

TERRAIN, CLIMATE PROPEL PARK BLAZE

Wildfire surpasses 370,000 acres as heat, wind and topography work against efforts to bring it under control.

By GRACE TOOHEY

As the Park fire marches into history books — becoming California's sixth largest on record — experts say it still has much life left, with several challenges hindering firefighting as the blaze continues to chew up remote wilderness at an astonishing clip.

Burning across mostly rural areas of Butte and Tehama counties, the Park fire surpassed 370,000 acres Monday, with a shift in weather forcing firefighters to react to new hot spots and unpredictable flare-ups.

"There's more to be seen from this fire," said Don Hankins, a Chico State University professor of geography who has expertise in pyrogeography and fire management. "As soon as those conditions change, [fire growth is] back on again."

Almost 5,000 personnel are now responding to the wildfire, and they have been able to secure 12% containment as of Monday. Much of the fire's future, however, rests with factors beyond human control: weather and terrain.

"I definitely see the potential for it to be a much larger fire," said Hankins, whose family has been evacuated from their home in Forest Ranch, northeast of Chico. Their house hasn't been damaged, he said, but he worries about what this fire could do — and where it could reach — if it continues to burn into the autumn months, which he said could happen unless there is a dramatic change in conditions. He noted it wasn't until rain hit the deadly Camp fire in 2018 that it fizzled out.

"The topography and the landscape there makes it difficult [for firefighters] to work in," Hankins said of the Park fire, which is burning throughout the rugged Ishi Wilderness.

After a weekend of lower temperatures and increased humidity, which aided fire suppression, increased heat and winds are starting to again fuel fire activity, officials said. Last week, the explosive wildfire more than doubled in size several times

[See Fire, A5]



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

SOLUNA LORA and her children console one another after they unveiled the gravestone this month of 2-year-old Ezekiel Rivera, who died from a fentanyl overdose. Among the states, California has the most deaths overall from fentanyl, with 6,473 in 2022.

Competing concepts of gender roles also on ballot

In reframed election, Harris leans hard into her vision of female empowerment as Trump stresses physical strength

By NOAH BIERMAN

INDIANAPOLIS — Less than two days after she in effect clinched the Democratic presidential nomination, Vice President Kamala Harris was introduced to a crowd of 6,000 Black women, all dressed in their sorority colors, as "America's No. 1 lady."

"When I was a United States senator, I would see this group of powerful leaders walk through the halls of Congress in white and blue," Harris said at the national meeting of Zeta Phi Beta in Indianapolis. "I always knew I was looking at some of the most powerful advocates for justice in America."

That night, former President Trump's rally in Charlotte, N.C., was full of testosterone as he recalled "the Hulkster" and Kid Rock speaking at his party convention and the night he overcame bullets "flying" at him during this month's assassination attempt.

"They said, 'Sir, we have a stretcher for you,'" Trump recounted. "I said, 'That's not going to look very good if I get carried out on a stretcher.'"

[See Gender, A5]



DARRON CUMMINGS Associated Press

KAMALA HARRIS is introduced to 6,000 Black sorority sisters as "America's No. 1 lady" last week in Indianapolis.

Infants, toddlers among fentanyl victims

In Bakersfield, a 2-year-old died from acute toxicity from the drug. His father is charged with murder.

By MELISSA GOMEZ

BAKERSFIELD — Ezekiel Xavier Rivera idolized his father.

The 2-year-old loved to follow Raul Rivera around the house and ride in the car with him, said Soluna Lora, Ezekiel's mother.

On June 3, 2023, Lora left the little boy with his father in Bakersfield while she took his older brother for a haircut. She and Rivera, who have three children together, are separated. When she returned to drop Ermias off too, Lora said, she spotted a bulge in Rivera's sock. It was a roll of cash and what she said she later learned was a baggie of drugs.

She demanded that Rivera let her take the children home with her, but he refused. She never saw Ezekiel alive again.

Two days later, the toddler was dead from acute fentanyl toxicity; Ermias — who was 3 — had tested positive for the drug. Rivera now faces a first-degree murder charge in connection with one son's death and a felony count of child cruelty, accused of exposing his other son.

"They didn't only lose their brother, they lost their father as well," Lora said of Ermias, now 5, and his sister, EvaRose, 7. "They loved being with him. ... Ezekiel loved [Rivera] so, so much."

As the fentanyl crisis ravages communities across the country, toddlers and infants increasingly are becoming unsuspecting victims of an opioid that is 50 times more potent than heroin. Adults make up the vast

[See Fentanyl, A10]

Biden ideas for Supreme Court

The president endorses term limits, but experts say a constitutional amendment would be needed. **NATION, A4**

Restaurant gear, dreams recycled

As the industry ails, Fred Bush's company is doing well buying, restoring and reselling equipment. **BUSINESS, A6**

Weather

Sunny.
L.A. Basin: 83/61. **B6**

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WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

CAST IN BRONZE

American skateboarder Nyjah Huston performs Monday at the Paris Olympics with an effort that won him a satisfying bronze medal. **SPORTS, B10**

Legal drama embroils COVID test startup

Innova founder and former executives are battling in court over the Pasadena firm's \$2 billion in profits.

By LAURENCE DARMIENTO

A script for a biopic called "Overnight Billionaire" recounts the extraordinary life of Charles Huang, a Chinese villager who overcomes long odds to educate himself and become a Hong Kong corpo-

rate analyst.

After immigrating to Los Angeles, Huang builds a COVID-testing company that is key to the United Kingdom weathering the pandemic.

The draft concludes on a high note, with a TV host acknowledging to the now-fabulously wealthy Huang that his story is "one in a billion."

Reality has been less rosy for the real-life Huang.

After securing a lucrative testing deal with the British government, Huang and his partners have become em-

[See Innova, A7]



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PERSPECTIVES

Fighting deep-sea mining of battery metals

California and Hawaii lead charge against scraping ocean floor for cobalt and nickel.

By SUSANNE RUST

As the global energy transition stokes demand for critical minerals, the International Seabed Authority has been meeting in Jamaica to debate the future of deep-sea mining, and whether the industry can begin scraping the ocean's floor for battery metals.

The discussions come amid heavy criticism from environmental groups, who say the risk of damaging sea life is too great.

The proceedings are also occurring without a vote from U.S. officials, since the United States hasn't signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — the international law that created the authority.

But that hasn't stopped California and several other states from establishing their own bans and restrictions. It also hasn't stopped a group of Democratic lawmakers from calling on President Biden to place a moratorium on seabed mining.

"Seabed mining is not safe and it's destructive," said California Assembly member Luz Rivas (D-North Hollywood), author of a 2022 law that bans the practice in state waters. "We shouldn't be doing it anywhere, in any ocean, on any seafloor."

But mining operations say the metals they plan to harvest, such as cobalt and nickel, will help grow the green economy and spare land habitats from disruption.

"The transition away from hydrocarbons is like Day 1, and we've got a long way to go," said Gerard Barron, president of the Metals Co., or TMC, a Canadian mining company that is planning to harvest metals in the Pacific's Clarion-Clipper Zone — a 4,500-mile stretch of ocean between Hawaii and Mexico.

"If you start looking at all the other transportation forms and grid storage, and then you look at the demand coming from the industrialization of the developing world, if it ain't grown, it's mined," he said.

The bounty for such min-



CAROLYN COLE Los Angeles Times

ANDREW K. SWEETMAN, a professor at Heriot-Watt University in Scotland, was among the scientists helping the Metals Co. with its deep-sea mining research. The practice causes much less environmental and social disruption than mining on land, the firm's leader says.

ing operations are polymetallic nodules — mineral spheres that are roughly the size of a baseball and found far offshore, thousands of feet below the ocean's surface.

Since state waters extend just three miles offshore, restrictions passed by California, Washington, Oregon and Hawaii are largely toothless. Still, the bans help send a message to the international community "that a sizable and powerful" contingent of the U.S. population objects to the practice, said Chris Lee, a Democrat in the Hawaii state Senate.

Also, a dozen Democratic lawmakers — including Reps. Sydney Kamlager-Dove, Zoe Lofgren and Jared Huffman of California, Ed Case of Hawaii and Raúl Grijalva of Arizona — have called on Biden to place a moratorium on seabed mining in federal waters. They say too little is known about the environmental effects to justify plowing ahead.

Barron and other mining

advocates insist that deep-sea extraction causes much less environmental and social disruption than mining on land. He said that you can either dig on the seafloor, or "underneath equatorial rainforests. And that means that to get access to it, you need to push out the Indigenous people living there. You need to remove the rainforest, dig away the topsoil to get to the nickel-bearing ore. And that's just the beginning of the impacts, because then there is waste."

Lee, the Hawaiian lawmaker, said the push to begin mining was premature and "frustrating," especially since battery and magnet technologies are evolving toward using more affordable and plentiful materials, such as sodium.

He argues there are other options — including recycling and repair laws — that would allow for these materials to be harvested in ways that don't involve mining or destroying ecosystems and habitats.

It's why he's working to create and support laws that not only provide incentives for recycling but also create roadblocks for the deep-sea mining industry. In 2023 he helped to pass a law that "basically gives authorization to our Department of Transportation to block our harbors from use for any vessels doing any undersea mining activity," he said.

In December, a TMC ship set to dock at Honolulu Harbor was turned away as protesters — native Hawaiians, navigators and environmentalists — gathered to express their displeasure.

Lee said his law was not enforced during this event because the ship turned off its own accord, but it does pose a deterrent.

Barron acknowledged

the pushback from state lawmakers and Hawaiian natives, and said he'd met with some of the "elders," had "listened to their thoughts," but "there's a lot of niche groups who have a lot of thoughts, right?"

