting the world is now.

Dr. Sears reports, "The most rewarding aspect of practicing medicine is watching my patients get the joy back in their lives. **Ultra Accel II** sends a wake-up call

to every cell in their bodies... And they actually feel young again."

And his patients agree. "I noticed a difference within a few days," says Jerry from Ft. Pierce, Florida. "My endurance has almost doubled, and I feel it mentally, too. There's a clarity and sense of well-being in my life that I've never experienced before."

How To Get Ultra Accel II

This is the official nationwide release of **Ultra Accel II** in the United States. And so, the company is offering a special discount supply to anyone who calls during the official launch.

An Order Hotline has been set up for local readers to call. This gives everyone an equal chance to try **Ultra Accel II**. And your order is backed up by a no-hassle, 90-day money back guarantee. No questions asked.

Starting at 7:00 AM today, the discount offer will be available for a limited time only. All you have to do is call TOLL FREE 1-877-506-2879 right now and use promo code **ACCEL168** to secure your own supply.

Important: Due to **Ultra Accel II** recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back.

Columbia backs Tel Aviv program

Tel Aviv University, NY school offer dual degrees

Zachary Schermele
USA TODAY

When a group of pro-Palestinian protesters pitched tents on Columbia University's Manhattan campus on April 17, they had one goal: to compel the school to sever financial ties with Israel, including halting an academic program in Tel Aviv. Until the demand was met, they refused to leave.

Nearly a month later, it's clear that the ask was too steep. Negotiations between school administrators and student leaders soured. Police arrested hundreds of demonstrators over the next few weeks. Scores of students were suspended. The school became a lightning rod for a youth-led upheaval over the Israel-Hamas war, sparking similar protests on college campuses across the country.

Their main stipulation was a familiar one in American higher education: that the university stop drawing endowment money from companies affiliated with the Israeli government, particularly those that could stand to gain from the war in Gaza. Multibillion-dollar endowments, especially those at large research universities such as Columbia, are complex and secretive. Often managed by hedge funds, they can be connected to thousands of potential revenue sources.

Another demand from the protesters drew less attention.

In 2019, Columbia launched a dual-degree program with Tel Aviv University. Under the agreement, students could earn two undergraduate degrees by studying in Israel for two years and then returning to the U.S. to finish their schooling at Columbia's School of General Studies in Manhattan. The program admitted about 60 students in 2021. Columbia offers similar programs, enrolling hundreds of students, in partnership with other universities in international hubs, including Dublin and Hong Kong.

When protesters urged the school to end its affiliation with Tel Aviv University, Columbia's administrators didn't budge. It was a point of pride and not a matter for consideration, officials said.

"Columbia University welcomes and embraces the Israeli students, faculty, and staff on our campus and are proud of their accomplishments on behalf of the greater Columbia community," Columbia spokesperson Samantha Slater



A pro-Israeli counter-protester holds a sign as demonstrators gather outside of Columbia University to demand a ceasefire and the end of Israeli attacks on Gaza during the ongoing Israel-Hamas war during a protest in New York City on April 20. PROVIDED BY ADAM GRAY

said in a statement to USA TODAY. "We also benefit greatly from our dual-degree program with Tel Aviv University, a program that the university will continue to wholeheartedly support."

Columbia's refusal to end the partnership underscores some of the more nuanced truths about how the divestment movement on college campuses is butting up against larger trends in higher education — including the demand for study abroad programs, a "financial aid arms race," reliance on tuition revenue, and the puzzling ways that money, even at the richest schools, can end up unevenly siloed in ways that reshape students' lives.

Unequal financial aid at Columbia

When Charissa Ratliff-D'addario decided to leave Spokane Falls Community College in 2019, she thought she knew what she was getting into. She had always fantasized about moving to New York City. When she was 13, she hung a poster of Columbia's main library on her bedroom wall.

Columbia's School of General Studies, which houses the dual-degree program with Tel Aviv University, is made for people just like her: nontraditional students a few years removed from high school. Administrators rave about how those students enrich classroom dialogues and bring fresh perspectives to younger students. When Ratliff-D'addario was accepted, she was thrilled.

But the reality of her experience didn't align with her dream. After she enrolled at 22 for her first year, she discovered that an error in the financial aid process deemed her ineligible for the grants she needed. She had to take out private loans to cover tuition. She eventually sold the house she owned in Washington state.

Her challenges are similar to those faced by many students at Columbia's School of General Studies, an undergraduate school that has struggled for years to offer the same generous financial aid other Columbia students get. Though the school's enrollment numbers have increased dramatically in the last decade, General Studies students receive less help covering their costs than some of the students they sit with. "It's a very tuition-driven school," Ratliff-D'addario said. "I don't think there's any argument around that."

An undergraduate paying full tuition at Columbia and living on campus can expect to pay roughly \$90,000 per year, according to the school's recent estimates. Though that number can diminish greatly when factoring in financial aid, skyrocketing tuition has helped Columbia become one of the richest and most expensive schools in the country.

But at Columbia, as many universities, every individual school is responsible for footing some bills. Each is forced to cover an annual tax from the central administration. The Faculty of Arts and Sciences, a five-school con-

glomerate that houses the School of General Studies, has long faced challenges balancing its budget. The rising cost of financial aid is a reason why.

"There was always this sense that we didn't have enough money," said Nicholas Dirks, who ran the Arts and Sciences arm at Columbia from 2004 to 2013 before becoming a chancellor at the University of California, Berkeley. It was "hardscrabble work," he said, to get more help for General Studies students.

Dual-degree programs ease some disparities

Driven by a trend in higher education to increase international opportunities for undergraduate students, Columbia first launched a dual-degree program in 2010 with the French university Sciences Po. When the European school committed to covering students' financial aid for their first few years abroad, administrators welcomed the chance to bridge some of the financial aid disparities typically faced by General Studies students, Dirks said.

After launching more partnerships under similar models, Columbia's dual- and joint-degree offerings more than doubled between 2010 and 2019, according to the campus newspaper. Meanwhile, the number of students in the School of General Studies rose by roughly a third over the last decade.

"In my mind, it's impossible not to connect the rapid growth of General Studies with the need for revenue," said Michael Thaddeus, a mathematics professor at Columbia who uncovered the university's misreporting to a popular college rankings list several years ago.

Dirks pushed back on the idea that the School of General Studies' enrollment bump has been primarily revenue-driven. But, he acknowledged, "it does help the bottom line."

Though there have been some improvements to financial aid for General Studies students, the program has still not bridged the gap with Columbia's other undergraduate schools. Ratliff-D'addario went on to start "Equality for GS," a student-led movement to increase financial aid for students like her.

Howard Bunsis, an accounting professor at Eastern Michigan University who analyzed Columbia's finances, said Columbia nixing its dual-degree programs would make no difference financially.

"Whether these existed or not would not move the needle at all," he said. "What bothers me in higher ed finance is places like Columbia crying poverty."

Hunter Biden loses bid to drop gun charges

Appeals court decision clears way for June trial

Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

A federal appeals court on Thursday rejected Hunter Biden's request to dismiss his gun charges in Delaware, clearing the way for a June trial.

Biden's lawyer, Abbe Lowell, said he would keep fighting to dismiss the case. "In reviewing the panel's decision, we believe the issues involved are too important and further review of our request is appropriate," Lowell said in a statement.

U.S. District Judge Maryellen Noreika had refused to dismiss the charges against Biden, who allegedly lied about an addiction to drugs when buying a gun in 2018.

Biden then appealed with three arguments, including that he shouldn't face a trial after a plea agreement fell apart last July and that prosecutors are being vindictive because of political pressure from Republicans to prosecute the president's son.

But a three-judge panel of the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected his three arguments unanimously because the case hasn't reached a final judgment yet.

"Criminal defendants raising those challenges cannot appeal before final judgment," Judges Patty Schwartz, Cindy Chung and Brooks Smith ruled.

The appeals judges ruled that non-prosecution agreements, such as the one that was abandoned for Biden's gun charges, don't prevent being charged in the future.

Biden also asked the appeals court for special consideration under a policy for "extreme" and "extraordinary" cases with a likelihood of irreparable injury.



Hunter Biden, shown here Feb. 28, is charged with falsely filling out a federal form denying he was addicted to any narcotics and with knowingly possessing the revolver despite the restrictions against people addicted to drugs. JACK GRUBER/USA TODAY

But the judges ruled his case didn't meet that standard.

Trial is scheduled to start June 3. Noreika set a May 17 deadline for proposed jury questions and instructions, and a final pretrial conference on May 24.

The indictment charges Biden with knowingly deceiving a firearms dealer by buying a Colt Cobra 38SPL revolver on Oct. 12, 2018. He is charged with falsely filling out a federal form denying he was addicted to any narcotics. And he is charged with knowingly possessing the revolver despite the restrictions against people addicted to drugs owning firearms.

Biden has acknowledged he was a

drug addict at the time.

He faces a maximum sentence of 25 years in prison if convicted — five years for the false statement to the dealer, 10 years for the false statement on the federal form and 10 years for possession of the firearm — but actual sentences typically are shorter than the maximum, according to the Justice Department.

The plea agreement would have allowed Biden to plead guilty to two misdemeanors for failing to pay his taxes in 2017 and 2018, and to enter a pretrial program for a gun charge that could have been dismissed if he complied. The deal might have allowed him to avoid prison.

David Weiss, the U.S. attorney for

Delaware, investigated Biden for five years and reached a plea agreement last July. But Republican lawmakers criticized the agreement, which could have carried no jail time, as a "sweetheart deal."

Noreika rejected the plea agreement because of disputes between prosecutors and defense lawyers about whether Biden could face other charges.

Attorney General Merrick Garland then appointed Weiss as special counsel to continue his investigation. Weiss secured indictments in Delaware on gun charges and in California on tax charges. Biden has also appealed to dismiss the tax charges.

OPINION

WANT TO COMMENT?

We're on Facebook (USA TODAY Opinion) and Instagram and X, formerly Twitter (@usatodayopinion). You can also comment directly on columns.

Why I celebrate Mother's Day through you



Bonnie Jean Feldkamp
Louisville Courier Journal
USA TODAY

My mom died when I was 7 years old and I've hated Mother's Day ever since.

I met my stepmother when I was 8 years old. I love her and she deserves all the tribute I can muster – but not on this one day.

If you look up my mother in the newspaper archives, you'll find the photo of the car crash that killed her. Feb. 25, 1983, in the Kentucky Post. I saw it at a neighbor's house I visited shortly after she died. The newspaper had been saved, carelessly tossed on a stack of papers near an end table. I was young, but I could still read.

I knew what I was seeing.

A few years ago I asked a friend to go to the library for me and get the article that I thought ran with the photo, but there was no article. Just a photo with a headline and a caption.

My friend omitted the photo per my request. The image is etched in my brain; I don't need to see it again.

The headline read, "Ice snarls I-275 in Wilder."

The caption read, "Westbound I-275 became a sheet of ice about 8:15 this morning when snow froze on the roadway. A Toyota skidded on the ice and struck an electrical pole, and four or five other cars went out of control. Two women in the Toyota – Bonnie Feldkamp, 32, of Walnut Street and Susan White, 33, of Wilson Ave, Cincinnati – were admitted to St. Luke Hospital."

That's not a typo. Bonnie Feldkamp was my mother. We have the same name. Bonnie Jean Feldkamp is our full name. I am her junior.

She died in that hospital two days lat-

I'm just coping at the keyboard, telling stories of the everyday people in our community who matter. People like my mom who deserve to have their stories told. ... I used to think that writing was my immortality, but really it's my mother's. Her name deserves better than a mention in a caption under a smashed up Toyota.

er. Brain dead. My father and my grandmother signed the papers that permitted surgeons to harvest her organs and we all let her go. I often wonder who benefited from my mother's organs.

I was a writer at a young age. If I wasn't writing in my diary, I was writing sentences and essays assigned as punishment. As a teen, I kept a journal and wrote poetry. Diaries were for amateurs. Journals were for serious writing, or at least that's what I thought at the time.

When I was arrested in middle school for destroying property, even the judge sentenced me to write an essay about positive ways to deal with my anger, along with a letter of apology to the property owner.

It would seem that everyone agreed I was better off with a pen in my hand.

At 48 years old I'm still learning to use my words. These days I'm just coping at the keyboard, telling stories of the everyday people in our community who



Bonnie Jean Feldkamp with her mom, also named Bonnie Jean Feldkamp, Christmas 1982. Her mother died in a car accident in February 1983.

FAMILY PHOTO

matter. People like my mom who deserve to have their stories told, deserve to have their voices lifted.

I used to think that writing was my immortality, but really it's my mother's. Her name deserves better than a mention in a caption under a smashed up Toyota on Page 1.

I don't need to celebrate her on Mother's Day. I celebrate her every time our name appears on a byline.

er's Day. I celebrate her every time our name appears on a byline.

Bonnie Jean Feldkamp is the community engagement and opinion editor for The Louisville Courier Journal, where this column originally published. She can be reached via email at BFeldkamp@Gannett.com or on social media: @WriterBonnie

Time to scream along with the trillions of cicadas



Rex Huppke
Columnist
USA TODAY

We Americans are staring down the barrel of a double-brood cicada emergence, a bound-to-be cacophonous event that will rattle our eardrums, make summer strolls crunchier than they should be and give the bug-wary among us an unruly case of the icks.

This confluence of rising cicada broods – which hasn't happened since 1803 – has some wishing they could fast-forward past summer and get to the part where the estimated trillions of these periodical visitors die so we can move on to more peaceful moments, like a wildly contentious presidential election or maybe a civil war.

A recent USA TODAY report noted: "Scientists estimate that trillions of cicadas in Broods XIX and XIII will emerge, eat, reproduce and die before the next generation heads underground to wait for another 13 or 17 years."

Someone should tell these noisy bugs that "emerge, eat, reproduce and die" is kind of our thing, but whatever.

Hearing the cicadas brood might not be so bad if we scream along

Rather than be stressed or worried or annoyed by the coming cicada-pocalypse, I have an idea that might unite the remaining few Americans who have not completely lost their minds: LET US JOIN THE CICADAS IN THEIR SCREAMING!

OK, technically, the cicadas aren't screaming. It's the dude cicadas and their vibrating tymbal organs (it's not as dirty as it sounds) issuing a mating call. And while it might sound like a mating call that would only attract low-flying jets and cats getting their tails stepped on, it works for the cicadas, so we shouldn't judge.

What we should do, in fact, is chime in.



Scientists estimate that trillions of cicadas in Broods XIX and XIII will emerge, eat, reproduce and die before the next generation heads underground to wait for another 13 or 17 years. SEAN RAYFORD/GETTY IMAGES

Cicadas are blissfully unaware of how awful we've made the world

These two cicada broods will emerge in 17 states in the Southeast and Midwest.

One brood hasn't been above ground in 13 years, the other in 17 years.

They've missed some things and, frankly, are probably better for it.

We noninsect human types continue to pollute the planet and pretend it's no biggie, all while doing a lot of random killing of each other.

About a third of the population believes the 2020 presidential election was stolen, despite a sum total of zero evidence. That same third of the population, and quite a few more, want the guy who made up the lie about the 2020 election being stolen to be president again, despite him spending most of his time whining outside courtrooms.

High food prices, richer billionaires? Let's scream!

Being angry about things and yelling loudly at people on the internet has become a national pastime.

And a sizable swath of Americans haven't looked up from their phones in 13 years.

Billionaires continue to become more billionaire-ish while regular folks are wondering why their box of cereal costs \$10.

The referees in the NBA keep making terrible calls, EVEN THOUGH IT'S THE PLAYOFFS!

And your average teacher makes less than your average knucklehead who posts YouTube videos of himself falling off things.

Honestly, we should let the cicadas have the country while the rest of us move underground for a decade or so.

Let your voice be heard this cicada season

But since we're not genetically equipped for subterranean existence and probably too picky to subsist on tree sap, the best we'll be able to do is stand alongside the trillions of cicadas this summer and scream our freakin' heads off.

Rather than gripe about the noise, let's join the chorus and, in the process, vent our multitudinous frustrations.

Get out in the yard and holler with great gusto:

"WE HEAR YOU, CICADA BROTHERS AND SISTERS! EVERYTHING SUCKS! AND WE REALLY WISH 2024 WAS OVER ALREADY!!!"

Follow USA TODAY columnist Rex Huppke on X, formerly Twitter, @RexHuppke and on Facebook [facebook.com/RexIsAJerk](https://www.facebook.com/RexIsAJerk)

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

U.S. residents hit Jackpot with 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls

Up for grabs for the next 2-days: Casino Rolls loaded with rarely seen American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins just like the old Casino Slots paid out, all coins are decades old and never to be minted again by the U.S. Gov't

► **American Eagle Casino Roll Handout:** Strict limit of 6 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls per caller has been imposed



■ **VEGAS SLOTS:** Shown left is a post card from the famous Dunes Casino. The hotel opened on the strip in 1955. Over the years, millions have flocked to the world famous Las Vegas Casinos like the Dunes hoping to hit the jackpot. Of course many hit big time, and now for the next 2-days everyone who calls will feel like a winner too. That's because the last 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls filled with American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins like those that filled the "loose" Casino Slots decades ago are now actually being handed over to today's callers who beat the 2-day deadline.

"It's like hitting the jackpot on an old Vegas Slot Machine decades ago" said Mary Ellen Withrow.

That's because for the next 2 days everyone can get these rarely seen 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls, but only those who beat the 2-day order deadline.

These full 15 count 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls are filled with historic American Eagle Ike Large Dollar coins like the ones from 1976 and earlier that were used decades ago in slot machines in the world famous Casinos.

It's amazing that these Old Vegas Casino Rolls are up for grabs. Just holding one in your hand reminds you of walking down the Vegas Strip in the glory days of Elvis, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Peter Lawford and Joey Bishop. It just makes you feel good.

"I'll tell you this, it's the best gift you could ever give someone. It's actually the perfect gift for any occasion. Everyone you give one of these 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls to will never forget your generosity and they'll be the envy of all who see them," Withrow said.

"We're bracing for thousands of U.S. residents who will be calling to get these 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls over the next 2 days. That's because these rolls are not torn, faded, ripped or beat up. They are in brand-new pristine collector condition. And here's the best part. These are full 15 count 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls loaded with the same American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins like the coins used to fill the world famous casino slot machines decades ago, and there can never be any more so there's no telling what they could one day be worth," Withrow explained.

Today's callers need to remember this. These are not ordinary rolls of coins you get at a bank or credit union. These 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls contain old American Eagle Ike Large Dollar coins commemorating the Rat Pack days of the early 1970's when Las Vegas Casinos were all the rage. These rolls are now being released from the private vaults at the Lincoln Treasury, each with 15 U.S. Gov't issued American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins dating back to 1976 and earlier.

We won't be surprised if thousands of people claim the six roll limit before they're gone. That's because after the rolls were sealed with these U.S. Gov't minted American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins, each verified to meet a minimum collector grade quality of very good or above, the dates and mint marks are unsearched to determine collector values and the rolls are now securely sealed. That means there's no telling what's in each roll.

"My advice, get as many as you can, stash them away in a safe place to pass down from generation

to generation," Withrow said.

"Just imagine how much these remaining 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls could be worth someday. The American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins alone are decades old and are never to be struck again by the U.S. Gov't," Withrow confirmed.

Withrow knows a thing or two about

money, she is retired 40th Treasurer of the United States of America and now is the Executive Advisor to the Lincoln Treasury.

All readers of today's newspaper publication trying to be the first to get the Free Large Dollars with every 'Old Vegas' Casino Roll just need to call the Hotline at

1-866-338-2833 and give the Promo Code IKE152 beginning at 8:30 am this morning.

The Toll-Free Hotlines are expected to be overwhelmed. That's why everyone hoping to get their hands on these 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls are being urged to call right away. If lines are busy keep calling. All calls will be answered over the next 2 days.

► How to get the 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls:

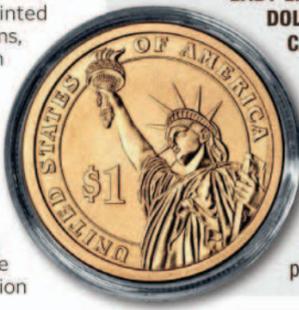
The Call-In Hotlines open at 8:30am (EST) this morning. Callers who beat the 2-day Release deadline are guaranteed to get them for less than \$7 per coin that's only \$98 for the full 15 count 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls loaded with decades old American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins. That's the lowest price ever offered and a real steal for these one of a kind 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls. Important: if any remain after the 2-day deadline the price skyrockets to \$255 per roll.

CALL TOLL-FREE: 1-866-338-2833 and mention promo code: IKE152. Or you can order by mail by writing "Casino Rolls" on a piece of paper with your name and full address with your remittance of \$98 for a single roll (your choice of roll), or \$294 for three rolls (Las Vegas Sign, Show Girls, Slots), or \$588 for all six rolls and mail to: Lincoln Treasury, PO Box 9971, Canton, OH 44711. You can also go online: LincolnTreasury.com/6 and use promo code: IKE152 at checkout to claim the discount.

LAST CHANCE: You've heard the old saying, "When they're gone, they're gone". That's why today's Public Release may be the best chance the public gets to own one of these 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls. And here's the best part. The price is right, in fact it's a steal for callers lucky enough to beat the 2-day deadline and get the 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls for less than \$7 per coin.

FREE US GOVERNMENT ISSUED LADY LIBERTY PRESIDENTIAL DOLLAR COIN WITH EVERY CASINO ROLL

With each Casino Roll, a US Gov't issued Lady Liberty Presidential Dollar Coin is included FREE. These coins will also never be minted again. Your free Dollar Coin will come in uncirculated condition and protected in a capsule ensuring its safety and protection. When you get the maximum number of Casino Rolls, you'll also get six of these beautiful presidential dollar coins while they last.

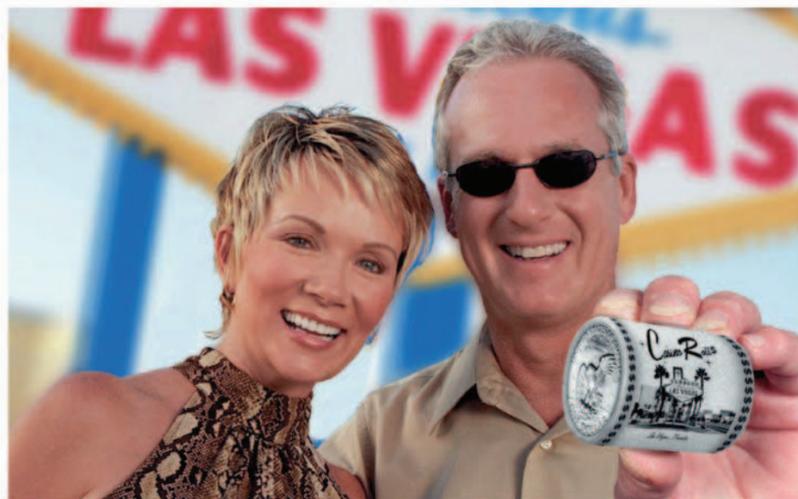


JACKPOT: It's like hitting 777 on an old Vegas "one armed bandit". That's because the dates and mint marks of the 15 American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins from decades ago are now sealed away in each roll exclusively by the Lincoln Treasury so you never know what you might find. Call this toll-free hotline: 1-866-338-2833 and use promo code: IKE152. Choose from one roll, three rolls, or the maximum of all six rolls.

American Eagle Ike Large Dollar



Minted in Philadelphia, Denver and San Francisco featuring a majestic eagle swooping over the moon's surface commemorating the original Lunar Landing.



HOW MUCH ARE THE 'OLD VEGAS' CASINO ROLLS WORTH: There's no way to tell, but at less than \$7 per coin you better believe they're a real steal. That's because the dates and mint marks of the U.S. Gov't issued American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins are sealed away inside the 15 count 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls. Coin values always fluctuate and there are never any guarantees, but each 'Old Vegas' Casino Roll contains American Eagle Ike Large Dollar coins that are decades old. Any scarce coins, regardless of their value that you may find inside the sealed 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls are yours to keep. One thing that is known is these are the only 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls known to exist and you can only get them by calling the toll-free line listed in today's announcement.

'OLD VEGAS' CASINO ROLLS ARE DELIVERED IN LINCOLN TREASURY VAULT BOXES WITH A CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY. LINCOLN TREASURY, LLC IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE U.S. MINT, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, A BANK OR ANY GOVERNMENT AGENCY FOR ANY REASON WITHIN 30 DAYS FROM SHIPMENT, RETURN THE PRODUCT FOR A REFUND LESS SHIPPING AND RETURN POSTAGE. THIS SAME PROMOTIONAL OFFER MAY BE MADE AVAILABLE AT A LATER DATE OR IN A DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION. OH RESIDENTS ADD 6.5% SALES TAX. LINCOLN TREASURY, 8000 FREEDOM AVE, NORTH CANTON, OH 44720. ©2023 LINCOLN TREASURY. P7434 QF2344JR-1

LIFELINE



SRIVASTAVA BY CHANCE YEH/GETTY IMAGES

MAKING WAVES MISS TEEN USA RESIGNS

Miss Teen USA 2023 is resigning just days after Miss USA Noelia Voigt relinquished her title. UmaSofia Srivastava shared a statement Wednesday announcing her departure, saying her “personal values no longer fully align with the direction of the organization.” She continued, “I will always look back on my time as Miss NJ Teen USA fondly, and the experience of representing my state as a first generation, Mexican-Indian American at the national level was fulfilling in itself.” On Monday, Voigt announced her resignation as Miss USA to focus on her mental health but there has been online speculation about if that is the full picture. Fans noticed the first letters of the first 11 sentences in her statement spelled “I am silenced.”



IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY WHO'S CELEBRATING TODAY

Bono is 64. **Kenan Thompson** is 46. **Linda Evangelista** is 59.

HOROSCOPE | SANCTUARY More: www.sanctuaryworld.com

Aries (March 21-April 19). Gift of gab? The moon's harmonious aspect to communication planet Mercury offers easy-going conversations and well-meaning gossip.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Organizing your thoughts? Get pent-up ideas out on paper or confide in an advisor.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Turned to for advice? Others seek you out as a shoulder to cry on.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Key business conversations? Find the balance between professional and personal.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Swapping sentiments? Today's harmonious connection between the moon and Mercury favors light-hearted discussions on beliefs and ideals.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Doing the necessary research? You're in the mood to dig deep. Knowledge is power!

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Are you on the same page? Swap stories and share sentiments with a partner.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Giving or receiving advice? Insights are unlocked during conversations with a coworker.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Sentimental conversations? You've been holding your feelings back. The moon's harmonious connection to chatty Mercury facilitates an honest heart-to-heart.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Problem-solving? You instinctively engineer workarounds and course-correct frustrating issues.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Getting creative? The moon's harmonious connection to Mercury is perfect for play and flexing your imaginative muscles.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Asked for advice? (Chosen) family or friends need your feedback.

MOVIES



Maya Hawke plays ailing young writer Flannery O'Connor in “Wildcat.” PROVIDED BY OSCILLOSCOPE

Ethan Hawke's new role is proud dad

Patrick Ryan USA TODAY

When Maya Hawke was a high-school junior, an English teacher turned her onto the short stories of Flannery O'Connor. • Her dad, Ethan Hawke, had been a fan of O'Connor's writing since childhood, “so it became a meeting place for us to talk about,” he says. “Flannery certainly stirs up a lot of questions; her journals are kind of hypnotizing, because they're deeply personal and deeply earnest. Maya was really struck by them and started sharing them with me.”

Now, father and daughter have teamed up for their first film together, “Wildcat” (in theaters nationwide Friday). Directed by Ethan, 53, and starring Maya, 25, the unconventional biopic traces O'Connor's struggles to publish her first novel, while also reckoning with faith and her own mortality. (The Georgia-born author was diagnosed with lupus at 25 and died in 1964 at age 39.)

Laura Linney, Steve Zahn and Cooper Hoffman have supporting roles playing real and fictional characters, as O'Connor's stories bleed into her daily life. “I knew a movie about her would be a movie about imagination,” says Ethan, who made his film directorial debut with 2001's “Chelsea Walls,” starring Uma Thurman, Maya's mom

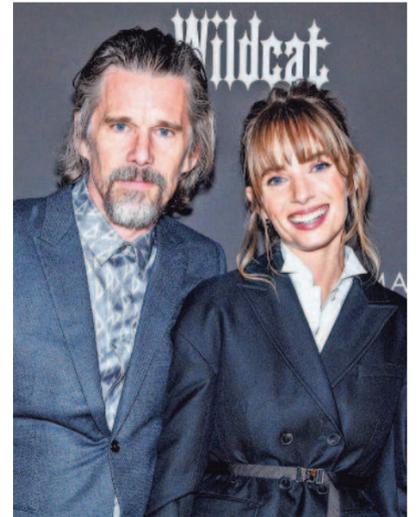
and his ex-wife.

He tells USA TODAY about “Wildcat” and more:

Question: You and Maya both started acting professionally as teenagers. What impresses you most about how she's carried herself in Hollywood?

Answer: She has a great aptitude to be herself. I experienced a certain amount of celebrity young, and I know how imprisoning that can be. When you feel judged, you don't really want to do anything; it's very hard to make mistakes and do all the things that are necessary to grow up. She handles herself so well, even having the desire to tackle such a complicated, difficult woman as Flannery O'Connor. So I just admire her

See **HAWKE**, Page 4B



Ethan and Maya Hawke attend the New York screening of “Wildcat” last month. ROY ROCHLIN/GETTY IMAGES

She handles herself so well ... I just admire her guts.”

Ethan Hawke
On his daughter and star Maya Hawke

STREAMING

Gatwa's 'Doctor' amps up cool factor

Kelly Lawler
USA TODAY

Meet the all-new “Doctor Who.” He's still an alien, and he still travels through time and space. But this one is a sharper dresser than you might expect, a little more chaotic, and just a lot cooler than previous Doctors. And cooler than you, too.

There are just effortlessly hip vibes emanating from Ncuti Gatwa, the 15th Doctor in the 60-year-old British science fiction institution, and the first person of color in the full-time role. As the kids would say, he slays.

“It does feel like a new era. Everything feels refreshed,” says Gatwa, 31, who's familiar to American viewers as one of the Kens in last summer's smash “Barbie,” and from Netflix comedy “Sex Education” (his name is pronounced SHOO-tee GAHT-wa). “We're doing things a little bit differently, but it's still the same show we know and love.”

The series has a new Doctor and companion (Millie Gibson as Ruby



Ncuti Gatwa is the 15th Doctor in “Doctor Who,” standing on board his TARDIS. PROVIDED BY DISNEY+

Sunday) and streams the new eight-episode season on Fridays at a new home, Disney+ (7 EDT/ 4 PDT), fresh off three critically acclaimed specials (also on

Disney+) celebrating its 60th anniversary last November. There is an energy to the new episodes that was woefully absent in the most recent seasons on BBC America, which starred Jodie Whittaker, who's a decade older than Gatwa. So there's fun to be had adventuring through time and space again.

“A lot of science fiction and fantasy, in particular, can be dark, can be sinister (and) can be aggressive,” says Russell T. Davies, the writer who brought “Who” into the modern era in 2005 and has returned as executive producer. “Doctor Who' can do all those things. But I think ‘Doctor Who' uniquely can be quite mad. I wanted madness. Chaos. Nuttiness. Wildness. Fun.”

There is madness in the first few episodes, which take the Doctor and Ruby back to the Paleolithic era, a “baby farm” in the future run by actual babies and back to the 1960s, where they're pursued by a villain played by drag queen Jinkx Monsoon.

But it's not all fun and games. Davies

See **DOCTOR WHO**, Page 4B

TELEVISION

George's death is a 'Sheldon' shock

Bryan Alexander
USA TODAY

Spoiler alert: This story includes details of the May 9 penultimate "Young Sheldon" episode.

You can't say you didn't see George Cooper Sr.'s death coming after seven seasons of "Young Sheldon," the prequel spinoff series to "The Big Bang Theory." After all, in the original CBS series, Sheldon Cooper (Jim Parsons) referenced his football coach father, George Sr., who died from a heart attack when the young physics genius was 14 and growing up in East Texas.

George Sr.'s death was part of the "Big Bang Theory" mythology, which was crucial to connect by the end of the "Sheldon," which is narrated by Parsons. Still, the offscreen heart attack of George Sr. (Lance Barber) revealed in the final moments of the Thursday episode, the last before the May 16 two-part series finale, is, well, heartbreaking.

And not just for Sheldon (Iain Armitage) and devoted TV fans.

"It was even heartbreaking for everyone on the set making that show," says "Big Bang Theory" and "Young Sheldon" co-creator and executive producer Chuck Lorre. "We're all so invested in this character. Being fictional doesn't take away the difficulty in saying goodbye. But it's been seven years in the making. We all knew this would happen."

Here are the ramifications of George Sr.'s "Young Sheldon" death:

How did Sheldon Cooper's father die in 'Young Sheldon'?

Everything seems to be falling into place for new grandfather George Sr., suddenly sailing amid his sometimes stormy family life. His wife Mary (Zoe Perry) and daughter Missy (Raegan Revord) are even supportive of his dream job offer, coaching football at Houston's Rice University, which would require a family move.

"With the stakes so high, it makes the tragedy that unfolds an even bigger punch in the gut," says Barber.

George Sr. survives a ladder climb, fixing the roof for the house sale. His son Georgie (Montana Jordan, who will lead another spinoff series next season) admonishes him for safety reasons. The two carry away the ladder in a tender father-son moment.



Lance Barber, left, is George Sr. and Montana Jordan is Georgie in "Young Sheldon." PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BILL INOSHITA/WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT INC.



Mayim Bialik and Jim Parsons reprise their roles of Sheldon Cooper and Amy Farrah Fowler in the series finale of "Young Sheldon."

But the next day, as George Sr. heads off to work, he picks up his travel mug, promises to be back for a family photo shoot and gives an unacknowledged, "See you all later." Sheldon doesn't look up from his book as his father walks out the kitchen door into the (heavenly bright) sunlight, never to return.

"It was purposely a banal nothing moment in Sheldon's life that he will struggle with," says Lorre. "Because he learns it's the last time he'll ever see his father. He will live to regret that moment in his life where he'll say, 'I could have done that better.'"

Hours later, the shocked family is informed that George Sr. died of a heart attack.

Sheldon wordlessly sits with a stunned expression, processing the unfathomable loss.

'Sheldon' death fulfills George Sr.'s character's 'Big Bang' resurrection

George Sr., frequently the butt of adult Sheldon's dark humor in "Big Bang," is the flawed character who changes the most because of "Young Sheldon."

"In 'Big Bang Theory,' when George was an offscreen character who's no longer alive, you could make all the jokes you want.

But 'Young Sheldon' is a sweeter family show," says Steve Holland, a producer and writer on both series. "And because of Lance Barber's portrayal of George in 'Young Sheldon,' you didn't believe his dad could be that bad."

For example, adult Sheldon explains in "Big Bang Theory" that he knocks three times on a door because he traumatically walked in on his cheating father "having relations" with a mysterious blond woman. In a March episode, the alleged infidelity is explained away in a scene where Sheldon walks in on blonde-wigged Mary role-playing with her husband as a campy German named Helga.

George Sr.'s death completes his character's redemption, explaining why Sheldon has such a dark view of his father.

Sheldon is immediately consumed with grief and remorse over his final non-goodbye, which he obsesses over, starting with the last haunting stare.

"Sheldon is already playing his last moments over and over," says Barber. "All the regrets and things that he wishes he said."

What will happen in the 'Young Sheldon' finale?

The two-part May 16 finale (8 EDT/EDT) features Sheldon and his family grieving at George Sr.'s funeral.

But the finale also finds joy after loss, as Sheldon moves on to college (the California Institute of Technology, as fans already know).

Parsons returns as an older Sheldon, reprising his role with Mayim Bialik, who plays his wife Amy, for the first time since "Big Bang" ended in 2019.

The screen couple has two young children. And Sheldon's struggles with fatherhood have softened his feelings about his own father, George Sr. "There's a recognition that his father is a human being who is flawed but doing the very best he can," says Lorre. "That's an epiphany you have about your parents when you're older. This finale is very much about Sheldon's perspective on his father.

"It changes for the better, given time and his own experience raising his children, who he doesn't understand."

MOVIE REVIEW

Simians sizzle but story sags a bit in 'Kingdom'



Brian Truitt
Columnist
USA TODAY

The issue of humans and simians in existential conflict arises again in a new "Planet of the Apes," this time with a coming-of-age sci-fi adventure that's a piece of visually stunning world-building more thoughtful than coherent.

"Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes" (★★★★☆; rated PG-13; in theaters Friday) is a sequel to the stellar "Apes" trilogy led by Andy Serkis' iconic chimpanzee leader Caesar, set in a landscape where people have gone feral while super-smart apes rule thanks to a man-made virus. Director Wes Ball ("Maze Runner") is a proven commodity in the post-apocalyptic space, and "Kingdom" aims to bring big ideas into a sprawling blockbuster atmosphere, though that gambit winds up weighed down by its own ambitions.

The new "Apes" is set "many generations later" after the death of Caesar, a kind and compassionate sort who believed humans and apes could one day live together. His specter looms large over "Kingdom," which centers on a naive young chimp named Noa (played via performance capture by Owen Teague) and an Earth where nature has reclaimed the land. Noa and his friends, Anaya (Travis Jeffery) and Soona (Lydia Peckham), ready for a big day in their lives among the Eagle Clan — so called because of the birds they raise. But the peaceful existence in their village is disrupted by a brutal attack from a horde of masked apes, who burn Noa's home and leave him for dead.

Noa wakes, battered and vowing to save his friends and family who've been taken, and he first falls in with Raka (Peter Macon), a wise orangutan who lives



Noa (played by Owen Teague) is a young chimpanzee forced on a rescue mission when his village is brutally attacked in "Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes." PROVIDED BY 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

by Caesar's idealistic beliefs. They meet a young human named Mae (Freya Allan), who's at first distrustful of her new allies until they save her from the same big bad apes that torched Noa's village.

The trio learns these villains are goons for the tyrannical bonobo Proximus Caesar (Kevin Durand). Ruling a coastal kingdom of apes, Proximus has taken Caesar's name yet twists his words to force his prisoners to crack a large vault and plumb the mysterious human treasures within. He's both a fan of mankind and a symbol of our innate cruelty in ape form.

Just as the previous films, the main draw is the apes themselves, computer-generated simian wonders who immerse audiences into their world. They look better than ever, with Noa's tearful

eyes delivering so much fragility and emotion in a close-up after a tragic scene, and the performance-capture wizardry, a signature aspect of these new "Apes" movies, feels more groundbreaking than ever.

At the same time, none of the major players in "Kingdom" reach the same level of acting or personality as Serkis' Caesar. That is an extremely high bar, though, and there are some pretty great apes: Teague's Noa grows on you because of his plight while Macon makes Raka a scene-stealing hoot with a kind soul. Allan, a regular on Netflix's "The Witcher," also shines in a meaty role as a human who's more complicated than she appears.

The early "Apes" movies from the '60s and '70s were defined by genre in-

novation and shock endings, and the Caesar movies were simply a great tale well told. "Kingdom" is less confident in its storytelling: It explores themes of legacy and species coexistence with a metaphor-laden plot that feels too long at 2½ hours, and it begs for more exposition at the beginning before overdoing it later on. The movie ultimately does satisfy by its end, even as it emphasizes philosophy and message over logical narrative choices.

"Kingdom" checks most of the boxes for longtime "Apes" fans, and newbies don't need to any prior homework as a standalone story that mostly explains itself. And as humans, you do commiserate with the onscreen apes themselves, because everything felt a little better back when Caesar was around.

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Amanda Rafkin
BY Rafael Musa

ROAST ME (FREESTYLE)

- ACROSS
1 Two-finger peace gesture
6 Happy
10 Place for a mud bath
13 "There's no need to rush!"
16 Fish commonly in fish and chips
17 Seedy breakfast roll
18 Curtain holder
19 Like a rope that's not slack
20 ___ cup (Starbucks dog treat)
21 Devices that track storms
23 India pale ___
24 Mention in a footnote
25 High-pitched bark
26 Dios, in English
27 Insect whose larvae are maggots
30 ___ butter (skin moisturizer)
33 Ancient Greek fable writer
36 Zone
37 Enjoy a novel
38 Fall staple similar to a pumpkin "Rats!"
41 Singer Clay in the Blues Hall of Fame
43 Increased
44 Source of tofu
45 Like clothes just out of the washer
46 Deep hole
47 Plop down
49 Dump unexpectedly
51 Opposite of bulk, in gym lingo
54 Certain first-time parent
57 Beehive State native
58 Sole
59 "Sweet but Psycho" singer Max
60 People for whom less is more
63 According to
Answers: Call 1-900-988-8300, 99 cents a minute; or, with a credit card, 1-800-320-4280.

Crossword grid with numbers 1-67.

© Andrews McMeel

- 64 Gathering that aims to alleviate geopolitical tensions
65 Elbow's place
66 Tennis legend Arthur
67 Becomes less hot
DOWN
1 Scenic view
2 "What a ___!" ("It's a bargain!")
3 Problem to discuss
4 Insect in a cloud
5 Awards show recognition, colloquially
6 Tart, pink-red breakfast beverage
7 Annoyance in a video call
8 Maker of Aspire laptops
9 Dillydally
10 Pile of discarded metal
11 Low-quality
12 Contributes
14 Lukewarm
15 Share a border with
22 Throw into disarray
24 Make do
26 Received money for work done
28 "I'm game!"
29 Drag queen's affirmation
31 Lack of trouble
32 Condition that can make it hard to focus
33 Basics
34 Currency in Lisbon
35 Cuddles up by a fire on a cold day
36 Poker stake
39 Column's counterpart
40 ___ cold turkey
46 Desperate requests
48 Florida city across the bay from St. Petersburg
50 "Ve-e-ery relatable"
51 Cocktail with cranberry juice, informally
52 "It's all fun and games ___"
53 Exams
54 California wine region
55 At any time
56 Gets to 0% battery
58 Swanky vehicle
61 "Pass"
62 Ice skater Jean-___ Baker

Thursday's Answer

Small crossword grid with answers: SERB, CLIP, SKIP, ARIA, SAUCE, ONCE, FATAL, ERROR, MEET, ASU, EATEN, KEEPS, REAMS, IPO, BOP, TIDLE, OSCAR, EPA, THANK, DEANS, FOOL, SERRAND, TROLL, EVENT, TOE, LOFTS, TSEE, ROE, EWE, SCANT, ALTAR, MOTTO, MIC, IKID, FAIRENOUGH, LIMA, ELLEN, MEME, STEM, DESK, GLAD.

CROSSWORDS ON YOUR PHONE get our crossword app

Numbers

More puzzles: puzzles.usatoday.com
Want solutions? answers.usatoday.com
Feedback: feedback@usatoday.com



SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

9x9 Sudoku grid with some numbers filled in.

5/10

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★★

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE puzzles.usatoday.com

© Andrews McMeel

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

3x6 grid for Numbers puzzle with some numbers filled in.

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★★

Thursday's Answers

Grid of numbers for Thursday's Answers: 6 4 5 1 7 3 9 8 2, 1 9 3 8 2 6 7 4 5, 2 8 7 4 5 9 6 1 3, 4 7 2 9 8 5 1 3 6, 3 5 9 6 1 2 8 7 4, 8 1 6 7 3 4 2 5 9, 7 2 4 5 6 8 3 9 1, 9 3 1 2 4 7 5 6 8, 5 6 8 3 9 1 4 2 7.

5/9

KENKEN

KenKen grid with cages and numbers: 3+, 12x, 6x, 3-, 2÷, 3, 1-, 2x.

Trademark KenKen, LLC Distributed by Andrews McMeel

- 1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 (easy) or 1 through 6 (challenging) without repeating.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

4x4 KenKen grid with solution: 24x, 3+, 3-, 3 1 4, 4 1 3 2, 2 3+ 2÷, 1 4 2 3.

©2024 KenKen Puzzle, LLC www.kenken.com

- 2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.
- 3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo Difficulty: EXPERT

Kubok 16 grid with circled numbers: 44, 19, 34, 39, 38, 5, 40, 12, 12, 2, 46, 9.

Solution to Thursday's puzzle

4x4 grid with numbers: 15 2 9 13, 12 4 7 8, 16 3 10 1, 11 14 5 6.

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

©2024 Kubok. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. 5/10/24 All rights reserved.

TXTPERT

Small crossword grid for TXTPERT.

- Across
2. 439737
5. 532
6. 257
7. 265
8. 233
9. 372
10. 55266
Down
1. 7455
2. 4522425
3. 732
4. 727437
8. 2265
9. 374

© USA TODAY and Rich Coulter

Today's theme Geography

Geography keypad with letters: 1 a, 2 b, 3 c, 4 d, 5 e, 6 f, 7 g, 8 h, 9 i, 0 .

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C... and 5/6/7/8 could be LOST

Small crossword grid for Today's theme.

Yesterday's solution

Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

- Find and Circle:
Four four-letter units of length
Three seven-letter colors
Three U.S.-based airlines
Three rocky planets
The T and F in a T/F question

Thursday's answer: ELBOW ANKLE WRIST KNEE / EUROPE AFRICA ASIA / SOLE PIKE TUNA / BARGE FERRY CANOE / PANTHER CHEETAH LEOPARD

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes

5/10

QuickCross grid with clues: ___ and gather, Computer brand, Gin type, Williams or Aaron, Diced meat dish, The Bruins of the NCAA, Element No. 10, "Star ___".

5/9

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE puzzles.usatoday.com

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt

5/10

UP & DOWN WORDS grid with clues: 1. NEUTRAL, 2., 3., 4., 5., 6., 7., VIRGINIA. Clues: 1. Boxing ring feature, 2. Part of a pool table, 3. Small amount of cash, 4. Wallet alternative, 5. Sing with passion, 6. Los Angeles, to Dallas, 7. Pennsylvania neighbor.

Thursday's Answer: MEN AT LAST, SUMMER WEATHER, BALLOON RACE, AT LAST, SUMMER WEATHER, BALLOON RACE, AGAINST.

PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM © Andrews McMeel

BONUS CROSSWORD

- ACROSS
1 Occasional office worker
5 Henry — Lodge
10 Injury result
14 Seed cover
15 Battleground
16 Sharpen
17 Type size
18 — wave
19 Commedia dell'—
20 Spook sessions
22 Nut center
24 Counterweight
25 Roam far and —
26 Greek island
28 Unlikely thing (2 wds.)
32 Burned brightly
33 Goad
34 "Born in the —"
35 Ship's record
36 Boat
37 Knock
38 "All About —"
39 Grow weary
41 Actress — Shields
44 Like a ghost town
46 "— Doone"
47 Matches a bet
48 Well-behaved
49 Bread spread
52 Earns lots (2 wds.)
56 Yearn
57 Allow
60 Deception
61 Inform (with "in")
62 Grayish color
63 Oil mogul — Halliburton
64 Damage
65 Stopped
66 Act
DOWN
1 Hits gently
2 Canal in a song
3 Isinglass
4 Box for flowers
5 Provided food
6 Happen
7 Four-poster
8 Puppet — string
9 "Look Who's —"
10 Allotments
11 Maize
12 — meridiem
13 Film spool
21 Actress — Blanchett
23 Advantage properly
25 Function
42 Chess piece
43 Well-organized
45 Honor
48 Complaint
49 Great German composer

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

Grid for PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED with words: TAPS, FLED, ALLI, AERO, LOGE, ABOIL, POOL, EXIT, NAVAL, ENTIRE, SAUNTER, EDICT, ISEE, ABC, PERPLEX, EFT, LATH, DOI, ERNIE, ARIES, YEW, SIDLE, CROWN, TAT, OPEN, KEN, AFFAIRS, RDS, OGEE, LARGO, TARGE, GETS, GOADED, LARGE, TINE, LURE, TREAD, ENID, ACME, DEAN, RELY, STAR.

5-10-24 © 2024 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS

- 29 Great Lake
30 City in Japan
31 First aid kit item
32 Ran away
36 War god
39 Sapling
40 Say again
41 Puffed out
42 Chess piece
43 Well-organized
45 Honor
48 Complaint
49 Great German composer
50 Sch. on the West Coast
51 Calendar abbr.
53 "Of course!"
54 — of Wight
55 Requirement
58 Actor — Aykroyd
59 As clear as —

DON'T QUOTE ME

Writer William Least Heat-Moon thinks about adventurers.

Quote puzzle: REARRANGE THE WORDS TO COMPLETE THE QUOTE. FIND HOPING KINDS SECRETLY THEY THOSE TRULY TWO. THERE ARE ___ OF ADVENTURERS: THOSE WHO GO ___ TO ADVENTURE AND WHO GO ___ HOPING ___ WON'T.

Thursday's Answer: "To err is human but to really foul up requires a computer." - Bill Vaughan

7 LITTLE WORDS

7 LITTLE WORDS puzzle with clues and solutions: 1 "Biggest Part of Me" band (8), 2 villain's quality (7), 3 actress & comedian Whoopi (8), 4 with you from birth (6), 5 inflexible (5), 6 unquestioningly obedient (11), 7 badger from the audience (6).

Word bank for 7 LITTLE WORDS: AMB, ORN, ESS, SIA, LD, DN, SUB, KLE, STI, ENT, FF, VI, RG, GO, BA, BE, HEC, RO, SER, INB.

Thursday's Answers: 1. PUBLISHED 2. WOKS 3. DUOS 4. ARNAZ 5. PERFORMANCE 6. PROPS 7. FLORENCE

JUMBLE

JUMBLE puzzle: Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words. NMYEO, RNAPK, KHSTEC, AGEGEN. THE PIANO SALESPERSON WHO PLAYED WHILE TALKING TO CUSTOMERS WAS A ___.

Yesterday's Jumbles: IMAGE GOING DRENCH INTACT Answer: When softball was invented in Chicago in 1887, it was a — GAME CHANGER

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Bad breath can be a condition or symptom

Daryl Austin
USA TODAY

Few things are as off-putting as having bad breath.

We inwardly cringe or turn away when a friend or co-worker has stinky breath, and identifying an unpleasant odor coming out of one's own mouth in social gatherings can be embarrassing and even lead to anxiety about being around others.

"No one wants bad breath and face-to-face interactions are simply more pleasant when it's been properly taken care of," says Kasandra Heath, a registered dental hygienist at Mesa View Dental in St. George, Utah.

But not wanting bad breath and understanding what causes it are two different things.

Here's what's behind unpleasant mouth odor – and how to prevent it.

What is halitosis?

Though some people think of halitosis and bad breath as being two different things, "they are actually one and the same," says Dr. Christopher Pullins, a family medicine physician at the Mayo Clinic.

Indeed, as the official medical name for mouth odor, "halitosis" is actually Latin for "bad breath."

Though we often think of bad breath as being temporary, "halitosis can also be chronic," explains Dr. Mirissa Price, an expert spokesperson for the American Dental Association and a pediatric dentist at Boston Children's Hospital.

It's also not uncommon. "Studies show that 50% of adults have had bad breath, or halitosis, at some point in their lives," she says.



Halitosis, or bad breath, stems from mouth bacteria. AARONAMAT VIA GETTY IMAGES

What are the symptoms of bad breath?

While the most obvious symptom of bad breath is, well, bad breath, there are other symptoms one can watch for. These include a white coating on the tongue, a dry mouth, or excess mucus entering the back of the throat from one's nose or sinuses – usually stemming from nasal irritation, allergies, or a bacterial infection.

"This is called a post-nasal drip and often accompanies mouth odor," says Heath.

And because bad breath often is associated with tooth decay, plaque build-

up around one's teeth can be another sign to look out for. "Persistent bad breath can be a warning sign of gum disease, which is caused by genetics, leftover plaque, or both," says Price.

It's worth noting that gum disease and post-nasal drips can be either symptoms or causes of mouth odor.

What causes bad breath?

Another cause of bad breath is eating stinky or spicy foods such as onions, tuna, flavored potato chips, chilies, beef jerky, horseradish, and garlic. "Smoking can also contribute to bad breath," says Pullins.

Dry mouth causes stinky breath as well. It stems from a lack of saliva, and saliva has the important job of keeping the mouth clean. "Dry mouth can have many causes, such as medications, salivary gland problems, or mouth breathing," explains Price. Indeed, decreased saliva production at night or drying out of one's mouth due to snoring all night is why many people wake up with what we refer to as "morning breath."

But the most common cause of bad breath is the presence of bacteria. "There are hundreds of types of bad breath-causing bacteria living naturally in your mouth," explains Price. "These bacteria grow in your mouth, which acts as a natural hothouse." She explains that mouth bacteria feed on the plaque between teeth and the leftover food after we've eaten, "which leads to a foul-smelling waste product being left behind."

Heath says that one of the most common places to find an accumulation of these bacteria is on the tongue. "If you fail to clean this surface, the buildup can cause your breath to really stink," she explains.

And while Pullins agrees that "90% of halitosis cases originate from an oral source," he says there are times when smelly breath also is related to gastrointestinal issues such as acid reflux or GERD, or due to certain medical conditions such as liver or kidney disease.

While conditions like these often require additional medical intervention, Price says that bad breath generally can be prevented by staying hydrated and by regularly eliminating bacteria through good oral hygiene. "It's also wise to avoid smoking and to steer clear of the foods that lead to bad breath," she says.



Ethan Hawke, left, and Robin Williams in 1989's coming-of-age classic "Dead Poets Society." PROVIDED BY FRANCOIS DUHAMEL/TOUCHSTONE PICTURES

Hawke

Continued from Page 1B

guts.

As a director, is there a difference when you're working with someone who's family?

I've done nine movies with Richard Linklater, and I started a theater company when I was young with my closest friends. So the idea of using friendship and intimacy as a launching pad to create is something I believe in. Even as a kid, listening to (John) Lennon and Paul (McCartney), knowing they were best friends, you feel the secrets of their friendship in their songs. You can tell they're built on something real. So a shorthand can be really useful if you're professional about it.

Are you and Maya still hoping to make your Beatles comedy, "Revolver?"

That's one of those COVID casualties. There's a lot of films that were in pre-production, raising money that died on the vine in those couple years.

You made Maya a Beatles compilation album for her 13th birthday, which found its way into a scene in "Boyhood" (2014). How did that happen?

I was telling that story to Rick and he was like, "Oh! We should put that in the movie!" That project was one of the high-water marks of my professional life: to do such an experimental film that's so deeply personal to all of us, and then having it find its way into the national zeitgeist. It keeps you idealistic that making strange films can make a difference.

Richard Linklater is shooting a movie musical of Stephen Sondheim's "Merrily We Roll Along" over the next 20 years. Was 12 years making "Boyhood" not enough for him?

(Laughs.) That's funny. Through a friend, I had met Sondheim at a party

and he was obsessed with what kind of rehearsal process went into the "Before" trilogy. He really wanted to understand how those movies were made, and he asked such micro-questions that I was like, "You should meet Richard Linklater." Then when "Boyhood" came out, they met and it was really Sondheim who was talking Rick into doing ("Merrily"). Rick is a secret Sondheim fanatic, so that's going to be one of the most anticipated movies of the next 20 years!

Have there been any recent discussions about a fourth "Before" movie?

That trilogy feels complete to us. There was certainly a moment where we all considered, "Wait, is there a pandemic movie with (our characters) Jesse and Celine?" That didn't happen, but it would've been interesting. If there were another movie, maybe we'd start another trilogy of their later years.

"Dead Poets Society" was released 35 years ago. Looking back, what kind of support was Robin Williams to you as a young actor starting out?

He got me my first agent, who's still my agent today, so I'm incredibly indebted to him. It's only now that I realize how indebted I am to that whole project. It really shaped my life, and it showed me how a movie can interact with the public over time and speak multi-generationally. When you're driving to set at 4 a.m. learning your lines, it's thrilling to think, "Oh, this is worth the effort."

You recently reunited with "Dead Poets" co-star Josh Charles for the "Fortnite" music video. Were you surprised to get a call from Taylor Swift?

Definitely. Maya has been going to her concerts for years – I think she was like 14 the first time we went. So (Josh and I) were both very surprised, but it was very flattering.



Millie Gibson is Ruby Sunday and Ncuti Gatwa is The Doctor in a 1960s-set episode of "Doctor Who." PROVIDED BY DISNEY+

Doctor Who

Continued from Page 1B

is keenly aware that we live in dark, challenging times, and he wants the series to reflect that with pointed references to political topics including abortion and LGBTQ+ rights. "Attacks on drag queens ... We just see the waves coming. And obviously, that's my world," says Davies, a gay man who frequently makes television about queer characters. "I will always have something to say about that."

Also keeping the show grounded in the present day are Gatwa and Gibson, a young and giddy pairing giving big Gen Z energy, even if Gatwa, 31, is slightly older.

"I would hope that my Doctor is a Doctor for all generations," Gatwa says. "Energy is what fuels the Doctor. We describe the relationship (between the Doctor and Ruby) as energetic and fast, which feels quite youthful."

Gatwa spent years playing a teen in "Education," a teen comedy about an amateur high school sex therapist, and has made his mark on the fashion world with bold red carpet looks, including a metal breastplate (he was shirtless underneath) at this year's Vanity Fair Oscars party. He has a

strong sense of style just like the 15th Doctor, the first Time Lord in quite a while to change costumes frequently.

"I've done Doctors who stayed in the same suit for years on end, and I was beginning to think, it's odd that they never change clothes. It is surprising that I wanted that before we cast Ncuti," Davies says. "Quite by chance, we've cast a man who's one of the world's greatest clothes horses. He looks beautiful in anything."

Davies said he also was inspired by the fans who intricately re-create the Doctor's costumes as cosplay at conventions. "If there's such joy in cosplay in diving deep, let's give them a great big swimming pool."

Gatwa shares Davies' enthusiasm for the Doctor's "fashion forward" outfits – trips to the Regency era and the '60s were his particular favorites – but says the Doctor's onscreen looks don't reflect his own personal style.

"I certainly share a sense of loving clothes with the Doctor. But no, our styles are very different. The Doctor is very eclectic. He can wear anything. Maybe one day there will be a Venn diagram between the pair of us, but not at the moment."

Does that mean the Doctor will be rocking exposed midriffs and metal breastplates in the future? Cosplayers can only dream.

MONEYLINE



STEFANI REYNOLDS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

DELTA, SOUTHWEST TOP SATISFACTION SURVEY

Delta Air Lines and Southwest Airlines received top marks in J.D. Power's North American airlines customer satisfaction survey for 2024. The firm's results, announced Wednesday, noted that airlines investing in their staff are seeing more satisfied customers despite higher airfares compared with a year ago. According to the survey, passengers' main priorities are getting to their destinations easily and safely. J.D. Power conducted its survey between March 2023 and March 2024, polling 9,582 passengers who traveled on a major North American airline during that period. Delta Air Lines scored highest in both the first/business class and premium economy segments. Southwest Airlines kept its position as the preferred economy carrier for the third year in a row.



PROVIDED BY NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE

NORWEGIAN OFFERS CRUISE DISCOUNTS TO TEACHERS

Norwegian Cruise Line is offering teachers a deal on their next vacation. The cruise line launched a new cruise discount for teachers this week, giving educators and related staff 5% off their fare and a \$50 onboard credit. The year-round offer comes as Norwegian marks the return of its Giving Joy campaign. Norwegian Cruise Line President David J. Herrera said, "We are excited to not only award 20 teachers on the fifth-year anniversary of Norwegian's Giving Joy program with a free vacation aboard the soon-to-debut Norwegian Aqua, but to also extend the recognition ... with our new Teacher Cruise Discount." The discount applies to active pre-K-12th grade classroom teachers, principals, assistant principals, school employees and college or university professors.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT TO CLAIM 2020 TAX REFUNDS

More than \$1 billion in refunds are waiting to be claimed, but you only have a week to do so, the IRS says. There are almost 940,000 people across the country, who have yet to file their 2020 taxes – as well as claim a refund for that tax year. The median refund amount from the remaining 2020 taxes is likely around \$932, according to the IRS. The official deadline to submit your tax return is Friday, May 17, according to the IRS.

FDA MAY BAN SOLVENT USED TO MAKE DECAF COFFEE

Your morning (or evening) cup of coffee may see some slight changes if a proposed rule from the Food and Drug Administration is adopted. Regulators are considering a rule that would ban the use of methylene chloride, a solvent used to decaffeinate coffee beans. The CDC says exposure to the solvent can cause drowsiness, dizziness, numbness and nausea. But coffee consumers are exposed to a low amount of the chemical. Currently, the FDA allows for concentrations of methylene chloride below 10 parts per million on the surface of the beans.

AI travel planners still not ready to replace humans

Some users are wary of its safety, expertise

Eve Chen
USA TODAY

It wasn't so long ago that travelers planned trips without the internet. "Back in the day, our parents used to go to these travel agents and really kind of express what they were looking for and what kind of vacation they wanted," said Saad Saeed, co-founder and CEO of Layla, an AI travel planner whose website launched this year. "Slowly, we kind of acclimatized ourselves to start using these search boxes, clicks, these forms and filters." Artificial intelligence-driven tools like Layla can now turn back the clock on that experience, engaging with users almost like humans to customize travel plans with lightning speed plus

all the resources of the web. But does AI actually make travel planning easier and can it compare to human expertise? Yes and no. Here's why.

Can AI actually understand us?

It can try. "What are you personally looking for in this trip and what do you want out of it?" asked Saeed. "Do you want to reconnect with your partner, for example, or do you want to just feel some adventure and thrill?"

A human travel agent may ask a series of questions to understand a client's needs. So can generative AI, which picks up on keywords. Mindtrip, an AI planner launched publicly on May 1, has an actual travel quiz that asks users to rank priorities like "Is your ideal vacation day an exhilarating adventure or a relaxing break?" using sliding scales.

"What we get at the end of that quiz,

using the AI, is a really customized description," explained Mindtrip Founder and CEO Andy Moss. That then informs what the AI suggests to the traveler.

Informed suggestions can save users time in narrowing down destinations and experiences, as well as introduce places users may never have discovered on their own.

Can AI fully replace humans?

No. Layla may sound human, using conversational phrases like "I've got three cozy nests that won't make your wallet cry."

"She has a personality. We try to make her funny and so on, where it's really that friend that can get to know you and then recommend you the perfect stuff," Saeed said.

But part of Layla's expertise comes

See AI PLANNERS, Page 6B



Uniworld Boutique River Cruises offers a family-friendly Generations Collection.

PROVIDED BY UNIWORLD BOUTIQUE RIVER CRUISES

JOY AND EASE OF A WINDING JOURNEY

Bypass crowds, tourist traps in Europe by traveling via river cruise

Nathan Diller USA TODAY

Europe has no shortage of marquee tourist hot spots, but Diamond Meadows' first river cruise there didn't include them. • The 28-year-old graduate student took a cruise along the Rhine and Moselle rivers that took her to such cities as Koblenz and Trier in Germany (she supplemented the sailing with train travel around Austria, Switzerland and elsewhere). • Meadows was traveling with her mom and her mom's boss, who uses a wheelchair. The group chose the CroisiEurope Cruises sailing for the ease of sailing with a mobility device. But she discovered other upsides.

"It takes you exactly into the heart of the city," said Meadows, who is based in Tennessee. Their roughly 160-guest vessel offered convenient drop-offs in smaller destinations, allowing them "to access so much more." • Many European destinations were packed with tourists last summer. But river cruises in the continent can offer a more laid-back way to travel with small ships visiting a mix of popular and less-crowded ports.

Are river cruises better than ocean cruises?

Jen Campbell Boles, founder of the travel agency Explore More Fam-

ily Travel, said that while cruising in general is a "great value for seeing Europe," river sailings are particularly immersive. "One quote we always use in the travel industry is, 'Ocean cruise liners take you to the destination, river cruises take us through the destination,'" she said.

Passengers visit not only major cities but also quaint villages and often disembark within walking distance of attractions. When they are done exploring, they return to a ship with an average of 150 guests.

"It's more intimate, it's cozier," said Campbell Boles. "You're not fighting the crowds, obviously."

See CRUISE, Page 6B



Diamond Meadows took a river cruise through Europe.

PROVIDED BY DIAMOND MEADOWS

"One quote we always use in the travel industry is, 'Ocean cruise liners take you to the destination, river cruises take us through the destination.'"

Jen Campbell Boles
Founder of the travel agency Explore More Family Travel

AI planners

Continued from Page 5B

from the real-life experiences of some 1,600 travel content creators the Berlin-based platform has partnered with. Their videos and insights can give users a richer picture of what to expect.

Mindtrip also leans on human expertise, having tapped a limited group of travel influencers for curated content with plans to eventually open it up so anyone can share their travel itineraries and experiences with the public.

Is AI a threat to privacy?

With all the rapid advancements in AI in just the past year, some users are wary of its safety.

“Data privacy is definitely one of our biggest concerns, and we ensure that none of the personal identifiable information ever reaches basically the model providers. That will all stay with us,” Layla’s Saeed said. “None of their personally identifiable data can ever be basically used to profile them or basically go into any of these systems, which are training these different models.”

Booz Allen Hamilton, the nation’s largest provider of AI to the federal government, focuses heavily on ethical and secure AI, as well as adhering to the government’s policies on data collection.

“We collect as little information as we can in order to provide a secure transaction,” said Booz Allen Hamilton Senior Vice President Will Healy, who heads up their recreation work, including Recreation.gov, the government’s central travel planning site for public lands like national parks. “We don’t save your searches. We don’t save your credit card data. We’re very careful about the data that we store.”

“I don’t see, at this point, how AI-generated advice is spiritually different from travel guide articles that you might read on certain websites.”

Yoon Kim

An assistant professor in MIT’s Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department and Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory

Yoon Kim, an assistant professor in MIT’s Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department and Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, isn’t too worried about security in the initial brainstorming stages of travel planning with AI.

“I don’t see, at this point, how AI-generated advice is spiritually different from travel guide articles that you might read on certain websites,” he said. “Travel planning is one really nice use case of these models, as narrow as it is, because it’s a scenario in which you want to be given ideas but you don’t actually need to commit to them.”

What’s next for AI?

Things could be different, though, if AI is used beyond trip planning. Deloitte sees AI being woven into all parts of travel.

“There is an opportunity for a real engine – I’m going to just use a generic term, engine – that allows you to search and pull it all together and to sort based off of your personal reasons for prioritization and then not stopping at ‘hey give me a list’ or ‘here’s what to do,’ but ‘OK, now go create my itinerary, help me book it, track it all the way through that travel process,’” said Matt Soderberg, principal, U.S. airlines leader for Deloitte.

Deloitte’s Facing Traveler’s future report, released in early April, identifies seven stages where AI can intersect with a trip, from personalized recommendations based on past travel, online purchases and tendencies to day-of issues to a post-travel pulse, where travelers may be asked about their experience and start thinking about future trips.

“When you solve across all of those, that’s going to be the Holy Grail,” Soderberg said. “The difficulty is that doesn’t all sit in one place. And so how do you get the right information and the right data to bring all of that together for a single experience for the consumer? And who’s going to own that?”

Layla and Mindtrip, among others, already offer booking through partners like Booking.com. “It’s all about making things actionable,” Moss said.



An aerial image of the coastline the proposed project will be built on. PROVIDED BY BLACK SAND BEACH LLC

Hawaii’s most famous black sand beach could soon be a private resort

Kathleen Wong

USA TODAY

A proposed development that would transform one of Hawaii’s most famous black sand beaches into a new resort area – including condos, tennis courts, and a conference center – is facing backlash from the Native Hawaiian community.

Punaluu Black Sand Beach, one of about 20 black sand beaches in the world, is located along the southeastern coast of Hawaii Island in the Kau district.

On any given day, tourists swarm the beach, parking illegally along the road. It’s one of the few places in the world where endangered hawksbill sea turtles, who are extremely sensitive to light and noise pollution, nest.

Named Punaluu Village, the planned mixed-use development spearheaded by Black Sand Beach LLC, was formed from the acquisition of the 434 acres by Eva Liu, hailing from California, in 2020.

The project defines itself as a “low-density 225-unit project” – downsized from its original plan of 2,900 accommodation units due to community feedback.

The new development aims to be “a learning and living space for the community,” according to Black Sand Beach LLC.

Black Sand Beach LLC told USA TODAY it has invested over \$1 million in restoring the land, such as removing rubbish, vegetation growth, and existing infrastructure left over from the initial development project in the late 1960s. The project was passed from developer to developer until 2006 when it was ownerless and fell into “terrible shape of

disrepair,” the company said.

“Disturbed by the lack of local initiatives to revive the area, Eva felt an undeniable duty to intervene,” Black Sand Beach LLC said.

For some Native Hawaiians who have lived in Kau for as long as they can trace their genealogy, the new development threatens the sacredness of Punaluu. “Our lahui (group) from Punaluu have been the stewards of this place,” said Maxx Phillips, Hawaii director and staff attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity, which filed a legal intervention in March opposing the development from receiving its permits.

Along with the restoration of some pre-existing facilities – such as a condominium, restaurant, golf course, tennis courts, a boat ramp and education center – the developer plans to build a wellness center, a two-and-a-half-story condominium, more commercial shops, a marketplace, a conference center with cabin retreats and parking facilities.

Over 100 community members shared their testimony at a public hearing on March 7. A special hearing is set for Monday.

“When you threaten to destroy the landscape, it’s like a threat to the family because our land is our ohana (family),” said Nohealani Kaawa, whose family has lived in Kau for many generations. The people of Kau are deeply connected to the land – certain places named in Kau and moolelo (stories) are named after the families.

It’s also a literal connection – many of their ancestors are buried where the golf course was first built.

“On a personal level, for me, our ancestors are buried there at Punaluu,” Kaawa said. “No matter where they build in their development plan, they’re

going to uproot the bones of our ancestors and that’s the biggest disrespect you can do for the kanaka maoli of Hawaii (Native Hawaiian people) is to expose their iwi kupuna (ancestral remains) to the sun. That kind of disrespect is as real as being physically assaulted or having someone spit directly into your face.”

Along with cultural concerns, the community has stated environmental concerns and that the analysis Black Sand Beach LLC is using for its development plans is decades-old and outdated, not accounting for issues like overtourism.

The development would impact the nesting of hawksbill sea turtles, Phillips said, and the area is already suffering from a failing wastewater system that leaks into the ocean and has yet to be repaired.

“They haven’t even met the kuleana (responsibility) that they already have,” Phillips said.

Black Sand Beach LLC said its development is the “smallest footprint necessary” to bring money into the local economy and “care for these lands in a responsible manner.” The corporation said the development will be built at least a fifth of a mile away from the shoreline as well as move all commercial activity and parking off the beach to protect the turtles. Plans also include restoring the native fishing ponds and native vegetation.

The community is torn over the new development. Some residents are in support of the development, stating it will help create “much-needed” jobs and “rejuvenate” Kau.

“It’s been really sad to watch,” said Kaawa. “It’s not just the community they’re dividing, it’s families.”

Cruise

Continued from Page 5B

That was part of the draw for Jim Jones, 57, who took Avalon Waterways river cruises with his wife in 2011 and 2014.

“The smaller cities were an attraction,” said Jones, who is based in Phoenix and works for a software company. He enjoyed visiting Avignon in the south of France, for example, which was once the seat of the papacy. “I’m a total history geek,” he said. On their first cruise, he recalled, “just about every town” they visited had a farmers’ market, allowing them to sample local food.

Unlike ocean cruise ships, with their large casinos and plentiful bars, on-board “it was very relaxed and a much slower pace.”

River cruise vessels tend to have “less bells and whistles,” Campbell Boles said (though she added that guests get a more personalized experience as a result of their small size).

Adam Duckworth, president and founder of Travelmation, echoed that. He said the cruises are less about the ship than where it’s going. “This is truly an experience about itineraries.”

Are European river cruises cheaper than land-based trips?

While travelers can find land-based accommodations that are less expen-

sive than river cruises, there are other factors to consider.

River cruises tend to bundle more costs, such as alcohol in the fare, than a mainstream ocean cruise line, Duckworth said (though exact policies vary by line). At least one excursion per day is typically included, as well, Campbell Boles added.

She said demand for Europe is still “through the roof” and land-based pricing is particularly high. “Even if you’re staying in the highest category stateroom or suite, you’re spending less than an equivalent hotel,” she said.

Transportation from one destination to another is also built into a river cruise, whereas travelers might have to take a train or make other arrangements to visit a mix of places. “I mean that really adds up in Europe, so this is a great way to see a lot more variety,” Campbell Boles said.

Passengers can also add pre- and post-cruise stays, allowing them to “get the best of both worlds.”

“What we say is that a river cruise oftentimes can be a premium product,” added Duckworth. “But for what you’re experiencing – the comfort, the (lower) stress, the luxurious experience on board – we find it to be actually the best value through Europe from our experience.”

Are European river cruises kid-friendly?

Since river cruises require a certain

amount of free time – most are at least seven days long – they have tended to be popular with older guests, according to Duckworth.

But in the past couple of years, he has noticed more multigenerational travel in the sector. “We’re seeing grandparents bring their grandkids, we’re seeing young professionals go on a river in Europe for the first time,” Duckworth said.

Some operators have offerings that are particularly well-suited to younger guests. Adventures by Disney offers river cruises with AmaWaterways, and Uniworld Boutique River Cruises has a Generations Collection.

Even if programming is curated with kids in mind, though, Duckworth cautioned that river cruise vessels don’t offer the same breadth of amenities as large ocean ships.

“If your kids want to go to a waterpark and they want to go on a FlowRider and they want to play putt-putt all day, there are great lines for you, but a European river cruise is probably not one of them currently,” he said.

Some lines also don’t allow kids or have varying age requirements, so it’s important to do some research beforehand.

For those going for the first time, Campbell Boles suggested starting with a cruise on the Danube or Rhine since they are “kind of the most iconic.”

“I mean, it’s Europe,” she added. “It’s going to be great no matter what river you go on.”

Tips on how to use AI to plan travel trips

Kayak and Expedia just latest to offer AI tools

Eve Chen
USA TODAY

Where should I go on vacation this summer?

The question is simple enough, but the possibilities are endless.

"Feeling adventurous or more like chilling by the beach with a drink in hand?" Layla replies to narrow the list.

Chilling by the beach sounds nice. "Alright, for that laid-back beach vibe, how about Santorini with its iconic sunsets or Ao Nang for some Thai beach bliss? Pick your paradise!" she suggested.

Only she is not really a "she." Layla is an AI travel planner whose website launched this year, among a growing number of artificial intelligence-driven tools for travel.

Just over 50% of 1,400 people recently surveyed by Matador Network, a travel publisher and creator of AI travel assistant GuideGeek, said they're open to using AI for their summer travel. A previous Matador Network survey found 64% of 1,200 travelers surveyed had already used or planned to use AI for trip planning.

Here's what travelers should know about planning trips with AI.

How common is AI today?

Many people associate AI with large language models like ChatGPT, which can both recognize and generate text, but that's just one type of AI.

"AI is generally everywhere," said Yoon Kim, an assistant professor in MIT's Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department and Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. "For example, when you search for something – let's say you search for something on TripAdvisor, Hotels.com – there is likely an AI-based system that gives you a list of matches based on your query."

"Because a lot of the (online travel

agencies) have now integrated different types of Gen AI into their platforms ... people may be using them without their knowledge," echoed Matt Soderberg, principal, U.S. airlines leader for Deloitte, which named AI as a major theme in changing travel in its Facing travel's future report released in early April.

Kayak and Expedia offer AI travel tools. Google has used AI for years for search. Those familiar "People Also Ask" questions are powered by AI. Google Flights uses machine learning, a type of AI. AI also powers Google Maps' Immersive View, which gives users a navigable fly-over view of 13 cities and more than 500 global landmarks that users can zoom in on like in a video game, with weather and crowd forecasts for different times of day.

Early this year, Google introduced generative AI to multisearch queries made with Google Lens. That allows users to take a photo of something and couple it with text questions like "What kind of flower is this?" or "Who painted this and why?" to get AI-generated answers based on data from across the web and links to additional sources.

How do I plan a trip with AI?

Planning travel with AI is typically free, but travelers may need to create platform-specific accounts to access enhanced features or ask more than a few initial queries.

Google account holders can get generative AI results in text-only search bar searches if they opt in to Search Generative Experience, which is part of Google's experimental Search Labs. Opting in to SGE allows them to ask things like "Plan me a 2-day solo trip to Grand Teton National Park" and not only get a suggested itinerary but related photos, reviews and links to other resources.

For Day 1 at Grand Teton, Google suggested a morning hike at Schwabacher Landing "to see the Grand Tetons reflected in the river," an afternoon visit to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Elk Refuge, and dinner at a local Italian restaurant with photos of each destination, links to their websites, pins show-

ing locations on Google Maps, suggestions for where to stay, space for follow up questions, and links to related questions like "Is 2 days enough for Grand Teton National Park?"

Just above the sample itinerary, read a disclaimer: "Generative AI is experimental" and below it: "Trip ideas generated with AI may include inaccurate or misleading information. Confirm info with sources you trust."

For the same prompt, both ChatGPT and GuideGeek – which can be messaged on social media like a person – offered more suggestions of things to do, as well as reminders to check on trail closures, but no specific recommendations on where to eat or stay, nor photos nor links to find more information on any of the destinations. Layla and Mindtrip, an AI travel planner that launched publicly this week, also included links to various points of interest, hotel suggestions, and the ability to adjust and book different parts of the itinerary through partnerships with third parties. Mindtrip allows multiple people within the same travel party to collaborate on itineraries.

Can AI be trustworthy?

Asking one AI travel planner for the top 10 snacks at Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom, among classics like Dole Whip and Corn Dog Nuggets, it suggested Mickey-shaped beignets. Those would certainly be a top snack if they were sold in the park, like at Disneyland. However Disney World guests have to go to Disney's Port Orleans Resort - French Quarter for sweet Mickey-shaped pillows of fried dough.

"This phenomena goes under the moniker hallucinations. These generative AI systems are prone to hallucinating plausible-sounding text that's actually factually incorrect," MIT's Kim explained. "This is, I think, going to be sort of an inherent problem with systems that probabilistically generate output over large spaces."

"If the LLM recommends a restaurant closed down two years ago, you lose all trust immediately," said Mindtrip

Founder and CEO Andy Moss. That's why they, and Layla, also rely on human intelligence for recommendations.

Kim noted there are ongoing efforts to mitigate against hallucinations but suggested double-checking AI-generated answers.

"We want to make sure that that information is usable, that it's actionable. It's clear, it's repeatable," said Will Healy, senior vice president at Booz Allen Hamilton, the largest provider of AI to the federal government. He heads up the company's recreation work, including Recreation.gov, the government's central travel planning site for public lands like national parks.

What can AI be used for?

Currently, most Recreation.gov visitors use progressive search to discover and book things like campsites, checking off boxes and reading information provided by the land manager. However, 25% of randomly selected users are being offered more personalized AI-powered options as part of a beta test with AI.

"What we're beta testing at the moment are things where you can say, 'Hey, I've got three kids. This is our first time camping. We want to go some place that's fun. My kids love the water. We want to try hiking, and my youngest son likes fishing, but he's not very good at it,'" Healy said.

"If you were talking to somebody who knew everything about every campsite, then what answer would they give you? That's what we think artificial intelligence can do," he added. "And it's not just the data that's in the system, but it's all of the reviews and blogs and everything's out there in the public domain that you can pull different pieces together, put together into a contextual answer."

If AI is able to understand a traveler's intent, Healy said it could also suggest alternative destinations or experiences if something a traveler wants is booked up or otherwise not available. He said it could also help make public lands more accessible to more people.

You can walk among giants at this national park

Eve Chen
USA TODAY

People all over the world watched with rapt attention in 2021 as a wildfire threatened to engulf the world's largest tree. Firefighters carefully wrapped the base of the General Sherman Tree in shiny, protective blanketing as flames drew closer at Sequoia National Park.

Ultimately, the roughly 275-foot-tall icon was spared, but other giant sequoias weren't so lucky. Redwood Mountain Grove in neighboring Kings Canyon National Park "lost an estimated 974 to 1,574 large sequoias," according to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, which are managed jointly.

"Given the amount of giant sequoias that were lost in the last few years – almost 20% of the entire giant sequoia population was lost in a short amount of time – we're not feeling as confident as we were just a few years ago about these trees really being around for generations and generations to come," said Sintia Kawasaki-Yee, chief of Communications and Management Support for both parks in California. "We really want to bring attention to their mortality."

That's not the only thing Sequoia visitors should know.

What is so special about Sequoia National Park?

Sequoia protects some of the largest trees in the world and a wide array of habitats.

"I would say the most special feature is that you enter at about, I want to say, 1,600 feet of elevation and within about a 45-minute span, you're able to reach 6,500 feet, which is a huge elevation gain in a really small amount of miles," said Kawasaki-Yee. "You come in in the foothills area. In the spring, we have really great wildflowers. We have the river. We have great access there year-round, but if you drive just 45 minutes into Giant Forest, you get to see the change in the terrain and wildlife."

Visitors can feel the change too, as temperatures dip and winds whip higher up, so pack accordingly.

Is the General Sherman Tree the tallest tree in the world?

No. It's not the tallest tree in the



Firefighters wrap the General Sherman Tree in protective material amid wildfire threat in 2021. PROVIDED BY ELIZABETH WU/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

world. That title belongs to Hyperion, a coast redwood at Redwood National Park, according to Guinness World Records.

But the General Sherman Tree is the largest by volume, with a trunk volume of 52,508 cubic feet, according to the park.

Can you touch the General Sherman Tree?

No. "The Sherman Tree is fenced off, so you cannot touch it, but there are many other sequoias in that same area that you can definitely walk up to and touch," said Kawasaki-Yee.

She recommends feeling their fibrous bark, which she noted is softer to the touch than one might expect.

"Feel free to hug a tree, connect with a tree," she added. "That connection is really important to really build that connection for people and hopefully that commitment to protect these trees in the long term."

Which park is better, Redwood or Sequoia?

"They're basically siblings, and so it's like comparing your kids," Patrick Tay-

lor, Interpretation and Education manager for the National Park Service at Redwood, told USA TODAY in April. "You love them both for slightly different reasons."

He explained that giant sequoias tend to have more volume to them.

"So they're bigger in the sense that they usually have a wider base, and they don't taper off as fast," he said. "The coastal redwoods are usually a little taller and a little more slender."

Is Sequoia National Park free?

No. Most visitors will have to pay a flat \$35 vehicle entrance fee that covers access to both Sequoia and Kings Canyon.

Certain groups are eligible for free entry to all national parks, namely military service members, veterans, Gold Star families, U.S. citizens and permanent residents with permanent disabilities, and fourth graders and their families.

Can you just drive through Sequoia National Park?

Yes. "You can actually do both parks in one drive," said Kawasaki-Yee. "A lot

of people that are doing road trips will drive through both parks on the same day or the same trip."

The park is located about a 1 1/2 hour drive from Fresno. Fresno Yosemite International Airport is the nearest commercial airport.

What is the best time of year to visit Sequoia National Park?

Kawasaki-Yee recommends visiting in the spring or fall to avoid summer crowds and winter road closures.

"Maybe right before Memorial Day weekend, so you don't get the crowds but you still get access to the areas," she suggested.

Can I stay inside Sequoia National Park?

Yes.

The park offers a variety of on-site camping and lodging, though some lodges, operated by third parties, are only open seasonally.

Who are the Indigenous people of the area?

"Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are the homelands of the Mono (Monache), Yokuts, Tübatulabal, Paiute, and Western Shoshone," according to the parks' website, which lists the following affiliated federally recognized tribes:

- Big Pine Band of Owens Valley Paiute Shoshone Indians
- Big Sandy Rancheria Band of Western Mono Indians
- Bishop Paiute Tribe
- Bridgeport Indian Colony
- Cold Springs Rancheria
- Fort Independence Indian Community of Paiute Indians
- Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
- North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians
- Paiute-Shoshone Indians of the Lone Pine Community
- Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians
- Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi-Yokut Tribe
- Table Mountain Rancheria
- Tejon Indian Tribe
- Tule River Tribe
- Utu Uu Gwaitu Paiute Tribe of the Benton Paiute Reservation

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Montgomery: The Alabama Supreme Court has authorized the nitrogen hypoxia execution of Alan Eugene Miller, setting the stage for the state to have at least four executions this year. Miller's execution would be the second carried out using nitrogen gas, the Alabama Attorney General's office says.

ALASKA Juneau: Oil and gas producers Santos and Repsol are exploring a sale of a minority stake in oil fields in Alaska they jointly own and develop in a deal that could be worth about \$1 billion, according to people familiar with the matter.

ARIZONA Phoenix: More schools could soon stock overdose reversal medications to combat the growing fentanyl crisis, the Arizona Department of Education announced. A task force of educators, health care professionals and law enforcement officers will meet in the coming months to determine how to implement a new initiative to supply schools with naloxone, said Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne.

ARKANSAS Little Rock: The attorneys general of Arkansas and Missouri announced that they, along with four other states, have filed a lawsuit challenging the Biden administration's new rules on Title IX.

CALIFORNIA Long Beach: The city has declared a public health emergency on the heels of an outbreak of tuberculosis that has left at least nine people hospitalized and one person dead.

COLORADO Denver: Colorado appears poised to change who staffs its 988 crisis support hotline, which could result in 330 layoffs at the nonprofit that staffs it now.

CONNECTICUT Hartford: The Senate voted for final passage of Democratic legislation that will expand Connecticut's groundbreaking, if limited, paid sick days mandate into a nearly universal benefit by Jan. 1, 2027, The CT Mirror reported. Gov. Ned Lamont pledged to the sign the bill as a reasonable standard for ensuring that workers need not choose between lost wages or working while ill.

DELAWARE Dover: Two men have been arrested for allegedly killing a young woman who was shot in the head last month on Delaware State University's main campus, police said.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: Police cleared a pro-Palestinian protest encampment at George Washington University early Wednesday morning and arrested 33 people, weeks after police refused an earlier request by the university to get involved.

FLORIDA Sarasota: Ringling College of Art and Design is launching a new Artificial Intelligence Undergraduate Certificate program, the first of its kind at an art and design college. The program aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the complex impact of AI on creative industries of all kinds.

GEORGIA Atlanta: A strip club had its safes cut into when two masked burglars entered the business through the ceiling and stole a quarter of a million dollars, police said.

HAWAII Honolulu: Hawaii state officials are investigating two cruise ships that sailed illegally close to Kauai's protected Na Pali Coastline, according to an emailed statement by the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

IDAHO Coeur d'Alene: An 18-year-old man shouted a racial slur at members of the Utah women's basketball team this spring but will not face criminal charges, a city prosecutor in Coeur d'Alene wrote in a decision.

ILLINOIS Springfield: The United States Postal Service has approved changing Springfield's Packaging and Distribution Center into a Local Processing Center, moving mail processing outside of the state to operations in St. Louis, Missouri.