He noted that his company is sponsored by the Pacific Island nations of Nauru, Kiribati and Tonga — "nations that were heavily impacted by climate change ... and exploited for their natural resources" — and that they are looking to benefit from his company's industry "through jobs and royalties and some economic opportunities."

His company required sponsorship from a sovereign nation in order to apply for a license from the international governing body to mine the ocean's floor.

The Jamaica-based authority is deciding how and whether to allow deep-sea mining as a growing number of nations voice concern. More than two dozen countries have called for a ban, pause or moratorium on deep-sea mining.

The authority, which is the global custodian for international deep waters, has granted 31 mining exploration contracts but has not authorized any exploitation as the debate continues. TMC has threatened to apply for permission before deep-sea mining rules and regulations are in place.

Barron said that despite Lee and others' worries, his company is concerned about the environment and has sponsored and conducted studies showing its harvesting activities will cause only minimal disturbance. He referred a reporter to work from MIT that showed the sediment plumes — or underwater dust clouds — caused by mining machinery travel

only a few meters, remaining relatively localized.

He said the result of driving over the sea floor with giant rakes and vacuum cleaners really won't make all that much of a difference to deep-sea ocean habitat.

"There are a handful of different habitat types ... all of which are ubiquitous," he said. "And what we will be doing is essentially converting one nodule-rich habitat into one that doesn't have as many nodules. But both of those habitats are ubiquitous. So it's simply transforming one into another and then providing the ability" for the disturbed habitat "to recolonize."

Research has shown that at the depths where these nodules are found — between 9,000 and 12,000 feet below the surface — the darkness and pressure make recolonizing life a very slow process.

"Life down there just moves at a much, much slower pace," said Douglas McCauley, an associate professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology at UC Santa Barbara. "The oldest organism that we know on the planet lives in these ecosystems. That's a black coral. Some of the specimens that scientists collected and dated were effectively born when people were building the pyramids."

Barron said that when his machines have plowed through, it has allowed the ecosystem to "thrive."

"If you think about the life down there as measured in grams per square meter, there's around 10 grams of biomass ... and 80% of that is bacteria," he said. "So, if you are a sessile organism sitting on a nodule, and we collect you, then that's probably the end of life. But for the bacteria, you know, what our stud-

ies are proving is that actually there may be a net positive impact ... a little bit like tilling the soil."

He said their work, which is not published, shows that when they went back to test areas they'd mowed over 12 months before, they found the biomass was "thriving."

Asked how they could tell that the bacteria and other organisms were thriving, he said, "They're there. They're alive and ... if they weren't ... they'd have a different appearance."

McCauley said he could not comment on these observations because the work hasn't been published, but pointed to a variety of organisms that have been discovered at these depths — "crystalline sponges that look like something out of Tiffany's brochure; ghost white 'Casper' octopus that have more hits on YouTube than I ever will, and gummy squirrels."

He emphasized also that there is still little known about how animals, such as beaked whales and squid, use this ecosystem.

"The impacts that keep me up at night in ocean mining are those associated with the mining wastewater plumes that would be created in the middle of the sea," he said. "Gigantic, moving plumes that could smother the Pacific's best tuna fishing grounds, the planet's largest daily migration of life from the deep to the surface across the ocean's twilight zone, a region that contains the most abundant vertebrate life on the planet, and is traversed by whales, sea turtles and giant squid."

And he said, research shows deep-sea mining "may become the loudest activity ever in the ocean and a massive source of noise pollution."

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North Korea seeks drugs for Kim's obesity-related issues, Seoul says

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEOUL — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has regained weight and appears to have obesity-related health problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes, and his officials are looking for new medicines abroad to treat them, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers Monday.

The 40-year-old Kim, known for his heavy drinking and smoking, comes from a family with a history of heart problems. Both his father and grandfather, who ruled North Korea before he took power in 2011, died of heart issues.

Some observers said Kim, who is about 5 feet 8 and previously weighed 308 pounds, appeared to have lost a large amount of weight in 2021, probably

from changing his diet. But recent state media coverage shows he has regained the weight.

On Monday, the National Intelligence Service, South Korea's main spy agency, told lawmakers in a closed-door briefing that Kim is estimated to weigh about 308 pounds again and belongs to a high-risk group for heart disease, according to Lee Seong-kweon, one of the lawmakers.

Lee said the NIS told lawmakers that Kim has shown symptoms of high blood pressure and diabetes since his early 30s.

Another lawmaker, Park Sun-won, said the NIS believes Kim's obesity is linked to his drinking, smoking and stress.

Lee and Park quoted the NIS as saying it obtained intelligence that North Korean officials have been

trying to get medicines abroad for Kim's suspected high blood pressure and diabetes.

North Korea is one of the world's most secretive countries, and there is virtually no way for outsiders to know Kim's exact health conditions. The NIS also has a spotty record in confirming developments in North Korea.

Kim's health is the focus of keen attention outside North Korea because he hasn't formally anointed a successor who would take charge of the country's advancing nuclear arsenal targeting the United States and its allies if he were incapacitated.

The NIS in its Monday briefing also maintained its assessment that Kim's preteen daughter, reportedly named Kim Ju Ae, is probably bolstering her

status as her father's heir apparent. But the South Korean spy agency said it cannot rule out the possibility that she could be replaced by one of her siblings because she has not been officially designated as her father's successor.

Speculation about Kim Ju Ae, who is about 10, flared as she has accompanied her father on high-profile public events starting in late 2022.

State media called her Kim Jong Un's "most beloved" or "respected" child and churned out video and photos proving her rising political standing and closeness with her father.

The NIS told lawmakers that at least 60% of Kim Ju Ae's public activities have involved attending military events with her father.



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Los Angeles Times

THE WORLD

Israeli army investigates alleged detainee abuse

Nine soldiers are held for questioning over the treatment of a Palestinian prisoner.

BY SAM McNEIL
AND SAMY MAGDY

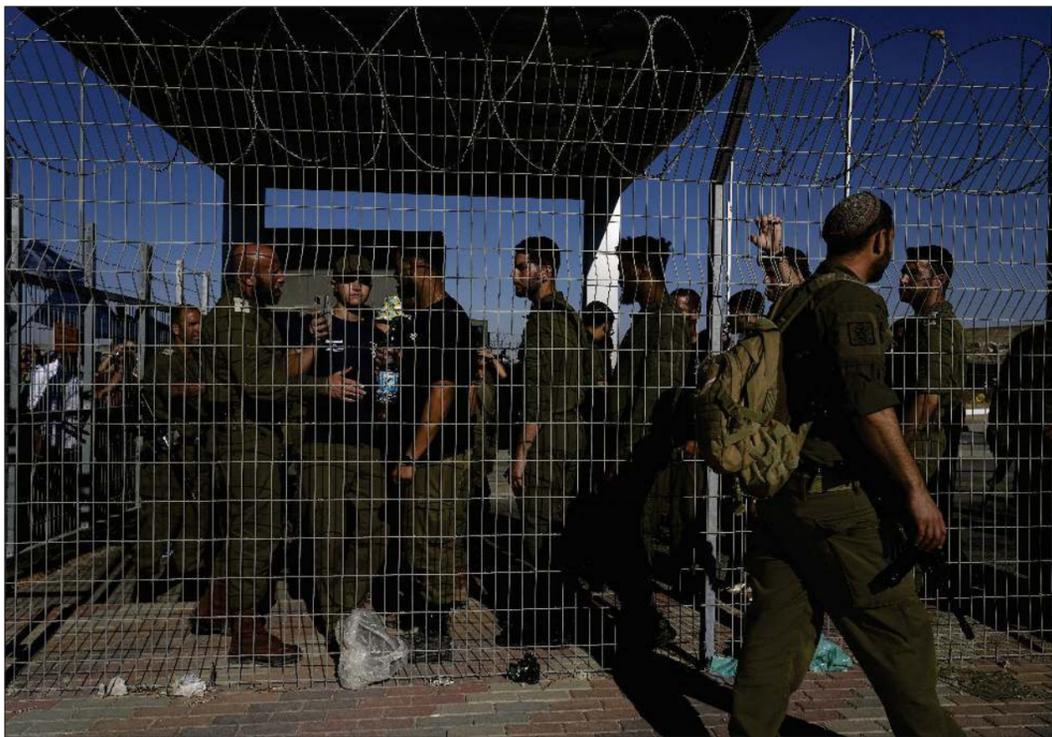
SDE TEIMAN BASE, Israel — The Israeli military said Monday that it was holding nine soldiers for questioning after allegations of “substantial abuse” of a detainee at a shadow facility where Israel has held Palestinian prisoners throughout the war in Gaza.

The military did not disclose additional details surrounding the alleged abuse, saying only that its top legal official had launched an inquiry. An investigation by the Associated Press and reports by rights groups have exposed abysmal conditions at the Sde Teiman facility, the country’s largest detention center.

A report by the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, earlier this year said that detainees alleged they were subjected to maltreatment and abuse while in Israeli custody, without specifying the facility.

The military has generally denied mistreating detainees. After the accusations of harsh treatment that prompted a court case, Israel said it was transferring the bulk of Palestinian detainees out of Sde Teiman and upgrading it.

Israeli media reported that military police officers who arrived at Sde Teiman in southern Israel to detain the soldiers were met with



SOLDIERS gather at the gate of the Sde Teiman military base in southern Israel, the country’s largest detention center. Israel’s military has been holding Palestinian prisoners at the facility throughout the war in Gaza.

protests and scuffles. Later, dozens of protesters who had come to show support for the soldiers burst through the facility’s gate, waving Israeli flags and chanting “shame.” The military said it was working to clear the protesters.