INDIANA Indianapolis: Indiana residents over the age of 60 lost nearly \$26.5 million to fraud and scams last year, according to the FBI's annual Elder Fraud Report. The multimillion-dollar losses are attributable to roughly 1,170 cases in which Indiana senior citizens fell victim to financial exploitation due to fraud involving illegal call centers, extortion, investment schemes, identity theft and data breaches, romance scams and other crimes.

HIGHLIGHT: SOUTH DAKOTA



Harrisburg High School students show the assembled electric car they built in their auto shop class. SAMANTHA LAUREY/USA TODAY NETWORK

Harrisburg: Harrisburg High School students in the Tiger Stripes Garage automotive shop get a one-of-a-kind learning experience for a couple weeks each semester: building and rebuilding an electric car from scratch. The Harrisburg School District is one of the first school districts in the state to offer this unique curriculum to students. The school received the car disassembled in about 40 different boxes in September by way of a \$50,000 Perkins Reserve Grant awarded by the South Dakota Department of Education from American Rescue Plan funds in March last year.

IOWA Des Moines: Powerful storms that sparked tornadoes across Iowa last month brought rainfall that's helped move half the state out of drought, a new report shows.

KANSAS Topeka: A man convicted of a May 2021 Topeka murder was sentenced to life in prison, with no chance for parole until he's served 51 years and eight months.

KENTUCKY Louisville: After initially failing, Jefferson County Board of Education members voted in favor of the first bell schedule scenario provided by district leaders, which moves the start times of nearly 50 schools. Starting in August, all schools will start at 7:30, 8:40 or 9:40 a.m. – rather than operating under the current system of nine different start times.

LOUISIANA Baton Rouge: Louisiana lawmakers closed the door on rape and incest abortion exceptions for pregnant children for at least another year and also rejected efforts to add protections for doctors from prosecution and clarifications for medically futile pregnancies.

MAINE Augusta: Maine Department of Health and Human Services announced that the department's commissioner will be stepping down at the end of this month, News Center Maine reported.

MARYLAND Annapolis: Three Maryland environmental groups announced plans to file a lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency for failure to abide by conditions in the Clean Water Act.

MASSACHUSETTS Worcester: The Worcester Public Schools is facing a projected \$22 million budget deficit, which represents about 4% of the approved budget, for the 2024-25 school year. The deficit means reductions and adjustments will be necessary for schools, Superintendent Rachel Monárrez said.

MICHIGAN Grand Rapids: Michigan State University and a strength and conditioning coach have settled a federal lawsuit that alleged "discriminatory treatment" by the university.

MINNESOTA Princeton: Two people and a dog were killed when a mobile home exploded.

MISSISSIPPI Starkville: Would you hop on or off a shuttle if you knew there was no driver? Mississippi State University students and others on campus might have the opportunity to find out. The university is starting a pilot program to see if the autonomous shuttles complement its other transportation modes, which include buses, bicycles and scooters.

MISSOURI Columbia: A soft, self-charging material being developed by a team at the University of Missouri may soon be used in clothing that monitors an individual's vital signs. And it's machine-washable.

MONTANA Helena: Montana House Speaker Matt Regier called for a special session to address immigration and state marijuana tax distribution in a letter sent to the secretary of state, The Daily Montanan reported.

NEBRASKA Lincoln: Garner Industries announced that the company is laying off nearly half of its workforce after its facility was destroyed by a recent tornado, Lincoln Journal Star reported.

NEVADA Carson City: Nevada's health care system ranks 41st overall of the 50 states and District of Columbia, according to a report detailing disparities in health care and wellness across racial and ethnic groups, Nevada Current reported. The care afforded to white residents ranks at 39th in the nation, says the report. Nevada ranks 35th for health services available to Black residents and 36th for services available to Hispanic people. The care provided to Asian American and Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islander residents ranked 25th – the state's highest ranking in the study.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Portsmouth: The owner of Portsmouth Water Taxi will be allowed to pick up and drop off passengers at the city-owned Peirce Island.

NEW JERSEY Trenton: New Jersey hospitals rebounded in the latest patient safety scores, ranking the state third in the nation in the percentage of hospitals that received an "A" grade by reducing the number of preventable medical errors, accidents, injuries and infections.

NEW MEXICO Santa Fe: Reparations for New Mexicans impacted by nuclear weapons testing could be held up in the GOP-led House of Representatives after the U.S. Senate passed a bill in March to provide payments to those suffering health impacts tied to the tests.

NEW YORK Rochester: A fake school vaccination scheme left scores of children in Western New York unknowingly exposed to classmates without mandatory shots for serious diseases, including measles, polio and whooping cough.

NORTH CAROLINA Asheville: Despite recently losing their case less than two months ago in the North Carolina Supreme Court, plaintiffs attempting to stop the city's removal of the Vance Monument have filed another lawsuit looking to save the once-prominent marker to a Confederate governor.

NORTH DAKOTA West Fargo: A bird rescue announced that it is closed indefinitely after a parrot was confirmed to be infected with a highly contagious and potentially deadly disease, KVRN reported.

OHIO Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University announced a multimillion-dollar expansion and extension plan of one of its scholarship funds, which, if realized, would make it one of the largest gifts to a scholarship fund in state history. The Thompson Working Families Scholarship program is a public-private partnership between BGSU and the Thompson Foundation.

OKLAHOMA Oklahoma City: A judge in Oklahoma blocked a state law that prohibits state pension systems from contracting with companies that limit investment in the oil and gas industry.

OREGON Perrydale: An unknown red substance has been flowing through drainage ditches in the Perrydale area since a barn fire May 2, and residents are being warned to keep themselves, pets and livestock away.

PENNSYLVANIA Pittsburgh: A 26-year-old Pennsylvania man who pulled a gun on a pastor during a livestreamed Sunday church service is now charged with murder in a relative's death officials said took place earlier that same day.

RHODE ISLAND Providence: Legislation that would allow families to install surveillance cameras in nursing-home residents' rooms unanimously cleared the Senate.

SOUTH CAROLINA Columbia: Whooping cough cases have been reported in South Carolina with a rise from last year's numbers. According to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, the state has seen a total of 52 whooping cough cases in total in 2024. Last year, the state only reported a total of six cases.

TENNESSEE Memphis: Le Bonheur Children's Hospital officially opened a state-of-the-art, \$95 million expansion that ups the hospital's intensive care capacity and features technology that will position the hospital as one of few worldwide boasting innovative technology for young patients with cardiac complications. More specifically, the new expansion includes a hybrid lab that is equipped with both MRI technology and a "cath lab," short for cardiac catheterization. The hybrid lab is the first of its kind in Tennessee and one of a few in the U.S. and worldwide, said Le Bonheur President Trey Eubanks.

TEXAS Houston: A traveling carnival business owner in Texas is the latest to be accused of labor exploitation amid a surge in calls for worker protection reforms and child labor violations across the nation. Angel Reyes Isidro allegedly operated a carnival business with unauthorized workers, according to an indictment.

UTAH St. George: Officials seized 24 pounds of fentanyl pills, with an estimated \$1.6 million street value, during a traffic stop, KSL reported.

VERMONT Burlington: Monsignor John McDermott has been appointed by Pope Francis to become the 11th Bishop of Burlington, replacing former Bishop Christopher Coyne, who was appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Hartford, Connecticut, last October, together with Archbishop Leonard Blair.

VIRGINIA Yorktown: Running errands for your mom can sometimes become a tedious task, but a Virginia woman has no complaints after becoming \$50,000 richer. While on an errand run for her mom, Katelynne Berland of Yorktown was buying her mom lottery tickets at 7-Eleven when she decided to try her luck at the game. Berland bought her first \$1 lottery ticket for the Pick 5 day drawing on April 14, Virginia Lottery said.

WASHINGTON Bremerton: Morning commuters on the Seattle-Bremerton fast ferry route have been hit with a procession of sailing delays and cancellations, with missed sailings every weekday since May 1. Without a spare boat, the odds of delays are higher and Kitsap Transit confirmed that when one vessel returns to the route after maintenance another will be going under for the next week and a half.

WEST VIRGINIA Nitro: Officials announced that major projects on Interstate 64 could be completed by next year, WSAZ reported.

WISCONSIN Madison: Republicans on the state's powerful budget committee approved their own plan for how to spend money received from opioid settlements and again refused to take up funding for addressing PFAS in a meeting Tuesday. Debate focused on how the state would spend its third disbursement of funding from the opioid settlements – \$36 million in fiscal year 2025. The committee members reviewed a proposal from the Department of Health Services, keeping some suggestions while changing others.

WYOMING Cheyenne: An annual report shows the gray wolf population in the state is achieving all management goals, Wyoming Tribune Eagle reported.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports

MLB AFTER ONE QUARTER



Dodgers designated hitter Shohei Ohtani is the front-runner for the National League MVP Award. KIYOSHI MIO/USA TODAY SPORTS

Keeping pace on numbers game

Early eye-opening hitting, stealing, winning and losing feats worth tracking till October

Gabe Lacques USA TODAY

It's almost hard to believe, but on Wednesday the Padres passed the 40-game mark, putting roughly a quarter of their regular season in the books. Almost every MLB team will cross that threshold this weekend. • With that in mind, it's certainly not too early to dope out what's real, what's fake and what's sustainable among the wild and wonderful early paces. Check back in October to see if these spring sprints turned into autumn actuality (stats and records through Wednesday):

Shohei Ohtani: 46 homers, 108 extra-base hits

Hey, where else to start this exercise? Ohtani has astounded his Dodgers teammates, who saw plenty of his act when he was down the road in Anaheim yet did not fully grasp his capabilities – even as a one-way player – until he was decapitating baseballs from every square of the strike zone.

Even after going homerless in his first eight games as a Dodger, Ohtani remains on pace to equal his career high of 46 homers, set in his first American League MVP season of 2021.

That mark is in jeopardy: The weather will only get warmer, Ohtani's comfort level with his new team will grow and he'll be further removed from

the most distracting moments of a gambling/fraud scandal perpetrated by his former interpreter, which disrupted the start of his season.

But the extra-base total is astounding. Babe Ruth holds the record with 119 in 1921, when he played 152 games. There have been 13 seasons of 100 extra-base hits, and eight of those came in 1937 or earlier. The only five since 1948 came in the heart of the offense-fueled steroid era.

Ohtani's pace would put him third all time, behind Ruth and Lou Gehrig, and break Barry Bonds' National League record of 107, set in his 73-homer season of 2001.

Come October: A 50-100 season – HRs, extra-base hits – is within reach.

See MLB, Page 5C

After Derby, stakes at risk

Preakness skip trend is a warning for racing



Dan Wolken
Columnist
USA TODAY

Despite much of the gloom and doom that bubbles into the narrative any time horse racing takes the national stage, last weekend was an undeniably good one for the sport.

Television ratings for the 150th Kentucky Derby were the best since 1989, with a peak of more than 20 million people tuning in to watch the thrilling, three-horse photo finish with Mystik Dan beating Sierra Leone by a nose. The Derby drew a record \$198.3 million in wagers, with nearly \$320 million bet in total on the 14-race card at Churchill Downs.

And perhaps most important of all, the week went off without any breakdowns or horse deaths, which might be coincidence but could also be evidence that new federally mandated safety protocols implemented over the last year are working. We'll see.

The bottom line is that, despite racing's decline as a major mainstream sport, people still like watching and betting on horses – particularly around days that feel like big events.

But the elation surrounding Derby Day is about to again run into the sport's annual comedown: the Preakness.

That's not a shot at the race itself or even the notoriously dilapidated condition of Baltimore's Pimlico Race Course (more on that in a moment).

If horse racing were optimized to retain the interest of those 20 million

See WOLKEN, Page 5C



Mystik Dan trainer Ken McPeck said midweek that he doesn't know whether he'll run the Kentucky Derby winner in the Preakness.

JEFF FAUGHENDER/THE COURIER-JOURNAL

Optics, timing problematic as WNBA goes full charter



Lindsay Schnell
USA TODAY

Twenty-eight years after it should have happened, the WNBA announced Tuesday that it would charter to all regular-season games starting as soon as next week, giving the best women's basketball players in the world something they earned long ago but is often not acknowledged by their superiors: respect.

The news gives that old saying "better late than never" new meaning – most of the time when someone says that, they don't think "late" is going to be in reference to nearly three decades.

This is a "historic" move for the WNBA according to league Commissioner Cathy Engelbert, a huge step for a league that



Chelsea Gray and all other players in the WNBA will soar to different heights this season as the league will fund charters to games. ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

often acts like a start-up instead of a major player in the sports landscape. And while overdue, it's a major win.

Players are downright giddy knowing they'll be able to recover quicker after road games, and do so while prioritizing their privacy and safety. As WNBA agent Lindsay Kagawa Colas, who represents numerous top players, told USA TODAY Sports, this is "a great example of when doing the right thing for player health and safety is good for business."

Bottom line: This is good news.

But it's also worth pointing out that the optics of this decision and its timing are terrible. And optics matter.

From the outside, it certainly looks as if the league suddenly decided to start chartering full time due to the arrival of a popular white player (Caitlin Clark), when last season the safety of a Black

See SCHNELL, Page 5C

Mom was a rock, doing it all while serving her country



Mike Freeman
Columnist
USA TODAY



USA TODAY Sports columnist Mike Freeman and his mom in the 1970s. He writes: "She used her strength to create a protective forcefield over the ordinary and mundane, which are so important to kids." PROVIDED BY MIKE FREEMAN

I remember the exact day I first saw my mother's strength. I mean, really saw it. My father had left us. Not long after, my mom sat next to me on the stairs of the house, put her arm around me, and kissed me on the cheek. She told me we were going to be OK, and there was no doubt in my mind she was right. Because she was Mom. She always made everything right. Even moments like that one.

She's called me Mickey or Mickey Joe forever. *We'll be all right, Mickey. I promise.* And her promises meant something. They meant everything.

She was the chauffeur who took me to soccer practice, the cook, the child psychologist, the encourager, the disciplinarian and the empath. She did all of that while working at the National Security Agency, where she was a senior executive, and one of the highest-ranking Black women at the agency. She'd also get her law degree by going to classes at night.

We sometimes think of power as physical strength or wealth, but true power is what my mom did for me growing up, and what so many other moms have done. She used her strength to create a protective forcefield over the ordinary and mundane, which are so important to kids: going to school; playing sports; hanging with friends; having food and clothes and support.

Her love has always had the power of a splitting atom. But another strength was just as buttressing. Mom's almost unrelenting desire to educate me about the world and how things work, from making pancake batter, to handling myself if stopped by the police, to emphasizing the power of Black pride when much of the outside world constantly told Black people how awful we were.

It was no accident that I grew up around remarkably strong Black people, especially Black women, and not just in my family. We moved to Columbia, Maryland, in the 1970s, one of the country's first entries into planned open housing. Families of all colors lived there, and kids of all colors and backgrounds played together in grassy suburban backyards in this city midway between Baltimore and Washington. Columbia's main architect coined the phrase "The Next America" to describe the city.

Soccer games, flashlight tag and the NSA

My mom, who didn't want her name used because of "all the kooks out there," discovered a place that in many ways was ideal for her son: a futuristic, pro-

gressive city that, like her, was far ahead of its time. As one of my best friends and next door neighbor in Columbia once stated in a book proposal we've written about the city: Columbia insisted on integrated housing before it was the law of the land, mixing socioeconomic levels (many of the least expensive housing options were given prime real estate on lakes, or high on hills with good views), and open-space schools without small classrooms, were large nods to Columbia's differences.

But even the small things were considered, like the cluster mailboxes designed to bring neighbors together when they got their mail. At the town's inception, churches, synagogues and mosques were combined into "interfaith centers," where the practical (shared parking lots on different holy days) conveniently synthesized with the spiritual (interfaith worship and prayer meetings). Most of the neighborhoods were designed like chambered nautiluses, with cul-de-sacs where kids rode countless circles on their new bikes and neighbors had block parties.

To me, Columbia was the greatest place in the universe. When my parents got divorced, I was surrounded by extensions of my mom: strong women, who were also divorced and moms themselves. One of them was the first Black woman to receive a doctorate at the University of Kentucky. All the divorced kids, and some of the divorced moms, forged lifelong friendships. My mom helped raise my friends, and their moms helped raise me.

In between the baseball and soccer games, and backyard football games, and the basketball in my friend's driveway, there was always Mom. She'd tell us not to drink from the water hose and instead brought lemonade. She instructed

me to check in with her, so she knew I was OK, but she let me hang late with my friends as we played flashlight tag.

I grew up extremely independent, a typical latchkey kid from that generation. Mom, however, was always a phone call away. I had standing orders to phone her if needed when she was at the NSA. I got used to the ultra-secret ways of the organization, and how much my mom traveled while working for it: Japan, Korea, Germany, Australia (twice), England, Thailand, Austria, Italy and Spain.

But Mom, even while working in the belly of the most secretive entity on the planet, was still Mom, asking how my day went, if I did my homework, and making sure I knew what was in the fridge to eat or leaving money to order Pizza Hut (deep dish pepperoni).

Those were most weekdays. The weekends when mom was home? They belonged to her. She took me to my football games and track meets. Sundays were full of cooking. To this day, no one does collard greens like Mom. The radio was always tuned to Howard University's WHUR where the gospel music was cranked up loud. The station birthed my love of the Isley Brothers and Parliament-Funkadelic.

Mom: Boldly go

Howard, one of the greatest of the HBCUs, was also my mom's alma mater where she majored in Russian and minored in German.

Mom was laid back and kind, but when it came to issues of my safety, and my behavior, extremely uncompromising. My mom was a member of Delta Sigma Theta, a historically Black sorority, and she kept a red, wooden paddle that hung on her closet door. It was clear: misbehave, get the paddle. She never in-

tended to use it, but I got the message.

Mom didn't just foster my athleticism. She also embraced my nerdism, too. Growing up in the 1970s, television shows and the media were full of anti-Black images. We were serially portrayed as pimps and criminals who couldn't form a proper sentence.

She made sure to strictly check what I watched and if one of those stereotypes slipped through her screening process, she'd warn me: "Mickey, we are not like that."

One of the programs that I was allowed to watch was "Star Trek." It was because of the Black communications officer on the starship Enterprise named Lt. Nyota Uhura, played by the late Nichelle Nichols. Uhura was a linguist and mathematician and was fluent in Swahili, an African language thousands of years old. My fandom would be locked in for the rest of my life after seeing Nichols play this groundbreaking role. My mom threw me Trek birthday parties that featured a cake in the shape of the Enterprise.

She bought me science fiction books and short stories. She'd come home from work, park that red Camaro in the garage and, despite likely being exhausted, would read one of my cornball sci-fi short stories, then congratulate me with a kiss on the cheek. When I was runner-up in a statewide poetry contest - I wrote about Paul Revere going grocery shopping - she made me a special dinner. In fifth grade, I beamed about being named a captain in the Safety Patrol. She beamed with me.

Mom made me believe that I could do anything.

She proofread the stories I wrote for the hometown newspaper, the Columbia Flier, which I started writing for in high school. Her encouragement sparked my journalism career.

When I'd come home bruised from being a 150-pound cornerback and safety in a high school football league where every team constantly pulled their guards on end-arounds, she was there with ice packs and sandwiches.

She taught me how to treat girls with respect. How to bake a cake. How to protect myself from STDs. Mom did all of this while serving her country at the NSA. Mom would use her analytical skills in the world of genealogy, tracing our family roots back centuries.

Friends came and went. So did jobs. Mom was there. There were moves around the country. Mom was there. Sometimes I wasn't always the greatest son, not calling as much as I should. Mom was there.

There was never a time, not once, not now, or ever, where I didn't feel intense dedication and care.

So, on this day, there's only one thing left to say ...

... I love you, mom.

Nuggets' Nikola Jokic named NBA MVP for third time

Jeff Zillgitt USA TODAY

Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic's amazing and unique story continues.

From the No. 41 pick in the 2014 NBA draft to one of the best basketball players in the world, the 6-foot-11 Serbian won his third regular-season MVP award in four years, beating out the Oklahoma City Thunder's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander

and Dallas Mavericks' Luka Doncic.

Jokic joins an elite group of NBA players with three or more MVP awards: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (six), Bill Russell (five), Michael Jordan (five), Wilt Chamberlain (four), LeBron James (four), Moses Malone (three), Larry Bird (three) and Magic Johnson (three).

Jokic received 79 first-place votes and 926 points. Gilgeous-Alexander was sec-

ond (15; 640) and Doncic third (4; 566).

Jokic averaged 26.4 points, 12.4 rebounds, 9.0 assists, 1.4 steals and almost one block per game and shot 58.3% from the field, 35.9% on 3-pointers and 81.7% on free throws and was No. 2 in triple-doubles with 25. He became just one of four players to have multiple seasons with 20-plus triple-doubles. He had a career-high 708 assists, passing Wilt

Chamberlain for most assists by a center in one season, and led the league in PER (player efficiency rating), which measures a player's contributions.

Doncic led the league in scoring with a career-high 33.9 points per game. Gilgeous-Alexander led the young Thunder to the No. 1 seed in the West and posted 30.1 points, 6.2 assists, 5.5 rebounds and 2.0 steals per game.

MARKETPLACE TODAY

For advertising information: 1.800.397.0070 www.russelljohns.com/usat

NOTICES
PERSONALS
Request for Proposals (RFP) RFP# 2025-0904: AIDS CADAP
The Department of Public Health (DPH) Infectious Disease Section is requesting proposals for the Connecticut AIDS Drug Assistance Program (CADAP). A qualified Pharmacy Benefits Manager or other organization is needed to provide enrollment, pharmacy benefits, insurance premium payments, and rebate management for CADAP.
The Request for Proposal is available in electronic format on the State Contracting Portal at https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/BidBoard , on the Department's website at https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Request-For-Proposals/Request-for-Proposals , or from the Department's Official Contact: Mitchell Namias, 860-509-7718, Mitchell.namias@ct.gov .
Deadline for submission of proposals is Tuesday, June 18, 2024 at 4:30 PM.

CAREERS
EMPLOYMENT
BEAUTIFUL SMILES BY DESIGN is in Dalton and Calhoun GA. We are looking for a General and/or pediatric Dentist at our Dalton location to lead our Practice growth. Our Practices are ultra-high tech, designed to provide premium dentistry to all our patients. We offer excellent compensation and benefits package. Mentorship for implants, Orthodontics, Molar Root canals available. Beautiful Smiles by Design. Tel: (919) 423 6386. E-mail: elainahc@beautifulsmilesdentistry.com
FULL-TIME GENERAL DENTIST Opportunity in Bellingham, WA. \$10,000 signing bonus. Our Mt Vernon office is seeking a full time General Dentist to support this growing community. Located just over an hour away from Seattle, WA and Vancouver, BC, this is a great location that is close to major metro areas while still having a community feel. At Gentle Dental, we value our teammate's smile as much as our patient's smile. Come join our team and make a difference in the lives of the people in your community! Email: rabitoye@interdent.com
MODERN FAMILY DENTAL OFFICE with an amazing team is seeking a full-time general dentist. Our well-established practice is located on the southern Outer Banks of North Carolina in the highly sought-after Crystal Coast area. Email CV and references to Kirsten@crystalcoastdentistry.com . NC state license is required.

EMPLOYMENT
SMILE STARTERS DENTAL is hiring for Associate Dentists. Well established practice in seeking full time Associates in multiple NC locations. We are a general practice providing comprehensive care to children and young adults through age 20 in a modern, newly updated facility. www.smilestartersdental.com . Please contact HR at tmalmut@smilestartersdental.com .
STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY in San Francisco CA is seeking a PT Associate Dentist to start out 1 day per week. Pay rate between \$655.00 - \$1,500.00 per day. Ideal candidate will possess 3+ yrs working dental experience. Associate must be able to provide all aspects of General Dentistry and be a licensed DDS or DMD in CA. Email resume to Shayne.derbj@aprio.com .

TRAVEL
CAMPGROUNDS
"The Happiest Place in Montana" Boulder Creek Lodge The Premier Family Vacation Destination
"The Happiest Place in Montana" - Boulder Creek Lodge in Hall, Montana is the premier family destination vacation location in Southwest Montana. The resort is located between Glacier National Park and Yellowstone National Park. Highlights within an hour of Boulder Creek Lodge include a glimpse into the Wild West by visiting the amazing Garnet Ghost Town where you can walk around a town frozen in time since 1900. Plan on spending the day visiting the western legends of outlaw at the Territorial Prison with a stop at the Antique Car Museum down the road from the Grant-Kohrs Ranch, a historical farming legend of the West in Deer Lodge, Montana.
In nearby Phillipsburg, Montana, you can pan for gems and sapphires like those in the Wild West did 150 years ago at Montana gems located on Main Street. Be sure to visit the Sweet Palace, an incredible candy store featuring salt water taffy made on site, sure to be a family favorite.
Boulder Creek Lodge Montana Call 406-859-3190 www.bouldercreeklodgemontana.com

PERSONALS
BEAUTIFUL ASIAN WOMEN Desire friendship, romance! Free brochure. Since 1991. Send S.A.S.E to: P.I.C., BOX 4601-USA, Thousand Oaks CA 91359. 805-492-8040 www.pacisl.com

PERSONALS
WE LOCATE LOST Loves, Old Friends, & Relatives. 913-638-7310 Info@americanheir.com

NEW GREAT MARKETPLACE RATES! Scan QR Code for Current Specials	
--	--

REAL ESTATE
REAL ESTATE
PRORealEstate Disposal.COM \$\$\$ OFFER 48 HR 1-800-699-0972

DENTAL OFFICE NEED HELP?
Place your ad in print or online. Give us a call and we can help in your search! Call Us Today! 877-394-1388

Quail Hollow course offers new closing challenge

Adam Woodard
Golfweek | USA TODAY NETWORK

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Quail Hollow Club has been a staple on the PGA Tour for the past two decades, but the 69 players in the field this week are facing a slightly different challenge compared to most years.

The famed club in the Queen City boasts arguably the most difficult three-hole closing stretch on the PGA Tour, and the Green Mile of Nos. 16-18 got a little longer in the offseason. A handful of changes to the course were made in the few months following Wyndham Clark's 2023 Wells Fargo Championship win, most notably a new tee on the par-4 16th. The additional 20 yards brings the scorecard yardage to 529 yards and the new tee brings a right-side fairway bunker into play for the long ball hitters off the tee.

"The new tee on 16 is a bear," said Webb Simpson, a Quail Hollow member since 2011 and resident since 2014. "The question before for me was can I ever carry the bunker, and I only could downwind. Now the bunker's not really even in play."

"I guess I'm hopeful now the long guys can't fly the right bunker because that's a problem with the old tee. If you could fly it 320, that fairway is double the size and you're hitting way less club in," added Max Homa, who won for the first time on the PGA Tour at the 2019 Wells Fargo Championship. "So you could swing way harder and be kind of bailed out left and right a little bit. Now it's like I don't think anybody can fly it. I say that, and (Wyndham Clark) will probably carry it."

Homa has never been a fan of lengthening holes and usually he doesn't think it's the right thing to do. He also believes driving distance is a skill that should be rewarded but felt the old setup at No. 16 offered too much of a reward for the few players who could carry the bunker.



Justin Thomas hits an approach shot on the 11th hole during the first round of the Wells Fargo Championship on Thursday at Quail Hollow Country Club.

ANDREW REDINGTON/GETTY IMAGES

"It definitely makes that second shot really unique," Homa continued. "That's a tough second shot, so I think that's fun to – I think it is one of those rare positive changes of moving a tee that far back and actually continuing to give the long guys an advantage but kind of making them hit into a similar width fairway that the rest of us are."

Justin Thomas, meanwhile, thinks the new tee box makes the tee shot easier. If conditions were firm (they often are, this week aside at Quail Hollow) and

the hole was playing downwind in the past, it was common for players to run drives 350-plus yards long and through fairways.

"If you pull it slightly or you get it turning with the wind or whatever it is, left runs out way quicker. Now, obviously you have a lot of room right, but I've pulled drives that have gone down there whereas now from that back tee, yeah, we can't cover the bunker, but nobody's going to be going through the fairway," Thomas explained. "I think it's some-

thing you're probably going to see less birdies, but I think you'll see less drives that get in trouble, if that makes sense."

No. 16 played as the second-hardest hole at last year's Wells Fargo Championship with a scoring average of 4.27, making it one of the top-50 most difficult par 4s on tour last season.

With Quail Hollow set to host next year's PGA Championship, the new tee on the 16th hole was one of a few alterations made to the George Cobb-designed course that opened in 1961. According to the PGA Tour, a new tee was added to the par-3 13th to add 10 yards, greens were resurfaced with Tif Eagle Bermudagrass, and 12 putting surfaces saw slopes get softened to offer better hole locations at higher green speeds. In addition to the new tees and greens, bunkers were also rebuilt with new drainage, liners and sand.

Early in the week players addressed how firm the new greens are, and despite the rain early in the week that should've softened the landing, holding shots on the dance floor could be a challenge come the weekend.

"They're really firm," Homa said of the greens. "If the wind kicks up at all, the greens, they'll stop eventually but it takes a massive bounce, bounces right over – Brian Harman's not super tall, but it would bounce clear over his head. Going to be a bit tough with the new greens, but they're in good shape, they roll great, so got to somehow get it to stay on there."

Changes were made across the course, but the new tee on No. 16 will showcase the most across the four rounds of play, especially down the stretch on the weekend.

"You know, it puts more emphasis in the Green Mile being the toughest three-hole stretch of golf," Simpson claimed. "You get to 16 tee with any kind of lead, it's still anyone's golf tournament because those last three holes are so difficult."

Korda opens strong with LPGA history on line

Beth Ann Nichols
Golfweek | USA TODAY NETWORK

ESPN tennis analyst Rennae Stubbs came out to the Cognizant Founders Cup on Thursday wearing a T-shirt that read "Everyone watches Nelly Korda" in large upper-case font.

It was a hopeful message from Stubbs, who believes not enough attention is being paid to Korda as she tries to become the first player in LPGA history to win six consecutive starts. Korda, who dazzled at the Met Gala earlier this week in New York City, opened with a 3-under 69 at Upper Montclair Country Club and sits four back of clubhouse leader Madeline Sagstrom.

LPGA legends Annika Sorenstam and Nancy Lopez join Korda as the only players to win five consecutive starts.

"The fact that she's going for six in a row and really, in my opinion, the sports media is not there enough," Stubbs told ESPN+ reporter Chantel McCabe. "So we are trying to bring a little bit of press, some social ... get people to understand that what Nelly Korda is on the precipice of actually doing is history-making in women's golf and in women's sports."

Stubbs, who won four Grand Slam doubles titles and two mixed-doubles titles, then headed back out to watch LPGA rookie Gabriela Ruffels finish her own round of 69. Stubbs was coached by Ruffels' father, Ray, early in her career.

Korda, the 25-year-old daughter of two world-class tennis players from the Czech Republic, notched four birdies in an opening round she deemed "solid." She was especially pleased with her irons. "This golf course is pretty intimidating off the tee," she said of some wayward drives that got caught in the wind.

While Korda had a large support team at the Chevron Championship, the LPGA's first major, this week it's back to a small contingent. Her swing coach, Jamie Mulligan, is out with Patrick Cantlay



Nelly Korda plays her shot from the 13th tee during the first round of the Cognizant Founders Cup at Upper Montclair Country Club on Thursday in Clifton, New Jersey.

ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

at the Wells Fargo in Charlotte, North Carolina. Her agent was in town briefly, but her parents didn't make the trip at all to Clifton, New Jersey.

Her physio, Kim Baughman, who keeps fruit in her backpack for Korda, who enjoyed a mid-round plum, is with her all week, along with longtime caddie Jason McDede.

Korda said she's not thinking about what's on the line.

"I'm not trying to think about the outside noise," she said. "Would it be amazing? Of course. But it's still so far away and proud of what I've achieved so far."

After winning her second career major at the Chevron, a worn-down Korda withdrew from the next week's stop in Los Angeles. She crashed on her couch for a bit, sleeping 9 to 10 hours at night, before gearing up to host her first AJGA event at the Concession Golf Club in Bradenton, Florida. The Nelly Invitational is an elite all-girls event near Korda's home that benefits a local rescue shelter. Korda

brought out Marvel the rescue dog for juniors to enjoy before the tournament started.

Korda, the first golfer to attend the Met Gala since Tiger Woods, said actor Jaden Smith, the 25-year-old son of Will Smith and Jada Pinkett-Smith, was the first person to say hello. A star-stuck Korda, wearing an Oscar de la Renta gown and her first spray tan, sat close to Kylie Jenner and found herself in awe all night.

"Can confirm Chris Hemsworth is definitely a very good-looking person," she said with a laugh.

Korda's streak began back in January in her hometown at the LPGA Drive On where she beat former No. 1 Lydia Ko in a playoff, denying the Kiwi the final point needed to qualify for the LPGA Hall of Fame.

After a seven-week break, the winning resumed on the West Coast in March and hasn't stopped. The first American to win five times in an LPGA season since Juli Inkster in 1999, Korda's closing birdie at Upper Montclair gave her a seventh consecutive round in the 60s. Seventeen of her last 21 competitive rounds have been sub 70.

As for the "Everyone watches Nelly Korda" shirts, they're a product of Together, a media and commerce company founded by female athletes Alex Morgan, Chloe Kim, Simone Manuel and Sue Bird.

The "Everyone Watches Women's Sports" merchandise includes a black hoodie, T-shirt and tote.

The Together website says their products are more than a piece of clothing – "It's a statement of enthusiasm and support for the unstoppable rise of women's sports."

With Korda on a run of historic proportions, one of the longest-running women's professional sports associations in the world can only hope its own Caitlin Clark moment is coming.



Shohei Ohtani, right, and former interpreter Ipppei Mizuhara attended an NFL game between the Rams and Saints at SoFi Stadium on Dec. 21, 2023. KIRBY LEE/USA TODAY SPORTS

Ohtani's ex-interpreter strikes plea deal

Gabe Lacques
USA TODAY

Ipppei Mizuhara, the former interpreter for Shohei Ohtani, pleaded guilty to two felony charges of bank fraud and filing a false tax return and was ordered to pay nearly \$17 million in restitution to the baseball star, according to details of a plea agreement filed Wednesday.

Mizuhara, 39, faced up to 33 years in federal prison had his case gone to trial after federal agents alleged he stole millions of dollars from Ohtani and funneled them to an illegal bookmaker to cover his gambling debts. As part of Mizuhara's agreement with the U.S. Attorney's Office, prosecutors will recommend a two-level reduction in Mizuhara's prison term.

With the reduction and Mizuhara's status as a first-time offender, the recommended prison sentence would range from seven to nine years, according to The Washington Post, although the agreement stipulates prosecutors cannot guarantee the length of sentence once he goes before a judge for sentencing in the Central District of California.

Mizuhara also must pay a \$1.15 million fine to the IRS, after he failed to report more than \$4 million in income – ostensibly thieved from Ohtani – in tax year 2022 and then knowingly signed a false return.

His attorney, Michael Freedman declined to comment Wednesday.

Mizuhara's plea puts much of the burgeoning scandal behind Ohtani, who was befriended by Mizuhara a decade ago and retained him when he switched ballclubs this offseason.

No charges after slur hurled at Utah women's team

Tom Schad
USA TODAY

An 18-year-old man shouted a racial slur at members of the Utah women's basketball team this spring but will not face criminal charges, a city prosecutor in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, wrote in a decision dated last Friday.

The city's chief deputy city attorney, Ryan Hunter, declined in the charging decision that he declined to prosecute the

teen because his statement did not meet the legal definition of malicious harassment or hate speech and is therefore protected under the First Amendment.

A police investigation determined the teen shouted the N-word at Utah players, some of whom were Black, as they walked to dinner the night before their first NCAA Tournament game.

"Our office shares in the outrage sparked by (the man's) abhorrently racist and misogynistic statement, and we

join in unequivocally condemning that statement and the use of a racial slur in this case, or in any circumstance," Hunter wrote. "However, that cannot, under current law, form the basis for criminal prosecution in this case."

A spokesperson for Utah athletics said the department had no comment on the decision. The Utes had been staying in Coeur d'Alene ahead of tournament games in Spokane, Washington, but switched hotels after the incident.

Pacers coach has point but off mark on bias



Jeff Zillgitt
Columnist
USA TODAY



Pacers head coach Rick Carlisle argues with an official in Game 2 of the second-round playoff series against the Knicks. WENDELL CRUZ/USA TODAY SPORTS

Indiana Pacers coach Rick Carlisle's frustration erupted.

His team can't get a victory against the New York Knicks in the NBA Eastern Conference semifinals, can't get key officiating calls to go their way, and the Knicks' Jalen Brunson is doing his best James Harden impersonation to draw fouls that perhaps shouldn't be called fouls and to create space by initiating contact that maybe should be fouls.

Carlisle unloaded on the officiating after the Knicks took a 2-0 series lead with a 130-121 victory Wednesday. Carlisle was ejected in the fourth quarter, and in his postgame comments he said he planned to submit plays (78 in total in two games) that were not officiated correctly.

He also made a comment that will result in a deduction in his next paycheck's direct deposit: "Small-market teams de-

serve an equal shot. They deserve a fair shot no matter where they're playing."

Carlisle has a point and misses the point.

There is not a small-market conspiracy, and Carlisle's claim is a stale trope. Oklahoma City and Minnesota were a combined 11-0 in the playoffs before Thursday's games. While not the smallest of markets, Denver won the title last season and Milwaukee won the title in 2021 - and neither would be considered one of the glamour cities.

Carlisle's frustration steered him down the

wrong road with that comment, and a fine is forthcoming. That's the price he will pay to get his message out.

And his message: He doesn't like how the Knicks are officiated.

Forget the kicked ball that wasn't that went against the Pacers late in Game 1 and forget the double-dribble that was called against New York and (rightfully reversed) late in Game 2.

Brunson uses his body to draw fouls and create space, and there is a belief that some of that is illegal or shouldn't be a foul.

Hunting fouls is an NBA pastime and skill that spawns derision and admiration. Harden perfected it. Now, Brunson only attempted six free throws in Game 2 but he had 14 in Game 1, making all attempts in a 43-point performance. The league doesn't like when its officials are "tricked" into a call and have gone to great lengths to try to eliminate some of the foul hunting.

So Carlisle is doing what he can. In the name of all things Joey Crawford, it's unlikely that Carlisle and the Pacers are correct on the 78 calls - including 49 from one game - they wanted the league to review via the NBA's Team Inquiry Website. The league will look at the plays and get back to the Knicks and Pacers.

The Athletic's John Hollinger, a former front office executive with Memphis, posted on X, formerly Twitter: "You're not credible saying there were 49 missed calls against you. What Pacers *might* be doing, however, through the NBA's computerized whining system, is sending in a 'pattern,'

which is also a thing you can do rather than just submitting one call - like, hey, maybe these weren't all fouls but look at these ten similar plays and tell me what's happening here."

Officiating is often under the spotlight, especially in the playoffs with every possession so important, and reffing complaints are a playoff tradition.

But there are other reasons why a game is won and lost.

The Pacers scored 121 points and lost as the Knicks shot 57% from the field and 46.7% on 3-pointers. The Pacers' potent offense and soft defense are not secrets. It's who they have been all season and who they are in the playoffs.

Spreading the blame, All-Star guard Tyrese Haliburton said, "We just didn't play good enough."

Carlisle is one of the NBA's best coaches. He made and missed his points about the officiating. Now, he needs to ensure his team plays better with the next two games in Indianapolis.

Philadelphia Union sign 14-year-old to MLS deal

Safid Deen
USA TODAY

Move over Joel Embiid, Bryce Harper and Jalen Hurts. There's a new star in Philadelphia. And he's just 14 years old.

Philadelphia Union signed Cavan Sullivan to a four-year deal Thurs-

day, making him the youngest player in team history and the fifth-youngest to sign a deal in Major League Soccer.

Sullivan could become the youngest athlete to play an American professional team sport - and the youngest to debut in a major soccer league - if

he debuts with the Union on or before July 29.

"To be totally honest, I'm a pretty boring kid outside of soccer. It's really my life," Sullivan said during his introductory press conference. "Soccer, homework, and my dad runs his training facility and I help out a lot

there ... But soccer is my life. It's the main thing."

He'll join his 20-year-old brother Quinn, also a midfielder, on the Union MLS squad.

Sullivan is a midfielder who shined helping the U.S. win its first Concacaf Boys' Under-15 championship in 2023 as a 13-

year-old. He scored four goals, earning the Golden Ball as the best player in the tournament. He has ascended as a Union Academy product since 2020 to the club's Under-15 MLS NEXT team, U17 MLS Next team and the club's second team earlier this year.

WEATHER WEATHER ONLINE USATODAY.COM

The weather changes. Stay up-to-date, 24/7.

Download our free app

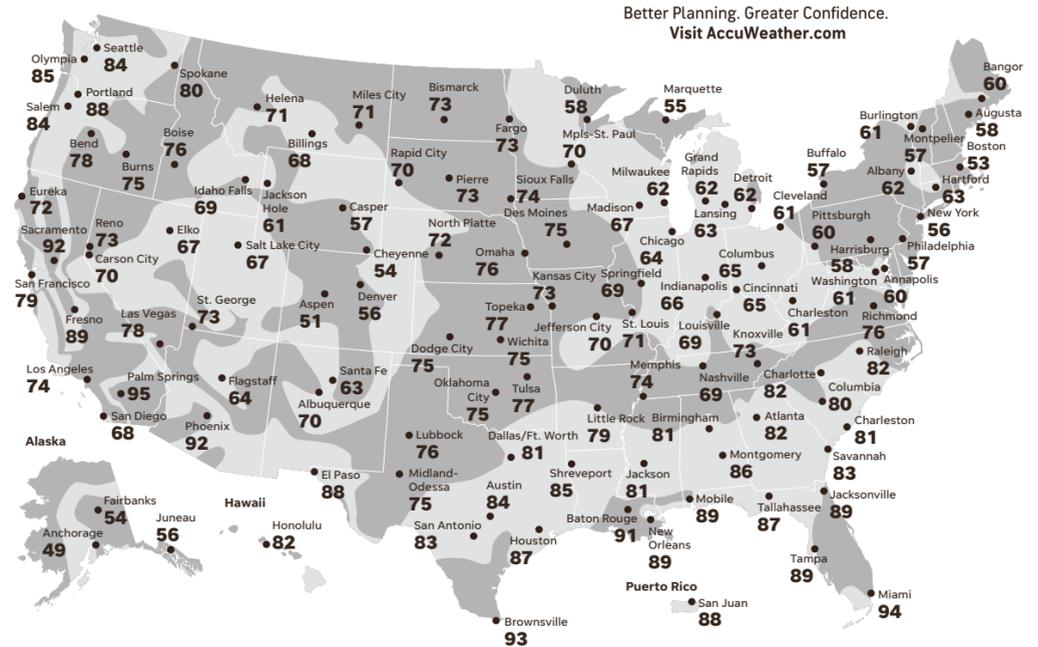
WEEKEND FORECAST

Much of the **West** will stay dry through the weekend with plenty of sunshine east day. There will be areas of low clouds on the **California** coast that may persist and hold temperatures down in some areas. An area of showers, thunderstorms and high-elevation snow will spread from **Colorado** to **New Mexico**.