Israel has detained thousands of Palestinians since the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that sparked the war in Gaza, according to official figures, though hundreds were released after the military determined that they

were not affiliated with Hamas. Israeli human rights groups say the majority of detainees have at some point passed through Sde Teiman.

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel said it welcomed the military’s investigation but said its claims are of systemic abuse at the facility and not just one case.

Israel has long been accused of failing to hold its soldiers accountable for crimes committed against

Palestinians. The allegations have intensified during the war in Gaza. Israel says its forces act within military and international law and says it independently investigates any alleged abuses.

The detentions of soldiers prompted an outcry among members of Israel’s far-right government, who called the investigation into their conduct an affront to their service.

“Our soldiers are not criminals and this despicable pursuit of our soldiers is unacceptable to me,” Yuli Edelstein, a veteran lawmaker from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud Party, wrote on the social media platform X.

The detentions came as international mediators are trying to get Hamas and Israel to agree to a cease-fire deal that would wind down

the war in Gaza and free the remaining hostages held there.

Officials from Egypt and Hamas said Monday that mediators were still working to smooth out sticking points.

The officials, who have direct knowledge of the negotiations, said the contentious points include Israeli demands to maintain a presence in a strip of land on the Gaza-Egypt border known as the Philadelphi corridor, as well as along a highway separating Gaza’s south and north.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren’t authorized to discuss the sensitive talks with the media.

They said Israel refuses to leave the area between Egypt and Gaza during the cease-fire. They said Israel

has linked its forces’ departure from the border corridor to installing underground sensors and an underground wall to monitor any future efforts by Hamas to build tunnels or smuggle weapons.

Officials in Israel did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Israel says Hamas uses tunnels that pass under the corridor to smuggle weapons, although Egypt denies the allegation and says it destroyed many in an earlier crackdown.

Israel’s military seized control of the Philadelphi corridor in early May along with the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza when it began its invasion of the city of Rafah.

The Egyptian official said no agreement has been reached on the corridor and the reopening of Rafah, adding that direct negotiations between Egypt and Israel were continuing.

The Hamas official, meanwhile, rejected Israel’s demands, including its desire to maintain Israeli troops along the highway halving Gaza, which is meant to vet Palestinians returning to their homes in northern Gaza and weed out any militants. The Hamas official said the group will hand its written response to mediators Qatar and Egypt in the coming days.

Both officials said Hamas still wants written guarantees from mediators that negotiations will continue during the first phase of the cease-fire to establish a permanent truce.

CIA Director William Burns, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani and Egypt’s head of intelligence Abbas Kamel met Sunday with Mossad chief David Barnea in Rome to discuss Israel’s latest demands.

Associated Press writers McNeil and Magdy reported from Sde Teiman base and Cairo, respectively.

Maduro declared winner in disputed Venezuela election

The results shock opposition supporters who thought they had a landslide victory.

BY JOSHUA GOODMAN
AND REGINA
GARCIA CANO

CARACAS, Venezuela — President Nicolás Maduro was formally declared the winner of his country’s disputed presidential election Monday, a day after the political opposition and the entrenched incumbent both claimed victory in the contest.

The National Electoral Council, which is loyal to Maduro’s ruling party, announced his victory, handing him a third six-year term as the leader of an economy recovering from collapse and a population desperate for change. The ministers of defense, communications, technology and the head of the National Assembly were among those in attendance who applauded.

“We have never been moved by hatred. On the contrary, we have always been victims of the powerful,” Maduro said in the nationally televised ceremony. “An attempt is being made to impose a coup d’etat in Venezuela again of a fascist and counterrevolutionary nature.”

“We already know this movie, and this time, there will be no kind of weakness,” he added, saying that Venezuela’s “law will be respected.”

There was no immediate comment from the opposition, which had vowed to defend its votes.

As Maduro spoke, demonstrators began to gather at a few points in Caracas, the capital, and some attempted to block freeways.

Officials delayed the release of detailed vote tallies from Sunday’s election after proclaiming Maduro the winner with 51% of the vote, compared with 44% for retired diplomat Edmundo González. The competing claims set up a high-stakes standoff.

“Venezuelans and the entire world know what happened,” González said. But he and his allies asked supporters to remain calm and called on the government to avoid stoking conflict.

Several foreign governments, including the U.S. and the European Union, held off recognizing the election results.

After failing to oust Maduro during three rounds of demonstrations since 2014, the opposition put its faith in the ballot box. The elections were among the most peaceful in recent memory, reflecting hopes that Venezuela could avoid bloodshed and end 25 years of single-party rule.

The country sits atop the world’s largest oil reserves and once boasted Latin America’s most advanced economy. But after Maduro took the helm, it tumbled into a free fall marked by plummeting oil prices, widespread shortages of basic goods and hyperinflation of 130,000%.

U.S. oil sanctions sought to force Maduro from power after his 2018 reelection, which dozens of countries condemned as illegitimate. But the sanctions only accelerated the exodus of about 7.7 million Venezuelans who have fled their crisis-stricken nation.

The opposition’s call for calm partly reflected protest fatigue among voters, who polls show are in no rush to upend their lives by taking to the streets as they have previously.

Voters lined up as early as Saturday evening to cast ballots, boosting the opposition’s hopes it was about to break Maduro’s grip on power.

The official results came as a shock to many who had celebrated, online and outside a few voting centers, what they believed was a landslide victory for González.

“I’m so happy,” said Merling Fernández, a 31-year-old bank employee, as a representative for the opposition campaign walked out of a voting center in a working-class neighborhood of Caracas to announce results showing González with more than double Maduro’s vote count.

Dozens of people standing nearby erupted in an impromptu rendition of the national anthem.

“This is the path toward a new Venezuela,” added Fernández, holding back tears. “We are all tired of this yoke.”

Gabriel Boric, the leftist leader of Chile, called the results “difficult to believe,”

while U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said Washington had “serious concerns” that the announced tally did not reflect the actual votes or the will of the people.

The U.S.-based Carter Center called on Venezuelan authorities to immediately publish the tallies of 30,000 individual voting machines. The center in Atlanta sent a small group to Venezuela for the election.

Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado said the margin of González’s victory was “overwhelming,” based on tallies the campaign received from representatives stationed at about 40% of ballot boxes.

Authorities postponed releasing the results from each of the 30,000 polling booths nationwide, promising to do so only in the “coming hours.” The delay hampered attempts to verify the results.

González was the unlikely of opposition standard-bearers. The 74-year-old was unknown until he was tapped in April as a last-minute stand-in for opposition powerhouse Machado, who was blocked by the Maduro-controlled Supreme Court from running for any office for 15 years.

The delay in announcing a winner — which came six hours after polls were supposed to close — indicated a deep debate in the government about how to proceed after Maduro’s opponents came out early in the evening all but claiming victory.

Authorities set Sunday’s election to coincide with what would have been the 70th birthday of former President Hugo Chávez, the revered leftist firebrand who died of cancer in 2013, leaving his Bolivarian revolution in the hands of Maduro. But Maduro and his United Socialist Party of Venezuela, which controls all branches of government, are more unpopular than ever among many voters who blame his policies for crushingly low wages that spurred hunger, crippled the oil industry and separated families as people fled the country.

Goodman and Garcia Cano write for the Associated Press. AP writer Fabiola Sánchez contributed to this report.

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THE NATION

Congress seen as means to Supreme Court reform

President backs term limits. Constitutional amendment would be required, experts say.

BY DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — Term limits for Supreme Court justices are a popular idea, but would require amending the Constitution and would be unlikely to affect the current justices, legal scholars say.

On Monday, President Biden endorsed term limits as one of “three bold reforms to restore trust and accountability” in the court.

Biden also called for a constitutional amendment to say former presidents have no immunity from criminal charges for their actions in the White House, which would reverse the Supreme Court’s decision in early July.

And he endorsed a “binding code of conduct” that applies to the Supreme Court justices.

Biden was less clear on how term limits could become law and whether they would apply only to new justices or instead force older justices into retirement.

“I support a system in which the president would appoint a justice every two years to spend 18 years in active service on the Supreme Court,” Biden said Monday in an op-ed in the Washington Post.

Legal experts say such a shift could be implemented only through a constitutional amendment.

“I strongly support 18-year term limits for Supreme Court justices, but I believe that this would require a constitutional amendment, especially if applied to cur-



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE Associated Press

POLLS FIND most Americans back the idea of limiting the terms of Supreme Court justices, shown in 2022. But it takes the support of two-thirds of Congress and three-quarters of the states to amend the Constitution.

rent justices,” said UC Berkeley Law School Dean Erwin Chemerinsky.

Polls show that most Americans support the idea of limiting the terms of Supreme Court justices. It is particularly popular with many Democrats and progressives, who seek to limit the power of the court’s current 6-3 conservative majority.

But amending the Constitution requires the support of two-thirds of the House and Senate and three-quarters of the states.

An Associated Press poll last summer found that 67% of Americans supported the idea of fixed terms for

Supreme Court justices rather than the current life terms. This included 82% of Democrats and 57% of Republicans.

The Constitution says judges and justices, once appointed, “hold their offices during good behavior,” which was understood then and ever since to mean they had lifetime terms.

Democrats in the House and Senate have proposed bills that would set an 18-year term for Supreme Court justices and would push the older justices into a semi-retired “senior status” after 18 years on the court. If enacted now, it would push aside three conservatives:

Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel A. Alito Jr. and Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr.

But the bills have no chance of moving forward in this Congress, and they would face a stiff constitutional challenge if they were enacted in the next Congress.

Georgetown law professor Steve Vladeck wrote that Biden’s “belated push for unattainable (and ineffective) reforms only drives home the opportunities he’s missed to change the national conversation about the Supreme Court.... These reforms have no chance of being adopted, and even if

they’re adopted, they’re unlikely to be effective anytime soon.”