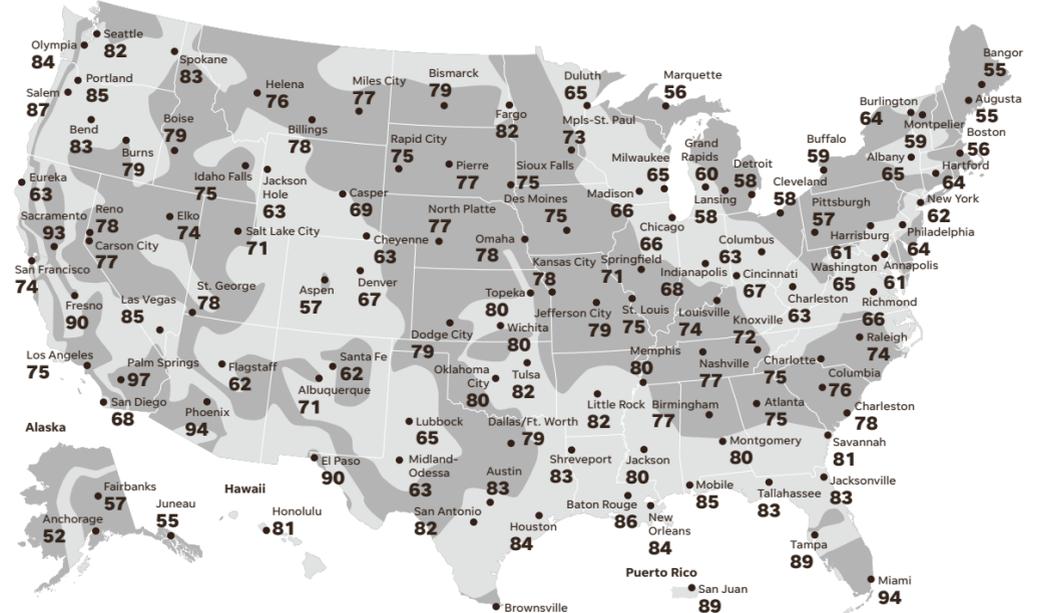
After severe storms depart the **Southeast** states on Friday, much of the weekend will be dry. A return of clouds and downpours may mark the start of a new flooding event for **Northeast Texas** on Sunday.

In the **Northeast**, one storm will bring rain and drizzle on Friday. A new storm will spread showers and gusty thunderstorms from the **Great Lakes** on Friday to the **Ohio Valley** and central **Appalachians** on Saturday and the coastal **Northeast** on Sunday.

FRIDAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



SATURDAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



EXTREMES

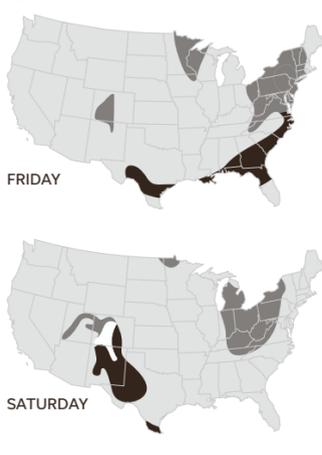
Note: For contiguous 48 states through 3 p.m. Thursday

HOTTEST: 98°
Brownsville, Texas

COLDEST: 13°
Leadville, Colo.

PRECIPITATION FORECAST

● T-storms ● Rain ○ Snow ● Ice/mix



Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather Inc. ©2024

NBA PLAYOFFS

Best-of-7; x-if necessary Times p.m. Eastern Daylight

EASTERN CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS

New York Knicks 2, Indiana Pacers 0
Game 1: Knicks 121, Pacers 117
Wednesday: Knicks 130, Pacers 121
Friday: Knicks at Pacers, 7, ESPN
Sunday: Knicks at Pacers, 3:30, ABC
x-May 14: Pacers at Knicks, 8, TNT
x-May 17: Knicks at Pacers, TBD, ESPN
x-May 19: Pacers at Knicks, TBD

Boston Celtics 1, Cleveland Cavaliers 0
Game 1: Celtics 120, Cavaliers 95
Thursday: Cavaliers at Celtics
Saturday: Celtics at Cavaliers, 8:30, ABC
Monday: Celtics at Cavaliers, 7, TNT
x-May 15: Cavaliers at Celtics, TBD, TNT
x-May 17: Celtics at Cavaliers, TBD, ESPN
x-May 19: Cavaliers at Celtics, TBD

WESTERN SEMIFINALS

Minnesota Timberwolves 2, Denver Nuggets 0
Game 1: Timberwolves 106, Nuggets 99
Game 2: Timberwolves 106, Nuggets 80
Friday: Nuggets at Timberwolves, 9:30, ESPN
Sunday: Nuggets at Timberwolves, 8, TNT
x-May 14: Timberwolves at Nuggets, TBD, TNT
x-May 16: Nuggets at Timberwolves, 8:30, ESPN
x-May 19: Timberwolves at Nuggets, TBD

Oklahoma City Thunder 1, Dallas Mavericks 0
Game 1: Thunder 117, Mavericks 95
Thursday: Mavericks at Thunder
Saturday: Thunder at Mavericks, 3:30, ABC
Monday: Thunder at Mavericks, 9:30, TNT
x-May 15: Mavericks at Thunder, TBD, TNT
x-May 18: Thunder at Mavericks, 8:30, ESPN
x-May 20: Mavericks at Thunder, 8:30, TNT

NHL PLAYOFFS

Best-of-7; x-if necessary Times p.m. Eastern Daylight

EASTERN SEMIFINALS

New York Rangers 2, Carolina Hurricanes 0
Game 1: Rangers 4, Hurricanes 3
Game 2: Rangers 4, Hurricanes 3 (2 OT)
Thursday: Rangers at Hurricanes, 7, TNT
Saturday: Hurricanes at Rangers, TBD
x-May 16: Rangers at Hurricanes, TBD
x-May 18: Hurricanes at Rangers, TBD

Boston Bruins 1, Florida Panthers 1
Game 1: Bruins 5, Panthers 1
Wednesday: Panthers 6, Bruins 1
Friday: Panthers at Bruins, 7, TNT
Sunday: Panthers at Bruins, 6:30, TBS
Tuesday: Bruins at Panthers, TBD
x-May 17: Panthers at Bruins, TBD
x-May 19: Bruins at Panthers, TBD

WESTERN SEMIFINALS

Colorado Avalanche 1, Dallas Stars 0
Tuesday: Avalanche 4, Stars 3 (OT)
Thursday: Avalanche at Stars
Saturday: Stars at Avalanche, 10, TNT
Monday: Stars at Avalanche, TBD
x-May 15: Avalanche at Stars, TBD
x-May 17: Stars at Avalanche, TBD
x-May 19: Avalanche at Stars, TBD

Vancouver Canucks 1, Edmonton Oilers 0
Wednesday: Canucks 5, Oilers 4
Friday: Oilers at Canucks, 10, TNT
Sunday: Canucks at Oilers, 9:30, TBS
Tuesday: Canucks at Oilers, TBD
x-May 16: Oilers at Canucks, TBD
x-May 18: Canucks at Oilers, TBD
x-May 20: Oilers at Canucks, TBD

pc Partly cloudy s Sunny sh Showers c Cloudy t Thunderstorms w Windy dr Drizzle h Haze f Fog i Ice r Rain sf Snowflurries sn Snow

Wolken

Continued from Page 1C

who watched last weekend, the Preakness would be where all the storylines people learn about in the Derby end up converging: Can Mystik Dan do it again and set up a possible Triple Crown? How will Sierra Leone bounce back from a heartbreaking defeat? Will there be redemption for beaten favorite Fierceness?

Instead, it's possible none of the main characters from the Derby will show up in Baltimore – including Mystik Dan, whose trainer, Ken McPeck, has been noncommittal to the point of seeming unenthusiastic about turning around just two weeks later for the Preakness.

"I ran him back once in two weeks and it completely backfired on me," McPeck told reporters Sunday. "So we'll just watch him, and we'll probably take it up to the last minute."

Though McPeck's tone was a bit more optimistic on Wednesday, it's not hyperbole to suggest that the Preakness becomes a sporting irrelevance if Mystik Dan doesn't show up. And it would be the second time in three years the Derby winner has skipped the second jewel of the Triple Crown, following Rich Strike's absence in 2021.

Regardless of McPeck's decision, the days of horsemen automatically sending their Derby winners to Baltimore appear to be over. They're sending the Triple Crown a message.

Maybe it's time the sport's stakeholders listen?

For at least 15 or 20 years, as horses run fewer races and trainers prefer to give them more time in between to recover, spacing out the Triple Crown races has been a hot topic within the industry. It became especially in vogue to bring it up during the 37-year Triple Crown drought after Affirmed in 1978, with 13 horses subsequently winning the first two legs and then coming up short in the Belmont.

But American Pharoah (2015) and Justify (2018) proved that the Triple Crown was still possible, reinforcing the idea that it should be really, really hard to join one of the most exclusive clubs in sports. For a few years, at least, talk of changing the format waned.

The question, though, shouldn't be whether the Triple Crown is too hard or too easy to win. It should be what can best sustain interest in a sport that doesn't have many big days on the national stage.

Is it good for the sport that Todd Pletcher and Chad Brown, who usually come to the Derby with multiple contenders, go back to New York and wait for the Belmont? Is it good for the sport that, as of now, the only Derby horse who seems likely to run in the Preakness is 17th-place finisher Just Steel? Is it good for the sport that we could regularly have Derby winners waffling about whether it's worth trying for the Triple Crown?

Though the number has always fluctuated a bit year to year, the 20 Preaknesses run between 1994 and 2013 included an average of 5.45 horses from the Derby. Over the last 10 years, however, that number has dropped to 3.6.

Last year, only Kentucky Derby win-

ner Mage ran in both races – and the rest of his career was plagued by physical problems until he was retired last November, having only run twice more after the Triple Crown.

Although every horse is different and some handle a rigorous schedule better than others, this is why trainers have increasingly leaned toward being conservative. If they want a fresh, fit horse for big races in the summer and fall, it just doesn't make a lot of sense anymore to send them out for a 1½-mile race just 14 days after a hard 1¼-mile race.

In talking with reporters Wednesday, McPeck even brought up the example of his first Derby starter, Tejano Run, who finished second in 1995. Two weeks later, the horse finished a dull ninth at Pimlico and wasn't heard from again until the following year.

"As a young trainer, I wish I could have a do-over," McPeck said. "I wouldn't have run him."

There's lots of blame for this state of affairs, starting with a breeding industry that has evolved American racehorses into a weaker, less-sound animal. But pining for the days of Count Fleet and Whirlaway – who each ran in and won a race between the Preakness and Belmont in the 1940s – isn't going to change these trends.

And Pimlico is the one paying the price, which is crucial at the moment given that the state of Maryland is set to assume ownership of the track as part of a legislative proposal that would direct \$400 million in state bond money to rebuild it and make it the year-round home of Maryland racing. Without those major upgrades, the future of the Preakness being a Baltimore event would be very much up in the air.

Though Maryland legislators will call it economic development, it's also a significant bet on the Preakness. But if the Preakness is no longer a race that the owners and trainers of the top 3-year-olds care about, how can you justify pouring that kind of money into it?

For the sake of the race itself, and sustaining any type of interest in the Triple Crown, it's time to finally think about spacing the races a month apart. If you ran the Derby on the first Saturday in May, the Preakness on the first Saturday in June and the Belmont on the first Saturday in July, there's no doubt more horses would run in all three.

"They should seriously consider it," McPeck said. "What's the big deal on shifting it a little bit? It would be better for the sport."

Of course, it would require Pimlico and the New York Racing Association working together to align the dates. Television networks would also have a say. Nothing in horse racing changes quickly or easily.

But the will-he-or-won't-he drama around Mystik Dan's participation is a flashing neon sign for a sport that should be riding the momentum of an epic Derby weekend.

The Preakness, and thus the Triple Crown, is in real trouble of maintaining its relevance. There's a solution that would be better for both fans and the health of the animals. It's time for horse racing to ditch tradition and do the obvious thing to fix one of its most valuable brands.



White Sox hitter Eloy Jimenez reacts after striking out against the Royals.
PATRICK GORSKI/USA TODAY SPORTS

MLB

Continued from Page 1C

100-win teams: Phillies, Dodgers, Orioles, Yankees, Guardians, Braves

Sound almost impossible? Sure. In fact, it challenges mathematics possibility that six teams could win 100 games in a season.

But there's no projecting the arc of a season, and right now 2024 looks like a pair of sizable clumps at the top and bottom and a thick middle. As recently as 2022 and 2019 four teams won at least 100 games and last year three teams won 100 and another 99.

The scary thing about most of this year's sextet tracking toward a hundo is almost all of their foundations are deep and dominant starting pitching.

Take the Phillies. An uncharacteristically blazing start gives them a majors-best 26-12 record. They merely need to play .598 ball to hit 100 wins – and with a starting rotation so good that Spencer Turnbull and his 1.57 ERA get relegated to the bullpen, it's extremely challenging to win a series from these guys.

Tyler Glasnow and Yoshinobu Yamamoto are exceeding the Dodgers' expectations, and soon they'll add Clayton Kershaw's return on the heels of Walker Buehler's debut. Orioles starters just tossed 22 consecutive scoreless innings and now roll six deep. Gerrit Cole is ramping up for the Yankees.

Get the idea?

Come October: At least four will pass 100 wins. And that's partly because ...

100-loss teams: White Sox, Rockies, Marlins, Astros, Angels

It's startling to think the White Sox (9-28), Rockies (8-28) and Marlins (10-29) are this bad before selling off parts at the trade deadline – to the extent that they have pieces to sell now that Luis Arraez is a Padre. It's safe to assume these teams' personnel will get worse and the depth even thinner.

And that makes it awfully hard to imagine the White Sox morphing from a .243 team to the .437 squad they need to be to avoid 100 losses.

Go ahead and chalk up 100 L's for the Rockies and Marlins, too.

The Astros haven't lost 100 games since 2013. The Angels never have.

Come October: The Astros recover from their .343 pace – but too late to keep their dynasty going. The Angels

also avoid 100 but find themselves dueling with Oakland for fourth place.

Elly De La Cruz: 30-90 Club

Might as well get used to it: MLB's liberal stolen base rules will produce wild seasons that look like statistical anomalies. Ronald Acuña Jr. tested the plateaus last season, when, to great fanfare, he became the first member of baseball's 30-homer, 60-steal club. And eventually the charter member of the 40-70 club.

So long as there are five-tool marvels brightening the baseball landscape, we'll continue witnessing unprecedented statistical permutations. This year it's Elly De La Cruz's turn.

The Reds shortstop entered the baseball zeitgeist with a fabulous start to his career in 2023, before tailing off as many 21-year-olds do. He's charting a similar course this year, with six homers and 10 steals in his first 19 games, and two and 11 in the 17 games since.

Yet that still puts De La Cruz on a 37-homer, 95-steal pace, which would be the most bags since Vince Coleman swiped 107 in 1987.

Come October: 30-80 looks realistic, but De La Cruz is still growing as a player and any bid at 40-80 would be threatened by even a brief power outage.

Marcell Ozuna: 181 RBI

Sure, the run batted in doesn't have nearly the cachet it once did, scorned as a product of opportunity.

Well, you got us there.

See, Marcell Ozuna bats fifth for the Atlanta Braves and is asked only to serve as designated hitter, and simply waving bat at ball is likely to send a few of his teammates toward home plate.

The Braves remain in their prime and have been largely healthy, which means Ozuna comes to the plate after Acuña, Ozzie Albies, Austin Riley and Matt Olson precede him. That's 11 All-Star appearances and nine Silver Sluggers filling the base paths.

Ozuna has responded in kind, with a major league-leading 38 RBI in just 34 games. His projected 181 RBI would rank fourth all time – just 10 shy of Hack Wilson's 94-year-old record – and make him the first to drive in at least 150 runs since Alex Rodriguez in 2007. Phillies third baseman Alec Bohm has been nearly as hot, with 32 in 37 games, a 136-RBI pace.

Hardly a surprise: Bohm has batted fourth or fifth for the potent Phillies.

Come October: Ozuna cracks the 150-RBI club – and the Braves and Phillies engage in another playoff showdown.

Schnell

Continued from Page 1C

player (Brittney Griner) wasn't enough to create permanent change.

On Tuesday, Engelbert insisted it's more nuanced than that. She told the media the popularity of the 2024 draft class is not what drove this decision; she's been working on getting charters since she took over as commissioner in July 2019. She estimates that it will cost the league \$25 million to charter full time. "You need that long-term revenue model," she said, "and we haven't had it."

Women's basketball is experiencing an unprecedented surge in popularity right now, led in large part by the frenzy surrounding Clark. With Clark's entry into the league last month, chartering in the WNBA had again become a major talking point. WNBA players have fought for years for charter flights – commonplace in nearly every other professional league – and been told they didn't have the money, it wasn't a priority, it wasn't a necessity.

These were excuses in my mind. The WNBA, for better or worse, is financially backed by the NBA, a \$10 billion entity that could have paid for charter flights from Day 1 if it wanted. NBA Commissioner Adam Silver has always had the power and opportunity to get involved. For years, it seems to me he chose not to.

To say it wasn't a priority was also a

low blow, as players were forced to pick between respectable salaries and charter flights during the last collective bargaining negotiations. As for it not being a necessity, Griner would surely beg to differ.

For years, I've had conversations with players, agents and power brokers about the optics of women's basketball at both the professional and college level. People have been especially critical of the WNBA, which players it chooses to promote versus not, how it markets the league, etc. And while privately they'll let their feelings be known, Black women, who have been the foundation of this league since its inception in 1997, have been especially reluctant to vocalize these criticisms, leery of rocking the boat.

When they do speak out, they are blunt. Two years ago two-time MVP A'ja Wilson told ESPN.com, "Even though our league is predominantly Black, I think it's hard for our league to push us, in a sense, because they still have to market, in their mind, what is marketable. Sometimes a Black woman doesn't check off those boxes."

In her new book, which was released Tuesday and details her terrifying 10-month detainment in Russia, Griner talks about returning to the states to both fanfare and vitriol. Threats became commonplace for the nine-time All-Star and two-time Olympian, as she walked through airports with her teammates on their way to and from games.

Despite major concerns about Griner's safety, no charters were provided for the

Mercury or Griner individually at the beginning of the 2023 season. (Previously, the league fined the New York Liberty for chartering, saying it was a competitive advantage banned by the CBA.)

Last June, Griner was accosted in DFW Airport by a right-wing YouTube personality despite her security guard trying to steer him away. Police were called, the clip went viral and fans shared their outrage on social media. While Griner was allowed to fly private at her discretion the rest of the season – separating her from her teammates, which no one liked – it never should have taken that incident to spur action.

Again, players are thrilled they've finally got this benefit. They were also surprised by the news.

"As a player that's been in this league for a while, we've been fighting for this first for a long time," Breanna Stewart of the Liberty, a two-time MVP, said Tuesday night after playing at Chicago. "So now to say that you've just come up with the 25 mil? Nothing has changed. Media deal, CBA, nothing; you know what I mean where (you could say) that money has come in. So either you were just holding on to it for whatever. But honestly, I am happy. Very happy. But surprised because I thought it was going to be used as a bargaining chip in CBA negotiations."

Even if it's true that Clark wasn't the final straw, or the individual who pushed the WNBA to finally do the right thing, for the WNBA and Engelbert to not even ac-

knowledge that the timing looks problematic again minimizes the concerns of the Black players.

"It's a tough balance," said sixth-year veteran Napheesa Collier of the Minnesota Lynx. "It is a little bit frustrating, but I feel like that's how everything (changes); you put a spotlight on things and force their hand. ... I'm happy something catapulted this change, in that sense I'm happy we got to this point, but I am a little disappointed it took so long to get there."

On Tuesday, when USA TODAY Sports asked Las Vegas All-Stars Wilson and Chelsea Gray about the charter issue, Wilson said, "If we credit this to one person, that's disrespectful to the (players) before us. They help us continue to push this league and push this game and grow it. ... I'm happy it's finally here and it's happening, because I know we were all tired of waiting for it."

I'm tired, too. Tired of the WNBA repeatedly dismissing concerns from its employees. Tired of the league acting like race doesn't matter when its women of color have the bravery to speak out, even though they have the most to lose. Tired of reminding people that we must keep this conversation going, even if the charter issue itself is fixed. Tired of telling people it's OK to demand more of a professional organization that's been around 28 years.

But mostly, I'm tired of the WNBA not meeting the moment. One day, maybe the league will get it right the first time.

Sports moms are the best

Time to celebrate the engines of our children's athletic pursuits

Stephen Borelli
USA TODAY

Meet my friend, Dana Yoo. Dana works full time as a cell biologist and vice president of research and development at a biotech company. She has another role, one she jokes that could be her actual full-time job. Dana is a sports mom. To my wife and I, Dana is the ideal sports mom. You might know someone like her, the mom from the team who gets everyone organized and wears a variety of hats. She wipes noses and wipes away kids' doubts, cheering like heck but also knowing when to stay quiet and offer her arm or shoulder for support. It seems ingrained in her DNA to not only multitask, but to make it look easy.

"She is doing so much that I really can't keep up," says Dana's husband, Chris Antolik. "Dana tells me where to go and when."

Dana has counted Little League board member, scorekeeper, team event coordinator, video streamer, first aid provider ("I always have my first aid kit ready to go!" she says) and assistant coach among her many unofficial positions.

Most of all, Dana is a rooter – for their sons, Caius, 15, and Marcus, 14, and for all of the boys on our Northern Virginia baseball teams.

"What makes me love being a sports mom isn't just that I get to spend so much time with my kids," she says. "I love getting to know the teammates and their families. They are my community."

This weekend, as we honor what our wives and moms mean to us, we can also salute their roles in sports that can sometimes be underappreciated, if not unnoticed.

Sports moms are often the engines of our kids' athletic pursuits, and their love endures whether those pursuits are realized or not. Whether they are biologists, teachers or national championship winning coaches, they are always moms first. Here are three reasons to celebrate them all.

1. Sports moms are omnipresent

Maryland head women's basketball coach Brenda Frese has to miss a lot of her sons' games, but she is always present in the minds of her 16-year-old twins, Tyler and Markus.

"When she does make it, the boys are excited to have mom in the stands watching," says Frese's husband, Mark Thomas. "Then they always choose to ride home with her and not me."

Tyler was diagnosed with leukemia at 2 years old. It was treatable, and any time his parents see him on the court or field, they cherish his health and ability to play. Frese sits quietly in the stands and takes careful notes on her sons' performances, only offering feedback if they come to her for it. They usually do.

"You have your own opinions but I'm never gonna voice those to my son," she told USA TODAY Sports last year. "It needs to be their path."

The twins have also internalized what a well-organized program looks like, their father says, by hanging around Frese's Maryland team, feeding players shots and their mom lineup advice.

"Brenda thrives in situations where there are a lot of moving parts," Thomas says. "I'm not ashamed to admit that a lot of times, women are better planners than men, and I think that's a huge help with a sports team. When I've coached youth teams, my best team managers have been moms."

"Team managers handle things like communicating with parents, organizing who brings snacks, team party, etc. But they do well as head coaches, too. I think a lot of moms are a nurturing presence. Sometimes they see things a little differently than guys do. It can be a healthy balance to have moms and dads both involved."

Given the demands of Frese's job, Thomas oversees their boys' activities. But when mom comes home, Thomas says, they forget about him.

"I become invisible," he says with a laugh. "But the dog still loves me."

Even if a sports mom isn't physically present, trust me, they're there. They may be in the athletes' minds, like Frese, or show up in the way they play. Or, their fingerprints could be on the fresh uniforms, bags of snacks and countless extras that go into maintaining a youth sports team.

2. Masters of logistics

Like Frese, Kim Newsome, who lives



Dana Yoo (center left) poses (left to right) with her son Caius, husband Chris and son Marcus at a tournament in Cooperstown, New York, during the summer of 2022. PROVIDED BY THE ANTOLIK FAMILY



Brenda Frese and her boys, Tyler (on left holding Archie) and Markus. PROVIDED BY MARK THOMAS

with her family near Princeton, New Jersey, has been a constant reassuring presence for her sons. Unlike Frese, she hasn't always been quiet. That's usually the role of her husband, Leon, a former football player at Princeton who's now chief security officer for the NBA.

"I'm there on the sidelines losing my mind and the former athlete (says), 'That was an error. OK, get the next one,'" she says jokingly.

Kim, an educator by trade, and Leon have three boys: Grant, 27; Garrett, 22; and Gaines, 15. Garrett and Gaines have excelled at baseball. Grant played baseball extensively before he switched to football and wound up starting on the University of Michigan's offensive line.

Kim wasn't a super competitive athlete growing up in the 1980s. Even when she met Leon at Princeton, she admits she never really thought about being a sports mom. She had no idea of the intricacies that went into it.

"You become a master of logistics," she says. "Practice or games for each child two to three times a week, weekends that often involve traveling far enough to need a hotel stay, figuring out who would take which children where. My husband traveled a lot for work, so that was always something we had to factor into the equation as well."

"Oh, and the laundry, my goodness it never ended with three boys. I was just telling a friend yesterday that the greatest surprise from our youngest son's school was that they wash their baseball uniforms."

Being a sports mom is something you grow into and learn to thrive. We've all had those dreaded 8 a.m. weekend games. Kim always likes to find a bakery to make sure the boys on the team had early-morning donuts. The mental load of planning and making sports an experience above and beyond the basics is overwhelmingly handled by sports moms, in my experience.

"Really, just trying to keep it fun so it never felt like a grind for the kids being at a baseball tournament all weekend," she says. "Other moms made sure we always had wine for the hotel lobby at night, which was amazing. We all had our roles."

Being a sports mom, of course, runs much deeper. Grant seemed destined for the NFL when, in 2016, a devastating injury ended his career and threatened to take his leg.

When he was initially hurt, he wanted to walk off the field so that Kim, watching from the stands, wouldn't worry.

"Of course, I was worried," she says. After Grant retired from football, he got his bachelor's degree and then master's from Michigan in public policy. He is now the Wolverines' offensive line coach.

As sports moms know, wins and losses, as important as they seem at the time, are secondary. They want our kids to emerge triumphantly from the sports experience.

"As a mom, I'm proud of the athletic accomplishments but most proud of that."

3. They never stop being Mom – to anyone who needs one

Three years ago, Kim and middle son Garrett awoke in the dark on the Friday after Thanksgiving to drive to Ann Arbor. They wanted to see Michigan play Ohio State, and to see Grant coach.

I recall a similarly early morning when I arrived at my friend Dana's house to pick up my older son, Connor. She let him and his brother sleep over so my wife and I could have a night out.

Connor had a baseball game. He told me Dana not only woke him up in time but made him a full breakfast to eat before his game.

Dana's warmth has always shined through in her adopted role, which, as all sports moms know, extends far beyond your own children.

"I have been so lucky to see the kids and their friends and teammates grow up together," she says. "I love rooting for their friends and seeing their success as much as I do for my own kids. But I love that the kids, their families and coaches always know that I will be eager to help in any way I can."

My younger son, Liam, and I will see Dana at a tournament this weekend. Dana coordinates a carpool among several families on the team ("I have a detailed spreadsheet!" she says) and has our Saturday lunch and evening activities planned.

There will likely come a moment after the boys' last game on Mother's Day when our coach will ask them to walk over and hug their parents for taking them there.

If you're at a game somewhere, make sure you embrace your favorite sports mom, too. For she is the true hero of the sidelines.

Steve Borelli, aka Coach Steve, has been an editor and writer with USA TODAY since 1999. He spent 10 years coaching his two sons' baseball and basketball teams. He and his wife, Colleen, are now sports parents for a high schooler and middle schooler. His column is posted weekly at sports.usatoday.com.



Kim Newsome (second from left) attends a Michigan football game last season to see her son Grant (second from right), an assistant coach for the team. Grant's wife, Caroline, is on her left and brother Garrett is on the far right. PROVIDED BY THE NEWSOME FAMILY

"Grant's injury was a point of real, profound adversity for him and for our family," Kim told me last spring, still getting emotional. "The way he navigated it, and the way our younger boys navigated it – I mean, for 38 days, when he was in the hospital, one of their parents was never home 'cause we were tag-teaming being with Grant. And my parents and Leon's mom stepped in."




Transform Your Floor In Just ONE DAY!

Up to **\$500 OFF!***

WHY CHOOSE REVAMP?

 1 Day Floors	 Solutions For Every Type Of Floor	 #1 Concrete Coating Company In The USA	 Long Lasting	 Highly Skilled Technicians	 Limited Lifetime Warranty
--	--	---	---	---	--

888-976-8854

GET A CUSTOM QUOTE FOR YOUR PROJECT TODAY!

GARAGES | DRIVEWAY | PATIO & OUTDOOR | POOL DECK




*Coupon must be presented at time of purchase, cannot be combined with any other offer. Maximum 10% discount.

Service Areas: Arizona, Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Wisconsin



Inner workings

Vacation destinations seem to exist in a state of magical realism. ● Attractions are larger than life, and logistics are seamless. Huge, themed parties happen every night of the week. Animals are happy and healthy, and gardens are lush year-round. ● It's easy to get caught up in it all, but have you ever wondered what it takes to make that happen? ●

USA TODAY reporters were given a behind-the-scenes look at five places – an airport, theme park, safari park, cruise ship and magazine photo engineering lab – to give readers a glimpse into the industry's inner workings. Meet the people putting in the hard work and find out all the things required to make the finished product picture perfect.

Inside

Follow that bag! Checked luggage takes 3.2 mile journey inside New York's LaGuardia Airport. **2D**

Let the good times roll! Mardi Gras fun at Universal Orlando Resort is the result of a year's planning. **3D**

Oh, baby! Caring for the new star at Disney's Animal Kingdom: Corra the elephant calf. **4D**

15,000 dishes a night! Chefs and crew in Carnival Jubilee's kitchens step up to meet challenge. **5D**

Getting the shot! Meet the mastermind helping National Geographic photographers. **6D**



Follow checked bags along 3.2 miles of conveyor belts

Zach Wichter USA TODAY

You arrive at the airport and check in your bag. You wistfully watch as it travels down the conveyor belt and disappears behind a curtain of hanging rubber strips, wondering what happens next on its journey and if it will make it to your destination with you. • If you're traveling through Terminal B at LaGuardia Airport in New York, there's a very high likelihood that it will get where it's going – or get to you – just fine.

The terminal, which fully opened to the public in 2022 after being totally reconstructed, was designed with a state-of-the-art handling system that, according to one official, can fully track about 98% of the bags that pass through from the moment they're checked to the moment they're loaded onto a plane.

USA TODAY had the opportunity to visit the restricted areas

of the airport where bags are processed and learn all about how they move from curb to plane and gate to carousel.

While our reporter and photographer didn't get to fulfill their dreams of riding the 3.2 miles of conveyor belts themselves, they were still afforded an up-close look at every stage of the bag-handling process.



Like all of Terminal B in New York's LaGuardia Airport, the check-in area is state of the art. ZACH WICHTER/USA TODAY

1. Checking in

"The baggage journey starts on the departure level," Angelo Salgado, senior director of operations at LaGuardia Gateway Partners, told USA TODAY as he led the tour through the baggage claim system.

One thing that sets the system apart in Terminal B is floor-level baggage scales. It's a small detail, but representatives from LaGuardia Gateway Partners, which is the developer and manager of the new terminal, said the system was designed to make the passenger experience as smooth as possible. No need to pick up your overweight suitcase – you can just roll it into place before you pay your fee.

The terminal has seven induction piers for regular baggage, two oversize bag check areas, curbside check-in and a group check-in facility. After being ingested into the system, bags move on to the primary screening facility, an area that's typically off-limits to the public.

2. Screening

The seven check-in piers funnel bags to two central mainline conveyors, which bring the bags into the screening room. First, every bag is scanned by an array of 10 cameras as it comes in, which allows the system to read the bar code, ensure the luggage is being routed to the right flight and detect its dimensions. Oversize bags that somehow didn't get sent to the large-items belt at check-in will be flagged and rerouted automatically. Otherwise, they risk getting lodged in the machinery and backing up the screening of everything else.

Salgado said 96% of bags can be tracked once they're scanned, but that doesn't mean the other 4% are necessarily lost. He said most of the scanning failures have to do with "bag hygiene" – things such as improperly affixed or poorly printed bag tags, or tags that are obscured during the intake scan, which can affect the ability of the system to track them.

In the main screening room, every appropriately sized bag passes through a CTX machine, which looks similar to the newest generation of scanners travelers may see at TSA checkpoints upstairs. Most bags are cleared through the machine for loading, and the system automatically moves them along if there's no problem.

If the machines detect something amiss, the bag triggers an alarm that alerts someone in the operation center. In many cases, they are able to inspect the bag remotely and clear it for loading just from an on-screen visual inspection. But if it needs a more thorough look, it gets routed to the secondary screening room.

The conveyor belts run only as needed, unlike the older system with continuously-running belts. LaGuardia Gateway Partners says that results in a 37% energy savings compared with traditional systems.



Every bag that enters the primary screening area is scanned for size and to ensure it's headed to the right plane.

JENNIFER ALTMAN FOR USA TODAY



A flagged bag sits on a mobile inspection table.

JENNIFER ALTMAN FOR USA TODAY

3. Extra screening

Bags that are flagged for additional screening ride on LIDAR-equipped robots known as mobile inspection tables. They're moved down a conveyor belt and automatically sent to an available TSA agent, who opens the bag and performs a more thorough inspection. The agent either clears the bag or pulls it aside as unsafe to travel.

Terminal B has 55 battery-operated mobile inspection tables, and they can navigate without any tracks and shuffle themselves around to ensure they're all charged as needed.

When a TSA agent clears the bag, they will put one of those "your bag has been inspected" slips inside before sending it on its way.

The mobile inspection table then drops the bag back onto the belt so it can be loaded with the rest of the luggage.

Without the slips, most travelers would probably never know their bag had been pulled aside for extra screening, but Salgado said it's always a good idea to follow TSA packing guidelines as closely as possible for a smooth trip.

"An alarmed bag has a higher chance of not making its flight," he said.



LaGuardia's Terminal B can handle between 10,000 and 18,000 bags per day.

JENNIFER ALTMAN FOR USA TODAY

4. Loading and unloading

Most bags make it through the screening system in 10-15 minutes if they don't need a second check or 25 minutes if they do, says Anthony Etergineoso, systems engineer for Oxford Airport Technical Services, the contractor that runs and maintains the system for LaGuardia Gateway Partners.

After all the inspections are complete, bags head into a garagelike space where they're loaded onto trucks that bring them out to departing planes.

The baggage system can handle more than 3,250 bags an hour, or 10,000-18,000 a day.

Salgado said the machinery is highly efficient, adding bags are most likely to have an issue during the loading or unloading process.

"It's the human component," he said. "It's that manual interaction with the bag. Maybe they do a tight turn, the bag falls off the cart, and now it's potentially lost."

Airlines or their contractors are in charge of their baggage loading operation, so this is where luggage also physically changes hands from the airport's systems back to the airline.

Bags are offloaded in the same room where they're put onto carts and then sent to baggage claim.



An employee loads oversize bags onto a cart after all of the inspections are complete.

JENNIFER ALTMAN FOR USA TODAY

5. Baggage claim

Terminal B has nine common-use baggage claims and two oversize belts, giving the operation an extra layer of flexibility.

According to Salgado, the whole baggage system is tested at 3:15 a.m. every day before check-in opens at 3:30, and the terminal operators developed contingency plans for how to keep luggage moving if something goes wrong.

Aside from baggage handlers' work, most of the luggage movement is automated.

Only a handful of people are working behind the scenes when things are running smoothly.

Mardi Gras, with a Florida twist

Universal Orlando's party takes a year of planning

Eve Chen USA TODAY

My grandmother died several years ago, but I could have sworn she was with me at Universal Orlando Resort. The mouth-tingling spicy smashed cucumber salad at Universal Mardi Gras: International Flavors of Carnival this year wasn't exactly like hers, but its familiar flavors still brought me right back to her table.

"We're really trying hard to be as authentic as possible," said Jens Dahlmann, vice president, executive chef of culinary operations at Universal Orlando.

Guests could taste it in the dishes created specially for the monthslong Mardi Gras celebration, which ran through Tuesday and is as big as Halloween Horror Nights and holidays at the Florida resort. They also could experience it at the festive nightly parade, but here's what guests didn't get to see, as USA TODAY learned behind the scenes.

A taste of New Orleans and beyond

"We have beignets, of course. We're going to have a little king cake. You have a seafood boil with crawfish and shrimp. We have gumbo, étouffée.

"We have all those things here for you, but there's so many other flavors for you to discover," Dahlmann said.

The cuisines of more than a dozen destinations, all of them tied to Carnival, represented.

"There's definitely over 80 food and beverage offerings, all brand-new dishes," said Robert Martinez Jr., executive chef of shared services at Universal Orlando. "We don't serve these dishes in any other location, so it is a lot of research and development." This year's menus were brainstormed as last year's Mardi Gras event wrapped.

The Pastelón at the Puerto Rico kiosk was a hit. I'm still thinking about its lasagna-like layers of sweet smashed maduros (fried sweet plantains), savory picadillo (seasoned ground beef) and melty cheese. It tasted like home cooking because it's inspired by a family recipe from Christopher and Marcos Colón, two Puerto Rican brothers who are chefs at the resort.

"Mother Colón, if you read this, thank you so much," Dahlmann said with a smile, adding his appreciation for the expertise team members bring from their backgrounds.

For the Pancit Bihon (rice noodle) recipe at the Philippines kiosk, which was new this year, the culinary team held a cook-off featuring four of their chefs of Filipino descent.

"The pancit, we got it from our grandma's recipe or mother's recipe," said chef Glenn Garcia, who runs the kiosk. "I'm born and raised in (the) Philippines, so it means a lot to me, like I can introduce the food that I grew up eating."

The chefs wanted guests from regions represented at the event to enjoy familiar tastes of home and keep open minds (and bellies) toward new flavors.

"We try and be very authentic and respectful to all the different cultures," said Ron Cope, executive chef at Universal Studios Florida.

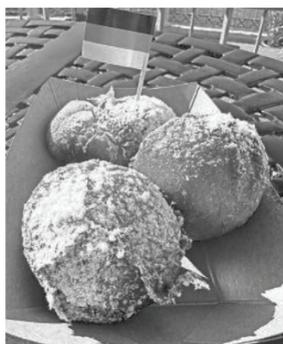
"We try to bring something for everyone. We have options, gluten-free, vegan, so if somebody thinks, 'Oh, it's Mardi Gras. It's just all spicy' ... it's a lot more."

'The right way'

Food is just one part of Universal Orlando's annual multi-sensory Mardi Gras experience, which is heavy on entertainment.



Mardi Gras at Universal Orlando is as big as any of the resort's holiday spectacles, attracting a diverse array of parade performers – including characters more at home at the resort's Halloween Horror Nights. PHOTOS BY EVE CHEN/USA TODAY



Snacks at the celebration include mutzen, a Carnival-style beignet, or doughnut-like pastry. This version has a German influence, a reflection of the event's diverse flavors.



This spicy smashed cucumber salad from Jens Dahlmann, vice president and executive chef of culinary operations at Universal Orlando, brought some zing to the international menu.

On select nights, guests can watch concerts by the likes of Luis Fonsi, DJ Khaled, and KC and The Sunshine Band, which were included in this year's park admission.

But every night, weather permitting, there's a big Mardi Gras parade featuring dazzling performers and stunning floats made by Kern Studios, the family-run company that has shaped the way Mardi Gras is celebrated in New Orleans today.

"This is done the right way, and frankly, it's the only way that I would want to do it," said Kern Studios CEO Barry Kern. "They've gone very far to make sure that it's authentic of a New Orleans experience."

Planning starts early

The planning for each parade starts a full year in advance, sometimes sooner. Typically, each spring, Lora Sauls, director of creative development and show direction for art and design, entertainment at Universal Orlando, and a small team travel to New Orleans to comb through Kern Studios' massive prop warehouse for ideas.

"They have over 13 dens full of floats and props and all kinds of things, and we just go prop hunting, and every year we see something different," she said. "We go in with a theme in mind." It's not always what they land on, but by the end of their short trip, they've narrowed down the theme and what they'd like on each new float.

Half of each year's floats are new and tied to the theme, and the other half are returning signature floats, as krewes have in New Orleans.

Kern Studios designs and builds the new floats, but all the finishing touches, including lighting, glitter, foliage and other decor, are done by Universal Orlando over months.

"They hand-glitter all of these floats," Sauls said. "It takes literally tons of glitter to glitter these."

Universal Orlando also designs and makes the costumes for the parade, which this year include sparkling octopi, super-

sized flowers and shiny celestial bodies in line with the 2024 theme of elements.

Guests could get a sneak peek of the costumes during the day as performers strolled through the park during pre-parade sets, handing out beads, posing for photos and inviting guests to the parade.

Everybody is welcome

One thing I noticed right away was how beautiful each performer looked, even though they were all built differently.

"We definitely wanted to focus on diversity within the Mardi Gras parade. Historically, it was a certain body type, and last year, we really made the big sweeping change to represent all types of bodies in all costumes," Sauls said.

"We're very proud of it. We got a lot of great feedback last year, so we wanted to keep that moving forward so people can see themselves in these really cool costumes."

She added this is the first year the costumes are gender-neutral and the first time performers were given a choice in what kind of makeup and how much makeup they wore, from very light to full. "Each performer got to choose what their face will look like," Sauls said.

Performers are encouraged to be themselves during the parade.

"The Mardi Gras parade is just about having fun," she said. "This is not a choreographed parade. This is a party."

Guests who wanted to be in the parade could ride floats by joining a free Virtual Line or paying for a Float Ride & Dine Experience starting at just under \$85. Usually, you have to be a member of a krewe to ride on a Mardi Gras float in New Orleans.

"What's great about Universal is that you have a very good chance of getting on a float," Kern said. "That's a lifetime experience for people."

The reporter on this story received access to this event from Universal. USA TODAY maintains editorial control of reviews.



The larger-than-life Mardi Gras alligator, traditionally the last float in Universal Orlando's parade, practically screams "Florida." It's hand-covered with glitter, as are the other parade spectacles.



This float pays tribute to the music tradition that helps define New Orleans. It's carefully stored in Universal Orlando's float warehouse and is one of six signature floats that return to the event each year.



Corra the African elephant calf is very curious and confident, according to her keepers at Disney's Animal Kingdom near Orlando, Fla. EVE CHEN/USA TODAY

Caring for animals, especially the most precious, 'is years in the making'

Eve Chen USA TODAY

"A baby!" ● The delight in a child's voice ringing across Kilimanjaro Safaris' savanna captured the mood as Corra made her public debut in February at Disney's Animal Kingdom in Florida. ● The spritely 2-month-old African elephant calf looked tiny next to her mom, Nadirah, despite weighing 312 pounds. ● "They're dense, so they're all muscle and joy," said Dr. Scott Terrell, director of animal and science operations for Disney's Animals, Science and Environment team, which cares for all the animals across Walt Disney World. "She's like a little kid. She wants to run and play and climb."

Corra is now nearly 5 months old.

The baby is precious, but not just because she's cute. Her species is endangered, and she embodies everything Disney's Animal Kingdom is working toward, as USA TODAY learned behind the scenes.

How do you care for a baby elephant?

"This is years in the making," said Liz Warncke, animal care manager for the team.

Corra is the first third-generation African elephant at Disney's Animal Kingdom and the eighth calf of her kind to be born there. Her mom, Nadirah, and aunts, Luna and Stella, also were born at the Florida park, a leading zoological institution accredited by the gold standard Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

"I've been at Disney for 10 years now, on the elephant team, and to see these girls grow up and now become first-time moms, it's been very rewarding," Warncke said. "They're all supportive of Corra."

She said the matriarchal family group likely would spend their whole lives together, as they would in the wild.

There are five other elephants at Animal Kingdom: a group of two females and three males, including Corra's father, Mac. The care they receive is a snapshot of the care all animals get at Disney World, but there are some differences with elephants.

"We're the only animal care team that only cares for one individual species, and that's just because it's such a hard job. It takes a lot," Warncke said.

There are 15 keepers who focus solely on elephants. Other keepers care for multiple species. Terrell said keepers know the animals like family. "Their hearts and minds are exactly where all of us would want."

Animals are given positive reinforcement and such rewards as high-value snacks. Many also have audio cues to draw their attention. Depending on the animal, it could be a voice cue such as calling a name or banging pots and pans.

"Corra actually knows her name now, which is great," Warncke said in February. "So we just call them back one at a time. They're very smart, and they're super food-motivated."

Participation in such activities as welfare checks is voluntary.

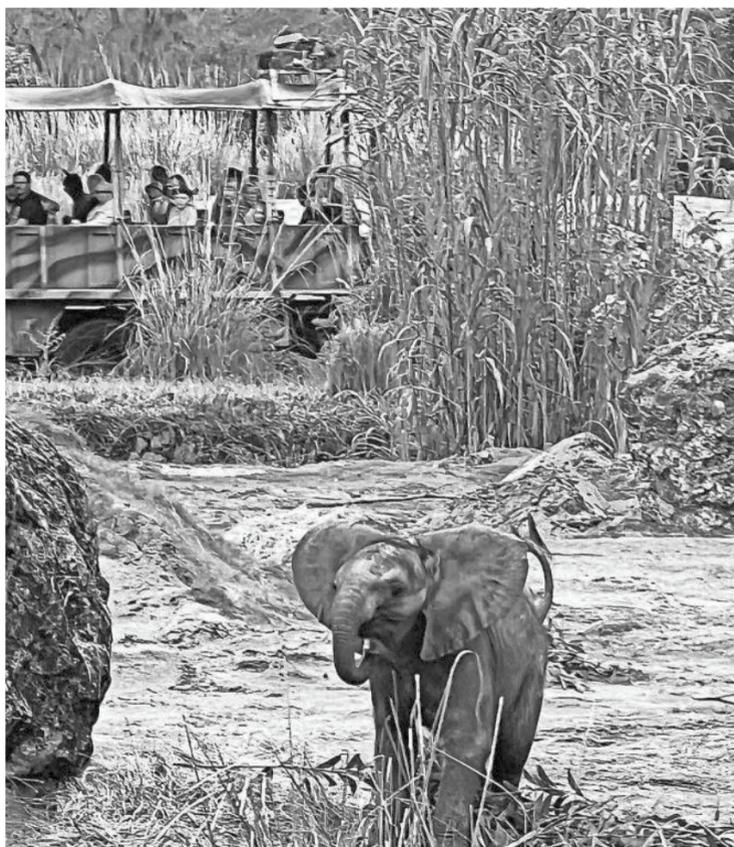
"If they don't want their blood drawn, they don't have to. They can walk away, which is with a lot of our animals here," said Sam Shablin, an endocrinology research associate for the Disney team who helps track animal physiology through hormone levels. "It's the same with our training of the animals, too. If they don't want to train that day, they don't need to. They can go do whatever they want."

Big day came just as predicted

After nearly 22 months of gestation, Corra was born in an outdoor yard on Dec. 13, without a hitch or human intervention.

"We actually got Corra's birth down to the exact day that she was due, which was very exciting for us," Shablin said. "We were just like, 'Look at what our data did!'"

Narrowing down the time frame was critical because Corra could have been born anytime between 615 to 699 days of gestation, according to Dr. Geoff Pye, the team's



Park guests on Kilimanjaro Safaris admire Corra from afar in February. The park also offers a tour, for an additional fee, that gives guests an opportunity to learn more about its elephants. EVE CHEN/USA TODAY

"We actually got Corra's birth down to the exact day that she was due, which was very exciting for us. We were just like, 'Look at what our data did!'"

Sam Shablin
Disney's animal care team

animal health director.

When the big day came, the care team watched the delivery live by camera.

"We were certainly prepared to intervene if needed, but you know if we do everything right, they don't need it," Terrell said.

Nadirah had plenty of fresh hay to lie on, and Warncke said the first-time mom took a nap before going into a quick 10- to 15-minute active labor, with support from sister Luna, who is now expecting and whom keepers handpicked to be near her side, as she would be in the wild.

"Everybody thinks we do everything, and it's all science. There's an art to what we do, too, and that only comes with essentially living with these animals every day," Terrell said.

"We want to take the best possible care of



Two-month-old Corra stands by her mom, Nadirah, during the calf's debut at Disney's Animal Kingdom in February. Nadirah was also born at the park. PROVIDED BY BENNETT STOOPS VIA THE WALT DISNEY CO.

the animals here. We want them to thrive here. We want them to have beautiful little babies just like you see there. ...

"And we want to care for their counterparts (in the wild). And if we're not doing both of those things, then we're not doing our job."

Animal care behind the scenes

Over the years, the Disney Conservation Fund has given \$125 million to nearly 600 organizations working to protect all kinds of species worldwide. Disney's Animal Kingdom has partnered with many of them, including more than 30 organizations supporting elephants, Terrell said.

"We discovered with a group called Save the Elephants this really incredible story that elephants aren't afraid of mice, like in 'Dumbo.' They're actually afraid of bees."

They learned that installing fences with beehives can keep elephants away from gardens that farmers rely on in Africa.

"One elephant can come in the night and eat their entire year's supply of fruits and vegetables, easily, much less a herd of elephants. Well, you're a parent, you have to feed your kids. You need to protect your food source. What do you do?"

Working with elephants at Animal Kingdom, the team learned that just playing bee sounds on speakers deters elephants.

"But if you do have the bees, then you can also harvest the honey. You can feed your family, maybe make a little money on the side," he said, calling it a win-win.

Other conservation efforts have included protecting the rainforest habitats of cotton-top tamarins in Colombia through Proyecto Titi, repatriating white rhinos to Uganda and reintroducing Puerto Rican crested toads back to the wild.

"We're involved with a project in the Democratic Republic of Congo that's getting ready to do the first-ever rewilding of gorillas from a rescue situation," Terrell said. Disney's Animal Kingdom is a founding member of the Gorilla Rehabilitation And Conservation Education Center, or GRACE, and a gorilla named Grace at the park helps guests connect with her counterparts in the wild.

Disney sends its experts and resources out to help in-country efforts, but it also shares research and information on animal care. "We recognize the privilege of having these animals and the responsibility that comes with having them, and in order to just pay off on that privilege, we need to make sure that we're making a difference," Terrell said. Everything the team learned from Corra's birth will be shared across the zoological community, he said.

Your chance to meet the baby

Disney's Animal Kingdom guests can see Corra for themselves on the popular Kilimanjaro Safaris attraction, but she may not always be out.

"We're rotating elephants all the time," Warncke said. "We want to make sure that they're not always in the same yard; their day to day changes."

Guests who want more time with the elephants can take the Caring for Giants tour, an hourlong experience that starts at \$39, on top of park admission. All proceeds from the tour go directly toward elephant conservation.

Though guests may not see everything that happens behind the scenes at Disney's Animal Kingdom, the hope is they leave inspired to keep learning about animals such as Corra and want to protect them, too, Terrell said.

"She will inspire millions of people in 2024 and beyond to care about elephants," Terrell said.

The reporter on this story received access to this editor from Disney. USA TODAY maintains editorial control of content.



Pacific Restaurant is one of the two dining rooms aboard Carnival Jubilee. Dinner is the busiest time for the ship's kitchen staff. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE

It takes a galley more like a city to keep cruise passengers fed

Nathan Diller USA TODAY

On any given night, Pacific Restaurant on Carnival Cruise Line's newest ship is a hub of activity. On multiple evenings during a recent sailing, guests lined up at the entrance to one of the main dining rooms on Carnival Jubilee, which gave way to a two-deck space with ornate, twinkling light fixtures and soaring white columns. • But a windowless room several decks below is where the real action happens. • The ship's main galley, lined with metallic counters, stoves and ceiling panels, cranks out 15,000 dishes a night on average. The kitchen – one of 18 galleys overall – supplies multiple meals, but dinner is its busiest time. • "It's not a small operation by any means, especially on this class of ship," Vivek Menon, the ship's food and beverage director, told USA TODAY onboard.

Lots of planning happens before meals ever hit guests' plates. Food orders are placed about two weeks in advance and loaded onto the vessel on turnaround days, said Menon, whose food and beverage team includes just less than 900 people. (Jubilee can accommodate more than 6,000 guests.)

The ship's galley staff cooks roughly 5,000 pounds of whole chicken, grills about 5,000 pounds of strip steak and bakes 600 loaves of bread every week.

One morning in late February, fish was thawing in a walk-in refrigerator the size of a small bedroom on Deck 3, two decks below the galley. According to a label on its exterior, a nearby freezer housed ice cream, and another room was filled with boxes of cruise essentials such as Grey Goose vodka and Crown Royal whiskey.

Chefs place orders with the vessel's storeroom team two days before they need the ingredients. "Pre-prep" – such as trimming and marinating chicken breasts – takes place a day beforehand, and more prep follows on the day of service, though the time required varies.

Those chicken breasts, for example, might be prepped an hour before being served. By contrast, "prime rib cooks for six hours," Menon said. "A short rib braises for 12 hours, so obviously that has a huge lead time. So, it depends on the dish."

Then it's showtime. The galley provides food for an average of 4,000 people a night between Pacific Restaurant and the ship's other dining room, Atlantic Restaurant.

Orders start trickling in at around 5:45 p.m., and the crew is ready. Chefs are given a head count at the beginning of the evening, at peak time and near the end of dinner.

For example, Menon said, "if we're cooking 1,000 fish for early dining, 1,000 filets, the counts are spread out in such a way that in the first 15 minutes, the cook is running around 200 ahead of count, because these counts are very quickly going to catch up."

As orders slow down, they narrow the gap and reduce output.

"At the end of dinner service, you have very little left," Menon said. "By the time it's 9, 9:15, we're already down one or two, four or five pieces, depending on the volume we're setting up."

Guest flow differs each evening, however.

At the start of a cruise, the crew starts logging how much of an item is used on that sailing – down to such details as how guests want their steak cooked – which allows them to prepare more or less as needed.

But tracking guest preferences is about more than just good service. The line has paid close attention to what goes uneaten as part of efforts to reduce food waste.

"We looked at what the guests don't like, what's coming back on the plate," Menon said. Carnival also introduced QR code menus in the wake of the COVID-19 pan-



Jubilee's main galley, or kitchen, is one of 18 aboard the ship. It takes a small army with precision timing and culinary skills to prepare meals for thousands of passengers each day.

demic, which has made it easier to tweak menus (though there are printed menus as well).

The line generated nearly 2½ pounds of food waste a person around five years ago. Now that number is about ½ pounds.

If guests want to peek behind the culinary curtain, they can see the galley for themselves. Carnival's Chef's Table experience features a tour and a multi-course dinner for 12 to 16 people, the line's website says.

The sleek dining room that hosts the dinner on Jubilee was tucked deep inside the galley space, giving passengers up-close views of the kitchen. The menu – which can't be found elsewhere on board – vary from ship to ship but have included such items as knotted Parmesan herb brioche, black-garlic cannelloni, a "lamb trilogy" (roasted, broiled and confit) and more.

The experience is available on all Carnival ships and ranges from \$90 to \$150 per person, depending on the vessel and the menu. Passengers can make reservations online after booking their cruise.

The reporter on this story received access to this sailing from Carnival. USA TODAY maintains editorial control of content.

The main galley in Carnival Cruise Line's newest ship, Jubilee, cranks out 15,000 dishes a night on average.



Carnival Jubilee can accommodate more than 6,000 guests. Its food and beverage team is nearly 900 people strong.

Those impossibly close wildlife images? Photo engineer Tom O'Brien makes them possible.

Tom O'Brien's equipment and vision have brought the world to people's living rooms.

PROVIDED BY REBECCA HALE/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



Meet 'Nat Geo's 007'

Kathleen Wong USA TODAY

The object vaguely resembled a chicken, with its rounded body but no head. However, the white paper-mache bird actually was supposed to be a greater-sage grouse – a bird that lives in the North American plains. • National Geographic photographer Charlie Hamilton James was on assignment in Wyoming in 2018 to capture images of male sage grouses doing their mating dance, in which they pop their chests in and out. • There was a major problem, though: The birds wouldn't perform their intimate mating ritual if a human was present.

So James approached National Geographic photo engineer Tom O'Brien, one of the only people who could help him. O'Brien is the mastermind behind the bespoke innovations that help National Geographic photographers capture the up-close stunning photography for which the publication is known.

"You're insane, dude," O'Brien remembered telling James when he asked for a "robot camera bird."

Yet it was completed in 2½ weeks. A strong yet tiny camera was placed inside the papier-mâché bird, which could travel down a 100-foot-long railroad track made of quarter-inch PVC pipe. It could go left and right, up and down, and James could control all of it via a Wi-Fi mesh network.

"It was one of the wildest things I've ever done," O'Brien said.

Placing the camera at bird height also was a strategic move. "Now all of a sudden they look majestic as heck," he said. "They look powerful and big."

Dubbed "the funky bird train," this project was just one of many MacGyver-like inventions O'Brien makes to let photographers get up close and personal with wildlife or deal with unpredictable and extreme natural conditions.

His innovations have been everywhere, from the Arctic to Mount Everest and, soon, the Sonoran Desert. ("How are we going to keep these cameras not boiling hot in the Sonoran Desert?")

Gear, batteries and 'bits and bobs'

O'Brien has a background in mechanical engineering, but he has dabbled in photography since his high school years. When applying for jobs in 2016, it was between this position at National Geographic and a firm that produced equipment for intelligence operators such as the CIA.

He chose National Geographic and is now half of a two-person department.

"People joke that I'm Nat Geo's 007," he said. "I love the freedom to create and innovate. ... It's something I have that many engineers don't have. We touch so many different types of engineering, from electric to mechanical to textiles."

O'Brien's team recently acquired a sewing machine.

Just blocks from the White House in Washington, the underground photo engineering lab has everything a photographer could need – and things the two may not know they could use.

Upstairs is a shop with machines such as 3D printers and laser cutters. In the basement, old cabinets line the walls, filled with every type of brass fastener in



O'Brien's infrared camera let Jen Guyton get images from inside a hyena den.

PROVIDED BY JEN GUYTON/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

This "funky bird train" on PVC pipe tracks delivered majestic and rare images of male sage grouses in Wyoming doing their mating dance. PROVIDED BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

meeting with the elephant curator at the Smithsonian's National Zoo and watching how elephants play with enrichment toys. O'Brien built a lightweight Pyrex housing strong enough to withstand elephant tusks.

For an expedition to Mount Everest, the equipment had to be lightweight, and he had to ensure the batteries wouldn't freeze. "With smaller batteries, the trick is you shove them inside your coat," he said. That wasn't possible with 10 pounds of drone batteries, so he painted lightweight aluminum black because "solar ovens work even better" at high altitudes.

Photographer Jen Guyton was heading out to Kenya's Masai Mara savanna to capture images of spotted hyenas. She dived into extensive research. "I tried to dig up every story that's ever been done on spotted hyenas, what has already been done and what's possible," she said.

"I try to prepare for everything and rely on nothing," she said. When it comes to nature and wildlife, anything can throw a wrench into plans. "You have to bend to an animal's will."

When she approached O'Brien, she had a "crazy idea." She wanted to photograph the hyenas in the dark because that's when the animals are most active. "All the photos we see of them are taken during the day."

They decided to try out infrared – her first time shooting with the technology – and created a custom system built onto a Land Cruiser. Two infrared spotlights typically used for crime scene investigations were mounted on top of the car, and two huge car batteries for the spotlights were placed on the back. Wires were everywhere.

Guyton went out multiple nights – some nights, it poured rain, so she had to bring the lights in – and caught images of hyenas eating and cubs playing.

Guyton also used a remote-controlled robot to get close to the hyena den while she stayed about 50 yards away to give them space.

"How do you get that low angle when you can't be on the ground with them?" O'Brien said. The camera settings could be adjusted as the daylight changed.

"The cool thing about it was hyenas are naturally curious," she said. The hyenas approached the robot, and one cub even offered it a stick in what seemed like a gesture to play. The images showed a completely different side to hyenas – exactly what Guyton sought.

"I like to think of photos as entire stories frozen in time," she said. "They capture a moment that can never be repeated in exactly the same way ever again."

the English imperial system and drills, bolts and screws in every size. "It allows us to quickly iterate and design, and grab and go," he said. There are drill presses, milling machines and butcher block tables. "If you told me the world is ending and you need to build me a car, I bet we could build you a car down there."

Then there's the camera gear, hundreds of lenses, batteries, cameras, lights, tripods, lighting stands, underwater housing and more "bits and bobs," as O'Brien put it.

From the lab to the wild

When photographers are heading out on assignment, they first stop at O'Brien's desk for help.

He made an elephant-resistant camera used in Gabon, which required



ANALYSIS

Diplomatic strains

Tense call, defiance lead to pause on Israel military aid

Steve Holland | REUTERS

WASHINGTON – President Joe Biden spent months urging Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to protect Gaza civilians, but the U.S. decision to pause some military aid to Israel was linked directly to a pointed phone call they had a month ago, a U.S. official said.

In the April 4 call, soon after seven World Central Kitchen aid workers were killed in an Israeli airstrike, Biden gave Netanyahu an ultimatum: protect citizens and aid workers, or else U.S. policy would change.

Biden had been pressed by international allies and many of his fellow Democrats at home to condition billions in U.S. aid to Israel over the massive death toll from its Gaza assault for weeks. Among many difficult calls between the two leaders, the April 4 conversation was pivotal, the official said. Until then, Biden had not threatened to hold back assistance despite increasingly tense conversations.

Last week, the White House acted on the ultimatum. The United States withheld a shipment of thousands of heavy bombs, out of concern over Israel's slow-rolling assault in Rafah, where Washington opposes a major Israeli invasion without civilian safeguards.

"Civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs and other ways in which they go after population centers," Biden said Wednesday night, his first public words about the weapons pause. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin suggested to reporters Wednesday more weapons could be withheld.

While Biden's weapons pause is nowhere near as severe as President Ronald Reagan's 1982 ban on cluster bomb sales to Israel, it is a turning point in the testy relations between Israel and its most reliable ally, one that has provided military aid, fighter jets and support at the United Nations.

"This isn't a halt to all offensive weapons sales to Israel, but it's a ratcheting up the pressure that the U.S. really doesn't want the Rafah operation," said Bruce Riedel, a 30-veteran of the CIA and now a Middle East expert at the Brookings Institution.

On Thursday, Israel struck eastern Rafah as a



President Joe Biden considers his ability to negotiate with foreign leaders a hallmark of his presidency. CRAIG HUDSON/REUTERS

More inside

Israeli forces strike eastern Rafah. **8NN**

cease-fire-for-hostages deal appeared to crumble, and the U.S. warned that Israel's military strategy was a mistake.

A second U.S. official said the administration had intended to keep the weapons pause quiet but they spoke up after the Israelis leaked the news.

The public nature of the move could work in Biden's favor, some supporters say.

There have been "months and months of discussion about 'What are the messages being conveyed by this government to the Israeli government' and 'To what extent do they take it seriously,'" said Jeremy Ben-Ami, president of the liberal Jewish advocacy group J-Street.

"The fact that this became public is part of the message," Ben-Ami said. "It's a message to the world that you can't have carte blanche with American aid."

Biden's Republican opposition, which almost universally supports Netanyahu, has been scathing in its criticism, accusing the president of un-

See ISRAEL, Page 8NN

TOP: An Israeli military vehicle fires near the Gaza border on Wednesday. AMMAR AWAD/REUTERS; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION TREATMENT BY ABEL MUNIZ MONTENEGRO/USA TODAY NETWORK

Future uncertain for Speaker Johnson

GOP caucus still divided after ouster attempt

David Morgan
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson woke up on Thursday having survived an attempt to push him out, but he still faces an uncertain future as leader of a Republican caucus locked in civil war.

Johnson was a little-known member of the House of Representatives until October, when he emerged from the bruising leadership fight that followed his predecessor's ouster in the powerful role of top Republican in Congress and second in line to the presidency behind the vice president.

He survived an attempt by hardline Republican Marjorie Taylor Greene on Wednesday to remove him as speaker, with the support of most of his party's 217-213 House majority and from Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. Many Democrats also voted for Johnson to avoid a replay of October's chaos.

Since winning the speaker's gavel, Johnson has dropped the narrow views of a relatively untried congressman from northwest Louisiana, serving his fourth term in the House, and embraced the political realities of national leadership. That evolution has angered enough party hardliners to seriously diminish his chances of remaining Republican House leader next year, regardless of whether the party holds its majority in the Nov. 5 election.

"I'm proud to serve in this position. It's not one that I aspired to. It's not one that I ever expected to have or planned for," Johnson said after Wednesday's vote. "But it is the honor of my life and career to do this, and I will do it so long as this body will have me do that."

When he won the speaker's gavel last October, the 52-year-old was viewed as a likable but inexperienced candidate with no political enemies, who opposed U.S. aid to Ukraine, favored strict border restrictions and brought a strong Christian conservative record to culture war issues such as abortion.

He had also played a leading role in House Republican objections to 2020 presidential election results following Trump's false claims that he lost to Democratic President Joe Biden because of voter fraud. Those claims, and the support they drew from Republicans in Congress, led to the deadly Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

'That's what leaders do'

As speaker, Johnson has come to rely on Democrats to help him avoid government shutdowns, safeguard U.S. efforts against terrorism, aid

See JOHNSON, Page 7NN

Trump lawyer questions Stormy Daniels' account

Judge denies defense request for mistrial

Luc Cohen and Jody Godoy
REUTERS

NEW YORK – Donald Trump's lawyer sought to show inconsistencies in porn star Stormy Daniels' various tellings of a 2006 sexual encounter she has said she had with Trump, part of an effort on Thursday to undermine her credibility as a witness in the first criminal trial of a former U.S. president.

Her unflattering account of a sexual encounter with Trump in a Lake Tahoe hotel suite while he was married to his wife, Melania, riveted jurors on Tuesday

and reminded U.S. voters of some of the more lurid aspects of his 2017-2021 presidency as he campaigns to win back the White House this year.

Facing questioning on Thursday by defense lawyer Susan Necheles in a Manhattan courtroom, Daniels stuck to her account.

"You're trying to make me say that it changed, but it hasn't changed," Daniels told Necheles.

Trump, 77, has pleaded not guilty to 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up his former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen's \$130,000 payment to Daniels, 45, for her silence ahead of the 2016 presidential election about the alleged encounter. Trump has denied ever having sex with Daniels.

Trump, the Republican candidate challenging Democratic President Joe Biden in the Nov. 5 election, has called the trial a politically motivated attempt to undermine his campaign.

Prosecutors have said Trump's efforts to obscure the paper trail for the payment to Daniels corrupted the 2016 election in which he defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton by preventing voters from learning about a story that might have swayed their vote.

After testimony ended on Thursday, Trump lawyer Todd Blanche once again asked Justice Juan Merchan to declare a mistrial on the basis of Daniels' testimony.

See TRUMP, Page 7NN



Former President Donald Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 counts of falsifying business records.

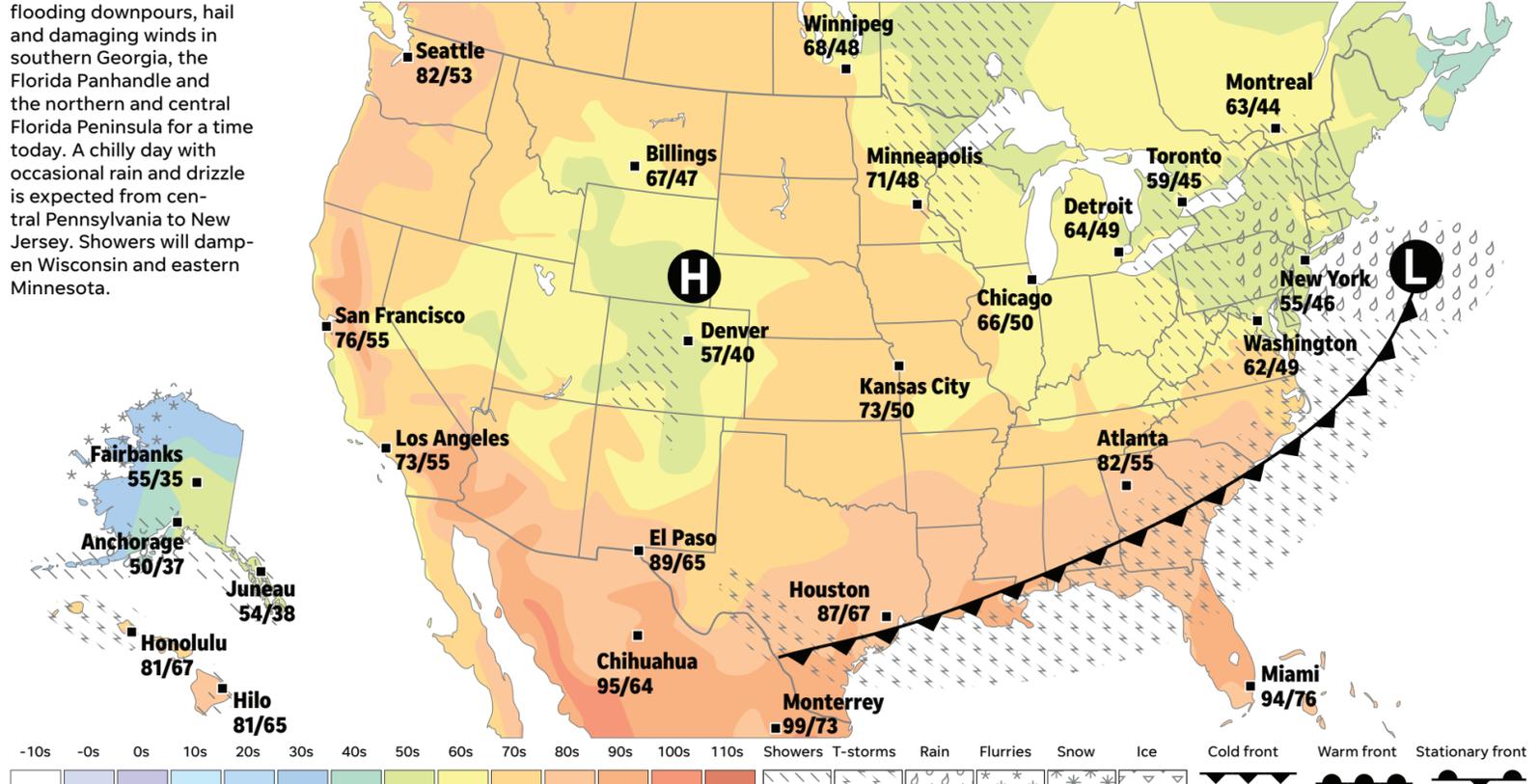
STEVEN HIRSCH/POOL VIA REUTERS

NATIONAL SUMMARY

Thunderstorms can bring flooding downpours, hail and damaging winds in southern Georgia, the Florida Panhandle and the northern and central Florida Peninsula for a time today. A chilly day with occasional rain and drizzle is expected from central Pennsylvania to New Jersey. Showers will dampen Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation for Friday. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



THURSDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)
High: 112 at Zapata, TX
Low: 8 at Gothic, CO
Precip: 3.54" at Toccoa, GA

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)
High: 118 at Jacobabad, Pakistan
Low: -8 at Rea Point, Canada
Precip: 3.81" at Pago Pago, Western Samoa

TODAY IN HISTORY

On May 10, 1889, tornadoes hit several eastern Pennsylvania communities, including Reading, Pottsville, Shamokin and Philadelphia.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: Where was the worst hailstorm of all time?
 Answer: In Ind: April 30, 1888. Baseball-sized hail killed 246 persons.

NATIONAL CITIES FRIDAY

City	High/Low/W	Air Quality	City	High/Low/W	Air Quality	City	High/Low/W	Air Quality	City	High/Low/W	Air Quality
Aberdeen, SD	74/44/pc	34	Evansville, IN	70/56/pc	55	Levittown, PA	54/42/r	27	Rochester, NY	55/44/sh	20
Abilene, TX	79/61/pc	54	Fall River, MA	56/41/sh	28	Lincoln, IL	68/52/pc	46	Rockford, IL	70/48/pc	28
Accomac, VA	66/49/pc	48	Farmington, NM	72/45/pc	61	Louisville, KY	71/55/pc	50	Ruidoso, NM	67/45/t	66
Adrian, MI	64/46/pc	44	Fayetteville, NC	79/55/t	56	Lubbock, TX	76/58/pc	53	Salem, OR	85/52/s	47
Akron, OH	60/44/sh	26	Fond du Lac, WI	68/47/pc	26	Manitowoc, WI	57/48/c	22	Salina, KS	77/48/pc	40
Alamogordo, NM	84/57/pc	61	Fort Myers, FL	91/76/pc	35	Mansfield, OH	62/44/pc	29	Salinas, CA	76/52/s	61
Alexandria, VA	62/47/sh	52	Fort Smith, AR	79/54/s	54	Marshall, NC	70/45/r	53	Salisbury, MD	62/47/sh	39
Alliance, OH	60/44/sh	32	Framingham, MA	57/39/sh	29	Marshfield, WI	64/43/sh	27	San Angelo, TX	80/64/c	53
Amarillo, TX	70/53/pc	48	Freeport, IL	68/46/c	29	Massillon, OH	62/44/sh	39	Sarasota, FL	86/75/s	41
Ames, IA	74/46/c	47	Fremont, OH	64/49/pc	35	McLean, VA	61/47/sh	51	Savannah, GA	80/60/t	33
Anderson, SC	85/51/s	64	Fort Collins, CO	61/40/c	48	Melbourne, FL	95/74/pc	45	Sheboygan, WI	56/48/pc	24
Appleton, WI	66/46/c	20	Gadsden, AL	79/50/s	60	Memphis, TN	75/57/s	65	Shelby, NC	79/47/pc	58
Asheville, NC	75/47/s	57	Gainesville, FL	88/65/t	37	Middletown, NY	52/41/r	18	Sherman, TX	80/56/s	41
Ashland, OH	62/45/sh	37	Galesburg, IL	68/47/pc	40	Milford, MA	57/38/sh	30	Shreveport, LA	85/59/s	65
Athens, GA	83/52/t	57	Gastonia, NC	80/48/t	59	Milwaukee, WI	63/50/pc	39	Silver City, NM	81/46/pc	70
Augusta, GA	81/52/t	49	Glen Rose, TX	80/60/pc	56	Monroe, MI	63/50/pc	38	Sioux Falls, SD	70/44/pc	39
Austin, TX	84/64/c	97	Gonzales, LA	91/64/t	79	Monroe, LA	84/60/s	52	Somerset, PA	53/42/sh	32
Bartlesville, OK	77/49/s	48	Great Falls, MT	68/44/s	47	Montgomery, AL	86/56/t	44	Somerville, NJ	54/42/r	23
Battle Creek, MI	64/49/pc	28	Green Bay, WI	67/48/pc	22	Muncie, IN	66/53/pc	34	South Bend, IN	64/50/pc	27
Bedford, IN	67/51/pc	35	Greenville, SC	83/50/pc	66	Murfreesboro, TN	70/50/pc	50	Spartanburg, SC	81/49/s	71
Binghamton, NY	52/43/r	17	Hackensack, NJ	54/44/r	50	Naples, FL	89/77/s	32	Springfield, IL	69/52/pc	52
Bluffton, SC	78/62/t	31	Hagerstown, MD	58/45/r	23	Nashville, TN	71/53/pc	51	Springfield, MO	68/51/s	46
Bremerton, WA	84/47/s	40	Hattiesburg, MS	87/59/t	60	Neptune, NJ	53/45/r	23	St. Augustine, FL	89/68/t	30
Brockton, MA	56/40/sh	29	Henderson, KY	69/55/pc	50	New Bedford, MA	54/41/sh	20	St. Cloud, MN	70/44/sh	31
Brownwood, TX	79/61/pc	62	Hendersonville, NC	77/47/s	57	New Bern, NC	86/53/t	60	St. George, UT	77/52/pc	48
Burlington, IA	69/49/pc	43	Herkimer, NY	57/47/sh	19	New Philadelphia, OH	63/43/sh	29	Staunton, VA	69/45/pc	40
Burlington, NC	78/49/t	48	Hillsdale, MI	62/47/pc	36	Newark, OH	64/45/sh	41	Stevens Point, WI	66/44/sh	25
Burlington, VT	61/47/c	25	Holland, MI	58/49/pc	27	Newton, NJ	53/41/r	20	Stockton, CA	91/55/s	69
Cambridge, OH	63/44/sh	25	Hornell, NY	53/44/sh	20	New York, NY	55/46/r	53	Stroudsburg, PA	52/40/r	22
Camdenton, MO	69/51/s	50	Houma, LA	92/68/t	62	Norwich, CT	56/40/c	24	Stuart, FL	96/75/pc	42
Canandaigua, NY	54/46/sh	18	Howell, MI	62/46/pc	35	Ocala, FL	90/69/c	37	Sturgis, MI	62/48/pc	31
Canton, OH	61/45/sh	37	Hutchinson, KS	76/48/pc	37	Oklahoma City, OK	75/57/s	54	Tallahassee, FL	85/62/t	37
Carlsbad, NM	74/54/pc	64	Hyannis, MA	52/42/r	20	Opelousas, LA	85/64/t	101	Thibodaux, LA	91/66/t	90
Chambersburg, PA	58/46/r	35	Indianapolis, IN	67/52/pc	45	Oshkosh, WI	68/47/c	20	Topeka, KS	77/50/pc	58
Cherry Hill, NJ	55/43/r	37	Iowa City, IA	73/47/c	42	Palm Beach, FL	92/78/pc	42	Tuscaloosa, AL	83/56/s	54
Cincinnati, OH	66/51/pc	38	Ithaca, NY	52/44/r	19	Palm Springs, CA	94/70/s	54	Utica, NY	56/46/sh	19
Clarksville, TN	70/54/c	51	Jackson, MS	82/58/s	108	Panama City, FL	84/65/t	38	Ventura, CA	62/50/pc	60
Coldwater, MI	62/47/pc	33	Jackson, TN	73/52/pc	57	Pekin, IL	69/50/pc	45	Victorville, CA	80/49/pc	51
Columbus, OH	65/48/pc	38	Jacksonville, FL	84/64/t	34	Pensacola, FL	86/65/t	39	Vineland, NJ	54/42/r	29
Corning, NY	55/45/r	18	Jacksonville, NC	83/53/t	59	Peoria, IL	68/51/pc	43	Visalia, CA	88/55/s	68
Corpus Christi, TX	90/77/pc	133	Kent, OH	61/44/sh	42	Petersburg, VA	80/50/pc	53	Washington, DC	62/49/sh	50
Daytona Beach, FL	95/71/c	41	Kewanee, IL	68/48/pc	36	Phoenix, AZ	92/67/s	78	Watertown, SD	69/45/pc	32
Deming, NM	86/55/pc	63	Keyser, WV	61/47/sh	34	Port Huron, MI	61/42/pc	22	Wausau, WI	64/44/sh	27
DeRidder, LA	87/64/pc	76	Kinston, NC	83/52/t	64	Portsmouth, NH	56/39/c	22	Waynesboro, PA	58/46/r	26
Des Moines, IA	75/50/c	49	Knoxville, TN	72/52/r	56	Poughkeepsie, NY	56/42/r	18	White Plains, NY	51/39/r	22
Detroit, MI	64/49/pc	43	Lafayette, IN	65/51/pc	29	Providence, RI	56/42/c	26	Wichita Falls, TX	78/57/s	46
Devils Lake, ND	67/45/pc	36	Lafayette, LA	88/66/t	89	Pueblo, CO	57/42/c	42	Wilmington, DE	56/44/r	30
Dover, NH	56/35/c	27	Lakeland, FL	93/73/pc	50	Quincy, MA	54/43/sh	43	Wilmington, NC	85/55/t	55
El Paso, TX	89/65/pc	54	Lansing, MI	64/46/pc	30	Redding, CA	93/55/s	44	Wisconsin Rapids, WI	66/43/sh	28
Elmira, NY	56/45/r	17	Las Cruces, NM	87/58/pc	57	Reno, NV	74/49/s	55	Wooster, OH	63/43/sh	24
Erie, PA	57/45/sh	25	Lebanon, PA	56/44/r	29	Ravenna, OH	61/43/sh	37	Worcester, MA	54/40/sh	30
Eugene, OR	86/50/s	30	Leesburg, FL	92/71/pc	40	Richmond, IN	65/50/pc	50	York, PA	57/46/r	30

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

City	Friday High/Low/W	Saturday High/Low/W	City	Friday High/Low/W	Saturday High/Low/W	City	Friday High/Low/W	Saturday High/Low/W	City	Friday High/Low/W	Saturday High/Low/W
Acapulco	86/69/pc	87/69/pc	Cape Town	64/48/r	66/51/pc	La Paz	65/36/pc	64/34/s	San Jose	86/69/r	86/70/sh
Addis Ababa	74/56/sh	78/56/pc	Caracas	91/77/sh	92/77/c	Lagos	93/79/t	90/78/t	San Salvador	89/72/t	89/72/t
Algiers	76/52/pc	78/58/s	Casablanca	82/64/c	79/60/pc	Lima	73/65/pc	72/64/s	Santiago	57/38/pc	59/39/s
Amman	96/71/pc	85/59/pc	Colombo	90/80/t	91/78/t	Lisbon	80/57/pc	76/57/s	Sao Paulo	84/67/s	88/67/s
Amsterdam	67/51/c	70/54/pc	Copenhagen	61/47/c	61/45/pc	London	74/51/pc	74/55/pc	Sarajevo	66/45/sh	69/46/pc
Ankara	78/53/pc	68/51/r	Damascus	94/66/pc	91/56/pc	Madrid	85/54/s	85/55/pc	Shanghai	82/66/c	74/65/r
Asuncion	83/71/c	82/65/c	Dublin	69/45/pc	69/51/pc	Manila	94/82/c	97/83/c	Singapore	90/80/sh	89/80/t
Athens	68/60/sh	73/58/pc	Geneva	73/48/s	77/50/s	Mexico City	91/60/pc	91/60/pc	Stockholm	55/37/pc	61/40/pc
Auckland	58/43/s	59/40/s	Guatemala City	86/67/t	85/67/t	Milan	77/58/pc	79/57/s	Sydney	69/61/r	65/58/r
Baghdad	96/70/s	103/76/pc	Hanoi	87/77/t	91/78/t	Mombasa	88/75/pc	89/75/s	Taipei	89/71/c	89/74/c
Bangkok	95/81/sh	96/82/t	Harare	81/53/s	84/55/s	Montevideo	61/49/pc	61/49/pc	Tegucigalpa	87/70/t	90/70/t
Beijing	83/57/c	81/53/s	Havana	93/74/s	93/75/pc	Montreal	63/44/c	60/49/pc	Tehran	75/62/s	81/67/s
Beirut	91/69/c	76/65/s	Helsinki	52/40/pc	53/40/s	Moscow	50/40/r	47/33/pc	Tokyo	73/64/s	76/65/s
Belgrade	70/52/pc	73/54/s	Hong Kong	81/77/c	82/78/pc	Nairobi	75/61/t	77/59/t	Toronto	59/45/c	57/47/sh
Berlin	71/51/pc	71/49/pc	Jakarta	94/78/sh	94/78/sh	New Delhi	104/84/pc	105/80/pc	Tunis	77/58/pc	80/60/s
Bogota	65/50/sh	69/51/sh	Jerusalem	95/65/pc	80/58/s	Panama City	88/76/t	88/76/sh	Vancouver	68/50/s	66/51/s
Brussels	70/51/pc	74/53/pc	Johannesburg	78/56/s	80/54/s	Paris	74/53/pc	77/56/pc	Vienna	70/47/c	71/51/pc
Bucharest	71/43/c	74/51/s	Kabul	73/51/t	72/49/t	Port-au-Prince	94/74/t	93/74/pc	Warsaw	63/47/c	61/42/c
Budapest	74/51/pc	74/55/pc	Khartoum	109/83/pc	111/86/s	Rio de Janeiro	81/72/s	85/76/s	Yerevan	69/49/pc	67/49/c
Buenos Aires	61/51/pc	61/49/pc	Kyiv	66/51/pc	63/43/c	Riyadh	100/76/pc	105/80/pc	Zagreb	74/48/s	75/47/pc
Cairo	96/71/c	88/66/s	Kingston	90/81/pc	90/81/pc	Rome	76/54/pc	76/52/s	Zurich	72/45/s	74/46/s

Denotes possible travel delays Friday

Weather(W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.



THAILAND

U-turn on cannabis

Thailand will recriminalize cannabis by the end of the year, according to Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, a major U-turn for the Southeast Asian nation two years after it became the first in the region to decriminalize the drug for recreational use, the Independent reported.

On Wednesday, Thavisin said cannabis would be re-listed as a narcotic before 2025, demanding that the Ministry of Public Health issue a regulation to allow it only for medical and health purposes.

Cannabis was first allowed for medicinal use in 2018 and later permitted for recreational use in 2022 under a previous government. But in the absence of a comprehensive law, its recreational use increased and also resulted in the rapid growth of a small domestic retail market for marijuana.

Thousands of shops and small businesses selling cannabis products have emerged since 2022, with one study projecting the industry could be worth up to \$1.2 billion by 2025, according to the Bangkok Post.

But Thavisin has strongly voiced his opposition against the recreational use of cannabis since he took office last year, warning that it could worsen the country's drug abuse problems.

The prime minister has called on all the government agencies to cooperate in solving the country's drug problem.

Observers noted that changing the rules about marijuana usage will impact the economy, as well as the small businesses catering to cannabis consumers.

The move in Thailand follows one in Canada: The government on Tuesday approved a request by the province of British Columbia to recriminalize the public use of drugs, the New York Times wrote. Before the change, the province's residents were allowed to possess small amounts of drugs, including hard heroin and cocaine, without facing criminal charges.



IRAQ

A new kind of instability

Iraq has regained a semblance of stability since the defeat of the Islamic State, the departure of most foreign troops, and the growth of Iranian influence in the capital of Baghdad in recent years. To counter that influence, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates announced last year they would invest \$3 billion into infrastructure in the war-torn country, as World Politics Review noted.

Still, as radical Iranian mullahs and ultra-orthodox Muslim sheikhs pour money into the country, they are fueling a new kind of instability, and a morality race.

For example, an assassin on a motorcycle recently shot and killed Um Fahad, a well-known Iraqi TikTok personality, presumably for "wearing tight or revealing clothing, or singing and cuddling her young son," the New York Times wrote. She had 460,000 followers – but conservative Iraqi officials sought to jail her for 90 days for dancing at her 6-year-old son's birthday party.

She was the third such personality killed in less than a year in the

country, suggesting that behaviors associated with Western values and secular culture are increasingly coming under fire in the Middle Eastern country. Meanwhile, this crackdown has come on the heels of youth-driven civil unrest in Iraq that began before the pandemic, in 2019, over corruption and Iran's influence in the country.

At the same time, Iraqi lawmakers have also passed a new law that would criminalize homosexuality and alternative gender expressions, Agence France-Presse reported. Those convicted of same-sex relations would face 15 years in prison. Transgender people could be sentenced to three years in jail.

Meanwhile, civil society is not necessarily flourishing in other parts of Iraq like Kurdistan, an independent region where American officials wield significant influence after cooperating closely with Kurdish forces to fight the Islamic State, as the Wilson Center explained. In Kurdistan, freedom of the press is under fire, according to Jurist News. Violence still mars the region, too.

Powerful forces are shaping Iraq, from within and without. Unless it puts its house in order, as analysts noted, Iraq won't be able to resist or control them, much less obtain the stability it needs to grow.