When Biden took office in 2021, he was under pressure to do something about the conservative court that had three new Trump appointees.

He appointed a presidential commission to study the matter and issue a report, but nothing further was done.

“For most of American history, members of Congress have assumed that the only constitutional way to achieve term limits for Supreme Court Justices is through constitutional amendment,” the report

said. “Starting as early as 1807, and continuing to the present, more than two hundred proposals have been introduced in Congress to amend the Constitution to establish term limits for Supreme Court Justices or for federal judges more generally.”

None were adopted. The first bill proposing to set term limits was introduced in 2020, the report noted.

Chemerinsky said setting term limits by law “would be particularly problematic if applied to current justices because they were appointed and confirmed with the clear understanding that they were lifetime appointments.”

“However, if term limits don’t apply to the current justices, they won’t make a difference for a long time.”

He noted that six of the current justices are under age 70, and conservative Justices Brett M. Kavanaugh, Neil M. Gorsuch and Amy Coney Barrett are likely to serve for 20 years or more.

FBI will interview Trump in shooting inquiry

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Former President Trump has agreed to be interviewed by the FBI as part of an investigation into his attempted assassination in Pennsylvania this month, a special agent said Monday in disclosing how the gunman before the shooting had researched mass attacks and explosive devices.

The expected interview with the 2024 GOP presidential nominee is part of the FBI’s standard protocol of speaking with victims during the course of its criminal investigations. The FBI said Friday that Trump was struck by a bullet or a fragment of one during the July 13 shooting attack at a campaign rally in Butler, Pa.

“We want to get his perspective on what he observed,” said Kevin Rojek, the special agent in charge of the FBI’s Pittsburgh field office. “It is a standard victim interview like we would do for any other victim of crime, under any other circumstances.”

Through roughly 450 interviews, the FBI has fleshed out a portrait of the gunman, Thomas Matthew Crooks, as a “highly intelligent” but reclusive 20-year-old whose primary social circle was his family and who maintained few friends and acquaintances throughout his life, Rojek said.

The FBI has not uncovered a motive as to why he chose to target Trump, but investigators believe the shooting was the result of extensive planning, including the purchase in recent months of chemical precursors that investigators believe were used to create the explosive devices found in his car and his home and the use of a drone about 200 yards from the rally site in the hours before the event.

In addition, Rojek said, Crooks looked online for information about mass shootings, improvised explosive devices, power plants and the attempted assassination in May of Slovakia’s populist prime minister, Robert Fico.

The FBI has said that on July 6, the day Crooks registered to attend the Trump rally, he Googled: “How far away was Oswald from Kennedy?” That’s a reference to Lee Harvey Oswald, who shot and killed President Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963.

Crooks’ parents have been “extremely cooperative” with investigators, Rojek said, and the extensive planning that preceded the shooting was done online. The parents have said they had no knowledge of Crooks’ plans, and investigators have no reason to doubt that, the FBI said.

Iowa bans most abortions after 6 weeks

Providers have said they will continue to operate in compliance with state’s new law.

BY HANNAH FINGERHUT

DES MOINES — Iowa’s strict abortion law went into effect Monday, immediately prohibiting most abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy, before many women know they are pregnant.

Iowa’s Republican leaders have been seeking the law for years and gained momentum after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe vs. Wade in 2022. The Iowa Supreme Court also issued a ruling that year saying there was no constitutional right to abortion in the state.

“There is no right more sacred than life,” Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds said in June. “I’m glad that the Iowa Supreme Court has upheld the will of the people of Iowa.”

Now, across the country, four states ban abortions after about six weeks of preg-

nancy, and 14 states have near-total bans at all stages of pregnancy.

The law in Iowa and other restrictions across the country will be a focus of the 2024 election, with Republicans celebrating their successes and Democrats criticizing them as an attack on women’s rights. Vice President Kamala Harris, who is the front-runner to be the Democratic presidential nominee, has said reproductive rights are at stake this November.

Her campaign released a video Monday to draw attention to the issue as Iowa’s law becomes enforceable.

“What we need to do is vote,” Harris said. “When I am president of the United States, I will sign into law the protections for reproductive freedom.”

Iowa’s abortion providers have been fighting the new law while still preparing for it, shoring up abortion access in neighboring states and drawing on the lessons learned where bans went into effect more swiftly.

They have said they will continue to operate in Iowa in compliance with the new law, but Sarah Traxler,

Planned Parenthood North Central States’ chief medical officer, called it a “devastating and dark” moment in state history.

The Iowa law was passed by the GOP-controlled Legislature in a special session last year, but a legal challenge was immediately filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa, Planned Parenthood North Central States and the Emma Goldman Clinic. The law was in effect for just a few days before a district judge temporarily blocked it, a decision Reynolds appealed to the state’s high court.

The Iowa Supreme Court’s 4-3 ruling in June reiterated that there is no constitutional right to an abortion in the state and ordered the hold be lifted. A district court judge last week said the hold would be lifted Monday morning.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, called it a “historic day for Iowa.”

The law prohibits abortions after cardiac activity can be detected, which is roughly at six weeks. There are limited exceptions in

cases of rape, incest, fetal abnormality or when the life of the woman is in danger. Previously, abortion in Iowa was legal up to 20 weeks of pregnancy.

The state’s medical board defined standards of practice for adhering to the law this year, though the rules do not outline disciplinary action or how the board would determine non-compliance.

Three abortion clinics in two Iowa cities offer in-person abortion procedures and will continue to do so before cardiac activity is detected, according to representatives from Planned Parenthood and Emma Goldman.

A law based on cardiac activity is “tricky,” said Traxler, of Planned Parenthood. Since six weeks is approximate, “we don’t necessarily have plans to cut people off at a certain gestational age,” she said.

For over a year, the region’s Planned Parenthood also has been making investments within and outside Iowa to prepare for the restrictions. Like in other regions, it has dedicated staff to work the phones, helping

people find appointments, connect with other providers, arrange travel plans or financial assistance.

It also is remodeling its center in Omaha, just over the state line in Nebraska, and newly offers medication abortion in Mankato, Minn., about an hour’s drive from Iowa.

But providers fear the drastic change in access will exacerbate health inequalities for Iowa’s women of color and residents from low-income households.

Across the country, the status of abortion has changed constantly since the Supreme Court’s decision in Dobbs vs. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, with trigger laws immediately going into effect, states passing new restrictions or expansions of access, and court battles putting those on hold.

In states with restrictions, the main abortion options are getting pills via telehealth or underground networks and traveling, vastly driving up demand in states with more access.

Fingerhut writes for the Associated Press.

2 ex-FBI officials settle lawsuits with Justice Dept.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Two former FBI officials have settled lawsuits with the Justice Department, resolving claims that their privacy rights were violated when the department leaked to the news media text messages that they had sent each other that disparaged former President Trump.

Peter Strzok, a former top counterintelligence agent who played a crucial role in the investigation of Russian election interference in 2016, on Friday settled his case for \$1.2 million. Lisa Page, an FBI lawyer who exchanged text messages with Strzok, also reached a separate settlement. Court records reviewed by the Associated Press show she is to be paid \$800,000.

The two had sued the

Justice Department over a 2017 episode in which officials shared copies with reporters of text messages that they had sent each other, including ones that described Trump as an “idiot” and a “loathsome human” and that called the prospect of a Trump victory “terrifying.”

Strzok, who also investigated former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server, was fired after the text messages came to light. Page resigned. They alleged that department officials leaked the texts to promote a false narrative of anti-Trump bias within the FBI and to elevate the department’s status with Trump after his relentless attacks on then-Atty. Gen. Jeff Sessions.

Justice Department inspector general reports examining the handling of the Clinton email and Trump-



JACQUELYN MARTIN Associated Press

FORMER FBI lawyer Lisa Page, left, and ex-FBI agent Peter Strzok sued over leaked text messages.

Russia investigations did not find evidence that partisan bias within the FBI influenced investigative decisions.

Trump attacked Strzok and Page for years, including during his presidency, calling them out by name at ral-

lies and on social media.

Strzok has also sued the department over his termination, alleging that the FBI caved to “unrelenting pressure” from Trump when it fired him and that his 1st Amendment rights were violated. Those constitutional

claims remain pending.

“This outcome is a critical step forward in addressing the government’s unfair and highly politicized treatment of Pete,” Strzok’s lawyer, Aitan Goelman, said in a statement Friday announcing the settlement.

A spokesman for the Justice Department declined to comment Friday.

“While I have been vindicated by this result, my fervent hope remains that our institutions of justice will never again play politics with the lives of their employees,” Page said in a statement.

Her attorneys said in a statement that “the evidence was overwhelming that the release of text messages to the press in December 2017 was for partisan political purposes and was against the law.”

Los Angeles Times staff contributed to this report.

Park fire is state's sixth largest on record

[Fire, from A1]
in a matter of hours and produced fire whirls, or “firenadoes,” as it grew.

“As the week progresses, temperatures are expected to rise,” said Sergio Arellano, a Park fire spokesperson. “It will make fire behavior, obviously, increase due to the high heat — it’s going to dry out the fuels more — plus we’re expecting some light winds.”

“Wind is always our enemy,” he added. Winds, as well as thick smoke, can ground helicopters, which have become key in battling the flames throughout the remote terrain.

Highs Monday were expected to reach into the low 90s, and southwest winds were expected to hit 20 mph in some upper elevations, Arellano said, with warming expected to continue through the week.

The blaze ignited Wednesday afternoon in what authorities say was an act of arson, when a man pushed a burning car into a gully near Chico. The fire quickly ballooned into the state’s largest of the year.

More than 26,000 people have since been ordered to evacuate across Butte, Tehama and Shasta counties, Arellano said Monday, and many more are under evacuation warnings, including in western Plumas County.