DISCOVERIES

Finding links

In May 2020, 11-year-old Ruby Reynolds and her father, Justin, stumbled upon a remarkable discovery while fossil-hunting on Blue Anchor Beach in Somerset, England.

Through a bit of sleuthing, the family confirmed that the four-inch-long, oval-shaped fossil they had found belonged to an extinct marine reptile known as an ichthyosaur.

But after cooperating with a team of paleontologists, they discovered more pieces of the creature's jawbone in what they have described as possibly the largest marine reptile ever found, the Washington Post reported.

In their study, the Reynoldses and researchers explained that the remains belonged to a new species of ichthyosaur, named *Ichthyotitan severnensis*. Piecing together other parts, they suggested that the extinct animal's jawbone could have been more than six feet long. This would mean that the *I. severnensis* could have been around 80 feet in length, but the team can't fully confirm this without a full skeleton.

Still, the remains were found not far from the nearby beach of Lillstock, where co-author Dean Lomax and his colleagues uncovered the jawbone of another species of ichthyosaur.

They explained that both marine reptiles were from a period called the Rhaetian, which was around the end of the Triassic period some 202 million years ago.

Ichthyosaurs occupied Earth's seas during the age of the dinosaurs: They emerged around 250 million years ago and their diet probably consisted of squid and fish.

Although they evolved into at least 150 species, their evolution remains a topic of mystery among paleontologists.

The recent find could shed more light on their evolution and how they were able to grow their large bodies before the mass extinction event at the end of the Triassic.

War causes shift in Ukraine's economy

Thousands of companies move from east to west

Olena Harmash
REUTERS

KYIV, Ukraine – Within days of Russian forces invading Ukraine in early 2022, architect Oleh Drozdov made up his mind: he would move his home and business from the besieged eastern city of Kharkiv more than 600 miles to the west, far from the fighting.

Now, with the war in its third year, his practice may finally be returning to growth, as businesses like his adapt to the conflict and search out opportunities alongside the formidable challenges.

"The storm is over. There are many holes in our boat but we are moving forward," Drozdov said from his offices in a historic building in the center of Lviv, a city of some 700,000 people close to the Polish border.

On the city's outskirts, cranes dot the skyline and industrial parks and other projects are being built.

In some ways Drozdov & Partners is well placed to adapt to the shock of war. It is small and footloose, and, in a country where millions of people and thousands of companies are displaced, demand for buildings and renovations is high.

"Some new opportunities have started to open up slowly," Drozdov said. "There are investments in this part of the country as businesses and people are relocating."

His practice is among 19,000 companies that have registered in new locations within Ukraine since the invasion, according to Opendatabot, which provides data from official registries, in a mass migration of businesses from east to west that may never be reversed.

"Thanks to the adaptability of businesses, support from partners and government programs, Ukraine is increasingly taking on the characteristics of a wartime economy," First Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko told Reuters.

"If we compare the economy's structure in 2023 with that of pre-war 2021, we clearly see this transformation. The



Oleh Drozdov, an architect from Kharkiv, Ukraine, moved his business to Lviv after Russia began its invasion in early 2022. ALINA SMUTKO/REUTERS

Ukrainian economy is showing resilience and adaptability ... proving its ability to navigate through difficult times."

West wins for now

In the east of Ukraine, where fighting has raged during offensives and counteroffensives, towns and villages lie in ruins. Kharkiv is being heavily bombed.

A study by the World Bank, United Nations, European Commission and the Ukrainian government published in February estimated the total cost of rebuilding the economy at \$486 billion, a figure that continues to rise as more damage is incurred.

Far to the west, urban centers are faring better.

Viktor Mykyta, regional governor in Zakarpattia which borders Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, described a rush of new businesses ranging from salt production to furniture and textiles.

Before the war, the mountainous region's economy relied heavily on tourism and remittances sent home by Ukrainians working abroad.

"When the war broke out, a lot of businesses moved, jobs were created,

the budget began to be filled," Mykyta said.

Officials in Lviv region report a similar trend, with logistics, energy, construction and IT firms among those setting up operations there.

Of the few wartime foreign investments announced, most are in central and western regions – in part because they stand to benefit most should Ukraine succeed in its aim of joining the European Union one day, analysts said. Projects include Turkish Onur Group's plans to invest \$50 million in graphite mining in western Khmelnytskyi region and a further \$150 million in renewables in Zakarpattia.

Germany's Bayer said it would invest 60 million euros in its corn seed production facility in central Zhytomyr region, while Ireland's Kingspan Group has announced a \$280 million investment in a facility in Lviv region.

Back in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second city, the reality is very different. Oleh Synehubov, the region's governor, said 70% of large enterprises have been destroyed or relocated or suspended their operations.

"Our regional and city budgets have fallen by 40%," he told Reuters.

World Bank data shows that businesses in eastern Ukraine experienced a 70% slump in sales between the invasion and the end of 2023, and those in the south a drop of 63%. In comparison, companies' sales in the west decreased 39%.

Need for workers

Official data on the impact of the war on different sectors is patchy, and recent trends could change if there are dramatic shifts on the battlefield. Russian attacks on energy infrastructure is also a major challenge for many firms.

After the economy collapsed by a third in 2022, it rebounded by 5.3% in 2023 and the government forecasts growth of 4.6% this year. The steel industry, once Ukraine's key exporter, contracted by about 80% in 2022 and grew only 8% in 2023.

The economy ministry said that so far in 2024, the fastest pace of growth has been in construction, processing, transport and retail.

The defense industry has also expanded significantly. According to Ukraine's strategic industries ministry, the number of defense manufacturers has more than doubled since February 2022.

As some sectors have expanded, job vacancies have grown fastest in the west of the country, according to Work.ua, an employment portal which reported a record number of wartime vacancies in April. Vacancies were up 55% in Zakarpattia at the end of February compared with pre-war levels while Lviv region had about 8,500 vacancies open at the start of March, up 23% from before the invasion.

Drozdov has struggled to hire enough staff at his practice and to fill vacancies at an architectural school that he also runs.

Mindful of the long-term task of rebuilding the country, Drozdov is launching a masters program for young architects with a focus on rebuilding the shattered east. He hopes to return one day to Kharkiv.

"When there is an opportunity we will return there physically. It will be a gradual process."

As boom fades, farm equipment piles up

Slower sales follow drop in corn and soy prices

Bianca Flowers and Renee Hickman
REUTERS

DEKALB, Ill. — Falling crop prices are leaving agriculture equipment sellers with an excess of unsold tractors and combines. To cope with the surplus, dealers are discounting machines, suspending new orders and even auctioning off equipment at reduced prices.

The slower equipment sales are a knock-on effect of corn and soy prices dropping to more than three-year lows as U.S. farm income plummets and equipment makers and dealers are forced to pivot quickly after a period of booming business.

Reuters interviewed 10 equipment dealers, mostly in the Midwest, as well as farmers and analysts, who said low crop prices combined with persistently high interest rates are deterring farmers from purchasing machinery. As farmers make fewer purchases, inventories of equipment are swelling, cutting into profits for dealers and big manufacturers alike.

Manufacturers Deere and CNH Industrial struggled to keep up with the strong demand for tractors in 2022 when farm income hit a record high and pandemic assistance payments gave farmers extra money to upgrade their fleets. Now both expect slower sales to hit their bottom line this year.

Josh Gruett, dealer principal at Waupun Equipment in Waupun, Wisconsin, which sells farm, construction and other equipment, said his inventory has risen 30% to 35% since the end of 2023.

The excess of unsold machinery prompted Gruett to halt new orders from companies including CNH, AGCO, and Polaris in hopes of balancing supply and demand, he said.

In April, inventory levels of high-horsepower tractors (300 and above) in the U.S. surged by almost 107% year-over-year, with combine inventory experiencing a 17.63% increase, according to Sandhills Global, a market research firm specializing in tracking used inventory for industrial manufacturers.

Slashing prices

Chris Tanner, a fourth-generation farmer, said some dealerships in his town of Norton, Kansas, have slashed prices up to 30% with an added incentive of zero percent interest to move machinery off their lots.

"They're heavily discounting combines and tractors — but after coming through a drought and experiencing



As farmers make fewer purchases, inventories of agriculture equipment are swelling, cutting into profits for dealers and big manufacturers alike.

RENEE HICKMAN/REUTERS

poor prices we don't have the money to spend," Tanner said.

The pain has also spread to those who sell spare parts.

Guy Robinson, is a parts manager at Dekalb Implement Company, which sells Deere equipment in Dekalb, Illinois.

During the peak years of the pandemic, Robinson said, the combination of supply chain troubles and rising demand made getting everything from parts to equipment to farmers "a nightmare."

And then demand began falling off in late 2022, he said.

About 30 miles south of Robinson's dealership, Aaron Rogers, retail location manager at AHW, another Deere dealer in Somonauk, Illinois, said zero or low percentage financing is a popular way to try to bring in customers.

"If you can get a good interest rate, that's what's driving the market right now," he said. Offering lower financing rates to sell inventory can result in a loss for dealers, but carrying unsold machinery can prove costlier.

Manufacturers give dealers free financing on equipment for a limited period while they sell it, but once that expires, dealers have to pay interest on their unsold inventory to manufacturers.

With fewer sales forecast, equipment dealers are feeling pressure to auction off equipment "right away" to preserve margins, said Casey Seymour, a sales consultant for dealers.

"Some of the stuff that is being put to auction is because dealers can't afford

to keep the floor plan," Seymour said. "They can't have millions of dollars worth of inventory sitting around at a floor plan (with a) 7.5% interest rate."

Particularly, inventory levels have been a big concern in the Midwest grain belt, said Ryan Dolezal, the manager of TractorHouse, a site for selling new and used farm equipment.

"We do not see the inventory levels issues like we do in Midwest markets," he said of specialty crop equipment compared to row crop machinery.

Used agriculture machinery inventory, the bulk of machinery sold in the United States, is on a steady increase that is forcing dealers to auction equipment at a lower price point, said Mitch Helman, a sales manager at Sandhills Global.

"For planters there's a 70% gap between auction and retail and that's insane. A spread this high has not been observed since May 2015," he said, referring to a time when grain oversupply was pummeling farmer income.

Deere reports earnings on May 16. In February, the company announced plans to cut production and warned shareholders inflation would make farmers reticent to finance equipment purchases.

Texas-based farmer Scott Born said given his tighter budget, he's forgoing buying new or used equipment for the remainder of the year.

"We have to try to limp by without major repairs — it's tough especially since (equipment and fertilizer) has gone so much higher in just a few years."

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Dow closes up for 7th straight session

Jobs data boosts rate-cut hopes

David French
REUTERS

The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed higher on Thursday, the seventh straight daily advance for the benchmark, as all three major U.S. indexes gained after weekly jobless claims data offered fresh hope for interest-rate cuts.

U.S. Federal Reserve policy has been the main driver of investor sentiment in 2024. Renewed hopes the central bank will cut rates have pushed the Dow to its biggest rally since December. It closed at its highest since April 1.

Other benchmarks also benefited.

After a flat day on Wednesday, the S&P 500 resumed its upward trajectory and closed above 5,200 points for the first time since April 9.

U.S. equity markets have clawed back losses incurred during April on fears the Fed may ultimately raise interest rates, and as tensions in the Middle East threatened to escalate.

"We've almost had a full recovery of that," said Brad Bernstein, managing director at UBS Private Wealth Management.

For the quarter thus far, the Dow is 1.1% lower, the S&P 500 is 0.8% down, and the Nasdaq Composite is off 0.2%.

While next week's producer and consumer prices readings are regarded as the next key signpost, other data have buoyed investor rate-cut hopes.

The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits increased more than expected to a seasonally adjusted 231,000 last week, data showed. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 215,000 claims.

Last week's data showing slowing job growth in April and job openings falling to a three-year low in March had investors pricing in one or two rate cuts by the Fed this year. Prior to that, traders were pricing in just one rate cut.

Declining U.S. Treasury yields also supported stocks since higher rates offer investors less risk while also making borrowing to fuel growth more expensive. The yield on the 10-year note was at 4.46% on Thursday, down from 4.7% two weeks ago.

"In the last few days, we've had some interesting events which have really helped calm the bond market," said Bernstein, noting factors including the U.S. Treasury and Fed announcing plans to buy Treasuries.

Lower yields are particularly supportive for tech megacap stocks, Apple, Amazon.com and Meta Platforms rose between 0.6% and 1%.

The S&P 500 gained 26.41 points, or 0.51%, to 5,214.08 points; while the Nasdaq Composite gained 43.51 points, or 0.27%, to 16,346.27. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 331.37 points, or 0.85%, to 39,387.76.

Ten of the 11 major S&P sectors rose, led by a 2.3% rise in the real estate index. Data center operator Equinix surged 11.5% after its first-quarter results.

On the flip side, chip designer Arm Holdings dipped 2.3% as its full-year revenue forecast came in below expectations.

Bigger rival Nvidia, which is still to report this earnings season, slipped 1.8%.

Roblox slumped 22.1% after the video-gaming platform cut its annual bookings forecast, in a sign that people were dialing back spending amid an uncertain economic outlook and elevated levels of inflation.

Robinhood Markets was 3.1% lower, despite the online brokerage beating estimates for first-quarter profit, thanks to robust crypto trading volumes and rate hikes that boosted its net interest revenue.

Meanwhile, Spirit Airlines jumped 12.9%, having hit a record low earlier this week.

OpenAI set to announce search product

Maker of ChatGPT looks to compete with Google

Anna Tong
REUTERS

OpenAI plans to announce its artificial intelligence-powered search product on Monday, according to two sources familiar with the matter, raising the stakes in its competition with search king Google.

The announcement date, though subject to change, has not been previously reported. Bloomberg and the Information have reported that Microsoft-backed OpenAI is working on a search product to potentially compete with Alphabet's Google and with Perplexity, a well-funded AI search startup.

OpenAI declined to comment. The announcement could be timed a day before the Tuesday start of Google's annual I/O conference, where the tech giant is expected to unveil a slew of AI-related products.

OpenAI's search product is an extension of its flagship ChatGPT product, and enables ChatGPT to pull in direct information from the web and include citations, according to Bloomberg. ChatGPT is OpenAI's chatbot product that uses the company's cutting-edge AI models to generate human-like responses to text prompts.

Industry observers have long called ChatGPT an alternative for gathering online information, though it has struggled with providing accurate and real-time information from the Web. OpenAI



Worldwide traffic to OpenAI's ChatGPT has been on a roller-coaster ride in the past year. DADO RUVIC/REUTERS ILLUSTRATION

earlier gave it an integration with Microsoft's Bing for paid subscribers. Meanwhile, Google has announced generative AI features for its own namesake engine.

Startup Perplexity, which has a valuation of \$1 billion, was founded by a former OpenAI researcher, and has gained traction through providing an AI-native search interface that shows citations in results and images as well as text in its responses. It has 10 million monthly active users, according to a January blog post from the startup.

At the time, OpenAI's ChatGPT prod-

uct was called the fastest application to ever reach 100 million monthly active users after it launched in late 2022. However, worldwide traffic to ChatGPT's website has been on a roller-coaster ride in the past year and is only now returning to its May 2023 peak, according to analytics firm Similarweb, and the AI company is under pressure to expand its user base.

An earlier attempt to bring updated and real-world information in to ChatGPT, called ChatGPT plugins, was retired in April, according to a help center posting on OpenAI's website.

House committee targets Georgia Tech

Officials seek details on ties to Chinese university

Michael Martina
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – A U.S. congressional committee on China has asked leading research university Georgia Institute of Technology to detail its collaboration with a Chinese university facing U.S. government restrictions due to its alleged ties to the country's military.

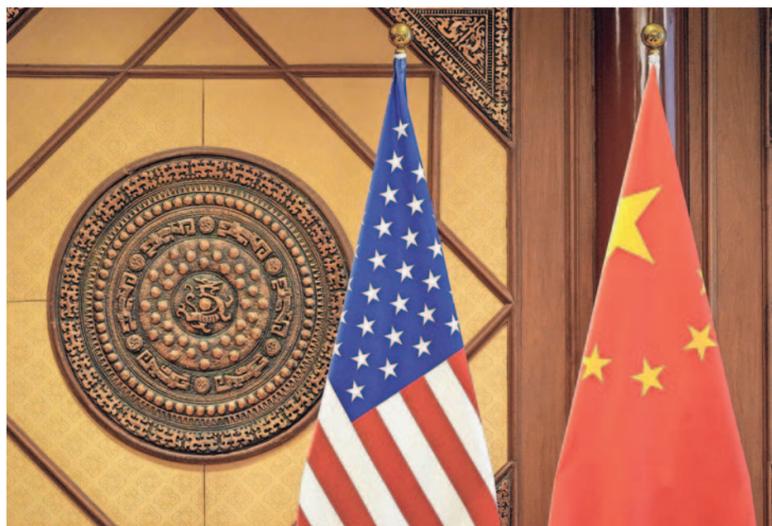
Georgia Tech partnered with China's northeastern Tianjin University on cutting edge technologies despite its documented ties to the People's Liberation Army, John Moolenaar, the new Republican chairman of the House of Representatives' select committee on China, wrote in a letter on Thursday to the U.S. school's president, Angel Cabrera.

But the Georgia Tech scientist who led the project defended the research, saying all the results were available to the public, that it had passed extensive legal reviews, and that only a small portion of the funding came from the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), which is heavily sponsored by the Pentagon.

The letter noted that Tianjin University and numerous affiliates had been added in 2020 to the Commerce Department's export restrictions list for actions contrary to U.S. national security, including trade secret theft and research collaboration to advance China's military.

"While Georgia Tech is now prohibited from exporting sensitive technologies to Tianjin University due to the Entity List's prohibitions, it has collaborated with Tianjin University and at least one other PLA-linked entity on developing sensitive technologies," Moolenaar said.

The Tianjin research center is affiliated with a Chinese company with sub-



The U.S. and China, in the midst of an intense geopolitical and scientific rivalry, both view semiconductors as a strategic industry with civilian and military uses.

MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/POOL VIA REUTERS FILE

sidaries that supply the PLA, the letter said.

A Georgia Tech news release from January said its researchers based in Atlanta and at the Tianjin International Center for Nanoparticles and Nanosystems had created the world's first functional semiconductor made from the nanomaterial, graphene, which it said could lead to a "paradigm shift" in electronics and yield faster computing.

The U.S. and China, in the midst of an intense geopolitical and scientific rivalry, both view semiconductors as a strategic industry with civilian and military uses, including quantum computing and advanced weapons systems.

A spokesperson from Georgia Tech said it welcomed the congressional inquiry, but that GTRI "does not have a collaboration, research partnerships, or provide any funding to Tianjin University."

"We are continuously monitoring the evolving relationships between China and the United States and have implemented additional procedures and protocols to ensure security and maintain vigilance," Abigail Tumpey, the spokesperson, told Reuters in an email.

In a published article, researchers credited financial support from GTRI, which counted the Defense Department and the U.S. military as customers for more than 90% of its research in fiscal year 2023, according to its latest annual report.

Moolenaar said Georgia Tech's collaboration with Tianjin University raised questions about its entity list compliance, and asked Cabrera to thoroughly disclose all of its joint work.

GTRI, Tianjin International Center for Nanoparticles and Nanosystems, and China's Embassy in Washington did not respond immediately to Reuters' re-

quests for comment.

Walter de Heer, the Georgia Tech professor who directed the program, told Reuters that only one Atlanta-based student had derived funding from GTRI for "nonproprietary" research related to the collaboration, which involved reproducing samples made in Tianjin.

He said deteriorating U.S.-China relations had derailed what had been a fruitful scientific endeavor with Chinese researchers.

He said the research was still about a decade away from viable implementation, but that he had been unable to obtain U.S. government or private sector funding for follow-on research despite its promise.

"Everything I'm doing is public domain and open source," De Heer said.

The letter marks one of the first actions Moolenaar has taken as head of the bipartisan committee, a post he assumed in April after former Rep. Mike Gallagher left Congress. No Democrats on the committee signed the letter.

The U.S. Justice Department under the Biden administration ended a Trump-era program called the China Initiative intended to combat Chinese espionage and intellectual property theft, but which critics had said spurred racial profiling toward Asian Americans and chilled scientific research.

Still, U.S. agencies and Congress have stepped up scrutiny of China's state-sponsored influence and technology transfers at American colleges and universities, concerned that Beijing uses open and federally funded research environments in the U.S. to circumvent export controls and other national security laws.

Various congressional bodies have recommended stricter China-related measures be added to the Higher Education Act of 1965 that requires U.S. colleges and universities that receive federal funding to disclose foreign ownership, control, gifts and contracts.

Supreme Court reinforces police power in ruling

John Kruzel
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday reinforced the power of law enforcement authorities to retain seized property belonging to people not charged with a crime, ruling in favor of Alabama officials who were sued by two women whose cars were held for more than a year.

In a 6-3 ruling powered by its conservative majority, the justices affirmed a lower court's dismissal of the lawsuits by the two plaintiffs, who were denied prompt hearings to reclaim vehicles seized by police in crimes committed by other people.

The three liberal justices in a dissent called the majority's reasoning "deeply flawed," and a libertarian legal group called the ruling a major blow to private property rights.

The case involved the legal process that innocent property owners are due under the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment. At issue was whether preliminary hearings – opportunities that may allow owners to regain their property more quickly than a different process known as a forfeiture hearing – are necessary to fulfill constitutional due process requirements.

Conservative Justice Brett Kavanaugh, writing for the majority, said preliminary hearings, also known as retention hearings, are not legally required.

"In civil forfeiture cases involving personal property such as cars," Kavanaugh wrote, "the (Constitution's) Due Process Clause requires a timely forfeiture hearing but does not require a preliminary hearing."

Civil forfeiture laws permit the federal and state governments to seize and often permanently keep vehicles, real estate and other property alleged to have been used to carry out or facilitate a crime – even when the owner has not been convicted or even charged with a criminal offense.

Some state laws require government officials to promptly show that seized property is likely involved in illegal activity and, failing that, return the assets while court proceedings over the owner's ultimate right to the property play out.

Alabama was previously among the states that did not mandate a prompt pretrial retention hearing in which the government must justify the property seizure, though the state revised its civ-



The U.S. Supreme Court affirmed a lower court's dismissal of lawsuits by two women who were denied prompt hearings to reclaim vehicles seized by police. EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS FILE

il forfeiture law while the case was pending.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor criticized the court's ruling in a dissent that was joined by fellow liberal Justices Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson.

"The majority today holds that due process never requires the minimal check of a retention hearing before a police officer deprives an innocent owner of her car for months or years," Sotomayor wrote.

Plaintiff Lena Sutton's vehicle was seized while it was being driven by a friend who borrowed it and was arrested for methamphetamine possession. Sutton's case was consolidated with that of a second plaintiff, Halima Culley, whose car was seized when her college-aged son was arrested for marijuana possession while driving it.

Despite their pleas to law enforcement to return their property, Sutton had to wait 14 months and Culley 20 months before courts determined that their cars should be returned.

The plaintiffs filed federal lawsuits arguing that the state government's failure to provide a prompt court hearing to let them try to reclaim their property violated the 14th Amendment's promise that government not "deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law."

Federal judges ruled against the plaintiffs in their lawsuits. The Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed those decisions. President Joe Biden's administration sided with Alabama in the case.

Kirby Thomas West, an attorney at the libertarian public interest law firm Institute for Justice, called Thursday's ruling "a big loss for private property rights" that would cause civil forfeiture cases to "languish for months or years before they are resolved."

Black airman's family wants body-cam video released

Fortson fatally shot at home by Florida deputy

Brendan O'Brien
REUTERS

A Florida sheriff's deputy who fatally shot a Black airman over the weekend may have entered the wrong apartment in response to a disturbance call, according to the family's attorney who is demanding the release of body-camera video showing the shooting.

The shooting occurred on the afternoon of May 3, when a deputy with the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office went to the apartment complex, entered the unit and opened fire, according to a statement from Sheriff Eric Aden.

Six shots hit Roger Fortson, 23, a senior Air Force airman who was at home in his apartment, according to attorney Ben Crump, who is representing Fortson's family.

The sheriff said the deputy heard sounds of a disturbance and reacted in self-defense after he encountered an armed man. The sheriff did not name Fortson in his statement or give any more detail on the incident.

The sheriff's office did not return calls to comment on whether deputies had gone to Fortson's apartment by mistake, nor to corroborate details of what Crump said had taken place on the afternoon Fortson was killed.

During a news conference on Thursday, Crump said Fortson was on a Facetime call with his girlfriend after he just got home from playing video games with his friends. When he heard a knock on his door, he asked, "Who is it?" but didn't get a response, according to his girlfriend.

Fortson then retrieved a gun he owned legally and was walking back into his living room when the deputy burst through the door and opened fire, Crump said, citing the girlfriend. Fortson did not fire his weapon, the lawyer said.

"He was in his apartment minding his business and then ... this cascade of tragic events started to take place," he said, calling on the sheriff to release police body-camera footage.

The killing is reminiscent of an unannounced police raid in Louisville, Kentucky, in March 2020, when police burst into the apartment of Breonna Taylor, a Black 26-year-old emergency medical technician, killing her. Police had obtained a "no knock" warrant to raid the apartment, mistaking it for the home of a suspect.



Air Force Senior Airman Roger Fortson was shot and killed by a Florida sheriff's deputy last week.

U.S. AIR FORCE/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS

Taylor's death, along with the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police weeks later, set off a worldwide wave of protests against racism in law enforcement in the summer of 2020.

After Fortson was shot, he was taken to a hospital where he died from his wounds.

The deputy must have gone to the wrong apartment as there was no disturbance at Fortson's residence and he was alone, Crump said.

"They had a duty to make sure they were at the right apartment before they busted in the door," he said, noting that the U.S. Constitution protects against unreasonable searches and seizures by police.

Crump said Fortson always dreamed of becoming a pilot, describing him as a patriot and a good young man who followed rules and respected authority.

"My baby was my everything," his mother said during the news conference, demanding full transparency from the sheriff's office as she held a photograph of her son. "Tell the truth about my son ... please clean his reputation."

The deputy, who has not been identified, was placed on paid administrative leave pending the investigation, the sheriff said. He did not specify who was conducting the investigation.

IN BRIEF

Senate passes sweeping aviation safety, consumer bill

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Senate late on Thursday overwhelmingly passed a broad aviation bill to boost air traffic controller staffing, increase funding to avert runway close-call incidents and speed refunds for canceled flights.

The \$105 billion, five-year measure reauthorizes the Federal Aviation Administration. The bill prohibits airlines from charging fees for families to sit together and requires airplanes to be equipped with 25-hour cockpit recording devices – up from the current two hours – and directs the FAA to deploy advanced airport surface technology to help prevent collisions.

The bill adds five daily round-trip flights at busy Washington National Airport and requires airlines to accept vouchers and credits for at least five years.

Efforts to boost aviation safety in the United States have taken on new urgency after a series of near-miss incidents and the Jan. 5 Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 MAX 9 door plug mid-air emergency.

The bill, which is expected to get final approval next week from the House of Representatives, does not raise the mandatory pilot retirement age to 67 as lawmakers had sought to do last year.

Earlier this week, lawmakers agreed to revise language to ensure quick refunds for airline passengers whose flights are canceled who bought non-refundable tickets and who are not seeking alternative flights.

Kushner pitching donors on father-in-law Trump, sources say

Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner has been making calls to encourage donors to attend a Trump fundraiser in New York, two sources told Reuters, in one of the first indications of Kushner working to help reelect his father-in-law.

A former White House adviser to the former president, Kushner stepped away from politics after Trump's term ended in 2021 and founded Miami-based private equity firm Affinity Partners. His wife, Ivanka, Trump's daughter, declared at the beginning of Trump's third run for the presidency in November 2022 that she did not plan to be involved in his campaign and wanted to prioritize her children.

It was not immediately clear whether the previously unreported fundraising push by Kushner is a one-off event or a sign he is becoming more involved in Trump's campaign, which is a leaner, more disciplined operation than in 2016 and 2020, when Trump's family members played key roles.

Two sources told Reuters that Kushner has been calling donors ahead of a Manhattan fundraiser next week for Trump, who is facing Democrat Joe Biden in the November presidential election. Kushner's parents, Seryl and Charles Kushner, are among more than a dozen co-hosts for the event, according to an invitation.

Kushner's firm has received major Middle Eastern investments, including a reported \$2 billion from the Saudi Arabian government.

Israel secures spot in Eurovision grand final despite protests

MALMO, Sweden – Switzerland and the Netherlands, two of the favorites to win Eurovision 2024, secured spots in Saturday's grand final alongside Israel despite large protests against the country's participation and booing during its performance.

Some 100,000 visitors have gathered in the southern Swedish city of Malmö for the annual kitsch-fest, under heavy police presence as authorities brace for possible unrest.

Swiss rapper and singer Nemo, 24, qualified from the second semifinal on Thursday with the song "The Code," as did Joost Klein, 26, of the Netherlands with his song "Europapa."

Israeli solo artist Eden Golan, 20, and her song "Hurricane" also qualified for Saturday's grand show, which will feature performances from 26 countries.

Some booing was heard from the crowd before, during and after Golan's performance but also applause and Israeli flags were seen waving, according to a Reuters journalist in the auditorium.

Armenia, Austria, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Latvia and Norway also qualified for the final.

Eurovision organizers had resisted calls to exclude Israel over its military campaign in Gaza, triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, arguing that the competition is a non-political event.

More than 10,000 pro-Palestinian campaigners, including climate activist Greta Thunberg, staged a protest in the hours ahead of the semifinal.

Reuters

CDC to post influenza A wastewater data online

Julie Steenhuisen
REUTERS

CHICAGO – The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is planning to post data on influenza A found in wastewater in a public dashboard possibly as soon as Friday that could offer new clues into the outbreak of H5N1 bird flu in cattle herds.

CDC wastewater team lead Amy Kirby told Reuters on Thursday that the agency has identified spikes of influenza A, of which H5N1 is a subtype, in a handful of sites and is investigating the source.

She said there is no indication of human infection with H5N1.

Testing wastewater from sewers proved to be a powerful tool for detecting mutations in the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kirby said the CDC has been collecting influenza data in wastewater in about 600 sites since at least last fall to better track respiratory infections. That data can now be helpful in tracking the outbreak of H5N1 bird flu that has infected 42 dairy herds in nine U.S. states, and one dairy farm worker.

Scientists are closely watching for changes in the virus that could make it spread more easily among humans.

The wastewater tests are capable of detecting many types of influenza A, including the H5N1 subtype, but the findings do not indicate the source of the virus or whether it came from a bird, cow, milk, humans or from farm runoff.

The dashboard will allow individuals to check for increases in influenza A in their area, and compare it with historical data where available.

Seasonal influenza cases have fallen off sharply, so spikes could offer a signal about unusual flu activity.

So far, testing has identified some increases in the presence of flu in samples that are "very localized in only a handful of sites," Kirby said.

What is surprising, she said, is the outbreak in cattle and the presence of virus in milk, which sometimes makes



The outbreak of H5N1 bird flu has infected 42 dairy herds in nine U.S. states, and one dairy farm worker. ALEX GALLARDO/REUTERS FILE

its way into wastewater.

The agency is now working to identify what factors are contributing to the wastewater findings, including understanding the presence of milk in wastewater.

'Not worried about the cows'

Dr. Marc Johnson, a virologist at the University of Missouri who developed a wastewater monitoring system for COVID, and other scientists have developed tests that can identify H5N1 in wastewater samples, but he said the CDC is discouraging use of such tests.

Kirby said such widespread testing would be a drain on resources and ultimately would not identify the source of the virus, although there may be times when such subtyping is needed.

"It really doesn't get us any further to knowing what the source of this is. Is it dairy? Or is it human? Or is it wild birds? Or is it poultry? All of those things are still on the table," she said. "It doesn't get us any farther down the road."

Johnson said such tests put scientists in a better position to track changes in the virus.

"I'm not worried about the cows. I'm not worried about the milk. But I'm worried that there are lots of other animals that it can jump to, and eventually it's going to find a combination that can make it into humans if we're not careful," he said.

Academic researchers working with Verily, a health sciences unit of Alphabet, already demonstrated how wastewater can help in the outbreak.

Their not yet peer-reviewed paper, posted on medRxiv, identified the virus in three wastewater plants in two Texas cities where infected cattle were present.

Using archived samples, they identified bird flu in wastewater as early as Feb. 25, before the first reports of cattle with unknown illnesses on March 7, and a full month before Texas confirmed H5N1 in dairy cattle.

"That represents a really significant lead time that we can have if we're implementing this work as widely and as readily as we should be as a country," said Dr. Marlene Wolfe, from Emory University in Atlanta and program director of WastewaterSCAN, a wastewater detection program supported by Verily.

US, civil rights groups sue Iowa over immigrant law that other states eye

Daniel Wiessner
REUTERS

The administration of President Joe Biden filed a lawsuit on Thursday seeking to block an Iowa law authorizing the arrest and prosecution of people who have returned to the U.S. after being deported, as a growing number of Republican-led states consider similar proposals.

The complaint filed in Des Moines, Iowa, federal court by the U.S. Department of Justice claims that the law known as S.F. 2340 unlawfully interferes with the federal government's ability to enforce U.S. immigration law.

The American Civil Liberties Union and other civil rights groups filed a similar lawsuit in the same court earlier on Thursday.

The Biden administration and the ACLU have made the same argument in lawsuits challenging a similar Texas

law that has served as a model for Republican lawmakers across the country who say Biden, a Democrat, has failed to address a recent increase in illegal border crossings.

Iowa's law makes "illegal reentry" into the state a crime punishable by up to two years in prison and authorizes state judges to order that individuals return to their home countries after serving sentences.

The lawsuits filed on Thursday say S.F. 2340 clashes with the system created by federal law for deporting people who are in the country illegally.

And the state law does not exempt people who have legal status in the United States, including asylum applicants and recipients of visas for survivors of domestic violence, the civil rights groups said. "There are lots of good reasons – related to foreign relations, national security, humanitarian interests, and our constitutional sys-

tem – why the federal government enforces our immigration law, instead of all 50 states going out and doing their own thing," said Rita Bettis Austen, legal director of the ACLU's Iowa chapter.

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, a Republican who signed the law last month, said in a statement that she has a responsibility to protect Iowans.

"Since President Biden refuses to enforce our nation's immigration laws – threatening the safety of our citizens – Iowa will step in," Reynolds said.

A U.S. appeals court in March blocked a Texas law that also allows state officials to arrest, prosecute and order the removal of suspected migrants while it considers the state's appeal of a judge's ruling that said it was invalid.

Meanwhile, Oklahoma last week enacted a law that is similar to the measures in Texas and Iowa, and several other states are considering bills.

US asylum change would speed up rejections

Ted Hesson
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – A new U.S. asylum change announced on Thursday aims to more quickly reject asylum-seekers caught illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border if they pose certain criminal and national security concerns, a limited move to cut down on crossings.

A proposed regulation would allow asylum officers to deny claims of migrants convicted of a serious crime, linked to terrorism or posing other dangers to public safety, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said in a news release. The rejections could take place in days instead of a process that can take years, DHS said.

Reuters and other outlets reported the plans on Wednesday.

The measure will be limited in scope, potentially applying to thousands of asylum-seekers per year, sources told Reuters. That would be a

fraction of the 1 million caught crossing illegally from Oct. 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

A DHS official on a call with reporters declined to offer an estimate of how many asylum-seekers could be rejected under the proposal.

"We don't think that the rule will apply to large numbers of people, but it will apply to the people that we are most concerned about," the official said.

President Joe Biden, a Democrat seeking reelection in November, took office in 2021 promising a more humane approach to border security compared to his predecessor former President Donald Trump, an immigration hardliner.

Biden has toughened his approach to border security in recent months as immigration has emerged as a top concern among voters. Trump, a Republican, has criticized his administration for reversing some restrictive border

policies.

The Biden administration has weighed using executive action to block many asylum-seekers at the border if crossings reach a certain level but has not yet taken that step.

The proposed regulation to more quickly deny asylum-seekers deemed to be criminal or security threats will be issued on Monday and be open to public comment for 30 days.

The Biden administration intends to finalize it this year, the DHS official said, requesting anonymity as a condition of the call.

Under separate guidance issued on Thursday, U.S. asylum officers will evaluate during all initial asylum screenings whether asylum-seekers could have moved to another part of their home country to find safety rather than travel to the U.S.

The latest moves follow a restrictive asylum regulation issued by Biden last year.

Hunter Biden loses bid to dismiss gun charges



Hunter Biden's legal team said they will ask the full appeals court to review the panel's decision.

EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS FILE

Tom Hals
REUTERS

WILMINGTON, Del. — A federal appeals court panel rejected a bid by President Joe Biden's son to dismiss criminal gun charges, clearing the way for Hunter Biden's June 3 trial, a first for the child of a sitting president.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in Philadelphia said Hunter Biden could not appeal because the lower court had not yet entered a final judgment in the case.

Shortly after the appeals court ruled, U.S. District Judge Maryellen Noreika ordered the trial of up to six days to be-

gin June 3 in Wilmington, Delaware.

Hunter Biden's legal team said they will ask the full appeals court in Philadelphia to review the panel's decision.

"In reviewing the panel's decision, we believe the issues involved are too important and further review of our request is appropriate," said a statement by Abbe Lowell, an attorney for Hunter Biden. Hunter Biden was appealing orders issued last month by Noreika.

The judge denied motions to dismiss two counts accusing Hunter Biden of lying about using illegal narcotics when he purchased a Colt Cobra handgun in 2018 and a third count of illegally possessing that weapon.

Hunter Biden's legal team had argued that the lower trial court had to wait for the federal appeals court to rule before it could push ahead with a trial.

Hunter Biden faces a maximum penalty of 25 years in prison on the gun charges. The trial will come as Joe Biden is ramping up his campaign for reelection. Republican former President Donald Trump, is currently on criminal trial in New York, where he is accused of illegally covering up a \$130,000 payment to an adult film star to keep her quiet about an affair in the run-up to the 2016 election.

Hunter Biden is also facing criminal tax charges in California.

Trump

Continued from Page 1NN

Blanche argued that her detailed testimony about the alleged sexual encounter, including her statement that Trump was not wearing a condom, had veered into territory that was irrelevant to the case and would prejudice jurors against Trump.

"This is not a case about sex," Blanche said. "This is not a case about whether that incident took place or didn't take place."

Merchan denied the request, saying that because Blanche had argued in his opening statement on April 22 that the encounter never happened prosecutors were allowed to try to rehabilitate Daniels' credibility.

"Your denial puts the jury in a position of having to choose who they believe," Merchan said.

The judge also denied a similar request on Tuesday.

In addition, Blanche requested that a gag order restricting Trump's public comments about jurors and witnesses be loosened to let the defendant publicly respond to questions about Daniels' testimony. Merchan also denied that request, stating that other witnesses may see Trump's comments and become concerned that he would say similar things about them.

Christopher Conroy, a prosecutor, suggested that the proper way for Trump to respond to Daniels would be to testify in his own defense. Trump before the trial told reporters he would testify, though it remains to be seen whether he will do so.

"There is a proceeding here that this (gag) order is designed to protect," Conroy said. "If somebody wants to respond to something that's said in this room, that can happen in this room."

The judge has fined Trump \$10,000 for running afoul of the gag order 10 times, and said further violations could land him in jail.

Defense claims Daniels 'made all this up'

In nearly four hours of cross-examination on Tuesday and Thursday, Necheles asked Daniels about her earlier testimony of the alleged encounter compared with versions in a book she wrote and interviews she gave over the years.

She asked Daniels why in a 2018 interview to Vogue magazine she did not mention that Trump's bodyguard had been outside the hotel room where the encounter happened. Daniels on Tuesday had testified that her awareness of the bodyguard's presence contributed to a power imbalance with Trump that left her feeling uncomfortable.

"You made all this up, right?" Necheles asked Daniels at one point.

"No," Daniels said emphatically, sitting with her hands folded and legs



Stormy Daniels testifies during Donald Trump's criminal trial in New York City on Thursday in this courtroom sketch.

JANE ROSENBERG/REUTERS



Daniels leaves Manhattan Criminal Court after testifying on Thursday. Daniels completed her testimony, with a combined seven hours on the witness stand over two days.

CHARLY TRIBALLEAU/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

crossed. Just before ending the cross-examination, Necheles asked Daniels if she had knowledge of Trump's business records — part of an effort to paint her testimony as irrelevant to the false business records charges at hand.

"I know nothing about his business

records, no," Daniels said. "Why would I?"

Daniels completed her testimony, with a combined seven hours on the witness stand over two days.

Former Trump White House aide Madeline Westerhout took the witness

stand on Thursday afternoon and told jurors about checks he signed while in office. Westerhout is expected to return to the witness stand on Friday.

This is the first of four criminal cases against Trump to go to trial. He has pleaded not guilty in all of them.

Johnson

Continued from Page 1NN

Ukraine's struggle against Russian invasion — and now, save his job.

"He learned there was another side of the story. That's what leaders do. They're not dug in on their positions," said Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, a Republican centrist from Pennsylvania.

Johnson spent hours in closed-door meetings this week listening to demands from Greene and her hardline ally Rep. Thomas Massie, and later told reporters that the meetings were part of his open-door strategy to keep the Republican conference together by spending "endless hours" talking to members.

"It takes a lot of time. This is why I don't get enough sleep these days," Johnson said.

"You have to quite literally get every-

one to work together," he added. "I take Marjorie's ideas and Thomas' and everybody else's, and we assess them on their own value."

Johnson's performance on spending bills and aid to U.S. allies has won him positive reviews from Republicans as well as some Democrats, including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Some Republicans say his stature as a party leader has been undercut by support from Democrats, who relished the chance last year to eject former Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who was known for his fundraising prowess and political acumen.

"He's a better speaker for them than some of the other options, not because he's willing to work with them, but because you can outflank him," said one House Republican who spoke on condition of anonymity.

This Republican lawmaker, who voted to protect Johnson's job this week,



House Speaker Mike Johnson has dropped the narrow views of a relatively untried congressman from northwest Louisiana since winning the speaker's gavel.

AMANDA ANDRADE-RHOADES/REUTERS

said Democrats view Johnson's underlying conservative credentials as a plus for November — a point underscored by progressive Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.



Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., introduced a motion this week to remove Johnson from his leadership position. The attempt failed.

KEVIN DIETSCH/GETTY IMAGES

"Mike Johnson is still a dangerous leader who seeks to strip abortion rights and who also supported overturning the election and setting the stage for Jan. 6," she told reporters.

WAR IN MIDDLE EAST

Israeli forces strike eastern Rafah

Cease-fire talks end with no deal

Nidal al-Mughrabi, Mohammad Salem and Jarrett Renshaw
REUTERS

Israeli forces bombarded areas of Rafah on Thursday, Palestinian residents said, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed President Joe Biden's threat to withhold weapons from Israel if it assaults the southern Gaza city.

A senior Israeli official said late on Thursday that the latest round of indirect negotiations in Cairo to halt hostilities in Gaza had ended and Israel would proceed with its operation in Rafah and other parts of the Gaza Strip as planned.

Israel has submitted to mediators its reservations about a Hamas proposal for a hostage release deal, the official said.

"If we must, we shall fight with our fingernails," Netanyahu said in a video statement. "But we have much more than our fingernails."

In Gaza, Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad said their fighters fired anti-tank rockets and mortars at Israeli tanks massed on the eastern outskirts of the city.

Residents and medics in Rafah, the biggest urban area in Gaza not yet overrun by Israeli ground forces, said an Israeli attack near a mosque killed at least three people and wounded others in the eastern Brazil neighborhood.

Video footage from the scene showed the minaret lying in the rubble and two bodies wrapped in blankets.

An Israeli air strike on two houses in the Sabra neighborhood of Rafah killed at least 12 people, including women and children.