At least 109 structures have been destroyed and 4,200 are threatened, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The fire’s eastern edge remains a major concern, with flames jumping across Highway 32 and Highway 36 to the north.

As the weather started to clear Sunday afternoon, it got hotter and drier, pushing away the smoke and cloud cover, allowing the fire to breathe, Mark Bunton, the operations section chief for the Park fire’s unified command, said at a morning update.

“With that, we ended up with ... a number of areas that gave us challenges,” Bunton said.

He said some areas saw spot fires — blazes set off by sparks jumping beyond the fire’s perimeter — spread over more than 100 acres, but crews are working to establish and hold containment lines, despite the challenging conditions. He said much of the fire’s western edge is almost impossible to reach with ground equipment, requiring “very labori-



NIC COURY Associated Press

A FIREFIGHTER monitors a burn operation on Highway 32 to combat the Park fire near Forest Ranch in Butte County, on Sunday.



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

LAGUNA BEACH firefighter Brian Adams keeps an eye Sunday on part of the Borel fire in Kern County in and around Sequoia National Forest.

ous work and time consuming” hand crews to lead the firefight.

Lassen Volcanic National

Park, in southern Shasta County, has been closed and evacuated, with park officials concerned the fire will

reach its historic district and headquarters in Mineral, which escaped the wrath of the Dixie fire in 2021, the na-

tional park said in a statement. Its staff has been assisting with evacuations and “scrambling to save historic artifacts stored in the 1927 Loomis Museum.”

The Park fire is far from the only concern across California, with crews responding to more than 22 wildfires statewide.

The Borel fire in Kern County continues to burn in and around Sequoia National Forest, growing to 53,010 acres Monday morning, according to federal officials.

Already the blaze has left a path of destruction, with significant structure loss in the historic mining town of Havilah and concern about more damage, given the area’s red flag warning — an alert for dangerous fire weather — through Monday night.

Several nearby communities are under evacuation orders and warnings, and much of the national forest and federal lands have been closed.

“Moderate to rapid fire spread will continue to move

to the east and north, potentially impacting structures and infrastructure in Bodfish, Moreland Mill, and French Meadow areas,” federal officials said in a Monday update. “Fire may exhibit very high rates of spread, high intensity and difficulty of control.”

The Borel fire is now being managed with two other fires in Kern and Tulare counties, previously referred to as the SQF Lightning incident. The other fires are the Trout fire, which has burned 23,369 acres and is 33% contained, and the Long fire, which has burned 9,204 acres and is 95% contained, according to federal officials.

“The summer is far from over, so staying prepared is crucial,” Cal Fire wrote on social media.

The historic nature of the Park fire “underscores the urgent need for wildfire preparedness. ... Have your go bag packed and know two evacuation routes. Stay informed by signing up for emergency alerts, stay prepared, and help protect our communities.”

With Harris in the race, notions about gender roles are on ballot

[Gender, from A1]

Just over a week into a reframed general election, it is clear that the race between Trump and Harris is not just between a man and a woman, but about competing notions of gender roles.

Trump has built his image on hyper-masculinity from an era where men sought to present themselves as physically strong and might dismiss allegations of sexual assault by claiming “she’s not my type,” as he did before losing a civil case against E. Jean Carroll. Professional wrestler Hulk Hogan and Ultimate Fighting Championship President Dana White lauded Trump’s toughness as they introduced his convention speech.

Harris has achieved a number of firsts in an age when women could redefine power in feminine clothes, while adding issues such as maternal health and reproductive rights to the national agenda. She has made her mark in the Biden administration by leading the fight to restore abortion rights and has continued to push that message during campaign appearances.

In a historical coincidence, Trump not only faced off against the first woman to lead a presidential ticket, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, but is now also facing off against the second.

Clinton embraced the role of glass ceiling breaker in 2016 but ultimately lost to

Trump, who had no qualms about physically blocking her out during a debate. Harris is eager to erase that history and taunted Trump by accusing him of “backpedaling” after he declined to agree to a Sept. 10 debate that had been scheduled with President Biden.

Trump sounded annoyed with the excitement around Harris as he sought to diminish her during a rally Wednesday by casting her as a lightweight liberal.

“Putin laughed at her like she was nothing,” he said of Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom Trump has often praised.

“I’ve never seen a turnaround like this,” he added, blaming the media for the hype. “Three weeks ago, four weeks ago she was the worst politician in America. Now they say: ‘Isn’t it amazing? Look at her. She’s so beautiful.’”

The size of the divide between male and female voters will probably determine the election. Trump beat Clinton among men — 52% to 41% — while Clinton won the women’s vote — 54% to 39% — in 2016. Clinton won the popular vote, but Trump’s edge with blue-collar men helped him defeat Clinton by small margins in several swing states, where she was not able to make up enough ground with college-educated women.

The candidates narrowed the gender gap in 2020, with Biden winning women’s votes 55% to 44% and Trump



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

KID ROCK performs during the Republican National Convention on July 18 in Milwaukee, where former President Trump spoke about overcoming bullets “flying” at him during this month’s assassination attempt.

winning men’s votes 50% to 48%, according to post-election analyses by the Pew Research Center.

A New York Times/Siena College poll released Thursday shows Harris within a percentage point of Trump among likely voters, carrying women by 15 points but losing men to Trump by 16 points. The wider margins are closer, but not identical, to the 2016 election. The electorate has also changed: Women outnumbered men in the college-educated workforce for the first time in 2019, and continued to do so through the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Pew.

Sen. Laphonza Butler, a Democrat from Los Angeles and a longtime political ally to Harris, cautioned against comparing Harris’ cam-

paign to Clinton’s or defining the election by gender, arguing that Harris is building a broad coalition that includes Black women, Latinas and the LGBTQ+ community, as well as men.

“We are where we are in 2024, not 2016,” said Butler, who led the women’s political group Emily’s List before being appointed to the Senate last year.

The 2022 Dobbs decision overturning abortion rights affects both men and women, as did the pandemic, Butler said.

“We have seen our children struggle to recover, which impacts mothers and fathers,” she said. “And so to make a gender story — or to try to somehow, I think, minimize the totality of what it’s going to [take to] win this

election — even if it’s going to be close, is not telling the whole story.”

That hasn’t stopped Harris from leaning hard into her vision of female empowerment. Her first official campaign video launched Thursday used the Beyoncé power anthem “Freedom,” which she also plays at campaign events. In the video and speeches, Harris has put “freedom to make decisions about your own body” at the center of her message, along with gun violence, healthcare, child poverty and Trump’s legal problems.

“In this moment, we are in a fight for our most fundamental freedoms,” she said at an American Federation of Teachers convention in Houston. “And to this room of leaders, I say: Bring it on.”

Harris’ message so far seems especially resonant with women, who have filled online events. Rochelle Allen said Harris is “our only hope right now” as she waited for her to speak in Houston.

But the 74-year-old from Detroit, who teaches at Wayne State University, is also worried and would have preferred that Biden stay in the race. She came of age when women were taught to put men first and allow them to lead, even in her church where she now serves as a pastor, she said.

“There are some people who just won’t vote for a female to be the leader. That’s backwards thinking, but it is the truth,” she said. “That’s why it’s really important that everybody else get out to vote.”

BUSINESS

He runs the failed-restaurant graveyard, tends to the ghosts

Fred Bush deals in used kitchen gear. Sellers abound as industry ails.

BY DANIEL MILLER

Fred Bush cut across the failing pizzeria and headed behind the counter where a hulking oven idled in the pre-lunchtime gloom. He opened its door and peered inside.

"That is the stone where you put the pizza," he explained. "You want to check to make sure the stones aren't broken."

As Bush inspected the Inland Empire restaurant's equipment — a mixer, meat slicer and more — the owner explained why he planned to close the pizzeria.

Like so many other Southland restaurateurs who've struggled in recent years, his business had been bludgeoned by an array of issues: Delivery service commissions cut into revenue, diners were spending less, good employees departed for better-paying jobs, and the landlord of the outdoor shopping center where he'd operated since 2019 wouldn't renegotiate the lease.

The man, who asked that he and his restaurant not be identified over privacy concerns, said he was working seven days a week, handling everything from cooking to deliveries, but was not turning a profit.

"This is very normal," Bush told the owner. "You ... just realize, 'No matter what I do, I'm not going to make money.'"

The proprietor was grateful Bush understood.

"Tough business, really tough," he intoned on his way out.

A restaurant closure is almost universally seen as bad news. But not necessarily from Bush's vantage point. That's because he deals in used equipment and furniture, buying stoves, sinks, shelves and the like from owners who've thrown in the towel. His Corona-based Fred Bush & Associates meticulously restores the items and sells them at steep discounts from the original retail prices. Recent clients include Cobi's in Santa Monica, Ca' Del Sole in Toluca Lake, and the Brentwood Italian spots Toscana and Divino. He's also worked with chains including Starbucks and Rubio's Coastal Grill.

These days, the drought settling over the restaurant landscape is, in a way, a boon for Bush: His 26,000-square-foot showroom brims with merchandise.

"We literally get a call a day from a restaurant that is closing," said Bush, 76, adding that he's running out of space at his warehouse. "I never turn down anything good."

Bush, who's been in the trade for 40-plus years, prefers to focus on the positive as he goes through pained visits with owners of cratering eateries: The wares that he buys and later sells help people pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.

"It's a tough business because you're catching people at their lowest — but you're in it to make money," said Kevin Lanouette of KL Kitchen Supplies, a Canyon Lake, Calif.-based supplier of new restaurant equipment. "[Bush's] bedside manner has got to be good. It's not something I would look forward to."