Among the dead was a senior commander of the militant Al-Mujahedeen Brigades, and his family, and the family of another group leader, medics, relatives and the group said.

Israel says Hamas militants are hiding in Rafah, where the population has been swelled by hundreds of thousands of Gazans seeking refuge from the bombardments that have reduced most of the coastal enclave to ruins.

In the United States, the White House repeated its hope that Israel would not launch a full operation in Rafah, saying it did not believe that would advance Israel's aim of defeating Hamas.

"Smashing into Rafah, in (President Biden's) view, will not advance that objective," spokesman John Kirby said.

Kirby said Hamas had been pressured significantly by Israel and there were better options to hunt down what remains of the group's leadership than an operation with significant risk to civilians.

Israel's assault on Gaza has killed nearly 35,000 Palestinians and wounded nearly 80,000, most of them civilians, the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said.

It launched its offensive in response



Palestinians ride on a vehicle as they flee Rafah, Gaza Strip, on Thursday after Israeli forces launched a ground and air operation in the eastern part of the city. MOHAMMED SALEM/REUTERS

to a cross-border attack by Hamas militants on Israel on Oct. 7 in which they killed about 1,200 people and abducted 252. Some 128 hostages remain in Gaza and 36 have been declared dead, according to the latest Israeli figures.

Biden on Wednesday issued his starkest warning yet against a full ground invasion in Rafah, telling CNN that: "I made it clear that if they go into Rafah...I'm not supplying the weapons."

Israel's ambassador to the United States said the decision to withhold weapons from Israel over Rafah sends the "wrong message" to Hamas and the country's foes.

"It puts us in a corner because we have to deal with Rafah one way or the other," Ambassador Michael Herzog told a Carnegie Endowment for International Peace webinar.

The Israeli military has the munitions it requires for operations in Rafah and other planned operations, chief armed forces spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said.

Israeli armed forces have already killed 50 Palestinian gunmen in east Rafah and uncovered several tunnels, Hagari said. Hamas had no immediate comment.

Talks end

In Cairo, delegations from Hamas, Israel, the U.S., Egypt and Qatar had been meeting since Tuesday. The talks in Egypt's capital made some headway but no deal was reached, according to two Egyptian security sources.

Izzat El-Risheq, a member of Hamas' political office in Qatar, said the Hamas delegation had left Cairo, having reaffirmed its approval of the mediators' cease-fire proposal. The plan entails the release of Israeli hostages held captive in Gaza and a number of Palestinians jailed by Israel.

Hamas blames Israel for the lack of agreement, and its Al-Aqsa TV's Telegram account said the group would not make any concessions beyond those in the proposal it had accepted.

Israel has said it is open to a truce, but has rejected demands for an end to the war.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said Washington continued to engage with Israel on amendments to a cease-fire proposal, adding work to finalize the text of an agreement was "incredibly difficult."

Medical sector collapsing

Israeli residents set fire twice to the perimeter of the headquarters of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees in East Jerusalem, causing extensive damage to the outdoor areas but no casualties, UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini wrote on X. There was no immediate comment from Israeli police.

"Once again, the lives of U.N. staff were at a serious risk," Lazzarini wrote, adding he had decided to close the compound until security is restored.

On Tuesday, Israeli tanks seized the Gaza side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, cutting off a vital aid route

and forcing 80,000 people to flee the city this week, according to the United Nations.

Israel kept up tank and aerial strikes across Gaza and tanks advanced in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City in the north, forcing hundreds of families to flee, residents said. The Israeli military said it was securing Zeitoun, starting with a series of intelligence-based aerial strikes on approximately 25 militant targets.

Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza was packed with people who had fled Rafah in recent days. Palestinian medics said two people, including a woman, were killed when a drone fired a missile at a group of people there.

The closure of the Rafah crossing with Egypt has prevented the evacuation of the wounded and sick and the entry of medical supplies, food and fuel needed to operate hospitals, the Gaza health ministry said on Thursday.

The only kidney dialysis center in the Rafah area had stopped operating due to the shelling.

"The entire medical sector has collapsed," said Ali Abu Khurma, a Jordanian surgeon volunteering at Al Aqsa hospital in Deir al-Balah.

United Nations aid chief Martin Griffiths said that for three consecutive days, "nothing and no one has been allowed in or out of Gaza."

"It means no aid. Our supplies are stuck. Our teams are stuck. Civilians in Gaza are being starved and killed, and we are prevented from helping them," Griffiths posted on X.

Israel

Continued from Page 1NN

dermining Israel's security. "If any Jewish person voted for Joe Biden, they should be ashamed of themselves," Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said Thursday on social media.

Defying Biden

Biden considers his ability to negotiate with foreign leaders – even those he frequently disagrees with like Netanyahu – a hallmark of his presidency. His administration has said it is keeping far-right Netanyahu close because it has greater influence over the Israeli leader that way. Netanyahu's open defiance of Biden's advice on Rafah has tried Biden's image as a foreign policy expert, while increasing pressure at home.

After Biden pushed him to not to attack Rafah Monday, Netanyahu rejected a Gaza ceasefire deal accepted by Hamas, and began airstrikes in Rafah. A third U.S. official told Reuters then that the Israelis did not appear to be negotiating a deal in good faith.

Netanyahu's decision to move ahead came just days after 57 of the 212 Democrats in the House of Representatives signed a letter calling on the Biden administration to take every possible

measure to dissuade the Israeli leader from an all-out assault on the city near the Egyptian border.

Top U.S. officials from Biden on down spent weeks publicly and privately stressing Israel should outline a plan for Rafah that would minimize harm to the hundreds of thousands sheltered there after fleeing Israeli bombing in the north. As far back as a Feb. 11 Biden-Netanyahu phone call, Biden "reaffirmed his view that a military operation in Rafah should not proceed without a credible and executable plan for ensuring the safety of and support for the more than one million people sheltering there," the White House said.

As concerns over Israel's Rafah plans grew, Biden officials were also raising questions about the legality of earlier phases of Israel's Gaza campaign.

Several senior U.S. officials have advised Secretary of State Antony Blinken that they do not find "credible or reliable" Israel's assurances that it is using U.S.-supplied weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Last week U.S. officials said the Israelis had given them a broad brush idea of what they were planning in Rafah but did not provide a full-blown concept on how to protect Gaza civilians, a key U.S. demand. "Right now, the conditions are not favorable to any kind of operation. We've been clear about that," Austin, a retired four-star general, told reporters



People wave Palestinian flags amid a protest at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass., on Thursday. RICK FRIEDMAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

last week. "It's necessary to take care of the civilian population that's in that area before anything else happens."

Austin's appeals on humanitarian aid to Rafah had also become a fixture of his private, weekly calls with his Israeli

counterpart, Yoav Gallant, including on Sunday night.

But then on Monday, Gallant's office issued a statement expressing that military action was required, "including in the area of Rafah."

SPORTS **EXTRA**

GOLF PGA TOUR

Schauffele leads by 3 shots at Wells Fargo

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Xander Schauffele fired a 7-under-par 64 in the first round of the Wells Fargo Championship, starting and finishing his day strong to take the early lead at the \$20 million signature event Thursday in Charlotte, N.C.

Schauffele held a three-shot advantage at day's end after Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland, a three-time winner of this tournament, finished an up-and-down round with a bogey at the 18th hole. McIlroy settled for a 4-under 67, tied for second with Collin Morikawa and Sweden's Alex Noren.

The 68-man field is playing four rounds without a cut at Quail Hollow Club in the sixth signature event of the season, which doubles as a tune-up for next week's PGA Championship.

"I think playing a championship course is always a good thing before a major championship," Schauffele said.

Schauffele started on the back nine and birdied five of his first eight holes before taking his only bogey of the day at No. 18. After a quiet start to the front nine, he threw a dart on his second shot at the par-5 seventh hole, his ball glancing the side of the cup for a would-be albatross before leaving him just 5 feet for eagle to get to 6 under.

Schauffele's drive at No. 8 flew far right, but he managed to find his ball and was allowed to move non-embedded rocks out of his path before hitting his second shot onto the green.

"The volunteer was by the Shotlink

See **WELLS FARGO**, Page 5NS



Xander Schauffele lines up his putt on the 14th green during the Wells Fargo Championship on Thursday.

JIM DEDMON/USA TODAY SPORTS

NBA PLAYOFFS



Cleveland Cavaliers guard Donovan Mitchell reacts after his 3-point basket against the Celtics during the second half of Game 2 of a second-round NBA playoff series on Thursday at TD Garden in Boston.

DAVID BUTLER II/USA TODAY SPORTS

CAVS, MAVS EVEN UP THEIR SERIES

- Donovan Mitchell tossed in a game-high 29 points and the visiting Cleveland Cavaliers pulled even in the Eastern Conference second round by beating the Boston Celtics 118-94 in Game 2 on Thursday night.
- Luka Doncic and P.J. Washington scored 29 points apiece while leading the Dallas Mavericks to a 119-110 victory over the host Oklahoma City Thunder, evening their Western Conference semifinal series.

COVERAGE, 2NS



Rangers left wing Artemi Panarin (10) celebrates his game-winning goal with defenseman Erik Gustafsson on Thursday.

JAMES GUILLORY/USA TODAY SPORTS

STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS RANGERS 3, HURRICANES 2 (OT)

Rangers on brink of sweeping Hurricanes

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Artemi Panarin scored at 1:43 of overtime to give the New York Rangers a 3-2 win over the Carolina Hurricanes in Game 3 of their Eastern Conference semifinal series on Thursday in Raleigh, N.C.

The Rangers hold a commanding 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven series and can eliminate the Hurricanes with a victory in Game 4 in Raleigh on Saturday.

New York is a perfect 7-0 in the post-season, having swept the Washington Capitals in the first round.

After double overtime was required in Game 2, the Rangers struck early in Thursday's OT period. Carolina defenseman Dmitry Orlov couldn't control a loose puck around the boards, and Vincent Trocheck's pass found Panarin for the redirection.

"Up and down the lineup right now, we're getting contributions from everybody," Trocheck said. "I like our depth, [it's] been phenomenal, so you're going to keep that going deep into the playoffs."

Panarin also had an assist in the game, and Trocheck had two assists. Chris Kreider and Alexis Lafreniere provided New York's other goals.

Rangers goaltender Igor Shesterkin was again spectacular, stopping 45 of 47 shots in an encore to his 54-save outing in Game 2. Shesterkin has allowed three or fewer goals in 30 consecutive playoff games, the second-longest such streak in NHL history.

"He's world-class, he's done a great job," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "When they do have their

See **RANGERS**, Page 3NS

NBA PLAYOFFS

CAVALIERS 118, CELTICS 94 SERIES TIED 1-1

Mitchell leads Cavaliers to a rout to even series

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Donovan Mitchell tossed in a game-high 29 points and the visiting Cleveland Cavaliers pulled even in the Eastern Conference second round by beating the Boston Celtics 118-94 in Game 2 on Thursday night.

Mitchell had six points at halftime, but scored 16 in the third quarter and seven in the fourth. He was 10 of 19 from the field, including 5 of 7 from 3-point territory. Mitchell tossed in a game-high 33 points when Boston earned a 120-95 victory in Game 1 on Tuesday.

Cleveland led by 12 after three quarters and pushed the lead to 25 after Caris LeVert's three-point play with 4:58 remaining. Boston coach Joe Mazzulla pulled his starters off the court at that point.

Despite being in foul trouble for much of the second half, Cleveland's Evan Mobley had 21 points, 10 rebounds and five assists. LeVert (21), Darius Garland (14), Isaac Okoro (12) and Max Strus (12) also scored in double figures for the Cavaliers.

"Everybody did their job, starting with Evan," Mitchell said. "The biggest thing is - I said it this morning - just trusting in the work. We haven't made shots a lot in these playoffs, but continue to trust the work you put in."

"We're extremely confident, even after Game 1. Understanding that we had some things we could adjust. Tonight we executed very well, but at the end of the day, it's one win. We'll continue to build upon it."

Jayson Tatum had 25 points, seven rebounds and six assists for the Celtics, who shot 8 of 35 from 3-point territory. Jaylen Brown added 19 points for Boston, but he was 0 for 6 on 3-pointers.

"I'll have to go back and watch the film, but I think when you lose a game like that, it could be a combination of tactics, a combination of effort, a combination of a little bit of all those things at times," Mazzulla said. "Not to say it was one thing the entire time, but it was probably a combination of those."



Cavaliers guard Caris LeVert (3) drives against Celtics forward Jayson Tatum during Thursday's game in Boston. DAVID BUTLER II/USA TODAY SPORTS

"I definitely think there were times in the game where we went through tough stretches offensively that affected our defense."

The series will shift to Cleveland for Game 3 on Saturday.

Cleveland center Jarrett Allen missed his fifth straight game with a rib injury. The Celtics were without center Kristaps Porzingis, who has missed the last three games because of a right calf injury.

Cleveland 118, Boston 94

CLEVELAND (118)

Okoro 5-6 1-2 12, Strus 5-10 0-0 12, Mobley 9-15 2-2 21, Garland 5-8 0-0 14, Mitchell 10-19 4-6 29, LeVert 9-17 3-4 21, Morris Sr. 2-4 0-0 4, Niang 2-4 0-0 4, Thompson 0-2 1-2 1, Merrill 0-10 0-0, Jones 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 47-86 11-16 118.

BOSTON (94)

Brown 7-17 5-19, Tatum 7-17 9-11 25, Horford 4-9 0-0 11, Holiday 2-7 0-0 4, White 3-11 3-4 10, Pritchard 6-10 0-0 13, Kornet 0-13-4 3, Tillman 0-0 0-0 0, Hauser 1-2 0-0 2, Mykhailiuk 0-1 0-0 0, Brissett 1-2 0-0 3, Queta 0-1 0-0 0, Springer 1-1 0-0 2, Walsh 1-1 0-0 2. Totals 33-80 20-24 94.

CLE 30 24 36 28 - 118
BOS 24 30 24 16 - 94
3-Point Goals: Cleveland 13-28 (Mitchell 5-7, Garland 4-5, Strus 2-7, Okoro 1-1, Mobley 1-2, Morris Sr. 0-1, Niang 0-1, Merrill 0-1, LeVert 0-3), Boston 8-35 (Horford 3-7, Tatum 2-5, Brissett 1-1, Pritchard 1-4, White 1-8, Mykhailiuk 0-1, Hauser 0-1, Holiday 0-2, Brown 0-6). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: Cleveland 44 (Mobley 10), Boston 31 (Tatum 7). Assists: Cleveland 24 (Mitchell 8), Boston 22 (Tatum 6). Total Fouls: Cleveland 20, Boston 15. A: 19,156 (18,624)

MAVERICKS 119, THUNDER 110 SERIES TIED 1-1

Doncic, Mavs bounce back, gain split at OKC

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Luka Doncic and P.J. Washington scored 29 points apiece while leading the Dallas Mavericks to a 119-110 victory over the host Oklahoma City Thunder on Thursday, evening their Western Conference semifinal series at one win apiece.

The Mavericks hit 18 3-pointers, their highest total in the 2024 postseason.

Doncic added 10 rebounds and seven assists as he rebounded from recent shooting struggles to go 11 of 21 from the floor, including 5 of 8 from 3-point range.

Washington's 29 points were a playoff career high, as he hit 7 of 11 3-point attempts and added 11 rebounds before fouling out late in the fourth.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 33 points on 13-of-24 shooting, and he added 12 rebounds and eight assists. Jalen Williams put up 20 points.

The series heads to Dallas for Game 3 on Saturday and Game 4 on Monday.

With less than 10 minutes left in the fourth, the Mavericks got a scare when Doncic came up hobbling after colliding with Oklahoma City's Cason Wallace.

Despite limping through the next two possessions, Doncic remained in the game and drilled a 3-pointer, his fifth of the game, to stretch Dallas' lead back to nine and quiet any chances of a Thunder comeback.

Doncic had gone just 5 of 35 from beyond the 3-point arc over the previous four games, including 1-of-8 effort in the Mavericks' Game 1 loss on Tuesday.

"I was trying to focus on my balance," Doncic said of his work after his Game 1 struggles. "My balance on shots wasn't good. I think today was one of the hardest games I had to play. I'm battling out there, trying to get my team the win."

The difference in Doncic was apparent from the start, as he buried a 3-pointer on his first shot of the game, fed



Mavericks guard Luka Doncic (77) drives against Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander on Thursday. ALONZO ADAMS/USA TODAY SPORTS

Daniel Gafford for an alley-oop dunk on the next possession and hit two more shots in the Mavericks' 13-2, game-opening run.

The Thunder's Luguentz Dort, who helped keep Doncic in check during the series opener, picked up two fouls in the first eight minutes. Doncic scored 16 points in the first quarter.

After trailing by 14 points in the second quarter, the Thunder came back to take their first lead early in the third quarter. Oklahoma City went up 72-71 on Aaron Wiggins' jumper.

Dallas 119, Oklahoma City 110

DALLAS (119)

Gafford 4-6 5-9 13, Lively II 1-7 0-0 2, Hardaway Jr. 6-10 3-4 17, Green 4-6 0-0 11, Exum 0-2 0-0 0, Hardy 0-0 0-0 0, Lawson 0-0 0-0 0, Powell 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 42-90 17-24 119.

OKLAHOMA CITY (110)

Holmgren 4-12 2-3 11, Wallace 3-5 0-0 6, Wiggins 3-6 2-2 9, Joe 3-5 0-0 7, Williams 3-6 0-0 8, Hayward 0-0 0-0 0, Dieng 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 42-89 16-17 110.

DAL 36 32 31 20 - 119
OKC 32 30 27 21 - 110

3-Point Goals: Dallas 18-37 (Washington 7-11, Doncic 5-8, Green 3-5, Hardaway Jr. 2-4, Jones Jr. 1-5, Irving 0-2, Exum 0-2), Oklahoma City 10-30 (Dort 2-4, Williams 2-4, Williams 2-4, Gilgeous-Alexander 1-3, Joe 1-3, Wiggins 1-3, Holmgren 1-6, Wallace 0-1, Giddey 0-2). Fouled Out: Dallas (Washington). Rebounds: Dallas 44 (Washington 11), Oklahoma City 41 (Gilgeous-Alexander 12). Assists: Dallas 30 (Irving 11), Oklahoma City 25 (Gilgeous-Alexander 8). Total Fouls: Dallas 21, Oklahoma City 18. A: 0 (18,203)

KNICKS VS. PACERS NEW YORK LEADS SERIES 2-0

Pacers running out of time to solve Knicks' Brunson

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Jalen Brunson will look to help the New York Knicks take a commanding lead in their Eastern Conference semifinal series against the Indiana Pacers on Friday when the teams play Game 3 in Indianapolis.

Brunson followed up his 43-point performance in New York's 121-117 victory in the series opener by overcoming a right foot injury to score 29 points in a 130-121 win on Wednesday.

"The mental toughness piece is so important," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "To get through things. To be at your best when your best is needed, even when you may not be feeling your best. That's who (Jalen) is. He's a great leader."

Brunson exited late in the first quarter in Game 2 due to his injury before returning to the floor to test his foot at halftime.

That sight apparently lit a spark for the second-seeded Knicks, who overcame a 10-point halftime deficit to outlast the Pacers.

"We're just sticking together no matter what, no matter what the situation is, no matter what's thrown at us, no matter what's at a disadvantage for us, we're just going to stick together and that's the thing we always harp on," Brunson said.

Brunson is averaging a robust 35.6 points per game this postseason for injury-riddled New York, which saw OG Anunoby sustain a hamstring injury on a transition play in the third quarter. Anunoby did not return to the contest and finished with a career playoff-high 28 points on Wednesday. His availability for Game 3 was not immediately known.

Now the series shifts to Indianapolis, and Pacers coach Rick Carlisle told reporters that he'd like to see a correction in what he believes is unbalanced officiating.

"Small-market teams deserve an equal shot. They deserve a fair shot no



Knicks guard Jalen Brunson celebrates in the fourth quarter of Wednesday's game against the Pacers in New York. WENDELL CRUZ/USA TODAY

matter where they're playing," said Carlisle, who received two technical fouls and was ejected on Wednesday.

Indiana's T.J. McConnell praised the fire shown by Carlisle but noted he isn't interested in pointing the finger at the officials.

"We're not gonna sit here and blame officials. We gotta be better. It's just that simple," McConnell said. "They smashed us on the boards again (in Game 2) and just brought more energy than we did. We gotta fix that."

To McConnell's point, the sixth-seeded Pacers were outrebounded 40-32 in the series opener and 44-34 on Wednesday.

Tyrese Haliburton rebounded from a dismal six-point showing in the series opener to score 34 on Wednesday. He made 11 of 19 shots - including 7 of 11 from 3-point range - to go along with nine assists and six rebounds.

"I just felt like we took advantage of what was given," Haliburton said. "Obviously, watching the Game 1 film, it has obviously been sitting with us that we gotta be better of getting downhill and getting more paint attacks."

NUGGETS VS. TIMBERWOLVES MINNESOTA LEADS SERIES 2-0

T-wolves expect to have Gobert back for Game 3

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Rudy Gobert is expected to rejoin the Minnesota Timberwolves when they tip off against the Denver Nuggets in Game 3 of their Western Conference semifinal series Friday in Minneapolis.

Gobert, who earned his fourth NBA Defensive Player of the Year award this week, missed Game 2 because of the birth of his son. He watched on TV as his teammates more than made up for his absence with stifling defense in a 106-80 win on the road against the Nuggets.

The victory gave Minnesota a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven series.

"It was incredible," Gobert said. "Obviously I was watching the game, holding the baby at the same time. But I had a little emotion at the same time because it was something special. The energy, the focus that they had, the determination."

"I don't know, there was something special in the way they came out. They came out to play 48 minutes. It was an incredible day, an incredible way to end the day for me and obviously the whole organization."

Now Denver must find a way to avoid slipping into a 3-0 series deficit on the road.

The Nuggets are the defending NBA champions and boast the best player on the court in three-time MVP Nikola Jokic - the latest honor coming Wednesday. He has averaged 27.0 points this postseason to go along with 15.0 rebounds and 9.4 assists.

Michael Porter Jr. and Jamal Murray each have averaged 20.4 points during the playoffs. But Murray is coming off a Game 2 in which he shot 3-for-18 from the field, 0-for-4 from beyond the arc and finished with four turnovers and only two assists.

Murray threw a heating pad on the court during Game 2. The NBA responded by fining him \$100,000, but he avoided suspension.

Nuggets guard Reggie Jackson said



Timberwolves center Rudy Gobert, right, and Nuggets center Nikola Jokic battle last Saturday in Denver. RON CHENOV/USA TODAY SPORTS

everyone felt frustrated after the second game.

"They punked us," he said. "They literally just manhandled us."

The Timberwolves hope to maintain that mentality as they return to Target Center, where they posted a 30-11 record during the regular season and won both of their first-round playoff games against the Phoenix Suns.

Minnesota is 6-0 in the playoffs thanks in large part to its 22-year-old superstar, Anthony Edwards, who is averaging 32.3 points in the postseason. Karl-Anthony Towns is averaging 20.7 points and 9.0 rebounds, and Gobert is averaging a double-double with 13.2 points and 11.4 rebounds.

Edwards tried to deflect attention from his scoring by highlighting the defensive prowess of his teammate, forward Jaden McDaniels. Through two games, McDaniels has scored only five points, but he has posted a plus-40 rating because of his defense.

"He doesn't complain," Edwards said. "He just keeps guarding, picking up full court. He's definitely the X-factor of the team."

STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS

PANTHERS VS. BRUINS SERIES TIED 1-1

Rugged series for Bruins, Panthers moves to Boston

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

After splitting the first two games in Sunrise, Fla., the Boston Bruins will look to regain control of the Eastern Conference semifinals when they return home to battle the Florida Panthers in Game 3 on Friday.

The Panthers dominated Boston – amidst a heightened level of “emotion and adrenaline,” as Bruins captain Brad Marchand put it – to knot the series Wednesday, scoring six unanswered goals en route to a 6-1 win.

Aleksander Barkov posted two goals and two assists, Brandon Montour had a goal and two assists and Sam Reinhart had four assists in Game 2 for Florida, which is the No. 1 seed in the Atlantic Division.

It was a much-needed response for the Panthers, who held a 33-15 shot advantage with just three allowed in the third period.

“Overall, we did what we wanted to do,” Barkov said. “They got the lead in the first period, but we didn’t change a thing. We just kept playing our game, going hard and to the net. That is what we did the whole game.”

Boston won 5-1 in Monday’s series opener, playing just two days after beating the Toronto Maple Leafs in overtime in Game 7 of its first-round series.

Meanwhile, Florida had a week off after eliminating the Tampa Bay Lightning in five games.

“I don’t know if the week off hurt us, (but we) really didn’t get into our game in the first one. We knew we needed to respond,” Florida center Steven Lorentz said. “We were just chipping away. Once we got the first (goal), we kind of got the ball rolling.”

The Panthers now have eight comeback wins in the postseason dating back to their 2023 run to the Stanley Cup Final.

Barkov led the way and now has eight points over his last three games.

“The thing I heard most when I came here was, ‘You have no idea how good



The Panthers' Brandon Montour (62) celebrates in front of the Bruins' Brad Marchand on Wednesday in Sunrise, Fla. SAM NAVARRO/USA TODAY SPORTS

Barkov is,” Florida coach Paul Maurice said. “I’ve got a TV. I’ve got a pretty good idea. It’s not my first game. But they were right. He’s better this year than he’s ever been.”

However the series turns in Game 3, the physicality should certainly continue after Wednesday featured a combined 148 penalty minutes. The night’s fisticuffs were highlighted by the talented duo of Boston’s David Pastrnak and Florida’s Matthew Tkachuk dropping the gloves.

The memory of last season’s seven-game, first-round series, won by Florida after facing a 3-1 deficit, also adds to the excitement.

“This is where rivalries are built in the playoffs. With last year, it kind of started there,” Marchand said. “They play a physical game and we’re able to do that as well. ... A lot of really good battles, guys are competing hard out there.”

Charlie Coyle gave the Bruins a 1-0 lead in Wednesday’s first period, but it was all Florida from there.

“I thought our team was emotionally engaged,” Boston coach Jim Montgomery said.

OILERS VS. CANUCKS VANCOUVER LEADS SERIES 1-0

Oilers looking to regroup after blowing Game 1 lead

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Hockey fans are eager to see whether the Edmonton Oilers will bounce back or spiral away when they resume their Western Conference semifinal series against the host Vancouver Canucks in Game 2 on Friday.

After blowing a 4-1 lead en route to a 5-4 loss in the series opener on Wednesday, the Oilers have now dropped all five meetings with the Canucks, counting regular season and playoffs.

Regrouping and evening the best-of-seven playoff series before it shifts to Edmonton for the third and fourth clashes is job No. 1 for the Oilers.

“Up until 10 minutes left in the third, I thought we controlled the action,” Edmonton defenseman Mattias Ekholm said. “Sometimes that happens, that’s the emotional ups and downs of the playoffs, they get three quick ones and that’s the game right there. We can be encouraged by the way we played for the first 50 minutes.”

After staking their three-goal edge with a pair of goals 45 seconds apart, the Oilers managed only five shots on goal over the final 26:49, and only four during the third period.

“I don’t think you divide that game into the first half and the second half,” Oilers coach Kris Knoblauch said. “The first half we had a huge lead at 4-1, but do I think we were that much better than them? (Goaltender Stuart Skinner) made some pretty big saves ... but five-on-five, I don’t think we were much better than them.”

“In the second half, they obviously had a lot more goals than we did, but did I think they were that much better than us in the second half? No. Sometimes that’s the way it works.”

Oilers forward Leon Draisaitl, who missed eight minutes of the second period but finished the game, did not practice on Thursday. Knoblauch said Draisaitl is day-to-day.

The Canucks certainly had reason to bask in their victory. Nikita Zadorov



Oilers defenseman Mattias Ekholm looks for the puck against the Canucks on Wednesday in Vancouver. BOB FRID/USA TODAY SPORTS

delivered the tying goal at 13:47 of the third and Conor Garland had the game-winner 39 seconds later to cap a three-goal period.

However, preventing an early deficit that requires such an impressive comeback will be a huge focus when the Canucks hit the ice in front of their frenzied fans.

“It’s obviously a good feeling to come back, but we’re on earth again,” Vancouver coach Rick Tocchet said. “For me, in playoffs, you get back to earth as soon as possible.”

“It was great, but we got a long way to go. The game (Friday) is huge. How do we correct some mistakes and how do we continue some of the stuff we did well?”

Vancouver does have plenty of aspects to build off. The Canucks were especially good at limiting scoring chances for the high-octane Oilers. Case in point is the fact that Edmonton captain Connor McDavid failed to register a shot on goal in a playoff game for the first time in his career. And when the puck was in Vancouver’s zone, the Canucks held strong, blocking pucks before they even reached the net.



Rangers goaltender Igor Shesterkin (31) stops a shot by the Hurricanes' Dmitry Orlov (7) on Thursday in Raleigh, N.C. JAMES GUILLORY/USA TODAY SPORTS

Rangers

Continued from Page 1

breakdowns or whatever and we get to him, he’s been sharp.”

Andrei Svechnikov had a goal and an assist for the Hurricanes, and Jake Guentzel scored Carolina’s other goal.

Pyotr Kochetkov stopped 22 of 25 shots in his first game of the postseason. Frederik Andersen started Carolina’s first seven playoff games, but his underwhelming .871 save percentage in the first two games against the Rangers inspired the Hurricanes to start Kochetkov in Game 3.

The Hurricanes outshot the Rangers by a 47-25 margin, the fifth-highest postseason shot total in Hartford/Carolina franchise history.

The Rangers’ penalty-kill unit was a perfect 5-for-5 for the third straight game. A new wrinkle to this dominance came with Kreider’s short-handed goal in the second period.

“We’re not executing very well,” Brind’Amour said. “We gave up that shorty and got away from what we were originally trying to do. That’s three games in a row, the same story.”

Kreider’s tally at 8:30 evened the score after a dominant first period from

the Hurricanes, which included Guentzel’s goal at the 10:14 mark.

“We’re trying to limit their chances in the middle of the ice,” Trocheck said of the Rangers’ penalty kill. “They’re doing a good job of spreading us out a little bit, but as long as we can be aggressive, and limit their entries, get our clears whenever we have chances.”

Lafreniere, who scored New York’s first two goals in Game 2, continued his breakout series by putting the Rangers ahead at 6:25 of the third period. Svechnikov equalized with 96 seconds remaining to force overtime.

N.Y. Rangers 3, Carolina 2 (OT)				
N.Y. Rangers	0	1	1	3
Carolina	1	0	1	2
First Period —1, Carolina, Guentzel 4 (Orlov, Svechnikov), 10:14. Penalties—N.Y. Rangers bench, served by Cuyille (Too many men), 2:00. Wennberg, NYR (Holding), 5:18. Svechnikov, CAR (Embellishment), 5:18. Vesey, NYR (Roughing), 11:25. Goodrow, NYR (Unsportsmanlike conduct), 11:25. Kotkaniemi, CAR (Unsportsmanlike conduct), 11:25. Orlov, CAR (Roughing), 11:25. Guentzel, CAR (High-sticking), 13:14.				
Second Period —1, N.Y. Rangers, Kreider 4 (Zibanejad), 8:30. Penalties—Martino, CAR (Tripping), 1:07. Panarin, NYR (Hooking), 2:10. Skjei, CAR (Interference), 4:26. Fox, NYR (Tripping), 7:39. Roslovic, NYR (Hooking), 10:57.				
Third Period —1, N.Y. Rangers, Lafreniere 3 (Panarin, Trocheck), 6:25. 1, Carolina, Svechnikov 2 (Aho, Skjei), 18:24. Penalties—DeAngelo, CAR (Slashing), 9:12. Schneider, NYR (Cross-checking), 11:38.				
Overtime —1, N.Y. Rangers, Panarin 4 (Trocheck, Lafreniere), 1:43. Penalties—None.				
Shots on Goal —N.Y. Rangers 7-11-6-1-25. Carolina 17-20-9-1-47.				
Power-play opportunities —N.Y. Rangers 0 of 4; Carolina 0 of 5.				
Goalies —N.Y. Rangers, Shesterkin 7-0-0 (47 shots-45 saves). Carolina, Kochetkov 0-1-0 (25-22). A-18,959 (18,680).				

STARS 5, AVALANCHE 3 SERIES TIED 1-1

Stars jump on Avs early, hold off 3rd-period rally

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Miro Heiskanen scored twice and Roope Hintz tallied once in a four-point performance to lead the host Dallas Stars to a 5-3 victory over the Colorado Avalanche on Thursday.

The Western Conference semifinal series is tied 1-1 with Game 3 of the best-of-seven series set for Saturday in Denver.

Tyler Seguin and Esa Lindell also scored for the Stars, who held a 4-0 lead through two periods and clung on for the victory. Goaltender Jake Oettinger made 28 saves, including a handful when it was a one-goal game and during a late Colorado power play.

Joel Kiviranta, Brandon Duhaime and Valeri Nichushkin found the net for the Avalanche, who had won five consecutive games. Goalie Alexandar Georgiev stopped 26 shots.

Heiskanen’s power-play goal opened the scoring 14:46 into the contest and provided the Stars a much-needed lead. After taking a cross-ice feed from Hintz, Heiskanen buried a one-timer.

Hintz doubled the lead 1:57 into the second period with his second of the playoffs. Within a minute after Game 1 overtime hero Miles Wood was denied on a partial breakaway, the Stars enjoyed an odd-man rush that ended with Hintz burying a sharp-angled shot.

Heiskanen’s second power-play goal, at 15:54 of the middle frame, extended the edge. Heiskanen had his point shot tick off a defender’s stick and into the top corner for his third of the playoffs.

Seguin’s short-handed goal at 18:06 of the second period made it a 4-0 game. During an odd-man rush, Seguin buried a rebound chance for his first of the postseason.

Kiviranta, who returned after missing the past three games, put the Avalanche on the board at 4:06 of the third period when he pounced on a rebound for his first of the playoffs.



Stars center Tyler Seguin (91) celebrates after his shorthanded goal against the Avalanche on Thursday in Dallas. JEROME MIRON/USA TODAY SPORTS

Duhaime halved Colorado’s deficit four minutes later when he netted his first career payoff goal by joining a rush and ripping a high shot

Nichushkin netted his ninth of the playoffs to make it a one-goal game with 3:44 remaining in regulation when a shot banked off his leg.

Lindell’s empty-net goal with 21 seconds remaining sealed Dallas’ victory.

Dallas 5, Colorado 3				
Colorado	0	0	3	3
Dallas	1	3	1	5
First Period —1, Dallas, Heiskanen 2 (Hintz, Robertson), 14:46. Penalties—Colorado bench, served by Parise (Too Many Men), 11:18. MacKinnon, COL (Delay of Game), 13:53. Marchment, DAL (Tripping), 18:55.				
Second Period —1, Colorado, Hintz 2 (Lundkvist, Marchment), 1:57. 2, Dallas, Heiskanen 3 (Benn, Hintz), 15:54. 1, Dallas, Seguin 1 (Harley), 18:06. Penalties—Manson, COL (Delay of Game), 7:14. Walker, COL (Slashing), 15:32. Hintz, DAL (Holding), 16:44.				
Third Period —1, Colorado, Kiviranta 1 (Manson, Colton), 4:06. 1, Colorado, Duhaime 1 (Cogliano), 8:00. 1, Colorado, Nichushkin 9 (Lehkonen, Mittelstadt), 16:16. 1, Dallas, Lindell 1, 19:39. Penalties—Marchment, DAL (Embellishment), 1:39. Kiviranta, COL (Interference), 1:39. Colorado bench, served by Colton (Too Many Men), 5:09. Johnston, DAL (High-sticking), 17:05.				
Shots on Goal —Colorado 9-9-13-31. Dallas 9-17-8-34.				
Power-play opportunities —Colorado 0 of 3; Dallas 2 of 5.				
Goalies —Colorado, Georgiev 5-2-0 (33 shots-29 saves). Dallas, Oettinger 5-4-0 (31-28).				

MLB

THURSDAY'S ROUNDUP

D-backs send Reds to 8th straight defeat

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Tucker Barnhart haunted his former team by starting a game-winning rally with two outs in the eighth as the visiting Arizona Diamondbacks completed a three-game sweep of the Cincinnati Reds, 5-4 on Thursday afternoon.

Corbin Carroll broke a 4-4 tie with a two-out hit off reliever Fernando Cruz (1-3) in the eighth to score Barnhart - who played for the Reds in 2014-21 - and give Arizona its season-best fourth straight win. Barnhart had walked and advanced to second on a wild pitch before Cruz walked Pavin Smith.

Kevin Ginkel (2-0) pitched a scoreless eighth - recording a strikeout, allowing a single and coaxing a double-play flyout to get out of the inning. Paul Sewald pitched a scoreless ninth to earn his first save in his first chance after missing the first month with an oblique injury.

Joc Pederson homered with two outs in the first to snap Cincinnati starter Hunter Greene's career-high scoreless streak at 14½ innings and stake Arizona to an early 1-0 lead.

Elly De La Cruz went 2-for-3 with an RBI for Cincinnati, which lost its eighth straight and finished its six-game homestand without a win. De La Cruz had two more steals to give him a Major League-leading 23 for the season.

Twins 11, Mariners 1

Manuel Margot doubled and matched a career high with five RBIs, and Minnesota cruised to a win over Seattle in Minneapolis.

Max Kepler and Ryan Jeffers homered and drove in two runs apiece for Minnesota, which won three of four games in the series. Carlos Santana and Edouard Julien each drove in one run.

Luke Raley finished 2-for-4 with an RBI to lead Seattle at the plate. The Mariners managed only one extra-base hit, a double by Mitch Haniger.

Twins right-hander Pablo Lopez (4-2) limited Seattle hitters to one run on four hits in 6⅓ innings. Lopez walked none and struck out 10, as he threw 61 of 100 pitches for strikes.

Mariners right-hander Logan Gilbert (3-1) endured his worst start of the season. After entering the day with nine runs allowed in 48 innings, he gave up eight runs on nine hits in four innings. He walked two and struck out four.

Rockies 9, Giants 1

Brenton Doyle homered among his two hits, Ezequiel Tovar tripled and doubled in the fourth inning and finished with three hits, and Colorado beat San Francisco in Denver.

Charlie Blackmon tripled, doubled, singled and drove in two runs, Elias Diaz had two hits and Cal Quantrill tossed six strong innings to help Colorado end a four-game skid. The Rockies sent 11 batters to the plate in a seven-run fourth in-



Arizona Diamondbacks designated hitter Joc Pederson hits a solo home run in the first inning of Thursday's game against the Reds at Great American Ball Park in Cincinnati. KATIE STRATMAN/USA TODAY SPORTS

ning. Quantrill (2-3) followed up his best outing with another solid start. Quantrill pitched 7⅓ shutout innings in a 3-2 win at Pittsburgh on Friday and built on that Thursday. He allowed one run on five hits, walked three and struck out five to earn his second straight win.

Michael Conforto homered among his two hits and Thairo Estrada also had two hits for San Francisco, which was outth 14-7. Shortstop Nick Ahmed left the game in the fifth with left wrist discomfort.

Both starters were efficient through the first three innings before the Giants ended a scoreless game with Conforto's leadoff homer in the fourth, his seventh of the season.

Astros 4, Yankees 3

Jon Singleton hit a 442-foot two-run homer to cap a three-run first inning and visiting Houston stopped a nine-game losing streak to New York.

The Astros stopped their four-game skid and avoided getting swept in the season series with New York, which they eliminated from the American League Championship Series in 2017, 2019 and 2022. Houston also improved to 3-11 in the past 14 meetings since sweeping the ALCS in 2022.

Singleton helped the Astros strike early against New York's Marcus Stroman (2-2) by hitting a 1-0 sinker off an advertisement on the third deck in right field Singleton quickly dropped his bat

and admired the blast as the ball landed about halfway in the second deck.

Yordan Alvarez preceded Singleton's 115.4 mph blast with a 395-foot drive into the second deck in right field that exited his bat at 116.8.

After hitting his eighth homer, Alvarez doubled and scored on Jeremy Pena's RBI single in the fifth.

White Sox 3, Guardians 2

Erick Fedde held visiting Cleveland scoreless over six-plus innings as Chicago opened the four-game series with a victory.

Fedde (3-0) allowed six hits and no walks while striking out three. Eloy Jimenez broke out of a 4-for-33 slump with two hits for Chicago, which recorded just its 10th win of the season after prevailing for the fourth time in the past six games.

The White Sox also got two hits apiece from Tommy Pham and Bryan Ramos.

Josh Naylor, Will Brennan and Bo Naylor each had two hits for Cleveland, which went 1-for-8 with runners in scoring position and left seven men on base.

Brewers 7, Cardinals 1

Rhys Hoskins' two-run shot in the first inning was one of three homers off Sonny Gray as Milwaukee handed visiting St. Louis its fifth straight loss.

Jake Bauers and Joey Ortiz also had solo homers off Gray (4-2), who entered

with a 0.89 ERA and had allowed just one homer in his first five starts.

Ortiz's third long ball of the year, a 408-foot drive to center with two outs in the fourth, put Milwaukee up 5-1.

The Cardinals loaded the bases off Brewers starter Tobias Myers with no outs in the fifth on single and two walks, but Jared Koenig came on and got a force at home, a foul popout and then an inning-ending flyout.

Royals 10, Angels 4

Michael Wacha continued his mastery of Los Angeles and was supported by home runs from Vinnie Pasquantino and Dairon Blanco in Kansas City's victory in Anaheim, Calif.

The St. Louis Cardinals selected Wacha in the 2012 draft after receiving the pick as compensation from the Angels for their signing of free agent Albert Pujols. Wacha has made the Angels pay ever since.

Wacha entered with a 3-0 record and a 0.44 ERA against the Angels in his career, including one of his two career shutouts. Despite his struggles this season, Wacha (2-4) was sharp, holding the Angels scoreless until the seventh inning in the opener of a four-game series.

Most of the damage came against Angels starter Reid Detmers, who has hit a rough patch after a strong start to the season. Detmers was 3-0 with a 1.19 ERA in his first four starts, but hasn't won since, losing each of his last four starts.

THURSDAY'S BOX SCORES

Arizona 5, Cincinnati 4												
ARI	CIN	100	002	110	5	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
CIN	ARI	000	010	300	4	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arizona	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Carroll cf	4	0	1	1	1	2	.206					
Marte 2b	5	1	1	0	0	1	.298					
Pederson dh	2	1	0	0	2	.302						
Walker lf	4	1	2	1	0	.279						
Gurriel Jr. rf	5	0	1	0	2	.253						
Suarez 3b	4	0	1	1	0	.226						
McCarthy rf	2	0	0	0	2	.299						
Barnhart c	2	1	0	0	2	.216						
Alexander ss	4	2	0	0	1	.276						
C-Smith ph	0	0	0	0	1	.214						
Newman ss	0	0	0	0	0	.188						
Totals	33	5	9	5	8	10						
Cincinnati	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Friedl cf	5	1	1	0	0	.231						
De La Cruz ss	3	1	2	1	0	.264						
Steer lf	3	0	1	2	1	.237						
Faley rf	4	0	1	0	0	.292						
India 2b	4	0	0	0	2	.214						
Ford dh	4	0	1	0	0	.200						
b-Fairchild pr-dh	0	0	0	0	0	.186						
Candelario 3b	4	2	2	1	0	.216						
Benson lf	3	0	1	0	1	.269						
Malic c	1	0	0	0	0	.137						
a-Stephenson ph-c	2	0	0	0	1	.222						
Totals	33	4	9	4	3	6						

Minnesota 11, Seattle 1												
SEA	MIN	010	000	000	1	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
MIN	SEA	510	210	20x	1	11	1	1	1	1	1	1
Seattle	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Rojas lf	3	0	1	0	1	.343						
Rodriguez cf	3	0	0	0	1	.262						
Raleigh c	3	0	0	0	0	.209						
Zavala c	1	0	0	0	0	.185						
Haniger rf	3	1	1	0	1	.213						
Haggerty rf	1	0	0	0	0	.000						
Garver dh	3	0	0	0	1	.176						
Polanco 2b	4	0	0	0	2	.182						
Raley lf	4	0	2	1	0	.243						
Urias 3b	3	0	1	0	0	.176						
Rivas ss	4	0	1	0	2	.333						
Totals	32	1	6	1	2	15						
Minnesota	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Julien 2b	4	1	1	1	1	.205						
Jeffers c	2	1	2	1	0	.306						
Larnach rf	5	1	1	0	0	.245						
Kepler dh	4	2	2	2	0	.329						
Castro ss	4	3	2	0	0	.293						
Castro ss	4	0	1	0	0	.272						
Margot lf	4	1	5	0	0	.169						
Santana 1b	4	1	2	1	0	.192						
Martin cf	3	1	0	0	1	.232						
Totals	34	11	11	3	8	3						
E: Urias, Haggerty, Jeffers. 2B: Haniger (5), Miranda (7), Margot (2). HR: Jeffers (8), Kepler (3). RBI: Raley (5), Julien (15), Jeffers (29), Kepler (24), Margot (5), Santana (14). SB: Julien (3). SF: Jeffers.												
Runners left in scoring position: Seattle 3 (Rodriguez, Haggerty, Rivas), Minnesota 1 (Martin). RISP: Seattle 1 for 8, Minnesota 6 for 14. GIDP: Urias, Larnach, Margot. DP: Seattle 2, Minnesota 1.												
Seattle	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA				
Gilbert L, 3-1	4.0	9	8	2	4	91	2.94					
Bazardo	2.0	1	1	1	4	35	4.50					
Miller	2.0	1	2	1	0	23	3.09					
Minnesota	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA				
Lopez W, 4-2	6.1	4	1	1	0	10	100	3.89				
Funderburk	1.2	1	0	1	2	27	4.86					
Stammont	1.0	1	0	0	1	3	2.60					
Inherited runners: Funderburk 1-1. HBP: Urias, Jeffers. WP: Funderburk 2. Umpires: HP-Tomlinson, 1B-Segal, 2B-Vanover, 3B-Rackley. T: 2:39. A: 22,154 (38,544).												
Colorado 9, San Francisco 1												
COL	ARI	100	000	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SF	COL	000	701	01x	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	0

Houston 4, N.Y. Yankees 3												
HOU	NY	300	010	000	4	11	1	0	0	0	0	0
NY	HOU	002	000	010	3	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
Houston	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Altuve 2b	5	0	1	0	0	2	.327					
Tucker rf	4	0	0	0	1	2	.268					
Alvarez dh	5	2	1	0	2	.245						
Pena ss	3	1	2	1	1	.333						
Singleton 1b	4	1	2	0	2	.239						
Bregman 3b	4	0	2	0	0	.198						
Diaz c	4	0	1	0	0	.273						
Loperfido lf	3	0	2	0	1	.316						
Dubon cf	4	0	0	0	1	.284						
Totals	36	4	11	4	3	10						
N.Y. Yankees	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Volpe ss	5	1	2	1	0	.257						
Soto rf	2	0	0	0	2	.333						
Judge cf	4	1	1	1	0	.236						
Stanton dh	4	0	0	0	0	.220						
Rizzo 1b	3	0	0	0	1	.259						
Torres 2b	3	0	1	0	1	.215						
Wells c	3	0	0	0	0	.190						
b-Sieff dh	1	0	0	0	0	.269						
Cabrera 3b	3	1	2	0	0	.256						
a-Trevino ph	1	0	0	0	0	.277						

Milwaukee 7, St. Louis 1												
MIL	STL	001	000	000	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
STL	MIL	010	100	10x	7	10	1	0	0	0	0	0
St. Louis	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Donovan dh	4	0	0	0	1	.217						
Nootbaar lf	5	1	1	0	0	.384						
Arenado 3b	4	0	1	0	2	.286						
Burleson 2b	4	0	0	0	1	.261						
Gorman 2b	2	0	0	2	1	.172						
Carlson rf	3	0	0	0	2	.000						
Winn ss	4	0	1	0	1	.265						
Pages c	3	0	0	0	1	.000						
Siiani cf	4	0	2	0	0	.226</						

GOLF

ROUNDUP

Zhang leads Founders Cup; Korda 6 back

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Rose Zhang carded a career-best and tournament-record 9-under 63 to grab a two-shot lead in the first round of the Cognizant Founders Cup on Thursday in Clifton, N.J.

While all eyes in the sport are on Nelly Korda as she vies to run her personal winning streak to six straight starts, it was her fellow phenom Zhang who conquered Upper Montclair Country Club with nine birdies and no bogeys. Korda posted a 3-under 69 and is tied for 18th.

Zhang is two in front of Sweden's Madelene Sagstrom. Ireland's Leona Maguire is three back at 6-under 66, tied with South Korea's Narin An and Australia's Stephanie Kyriacou.

Zhang, 20, made her professional debut last June at the Mizuho Americas Open in nearby Jersey City and won the tournament.

"It's almost the one-year anniversary I guess for me being on tour," said Zhang, who recently finished up her final exams at Stanford. "I still feel like I'm learning every single week about myself, about how I should approach the golf game, and the lifestyle out here on tour."

Her return to New Jersey saw her post a 6-under 30 on the front nine with four straight birdies at Nos. 6-9.

"It was almost just auto-command kind of golf," Zhang said. "I feel like in the last couple weeks it's been a little bit difficult. I've been struggling a little bit with the golf swing and gaining confidence in my preparation."

"But going into this week I kind of let it all go, let the expectations go a little bit more. I was able to free myself up a little bit, which was really nice to see some shots go in, especially on the greens."

Sagstrom began her round on the back nine and quickly found some momentum by eagling the par-5 12th. She added six birdies and only one bogey on her day and was the leader in the clubhouse before Zhang passed her by.

"It was kind of a little bit of our bonus," Sagstrom said of her eagle putt. "Traditionally I am a good putter. For some reason I putted well here all the years we been here. For me, my game plan has been to be a bit more consistent with my ball striking, giving myself some chances and, I really did that and took advantage of some of the putts I had."

Korda also started on the back and went birdie-bogey at Nos. 12 and 13. Though she left some birdie putts on the course, she holed her chances at Nos. 18, 2 and 9 to finish on a positive note.

"I have not thought about the streak at all, honestly," Korda said. "I think that's only going to do more harm for me than do good."



Nelly Korda plays her shot from the 13th tee during the first round of the Cognizant Founders Cup at Upper Montclair Country Club on Thursday in Clifton, N.J. ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

PGA Tour

Beau Hossler and Scotland's Robert MacIntyre each fired a 7-under-par 64 to share the lead after the first round of the inaugural Myrtle Beach Classic in South Carolina.

Hossler and MacIntyre said this week was the first time they had seen the Dunes Golf and Beach Club, but that apparent handicap didn't keep them from forging a one-stroke advantage. They each are seeking their first win on the PGA Tour.

Four players are tied at 65: Davis Thompson, Alistair Docherty, China's Zecheng Doug and Argentina's Alejandro Tosti.

Hossler opened with a birdie at No. 1, and added more birdies at Nos. 4, 5, 11 and 12, before making a 75-foot eagle shot out of a left fairway bunker at the par-5 No. 13.

"I couldn't see it," Hossler said when asked about the eagle. "I saw it go up and then I heard people say, 'good shot.' Yeah, it was nice. I left it right at the spot where I wanted. I thought the left bunker would be a good place, and obviously I'd never expect to make it, but hit a good one, and I couldn't help — obviously I didn't see it go in, so I don't know how much speed it had, but it felt like a pretty good shot."

He gave back a shot with a bogey at the par-4 No. 14, but rebounded with his final birdie of the day at No. 15.

"It's been a good start and then very mediocre the last couple months," Hossler said of his year.

"Game just hasn't felt great. Wasn't hitting it great, wasn't putting great. Felt a bit out of it."

"No, I feel like I'm trending, got some stuff that I'm working on that I feel pretty excited about. It's peaks and valleys in this sport. It's really frustrating. I think it's like that for pretty much every player in the world except for one at the moment, and I'm trying to just accept the fact that it is what it is and try and have a little better attitude when it's down because it's tough to ride that emotional roller coaster for a career."

MacIntyre started on the back nine and put together a run of five birdies over seven holes (Nos. 12, 13, 15, 16, 18) for a 31, then followed with a 33, including a bogey at the par-4 No. 8 when two shots found the rough and he sank a 23-inch putt.

The Dunes Golf and Beach Club, a Robert Trent Jones-designed course, formerly hosted the season-ending Charles Schwab Cup Championship on the Champions Tour from 1994-99.

"It's unbelievable. It's a great track," MacIntyre said.

PGA Champions

Chris DiMarco and Irishman Padraig Harrington shared the early lead at 7 under through 13 holes when play was suspended at the Regions Tradition in Birmingham, Ala.

The first major of the PGA Tour Champions season was halted Thursday afternoon due to lightning in the area. The tour decided not to resume play until Friday at 8 a.m. local time, with all 78 players needing to complete their first rounds before beginning Round 2.

DiMarco and Harrington are two strokes ahead of Steve Flesch, Fiji's Vijay Singh, Australia's Rod Pampling and South Korea's Y.E. Yang. Flesch was 5 under through 16 holes while Singh, Pampling and Yang were 5 under through 11.

DiMarco, 55, has yet to win on the PGA Tour Champions.

He's never finished better than T33 at the Regions Tradition, yet he had a red-hot start Thursday with seven birdies in 13 holes, including three straight at one point.

While newer to the PGA Tour Champions than DiMarco, the 52-year-old Harrington already has seven wins and one major (the 2022 U.S. Senior Open) in his back pocket.

Wells Fargo

Continued from Page 1

tower and he said he heard it land in the hazard, so everyone's kind of looking in the hazard," Schaufele said. "Then Wyndham (Clark) and (caddie Austin Kaiser) kind of went further up and then they found the ball. Wyndham's like, 'I think that's your ball,' so kind of walked up, identified it and went from there."

The 30-year-old followed that critical par save with a 6-foot birdie putt at No. 9 for a final flourish.

McIlroy's highlight was a perfectly struck 50-foot eagle putt at No. 7 that gave him the solo lead at the time at 5 under. The rest of his day was a series of bogeys and bounce-back birdies until he failed to save par from 7 feet at No. 18.

"It was good to play a solid round of golf," McIlroy said. "Left a couple out there, I feel, but at the same time I've got three more days to try to build on what I've done today."

Noren had a back-nine run of three straight birdies, then stuck his approach shot at No. 18 just a foot from the hole for a late boost. Morikawa, meanwhile, was at 5 under after birdies at Nos. 5 and 7 but hit a bunker on his final hole, the ninth, and bogeyed to take a small step backward.

"Unfortunate to just kind of give away on the last hole," Morikawa said. "It was a long day, and for the most part felt really good and gave myself some chances, made some putts and kept it really simple out there."

Morikawa is one of many golfers with major championship pedigree trying to iron out their game before the PGA next week.



Rory McIlroy plays a shot from a bunker on the 10th hole during the first round of the Wells Fargo Championship on Thursday in Charlotte, N.C. JIM DEDMON/USA TODAY SPORTS

Justin Thomas shot a 3-under 68 with four birdies and one bogey to open his tournament. The two-time PGA champion — who hasn't won a tournament of any kind since his 2022 PGA title — is tied for fifth with Russell Henley,

Lee Hodges, Taylor Moore, Australia's Jason Day, South Korea's Sungjae Im and Austria's Sepp Straka.

"It's a lot of drivers and it's a premium on hitting the fairways," Thomas said.

"I think it's definitely a ball-striking course, so I like that aspect of it, that it kind of gets me in the mindset of very similar to how it will be next week. But yeah, in terms of what it does to (prepare him for the PGA), I guess it's TBD."

TENNIS ROUNDUP

Nadal rallies to win opening match in Rome

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Rafael Nadal trailed by a set against qualifier Zizou Bergs but rallied to win 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 in his opening-round match at the Internazionali BNL d'Italia on Thursday in Rome.

Nadal, dominant on clay courts in his career, has won 10 times in Rome. Throughout 18 Italian Opens, he had lost just once in the opening round, but three double faults and two service breaks gave Bergs, of Belgium, the opening he needed to grab the first set and hope of winning the two-hour, 54-minute match.

"It was not my best match. I was practicing better than how I played today without a doubt but I found a way to win," Nadal said. "That is so important at the beginning of the tournament. My game is more unpredictable than before. I didn't play much tennis for the past two years, so it is up and down. I think I can do much better than I did today and hope I can do it in the next round."

Nadal, 37, has missed much of that time largely due to a hip injury. In what is expected to be his final ATP Tour season, the Spaniard undoubtedly wants a good showing in Rome leading to the French Open, which he has won a record 14 times.

In the second set, Nadal settled in and fought off five break points and converted two against Bergs, moving well on the court.

The packed house appreciated his play.

"It is always emotional to play here," Nadal said.

"One of the most important events in my tennis career. The crowd has always been amazing with me, supporting me since the beginning of my tennis career, so super excited to play one more time here."

In the second round, Nadal will face seventh-seeded Hubert Hurkacz of Poland, who had a first-round bye.

Other early winners on Thursday included Thiago Seyboth Wild of Brazil, Dominik Koepfer of Germany, Italians



Rafael Nadal celebrates after winning his match against Zizou Bergs at the Rome Open on Thursday. ANDREAS SOLARO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Matteo Gigante and Stefano Napolitano, Serbs Miomir Kecmanovic and Hamad Medjedovic, Jaime Munar of Spain and Corentin Moutet of France.

Gauff working on serve, still wins

No. 3 seed Coco Gauff overcame nine double faults and handled Poland's Magdalena Frech 6-3, 6-3 in the second round of the Internazionali BNL d'Italia.

Gauff hit three aces as she continues to tinker with her serve ahead of the next Grand Slam, the French Open in June.

"I feel like the other parts of my game are improving in the right direction,"

Gauff told wtatennis.com before the tournament. "I feel like (her serve is) the part that if I can work that through, I think it will set me up for a very good Roland Garros.

"Other than that, I feel like I'm returning well, hitting off the ground well. For me, if I can get that part well, I can do well."

Gauff is coming off a Round of 16 exit from the Mutua Madrid Open. She hit 13 double faults in a three-set loss to Madison Keys.

"I feel if I'm still close in these matches against Maddie (Keys), who is like a top player, I think (if) I just fix that detail, it will save me," Gauff said, "and

maybe those matches would turn into winning in straight sets instead of losing in three sets."

Japan's Naomi Osaka also feels her game coming together after upsetting Ukrainian No. 19 seed Marta Kostyuk 6-3, 6-2 on Thursday. It was Osaka's first career top-20 win on clay.

"I think this match is apparently a lot of firsts for me, so I'm very happy about that," the former World No. 1 said. "I was pretty nervous coming back after the rain delay, just knowing that I really want to capitalize on that break point. Excited that I was able to do that.

"Overall, if I had to give myself a rating, I'd say that I can see a lot of progress from my last match to now."

Current World No. 1 Iga Swiatek of Poland put away Bernarda Pera 6-0, 6-2 to stay hot after winning the title in Madrid.

No. 7 seed Qinwen Zheng of China had no trouble with Shelby Rogers in a 6-2, 6-0 victory, while 10th-seeded Daria Kasatkina of Russia got past Germany's Tatjana Maria 7-5, 6-1.

The day saw a handful of upsets, including Belarusian Aliaksandra Sasnovich taking down No. 14 Ekaterina Alexandrova of Russia 6-0, 6-1 in just 59 minutes. Russia's Diana Shnaider took down 15th seed and countrywoman Liudmila Samsonova 6-1, 6-3, while German Angelique Kerber toppled Russian 17th seed Veronika Kudermetova 6-3, 6-0 in 69 minutes.

Keys, the No. 18 seed, outlasted Colombia's Camila Osorio 6-0, 4-6, 6-3, while No. 12 seed Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil also needed three sets to beat China's Xinyu Wang 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Other second-round winners Thursday included No. 6 seed Marketa Vondrousova and No. 29 seed Linda Noskova of the Czech Republic. No. 28 seed Sorana Cirstea of Romania, Spaniard Paula Badosa, Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva and Romania's Jaqueline Cristian. Finishing up the Round of 128, winners included Italy's Sara Errani, Russia's Anastasia Potapova, Slovakia's Rebecca Sramkova, France's Varvara Gracheva and American Katie Volynets.

NFL NOTEBOOK

Lions GM: Extension for QB Goff a high priority

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Lions general manager Brad Holmes continues checking off priorities in Detroit, and a long-term extension for quarterback Jared Goff is rising to the top of the list.

"He's earned an extension," Holmes said in a radio interview with 97.1 The Ticket. "It's important. It's a high priority for us. Both sides are working really, really hard. These things just take time."

Closing in on the final season of a four-year, \$134 million contract Goff signed before he was traded to Detroit in the QB swap that sent Matthew Stafford to the Los Angeles Rams, an extension has been in the works for months.

Holmes hoped to simultaneously share big contract news on Goff last month when the Lions struck new deals with offensive tackle Penei Sewell and wide receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown.

"In a perfect world, we would've had all three of them done. Bang, bang, bang," Holmes said. "But these things just kind of take a while. Especially with the quarterback market. But I do have faith that it's going to get done."

Talks with Goff's agent, Ryan Tollner, took a back seat during the NFL draft. Holmes didn't select a quarterback among the Lions' six picks but did draft Tennessee quarterback Hendon Hooker in the third round in 2023. Goff turns 30 in October.

Report: Rams releasing veteran WR Skowronek

The Los Angeles Rams are releasing veteran wide receiver Ben Skowronek, NFL Network reported Thursday.

Skowronek, 26, appeared in all 17 games last season but managed only eight catches for 66 yards and one score.

He caught 58 passes for 575 yards and one TD in 45 games (12 starts) since the Rams drafted him in the seventh round in 2021.

In addition to stars Cooper Kupp and Puka Nacua, the Rams' receiver room includes Tutu Atwell, Tyler Johnson, Demarcus Robinson and 2024 sixth-round pick Jordan Whittington.



Lions quarterback Jared Goff gestures to teammates before a snap against the 49ers during the NFC Championship. KELLEY L COX/USA TODAY

Pro Football Hall of Fame CB Jimmy Johnson dies at 86

Pro Football Hall of Famer Jimmy Johnson, a lockdown cornerback who spent his entire 16-year career with the San Francisco 49ers, died on Wednesday evening, his family announced. He was 86.

The Hall of Fame made the announcement Thursday for Johnson's family, which said he had been in declining health for some time and had remained in the San Francisco area.

Enshrined in the Hall of Fame in 1994, Johnson played from 1961-76. He competed in 213 games — at the time a franchise record later broken by Jerry Rice. Johnson's 47 interceptions also were a team mark later broken by Ronnie Lott.

Saints sign first-round OT Fuaga to \$17.3M deal

Saints first-round pick Taliese Fuaga signed a fully guaranteed four-year contract worth \$17.3 million with a team option for a fifth season.

Fuaga was the 14th overall pick in the 2024 NFL draft and is expected to start immediately with the offensive line in flux in front of starting quarterback Derek Carr. The team shared a video of Carr embracing Fuaga as they arrived at the team facility.

NBA NOTEBOOK

Suns fire coach Vogel after 1 season, early playoff exit

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Frank Vogel is out as head coach of the Phoenix Suns after a 49-win regular season was overshadowed by a first-round playoff sweep at the hands of the Minnesota Timberwolves.

"As we said at the press conference on May 1, team leadership including myself, Josh Bartelstein and ownership would be looking across basketball operations to determine what changes needed to be made," Suns president of basketball operations and general manager James Jones said in a statement Thursday. "After a thoughtful review of the season, we concluded that we needed a different head coach for our team. We appreciate Frank's hard work and commitment.

"We are here to win a championship and last season was way below our expectations. We will continue to evaluate our operation and make the necessary changes to reach our championship-caliber goals. We all take accountability, and it's my job, along with Josh and ownership, to build a championship team."

One season into his latest tenure as head coach, Vogel helped Phoenix and a triumvirate of All-Stars — Kevin Durant, Devin Booker and newcomer Bradley Beal — challenge the 50-win mark despite injuries that disrupted the lineup regularly.

He replaced Monty Williams, who was fired last season following a loss in the conference semifinals and hired as the Detroit Pistons' head coach.

NBA suspends Beverley 4 games

Milwaukee Bucks guard Patrick Beverley has been suspended four games without pay for forcefully throwing a basketball multiple times at spectators and an inappropriate interaction with a reporter, the NBA announced.

Beverley's actions took place during and after the Bucks' 120-98 loss to the Indiana Pacers in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference first-round series last Thursday. That loss eliminated the Bucks from the playoffs.

Beverley, 35, is now a free agent. In the final minutes of last Thursday's game, a fan reportedly was heck-



Frank Vogel was fired by the Phoenix Suns on Thursday after one season as their head coach. JOE CAMPOREALE/USA TODAY SPORTS

ling players from behind the Milwaukee bench. Beverley threw a basketball at the fan, however he missed and hit a woman in the head.

That's when another fan picked up the ball and tossed it to Beverley, who aggressively threw it back. Beverley appeared to exchange words with the fan, with teammate Jae Crowder attempting to calm him down.

Glen 'Big Baby' Davis sentenced to 40 months in prison

Former NBA player Glen "Big Baby" Davis was sentenced to 40 months in prison and three years supervised release by a federal judge for his role in defrauding the league healthcare plan of more than \$5 million over four years.

Davis is the fourth prominent former player sentenced in the case after they were found guilty of the scheme in which at least 20 people aided in submitting or falsifying claims to the NBA healthcare plan.

Davis submitted a total of \$132,000 worth of claims, almost all of which were proven fraudulent by prosecutors using cellphone geolocation data and related travel expenses.

He also was ordered to make a payment of \$80,000 in restitution with financial management classes and drug testing mandatory as conditional terms of his eventual release.

SCOREBOARD



BETMGM

New BetMGM customers can sign up today and get a First Bet Offer up to \$1,500 using bonus code **USATSPORTS**. Just download the BetMGM app, deposit at least \$10 and place your first wager on any game. If your first bet loses, you will receive bonus bets in the amount of your bet (up to \$1,500). **Just make sure you use bonus code USATSPORTS** when you sign up. Gambling problem? Call 1-800-GAMBLER (Available in the US). Call 877-8-HOPENY or text HOPENY (467369) (NY). Call 1-800-327-5050 (MA). 21+ only. Please Gamble Responsibly. Call 1-800-NEXT-STEP (AZ), 1-800-BETS-OFF (IA), 1-800-981-0023 (PR). First Bet Offer for new customers only. Subject to eligibility requirements. Rewards are non-withdrawable bonus bets that expire in 7 days. In partnership with Kansas Crossing Casino and Hotel. See BetMGM.com for Terms. US promotional offers not available in North Carolina, New York, Nevada, Ontario, or Puerto Rico.

ODDS SPONSORED BY BETMGM.COM

Odds available as of print deadline. Gannett may earn revenue from sports betting operators for audience referrals to betting services. Sports betting operators have no influence over nor are any such revenues in any way dependent on or linked to the newsrooms or news coverage. Terms apply, see operator site for Terms and Conditions. Gambling problem? Call 1-800-GAMBLER CO, DC, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, MS, NJ, OH, PA, TN, VA, WV, WY. Call 877-8-HOPENY or text HOPENY (467369) (NY). Call 1-800-327-5050 (MA). 21+ to wager. Please Gamble Responsibly. Call 1-800-NEXT-STEP (AZ), 1-800-522-4700 (IA), 1-800-BETS-OFF (IA), 1-800-270-7117 for confidential help (MI), 1-800-981-0023 (PR). In partnership with Kansas Crossing Casino and Hotel. Visit BetMGM.com for Terms & Conditions. US promotional offers not available in DC, Nevada, New York or Ontario.

All times Eastern

MLB

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	24	12	.667	-
N.Y. Yankees	25	14	.641	½
Boston	19	18	.514	5½
Tampa Bay	19	19	.500	6
Toronto	17	20	.459	7½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	24	14	.632	-
Minnesota	22	15	.595	1½
Kansas City	23	16	.590	1½
Detroit	19	18	.514	4½
Chicago	10	28	.263	14
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	22	17	.564	-
Seattle	20	18	.526	1½
Oakland	18	21	.462	4
L.A. Angels	14	24	.368	7½
Houston	13	24	.351	8
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	26	12	.684	-
Atlanta	22	12	.647	2
Washington	18	18	.500	7
N.Y. Mets	18	18	.500	7
Miami	10	29	.256	16½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	22	15	.595	-
Chicago	22	16	.579	½
Pittsburgh	17	21	.447	5½
Cincinnati	16	21	.432	6
St. Louis	15	22	.405	7
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Dodgers	26	13	.667	-
San Diego	20	20	.500	6½
Arizona	18	20	.474	7½
San Francisco	17	22	.436	9
Colorado	9	28	.243	16
Wednesday's Scores				
L.A. Angels	5	Pittsburgh	4	
Toronto	5	Philadelphia	3	
Cleveland	5	Detroit	4	
N.Y. Mets	5	St. Louis	PPD Rain	
Kansas City	6	Milwaukee	4	
San Diego	3	Chicago	0	
L.A. Dodgers	3	Miami	1	
Oakland	9	Texas	4	
Arizona	4	Cincinnati	3	
San Francisco	1	San Francisco	6	
Colorado	6	Colorado	6	
Thursday's Scores				
Minnesota	11	Seattle	1	
Colorado	9	San Francisco	1	
Houston	4	N.Y. Yankees	3	
Chicago	3	Cleveland	2	
Milwaukee	7	St. Louis	1	
Kansas City	10	L.A. Angels	4	
Friday's Games				
Houston (Valdez 1-1)	at	Detroit (Mize 1-0)		
Chicago (Taillon 3-0)	at	Pittsburgh (Jones 2-3)		
N.Y. Yankees (Schmidt 3-1)	at	Tampa Bay (Littell 1-2)		
Arizona (Pfeadt 1-2)	at	Baltimore (Irvin 3-1)		
Minnesota (Ryan 1-2)	at	Toronto (Kikuchi 2-2)		
Washington (Corbin 0-3)	at	Boston (Houck 3-3)		
Philadelphia (Suarez 6-0)	at	Miami (Rogers 0-5)		
Atlanta (Morton 2-0)	at	N.Y. Mets (Quintana 1-3)		
Cleveland (Carrasco 2-2)	at	Chicago (Crockett 2-4)		
St. Louis (TBD)	at	Milwaukee (TBD)		
Texas (Dunning 3-2)	at	Colorado (Gomber 0-2)		
Kansas City (Lynch IV 0-0)	at	L.A. Angels (Canning 1-4)		
Oakland (Blackburn 3-1)	at	Seattle (Miller 3-2)		
L.A. Dodgers (Glasnow 6-1)	at	San Diego (King 3-3)		
Cincinnati (Abbott 1-4)	at	San Francisco (Webb 3-3)		
Saturday's Games				
Minnesota (Woods Richardson 1-0)	at	Toronto (Gausman 2-3)		
Arizona (Nelson 2-2)	at	Baltimore (Means 1-0)		
Chicago (Assad 3-0)	at	Pittsburgh (Skene)		
Washington (Irvin 2-3)	at	Boston (TBD)		
4:10 p.m.				
N.Y. Yankees (Cortes 1-3)	at	Tampa Bay (Peipoi 3-2)		
Philadelphia (Walker 2-0)	at	Miami (Luzardo 0-2)		
Atlanta (Fried 2-1)	at	N.Y. Mets (Scott 0-0)		
4:10 p.m.				
Houston (Brown 0-4)	at	Detroit (Skubal 4-0)		
4:10 p.m.				
Cleveland (McKenzie 2-2)	at	Chicago (Clevinger 0-1)		
7:10 p.m.				
St. Louis (Gibson 2-2)	at	Milwaukee (Peralta 3-1)		
7:15 p.m.				
Cincinnati (Lodolo 3-1)	at	San Francisco		

(Black 0-1), 7:15 p.m.
Texas (Gray 1-1) at Colorado (Feltner 1-3), 8:10 p.m.
L.A. Dodgers (Paxton 4-0) at San Diego (Waldron 1-4), 8:40 p.m.
Kansas City (Ragans 2-2) at L.A. Angels (Anderson 2-4), 9:38 p.m.
Oakland (TBD) at Seattle (Castillo 3-5), 9:40 p.m.

Sunday's Games
Arizona (Gallen 4-2) at Baltimore (Kremer 3-2), 1:35 p.m.
Washington (Gore 2-3) at Boston (Bello 3-1), 1:35 p.m.
Chicago (Steele 0-0) at Pittsburgh (Keller 2-3), 1:35 p.m.
Minnesota (Ober 3-1) at Toronto (Manoah 0-0), 1:37 p.m.
Houston (Verlander 1-1) at Detroit (Flaherty 0-1), 1:40 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees (Gill 3-1) at Tampa Bay (TBD), 1:40 p.m.

Philadelphia (Wheeler 4-3) at Miami (Perez 1-1), 1:40 p.m.
Cleveland (Allen 3-2) at Chicago (Soroka 0-4), 2:10 p.m.
St. Louis (Mikolas 2-5) at Milwaukee (Wilson 2-1), 2:10 p.m.
Texas (Heaney 0-4) at Colorado (Hudson 0-6), 3:10 p.m.
Cincinnati (Montas 2-3) at San Francisco (Harrison 3-1), 4:05 p.m.
Kansas City (Lugo 5-1) at L.A. Angels (Sandoval 2-5), 4:07 p.m.
Oakland (Wood 1-2) at Seattle (Hancock 3-3), 4:10 p.m.
L.A. Dodgers (Buehler 0-0) at San Diego (Darvish 2-1), 4:10 p.m.
Atlanta (Elder 1-1) at N.Y. Mets (Severino 2-2), 7:10 p.m.

Leaders
American League
Batting Average - Kwan, Cleveland .353; Altuve, Houston .336; Soto, New York .329; Perez, Kansas City .326; Rutschman, Baltimore .322; Witt Jr., Kansas City .319; Pena, Houston .313; Rosario, Tampa Bay .308; Smith, Texas .302; Heim, Texas .301.
Home Runs - Trout, Los Angeles 10; Tucker, Houston 10; Henderson, Baltimore 10; O'Neill, Boston 9; Naylor, Cleveland 9; Raleigh, Seattle 9; Greene, Detroit 9; Perez, Kansas City 8; Soto, New York 8; Garcia, Texas 8.
RBI - Perez, Kansas City 31; Ramirez, Cleveland 30; Garcia, Texas 29; Semien, Texas 27; Jeffers, Minnesota 26; Ward, Los Angeles 24; Tucker, Houston 24; Henderson, Baltimore 24.
Stolen Bases - Caballero, Tampa Bay 14; Witt Jr., Kansas City 13; Rengifo, Los Angeles 9; Duran, Boston 9; Garcia, Kansas City 8; Blanco, Kansas City 8; Rodriguez, Seattle 8; Altuve, Houston 7; Adell, Los Angeles 7; Volpe, New York 7.
Wins - Lugo, Kansas City 5; Bernies, Toronto 4; Skubal, Detroit 4; Rodriguez, Baltimore 4; Kimbrel, Baltimore 3; Miller, Detroit 3; Yates, Texas 3; Leclerc, Texas 3; Weaver, New York 3; Castillo, Seattle 3.
ERA - Gilbert, Seattle 1.69; Crawford, Boston 1.75; Skubal, Detroit 1.90; Lugo, Kansas City 1.92; Houck, Boston 1.99; Blanco, Houston 2.09; Singer, Kansas City 2.45; Gray, Texas 2.50; Eovaldi, Texas 2.61; Miller, Seattle 2.61.
Strikeouts - Castillo, Seattle 56; Flaherty, Detroit 56; Ragans, Kansas City 54; Skubal, Detroit 53; Crochet, Chicago 53; Gilbert, Seattle 50; Burnes, Baltimore 47; Cortes, New York 46; Houck, Boston 46; Ryan, Minnesota 46.
Saves - Holmes, New York 11; Clase, Cleveland 11; Foley, Detroit 9; Miller, Oakland 8; Kimbrel, Baltimore 8; McArthur, Kansas City 7; Yates, Texas 6; Jansen, Boston 5; Estevez, Los Angeles 5; Munoz, Seattle 5.

National League
Batting Average - Ohtani, Los Angeles .365; Betts, Los Angeles .349; Bohm, Philadelphia .349; Turner, Philadelphia .343; Profar, San Diego .338; Contreras, Milwaukee .331; Smith, Los Angeles .331; Garcia Jr., Washington .330; Arraez, San Diego .307; Ozuna, Atlanta .306.
Home Runs - Ohtani, Los Angeles 11; Ozuna, Atlanta 10; Alonso, New York 9; Muncy, Los Angeles 9; Harper, Philadelphia 9; Hernandez, Los Angeles 9; Schwarber, Philadelphia 9; Morel, Chicago 8; De La Cruz, Cincinnati 8; Walker, Arizona 7.
RBI - Ozuna, Atlanta 34; Bohm, Philadelphia 32; Harper, Philadelphia 28; Profar, San Diego 27; Betts, Los Angeles 27; Ohtani, Los Angeles 27; Contreras, Milwaukee 27; Muncy, Los Angeles 26; Hernandez, Los Angeles 26; Smith, Los Angeles 26.
Stolen Bases - De La Cruz, Cincinnati 19; Acuna Jr., Atlanta 14; Turang, Milwaukee 14; Young, Washington 12; Thomas, Washington 11; Turner, Philadelphia 10; Steer, Cincinnati 9; Ohtani, Los Angeles 9; Betts, Los Angeles 8; Chisholm Jr., Miami 8.
Wins - Glasnow, Los Angeles 6; Suarez, Philadelphia 6; Minter, Atlanta 5; Garrett, New York 5; Imanaga, Chicago 5; Paxton, Los Angeles 4; Nola, Philadelphia 4; Williams, Washington 4; Cease, San Diego 4; Gallen, Arizona 4.
ERA - Imanaga, Chicago 1.08; Lopez, Atlanta 1.53; Wheeler, Philadelphia 1.64; Assad, Chicago 1.66; Suarez, Philadelphia 1.72; Hicks, San Francisco 1.89; Williams, Washington 1.96; Cease, San Diego 2.55; Jones, Pittsburgh 2.63; Glasnow, Los Angeles 2.70.
Strikeouts - Wheeler, Philadelphia 63; Glasnow, Los Angeles 63; Jones, Pittsburgh 52; Peralta, Milwaukee 50; Cease, San Diego 48; Yamamoto, Los Angeles 47; Greene, Cincinnati 47; Suarez, Philadelphia 46; Keller, Pittsburgh 44; King, San Diego 43.
Saves - Finnegan, Washington 12; Suarez, San Diego 11; Helsey, St. Louis 11; Iglesias, Atlanta 9; Phillips, Los Angeles 8; Alvarez, Philadelphia 7; Neris, Chicago 6; Diaz, Cincinnati 6; Bednar, Pittsburgh 6; Doval, San Francisco 6.

NBA

Playoffs		
CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS (Best-of-7; x if necessary)		
EASTERN CONFERENCE		
No. 1 Boston Celtics 1		
No. 4 Cleveland Cavaliers 1		
May 7: Celtics 120, Cavaliers 95	May 8: Cavaliers 118, Celtics 94	May 11: Celtics at Cavaliers, 8:30 p.m.
May 13: Celtics at Cavaliers, 7 p.m.	May 15: Cavaliers at Celtics, TBD	x-May 17: Celtics at Cavaliers, TBD
No. 2 New York Knicks 2		
No. 6 Indiana Pacers 0		
May 6: Knicks 121, Pacers 117	May 8: Knicks 130, Pacers 121	May 10: Knicks at Pacers, 7 p.m.
May 12: Knicks at Pacers, 3:30 p.m.	x-May 14: Pacers at Knicks, TBD	x-May 17: Knicks at Pacers, TBD
x-May 19: Pacers at Knicks, TBD	x-May 20: Mavericks at Thunder, 8:30 p.m.	x-May 21: Mavericks at Thunder, 8:30 p.m.
WESTERN CONFERENCE		
No. 1 Oklahoma City Thunder 1		
No. 5 Dallas Mavericks 1		
May 7: Mavericks 117, Thunder 95	May 9: Mavericks 119, Thunder 110	May 11: Thunder at Mavericks, 3:30 p.m.
May 13: Thunder at Mavericks, 9:30 p.m.	May 15: Mavericks at Thunder, TBD	x-May 18: Thunder at Mavericks, 8:30 p.m.
No. 3 Minnesota Timberwolves 2		
No. 2 Denver Nuggets 0		
May 6: Timberwolves 106, Nuggets 99	May 6: Timberwolves 106, Nuggets 80	May 10: Nuggets at Timberwolves, 9:30 p.m.
May 12: Nuggets at Timberwolves, 8 p.m.	x-May 14: Timberwolves at Nuggets, TBD	x-May 16: Nuggets at Timberwolves, 8:30 p.m.
x-May 19: Timberwolves at Nuggets, TBD	x-May 20: Mavericks at Thunder, 8:30 p.m.	x-May 21: Timberwolves at Nuggets, 8:30 p.m.

NHL			
Playoffs			
CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS			
EASTERN CONFERENCE			
Boston Bruins 1, Florida Panthers 1			
May 6: Bruins 5, Panthers 1	May 8: Panthers 6, Bruins 1	May 10: Panthers at Bruins, 7 p.m.	
May 12: Panthers at Bruins, 6:30 p.m.	May 14: Bruins at Panthers, TBD	x-May 17: Panthers at Bruins, TBD	
New York Rangers 3			
Carolina Hurricanes 0			
May 5: Rangers 4, Hurricanes 3	May 7: Rangers 4, Hurricanes 3 (2OT)	May 9: Rangers 3, Hurricanes 2 (OT)	
May 11: Rangers at Hurricanes, 7 p.m.	x-May 13: Hurricanes at Rangers, TBD	x-May 16: Rangers at Hurricanes, TBD	
x-May 18: Hurricanes at Rangers, TBD			
WESTERN CONFERENCE			
Colorado Avalanche 1, Dallas Stars 1			
May 7: Avalanche 4, Stars 3 (OT)	May 9: Stars 5, Avalanche 3	May 11: Stars at Avalanche, 10 p.m.	
May 13: Stars at Avalanche, TBD	May 15: Avalanche at Stars, TBD	x-May 17: Stars at Avalanche, TBD	
Vancouver Canucks 1, Edmonton Oilers 0			
May 8: Canucks 5, Oilers 4	May 10: Oilers at Canucks, 10 p.m.	May 12: Canucks at Oilers, 9:30 p.m.	
May 14: Canucks at Oilers, TBD	x-May 16: Oilers at Canucks, TBD	x-May 18: Canucks at Oilers, TBD	
x-May 20: Oilers at Canucks, TBD			
NHL Playoffs Point Leaders			
	G	A	Pts
McDavid, EDM	1	12	13
Draisaitl, EDM	5	7	12
Makar, COL	3	9	12
MacKinnon, COL	3	8	11
Zibanejad, NYR	3	8	11
Rantanen, COL	2	9	11
Hyman, EDM	9	1	10
Trocheck, NYR	5	5	10
Barkov, FLA	4	6	10
Tkachuk, FLA	4	6	10
Marchand, BOS	3	7	10
Bouchard, EDM	1	9	10
Nichushkin, COL	8	1	9
Verhaeghe, FLA	5	4	9
Johnston, DAL	5	3	8
Lehkonen, COL	5	3	8
Jarvis, CAR	4	4	8
Aho, CAR	2	6	8
Ngnt-Hopkins, EDM	1	7	8
Boeser, VAN	4	3	7

NHL			
Playoffs			
CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS			
EASTERN CONFERENCE			
Beau Hossler64-64 (-7)			
Robert MacIntyre64-64 (-7)			
Akshay Bhatia74-74 (3)			
Matt Fitzpatrick74-74 (3)			
Brian Harman74-74 (3)			
Justin Rose74-74 (3)			
Austin Eckroat75-75 (4)			
Shane Lowry75-75 (4)			
Emiliano Grillo76-76 (5)			
Billy Horschel76-76 (5)			
Matthieu Pavon76-76 (5)			
Myrtle Beach Classic			
Thursday			
Myrtle Beach, SC			
Dunes Golf and Beach Club			
Purse: \$4 million			
Yardage: 7,347; Par: 71			
First Round			
Carl Yuan	67-67 (-4)	Anders Albertson	68-68 (-3)
Joseph Bramlett	68-68 (-3)	Parker Coody	68-68 (-3)
Michael Kim	68-68 (-3)	S.H. Kim	68-68 (-3)
Ryan McCormick	68-68 (-3)	Troy Merritt	68-68 (-3)
Henrik Norlander	68-68 (-3)	Sean O'Hair	68-68 (-3)
Scott Piercy	68-68 (-3)	Chez Reavie	68-68 (-3)
Alex Smalley	68-68 (-3)	Austin Smerthman	68-68 (-3)
Sam Stevens	68-68 (-3)	Matt Atkins	69-69 (-2)
Paul Barjon	69-69 (-2)	Kevin Chappell	69-69 (-2)
Joel Dahmen	69-69 (-2)	Taylor Dickson	69-69 (-2)
Chesson Hadley	69-69 (-2)	Harry Higgs	69-69 (-2)
Martin Laird	69-69 (-2)	S.Y. Noor	69-69 (-2)
Davis Riley	69-69 (-2)	Brad Shattuck	69-69 (-2)
Richy Werenski	69-69 (-2)	Carson Young	69-69 (-2)
Daniel Berger	70-70 (-1)	Jacob Bruderman	70-70 (-1)
Wesley Bryan	70-70 (-1)	Hayden Buckley	70-70 (-1)
Ryan Fox	70-70 (-1)	Jordan Gumberg	70-70 (-1)
Blaine Hale, Jr.	70-70 (-1)	Joe Highsmith	70-70 (-1)
Patton Kizzire	70-70 (-1)	Thriston Lawrence	70-70 (-1)
Mac Meissner	70-70 (-1)	D.J. Trahan	70-70 (-1)
Sami Valimaki	70-70 (-1)	Tom Whittney	70-70 (-1)
Aaron Baddeley	71-71 (0)	Rafael Campos	71-71 (0)
Pierceson Coody	71-71 (0)	Austin Cook	71-71 (0)
Trace Crowe	71-71 (0)	Brian Davis	71-71 (0)
Kevin Dougherty	71-71 (0)	Wilson Furr	71-71 (0)
Max Greyserman	71-71 (0)	Lanto Griffin	71-71 (0)
Kelly Kraft	71-71 (0)	Adam Long	71-71 (0)
William McGirt	71-71 (0)	Ryan Moore	71-71 (0)
Thorbjorn Olesen	71-71 (0)	Victor Perez	71-71 (0)
David Skinnis	71-71 (0)	J.J. Spaun	71-71 (0)
Kevin Streelman	71-71 (0)	Braden Thornberry	71-71 (0)
Martin Trainer	71-71 (0)	Brandon Wu	71-71 (0)
Tyson Alexander	72-72 (1)	Blades Browner	72-72 (1)
Jonathan Byrd	72-72 (1)</		