Bush said that when he meets with proprietors, they often are in a good mood, pleased that their ordeal is nearing its end. And he takes pleasure in that part of the job. But the Inland Empire pizzaiolo hadn't seemed at ease. Still, Bush was adamant that the man would soon find peace. Bush ultimately offered \$4,500 for the bulk of his equipment, about 30 items in all.

He estimated the wares had cost the owner at least \$75,000. Once they were restored, Bush would list them at prices totaling about \$15,000.

As of mid-July the man hadn't accepted, Bush said, and no one was answering the phone at the pizzeria.

'Pretty much brand new'

Bush's business is a key cog in the Southern California restaurant industry: People working in the space said they knew of no other used equipment dealer on his level.

He grew up in West L.A. and got into the business in 1976, working with



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

"WE LITERALLY get a call a day from a restaurant that is closing," said Fred Bush, shown in his company's Corona warehouse in June.

a partner to buy secondhand restaurant equipment at auction and resell it. But the partnership was rocky, and he struck out on his own in 1982.

Two years later, Bush was tapped by the organizers of the Olympic Games in L.A. to remove five temporary kitchens that had been built across the region to feed the athletes who were competing. He purchased the equipment and was able to quickly resell it, owing in part to its pristine condition.

"Everything was two weeks old," Bush said.

Not everything that passes through his warehouse doors arrives so clean. In fact, much of the gear is filthy. But Bush takes pride in refinishing wares so that they look "pretty much brand new."

Many items are sold for less than half their retail price and come with a 30-day warranty. Bush, for example, recently listed a Montague Co. convection oven for \$9,500 — far below its original price of roughly \$21,000. He said he'd paid about \$2,500 for it.

On a recent tour of his company's facility, Bush pointed out the booth where equipment is repainted, and a sheet metal shop where stainless steel parts are fabricated. All items are disassembled, cleaned and rebuilt as needed. A Hobart mixer that was ready to be delivered to a customer shined next to a row of the same model that had yet to be repaired. They were coated in grease and grime.

"We totally recondition everything," Bush said.

Joaquin Caldera, vice president of Fred Bush & Associates, has worked for the company since 1991 and is a big reason it is able to bring almost any piece of ragged gear back to life, Bush said. The walls of Caldera's office are covered in dozens of clear baggies filled with the parts of equipment on which he commonly works, a testament to Bush's boast that Caldera "can repair anything."

George Qualls, operations manager for a barbecue restaurant company, recently worked with Bush to outfit a handful of locations of the chain in San Diego County.

But the first time Qualls saw the sorry state of the equipment taken in by Bush — specifically a grubby charbroiler — he was shocked.

"He showed it to me, and gave me a price, and I said, 'Fred, really?'" Qualls recalled. "And he said, 'No, no, it's not going to look like that.' I went back four days later, and it looked like a brand-new piece of equipment. It was really crazy."

Qualls bought the charbroiler for \$550 — about a quarter of what it would have cost new.

Devoted to diners

Bush lives and breathes restaurants: He invests in them and is friends with proprietors.

He said he's even furnished his two grown children's homes with used restaurant furniture. They benefited, he said, when Starbucks was closing stores about a decade ago and needed to unload armchairs, coffee tables and sofas.

"My kids would want to see what

we got from Starbucks and put it in their houses," he said. "Most of the stuff ... was [like] new."

Bush is often on the road, looking in on places that are shutting down so that he can assess their equipment. He logs heavy miles: During a two-day span in June, he went from Upland to Brentwood to Lake Forest. Some of the visits are purely happy ones: Bush also buys equipment when restaurants are remodeling or expanding.

Still, he regularly tours troubled establishments — and sometimes before their plans to shutter have been announced. As such, he may know the fate of a restaurant ahead of its employees or the public.

Indeed, Bush said that days before the Rubio's chain announced in June that it was closing 48 restaurants in California, he had visited one location at the company's behest to make a survey of what equipment he would buy.

He now has some of the chain's chairs for sale. They're available for \$20 apiece.

A dream in a down market

During the visit to Bush's Corona showroom, a handful of prospective customers perused neat aisles of mostly stainless steel equipment gleaming under florescent lights: refrigerators, convection ovens, steam kettles, fryers, griddles, blast freezers, ice machines, stoves, broilers, mixers, coffee makers, dishware, utensils, tables, chairs and more.

Bush pointed out an enormous piece of decorative wood that he'd purchased from a Japanese restaurant in South Coast Plaza. He'd been having trouble selling it. "It probably weighs 500 pounds," he said.

Then he ran into Sam Harris, co-owner of Sherman's Deli & Bakery in Palm Springs. He'd recently bought an ice machine from Bush and had come back to check out ovens.

"I always come in here and leave with something," Harris said.

In a tough economy, repeat customers — especially those with existing eateries — are key. Though the current climate for restaurants has helped Bush build his inventory, it also means that there are fewer new restaurants opening. And that means lower sales.

Lanouette of KL Kitchen Supplies, whose clients have included Republique and the Hotel Bel-Air, said that when projects he's working on call for used equipment, he sources it from Bush. And in today's economy, when expediency is key, refurbished wares often fit the bill.

"Times being what they are ... it's all about getting the doors open and putting money back into [a restaurateur's] pocket," Lanouette said. Bush's merchandise is "very helpful to a lot of my clients who don't have deep pockets but have a dream."

There will always be people chasing that dream of opening a restaurant. Bush believes it's innate in some people — they just want to feed others.

"They've gotta keep trying," he said. "And, ultimately, we all have to eat."

SpaceX to move splashdowns back to California coast

BY LAURENCE DARMIENTO

SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft will take a new route home beginning next year after the company announced it will move its splashdowns back to the waters off California.

Long Beach Mayor Rex Richardson said Sunday on X that the city's port would be the new home for SpaceX's recovery operations.

"Excited to share a Space Beach update! Long Beach will be the new home to @SpaceX's Dragon recovery vessel as their West Coast Recovery Operations team based out of the @portoflongbeach will welcome back both @NASA and other private astronauts who are returning to Earth from orbit and beyond," Richardson wrote.

The announcement came just a few weeks after SpaceX founder Elon Musk announced he is moving the headquarters of the Hawthorne-based SpaceX and the San Francisco-based X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, to Texas — citing several criticisms he has of California.

Moving the splashdown sites from off the Florida coast to California was necessary to address concerns over debris from the Dragon that has crashed to Earth on previous missions.

The Dragon, which has carried astronauts and cargo into space on more

than three dozen flights since 2012, has two main sections: the capsule that carries people and cargo, and an expendable part called the trunk.

In 2019, SpaceX moved the Dragon's splashdowns from the West Coast to Florida, a move that allowed "teams to unpack and deliver critical cargo to NASA teams in Florida more efficiently and transport crews more quickly to Kennedy Space Center," the company said in a statement on its website.

As part of that move, the company developed a new way of dealing with the trunk, detaching it from the capsule while it was still in orbit. Engineers calculated that the trunk would completely burn up as it fell from orbit and through the Earth's atmosphere. However, pieces of the trunk have been found in Australia and elsewhere, forcing SpaceX back to the drawing board.

When splashdowns in the Pacific begin next year, the trunk will remain attached to the capsule until after the spacecraft has left orbit, allowing SpaceX to control its descent into the ocean away from land, the company said.

Phil Larson, a former SpaceX manager, said it takes several dozen employees to handle splashdowns, so he didn't expect the return to West Coast recoveries would have a big impact on local job creation, with some employees possibly deciding to remain in Florida.

Big Lots to close over 50 stores in state; its viability is uncertain

BY CAROLINE PETROW-COHEN

Big Lots, the discount retail chain known for carrying a wide assortment of goods, is closing more than 50 stores in California amid flagging sales that have thrown the chain's future into question.

In a June filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the company said it expects to close 35 to 40 stores in 2024. However, according to closure notices on individual store websites, the actual number will be higher.

Big Lots currently operates 109 stores in California, the second highest in the country behind Texas. There are about 1,400 Big Lots nationwide. The chain is known for offering an extensive and somewhat eclectic collection of items at low prices, including brand-name goods and discount products.

"Our customers may be on a tight budget," the Big Lots website says, "or they may just enjoy our treasure-hunt atmosphere."

Big Lots, however, has been struggling. The company reported a net loss of \$205 million in the quarter ending May 4 — similar to the \$206-million loss it posted for the same period

last year. Net sales of around \$1 billion in the quarter marked a 10% decrease compared with the same period last year.

Those losses, the rate at which the company has spent down cash reserves in recent years, and gloomy projections for the future "raise substantial doubt about our ability to continue as a going concern," the company wrote in the filing.

Shares of the company closed Monday at \$1.04, a nearly 87% decline from the start of the year.

Inflation and rising costs of goods have put pressure on retailers as many customers, especially those on a tight budget who may be drawn to discount chains such as Big Lots, limit their spending.

This year, California-based 99 Cents Only Stores announced the closure of all 371 of its locations, citing inflation and changes in consumer demand.

"We missed our sales goals due largely to a continued pullback in consumer spending by our core customers, particularly in high ticket discretionary items," Big Lots President Bruce Thorn said in a statement. "We remain focused on managing through the current economic cycle by controlling the controllables."

MARKET ROUNDUP

Stocks drift to a mixed finish ahead of a frenetic week

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — U.S. stock indexes drifted to a mixed finish Monday to kick off a week full of earnings reports from Wall Street's most influential companies and a Federal Reserve meeting on interest rates.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index edged up by 4.44 points, or 0.1%, to 5,463.54, coming off its first back-to-back weekly losses since

April. The Dow Jones industrial average slipped 49.41 points, or 0.1%, to 40,539.93, and the Nasdaq composite added 12.32 points, or 0.1%, to close at 17,370.20.

ON Semiconductor helped lead the market with a jump of 11.5% after the supplier to the auto and other industries reported stronger profit for the spring than analysts expected.

McDonald's rose 3.7% despite reporting profit and revenue for the latest quar-

ter that fell shy of forecasts. Analysts said the performance of its U.S. restaurants wasn't as bad as some investors had feared.

They helped offset slides for oil-and-gas companies after the price of oil sank back toward where it was two months ago. ConocoPhillips lost 1.6% and Exxon Mobil fell 1% amid worries about how much crude China's faltering economy will burn.

Several of Wall Street's

biggest names are set to report their results this week: Microsoft on Tuesday, Meta Platforms on Wednesday and Apple and Amazon on Thursday.

The Fed will hold its latest policy meeting on interest rates this week, and an announcement will come Wednesday.

Treasury yields held relatively steady in the bond market, and the yield on the 10-year Treasury slipped to 4.17% from 4.19% late Friday.

Major stock indexes

Index	Close	Daily change	Daily % change	YTD % change
Dow industrials	40,539.93	-49.41	-0.12	+7.56
S&P 500	5,463.54	+4.44	+0.08	+14.54
Nasdaq composite	17,370.20	+12.32	+0.07	+15.71
S&P 400	3,069.72	-5.24	-0.17	+10.36
Russell 2000	2,235.33	-24.74	-1.09	+10.27
EuroStoxx 50	4,815.39	-47.11	-0.97	+6.50
Nikkei (Japan)	38,468.63	+801.22	+2.13	+14.95
Hang Seng (Hong Kong)	17,238.34	+217.03	+1.27	+1.12

Associated Press

Legal fight renews scrutiny of Innova, its COVID test

[Innova, from A1] broiled in multiple legal disputes over at least \$2 billion Pasadena-based Innova Medical Group earned in profits during the pandemic.

Huang has alleged in civil lawsuits that two former executives defrauded Innova of more than \$100 million, which they have denied. One of those executives accused Huang of squandering company funds to finance “a lavish lifestyle, half-cocked business gambles and luxuries for his friends and girlfriends,” according to a Los Angeles County Superior Court lawsuit filed last year by Robert Kasprzak. “Huang is a high-end con artist who claims he can see the future,” the lawsuit says.

Another lawsuit, filed by Kening Xu, one of Huang’s former business associates, accuses Huang of treating Innova’s private equity parent as his “personal property,” awarding himself and others more than half its shares while making “numerous reckless investments.” Huang has denied the claims.

The unusually contentious litigation includes at least 10 state and federal lawsuits, among them a sexual battery complaint filed against Huang by a former employee, which he has denied. Huang also alleges he was the victim of an extortion plot being prosecuted in Pasadena that involves a purported sex tape.

Huang did not respond to a detailed list of questions, but in a statement Innova disputed the claims.

“These baseless accusations come from people who have either engaged in unlawful or improper activity, vastly overstated their contributions to the company, or claim to be entitled to millions of dollars they neither earned nor deserve. The companies and Dr. Huang choose to litigate these matters in the proper venue, a court of law, when they expect to be completely vindicated and to see justice served,” the statement said.

The controversy — a familiar tale of what can happen to a startup suddenly flush with success and money — has renewed scrutiny of Innova and its antigen test. In 2021, the Food and Drug Administration said the tests lacked adequate trial data and “could present a serious risk to the public health.” The company later resolved those issues with the agency.

The British government stuck by Innova, citing its own studies, but questions have lingered about the test’s efficacy and how the business was able to win such large contracts. An independent inquiry into that country’s pandemic response is expected to include the Innova contracts. “This was an enormous sum of money that was spent, and we still don’t understand how Innova came to be chosen,” said barrister Jo Maugham, founder of the Good Law Project, a U.K. legal advocacy group.

Humble beginnings in rural China

Huang, 60, grew up in a poor village outside Wuhan, China. The oldest son of a large family, he managed to gain entrance to Wuhan University and go on to receive an MBA and a doctorate in marketing at the University of Strathclyde in Scotland, according to a translated interview he gave to ODK Media, an Asian streaming service.

He headed to Hong Kong, where he worked on and off for more than a decade as an analyst, including covering the automotive and pharmaceutical industries. He boasts on the website of his Pasaca Capital private equity firm that he predicted the Asian financial crisis in 1997.

Huang also partnered with Yang Rong, the billionaire founder of Brilliance Group, a Chinese vehicle maker. Yang, also known as Benjamin Yeung, fled China in 2002 after getting into a dispute with a Communist Party leader, settling in the upscale San Gabriel Valley community of Bradbury.

Huang eventually settled with his family nearby in Arcadia. In 2009, the two men proposed building a \$4-billion hybrid vehicle plant in Baldwin County, Ala., but the project fizzled.

In 2016, Huang formed Pasaca Capital Inc. to look for acquisitions, and later reconnected with an old business associate: Daniel Elli-



A WORKER processes an Innova COVID-19 test at Hull University in Britain in 2021. Questions have lingered about the test’s efficacy and how the Pasadena startup was able to win \$5 billion in contracts from Britain.

ott, an entrepreneur and engineer who also had ambitions to make it big.

Elliott, who grew up in Rancho Dominguez in L.A. County, forged a career in battery technology and electric vehicles. In 2007, he was invited to the White House, where he advised President George W. Bush on electrifying the transportation sector. Later, he was the chief executive of a company that proposed building a \$372-million battery plant in Kentucky, but the project ended up in bankruptcy.

Elliott, 52, said Pasaca was in negotiations to buy Sandoz, the generic pharmaceutical business of the Swiss drug company Novartis, when the pandemic struck and Huang pitched another idea.

“Charles called me in January [2020], and said, ‘Hey, do you want to get into the COVID-testing business?’ and I was like, ‘What the hell do I know about COVID testing?’” Elliott recalled.

Soon convinced, Elliott called on an old friend for help: Kasprzak, an attorney he had worked with on past ventures.

A promising antigen test

Huang incorporated Innova Medical Group as a subsidiary of Pasaca in March 2020.

The partners first tried to sell off-the-shelf tests that detect antibodies created by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19.

When that didn’t work, Elliott said, he called Dr. Deborah Bix, President Trump’s coronavirus response coordinator. She told him what were needed were tests that could detect antigen proteins produced by the immune response to COVID that could be done at home.

Bix said that she doesn’t recall the conversation but that at a White House meeting on March 4, 2020, she told a group of pharmaceutical executives that they needed to make the tests, with Abbott Laboratories producing its BinaxNow test by June.

Innova scoured Asia for test makers, settling on Xiamen Biotime Biotechnology in Xiamen, China. A deal was reached for the company to make 1 billion tests, Elliott said.

Elliott said he called governments around the world and made headway in Britain, with Innova submitting tests for evaluation by Operation Moonshot, a program in then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s administration that involved mailing millions of antigen tests to households.

Innova needed a U.K. company to submit its application and hand-deliver tests to a government laboratory evaluating drug company submissions, Elliott said. Innova reached a deal with Disruptive Nanotechnology Ltd. “I probably was sleeping two hours a night,” recalled Elliott, who said he was constantly on the phone with government officials and the prime minister’s offices at 10 Downing St.

Dr. Tim Peto, an Oxford University scientist who led



DANIEL ELLIOTT, right, with President George W. Bush in 2007, was Charles Huang’s partner in Innova.

‘This was an enormous sum of money that was spent, and we still don’t understand how Innova came to be chosen.’

— JO MAUGHAM, founder of the Good Law Project, a U.K. legal advocacy group

the initial government study, said Innova was chosen after its test “passed the threshold of performance” and the company showed it could supply large quantities. “It wasn’t taken forward because it was clearly the best of the bunch,” he said.

On Sept. 17, 2020, the government placed an initial \$138-million order for tests, with Innova delivering 18 million in 15 days, Elliott said. The British military flew to China to receive them from Biotime.

In the ODK YouTube video, Huang called it his “proudest moment.” “Despite numerous challenges, we conquered them all,” he said.

In all, Innova would deliver about 2 billion tests to the British government, Elliott said, with the company signing additional contracts.

The total revenue from the contracts was at least \$5 billion, according to a U.K. government website, with Xu claiming in his lawsuit that profits from the government contract topped \$2 billion. Elliott said 178 improvements were made to the test, with the company selling them in smaller quantities in about 20 countries, including France, Brazil and Qatar.

The incredible success was liberating after all the struggles to raise funds, Huang told ODK Media: “We no longer have to seek money from investors, as we are investors ourselves.”

A financial windfall for top executives

One of Innova’s early acquisitions, Elliott said, was MPS Medical, an Orange County company it wanted to employ for making antigen tests for the U.S. market, which it didn’t pursue. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair was hired as a consultant to assist in expanding business internationally.

“I thought we were there to build a legacy company that my kids could work in,” Elliott said. “We were buying other technologies and other companies.”

Huang leads multiple businesses, according to a

representative denied the email was defamatory, saying Huang was making only a “statement of principles” and that section of the email was not “directed to any person in particular.”

Allegations of stolen funds

Huang alleged he had learned that commissions he believed were going to Disruptive Nanotechnology and Nano LiquiTec, another Innova intermediary, were actually stolen by Elliott and Kasprzak, according to the Nevada lawsuits filed against the men.

The lawsuits accused the men of setting up a company in October 2020 called Nano Holdings — a name they assert was intended to confuse Huang — to skim 2% of commissions from the U.K. test sales. A total of \$106 million is alleged to have been stolen, largely through that scheme.

The lawsuit against Elliott cites messages between the two men allegedly discussing the “scheme,” including a WhatsApp message Elliott sent to Kasprzak on the day he asked Huang to sign the Nano Holdings commission agreement: “You and I will make \$10m EACH! In our side business this year.”

The messages are presented out of context, said Elliott’s attorney, Mark Holscher. Elliott alleges that Huang knew and agreed to the creation of Nano Holdings as a way to increase the two men’s compensation without other Innova and Pasaca employees finding out and demanding additional compensation.

Two Pasaca business associates have signed sworn declarations viewed by The Times stating that Huang told them he knew the Nano commission payments were going to Elliott and Kasprzak, Holscher said. Huang has denied such knowledge.

Kasprzak also states in a declaration in response to the Nevada lawsuit filed against him that Huang knew the details of the Nano Holdings venture. He is alleged to have made \$77 million in compensation and other benefits in addition to the stolen commissions. Kasprzak then filed his own L.A. County lawsuit in April 2023 accusing Huang of misappropriating funds from the company.

The lawsuit said the allegations of wrongdoing against him were a pretext to fire him without paying him the \$75 million for his shares — despite his allegations that Innova’s success was largely due to his and Elliott’s efforts. The lawsuit cites a letter sent by Boris Johnson’s secretary of state for health and social care to the two men, applauding their “hard work” and “diligence” in securing the antigen tests. It does not mention Huang.

The lawsuit further states that Huang took advantage of his control over Pasaca and Innova to divvy up ownership shares to his benefit, transfer \$200 million to bank accounts in Hong Kong and Singapore and make more than \$200 million in bad investments.

Huang also is accused of spending funds on private jets, an \$18-million Bradbury mansion dubbed the “CEO house,” to hire mistresses and to produce the “fictionalized and idealized” “Overnight Billionaire” movie project. All in all, it says that more than \$1 billion was transferred out of Innova to Pasaca.

An Innova representative said all the allegations against Huang are false.

The Elliott and Kasprzak disputes are now being heard in separate arbitration cases. Kasprzak declined an interview through his attorney, Chris Casamassima, who said his client “did not receive any improper compensation from Pasaca or anyone else, and to the contrary, he is still owed a substantial sum of money.”

Also in arbitration is the lawsuit by Xu, 61, who is the nephew of Yang, Huang’s former business partner. He is demanding \$400 million, or about a fifth of the alleged profits, as one of the five “co-venturers” of the enterprise. Huang denies he owes the money.

This month, two former Pasaca executives filed a federal lawsuit in L.A. against Huang citing accusations in Kasprzak’s complaint and seeking hundreds of millions of dollars in restitution. Huang denied any wrongdoing.

Disruptive Nanotechnology has sued Elliott, Kasprzak and Huang, as well as Pasaca and Innova, alleging it was defrauded out of \$500 million when its commissions were reduced. Elliott, Kasprzak and Huang deny any wrongdoing.

Amid the legal wrangling, Huang found himself the target of an alleged extortion plot. In May 2023, the L.A. County district attorney’s office filed felony extortion charges against a married couple and Sunny Sun, a former Pasaca employee.

The alleged plot involved a purported video of Huang having sex with Sun surreptitiously recorded at a company condo, according to a Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department investigative report reviewed by The Times. Huang told investigators he had sex with Sun and had been threatened that the video would be posted online unless he paid \$20 million, the report said. All three have pleaded not guilty and posted bail. A preliminary hearing has not yet been held.

Garo Madenlian, Sun’s attorney, said he believed his client would be exonerated. “In fact, I think she is the victim,” he said.

Meanwhile, Huang and another Pasaca executive have been accused of sexual battery and sex trafficking in civil litigation filed in April in Los Angeles County Superior Court. The complaint by a Jane Doe alleges she was hired to lead Pasaca’s public relations in 2022 despite a lack of experience. She asserts in the suit she was actually lured to the company to provide Huang sexual services.

An Innova representative said the allegations are false and part of an extortion attempt.

As for “Overnight Billionaire,” an Innova representative said the film was being delayed because of all the litigation. It has a new title, “One in a Billion,” according to IMDb, which lists the film as “in development.”

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OPINION

EDITORIAL

Huntington Beach has a public access problem

State should examine the city's settlement with air show and whether event has proper permits.

THERE'S NO question that the annual Pacific Airshow in Huntington Beach is popular. For three days in early fall, military and civilian planes put on an aerobatic display over roughly a mile of oceanfront for nearly 700,000 spectators.

Fans flock to the show, and this year they will pay the event organizers \$30 to just plant themselves on the sand or up to \$80 to sit on the pier. Tickets for seating and food and drink under a tented pavilion can cost a few hundred — or thousands if it's a reserved table for 10. RV parking spots next to the beach for four nights can go for \$4,500. It's a fun time for paying customers, and a lucrative gig for the event management company, Code Four, which has owned and operated the air show since 2016.

The problem is that the roughly mile-long stretch of beach where the event takes place is public land, which isn't supposed to be cut off completely from free public access. Yet, that is happening, the state Coastal Commission has repeatedly warned city officials and the air show operator. Last year, for example, the show organizers erected a fence around the entire three-day event, ostensibly, to keep the nonpaying public out. Nonpayers were also kept off the



IRFAN KHAN Los Angeles Times

U.S. AIR FORCE Thunderbirds perform at the Pacific Airshow on Oct. 1, 2022, in Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcons.

pier and out of the water.

That's unacceptable. California law requires public access to beaches, and it's the responsibility of the Coastal Commission to ensure, through the permitting process, that events such as the air show provide it. But commission officials say Code Four never bothered to apply for the coastal permits required to put up equipment and structures or take nearby public parking spaces out of use for nearly a month.

Of course Code Four needs to obtain the required permits, and the city of Huntington Beach should insist it does. The city says that the show does provide some free access and that it's the Federal Aviation Administration that cuts off water access. If so, all that needs to be explained in a permit application.

But a troubling settlement struck by the city last year — the full terms of which were kept secret until recently — shows the city is too willing to give all sorts of benefits to the Pacific Airshow. The deal settles Code Four's lawsuit over a 2021 coastal oil spill

that caused the city to cancel the final day of the air show, and gives the operator millions of dollars in taxpayer funds and the exclusive right to stage the event for up to 40 years.

The city agreed to pay the show operators nearly \$5 million, plus up to \$2 million more depending on what the city might get from pending litigation against the company that owns the pipeline that leaked. Additionally, the city waives various fees and offers the use of 3,500 city parking spots to monetize during the show — 600 of which the organizers can use for nearly a month setting up equipment before the show and taking it down. The settlement's terms on parking spots and length of time the show would operate don't go into effect until there is a signed contract approved by the City Council.

The arrangement stinks, and Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta should investigate, as three current Huntington Beach City Council members have requested. Councilman Dan Kalmick called it an egregious "gift of public

funds." State Sen. Dave Min (D-Irvine) also called for a state audit.

What could possess a city to enter such a breathtaking settlement for making a decision to protect public safety? The city attorney says the city was legally vulnerable because the decision to cancel was made without first calling an emergency meeting of the City Council. Huntington Beach City Councilmember Tony Strickland, who was mayor at the time of the settlement, says the air show brings in revenue of \$120 million to Huntington Beach and if it hadn't settled, Kevin Elliott, the chief executive of Code Four, would have taken the show to another beach city.

If he's right, that makes it all the more important that state officials examine public giveaways such as this so that cities aren't pressured to make sketchy deals.

We want events such as the Pacific Airshow to continue to thrive — so long as they don't hold up a city for excessive perks or violate California's historic guarantee of public access to its magnificent beaches.

LETTERS



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

OHIO SEN. J.D. Vance accepts the vice presidential nomination during the Republican convention July 17.

'It's me, childless cat lady'

Re "Kamala Harris and 'cat ladies' versus GOP's racism and sexism," Opinion, July 28

THE RANT BY Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance, the Republican vice presidential nominee, and its counterargument making the rounds are bizarre. The response shouldn't be "but I tried to have a baby" or "I chose not to have a baby." It should be, "My worth stands separate from reproduction."

Everything that's being said is being said about women, not men. It's as though women are islands unto themselves when it comes to having or not having children, but it's not a solo sport. In all cases, a man is involved.

There are many reasons a woman is childless, and often it's not due to a woman's infertility, but rather a man's inability to reproduce or simply his choice.

Don't defend your decision to have or not have children. Defend your worth as a human being. Using kids to pin women down is a practice that's been around since time began.

And I'd bet that more than half of all abortions are done at the suggestion of a man. So if there's punishment awaiting those aborting unwanted pregnancies, then both men and women should be burned at the stake, not just the woman.

LISA HARMON, Yakima, Wash.

Hey, Sen. Vance, it's me, childless cat lady. You got one thing really wrong: I'm not miserable.

In fact, I'm having a joyful time writing a check to Kamala Harris for President.

MELANIE HINSON
San Pedro

::

I agree with Robin Abcarian that some of the things that are being said about Vice President Kamala Harris, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, are just

plain stupid. I would advise Vance to say, "My bad," over his "cat ladies" comments post haste.

But if Abcarian thinks that playing the "sexist and racist" card is going to defeat former President

Trump in November, she's badly mistaken.

My feeling is that the American public in general is tired of all of this name-calling by both parties. What the "regular voter" wants is to tell the two parties this: It's the economy, stupid.

MARK WALKER
Yorba Linda

Vital transit link for Inglewood

Re "Inglewood needs the people mover, Rep. Waters," Opinion, July 26

It is unbelievable that a leader from California would oppose a project to reduce car reliance.

When the Rolling Stones played at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood on July 13, I worked diligently to find a transit option. After the show, I wanted to avoid getting in my car and navigating across Los Angeles.

The downtown Inglewood K Line station is about 1.5 miles from SoFi Stadium, making it impossible to utilize a transit system that the public has spent billions to build.

Rep. Maxine Waters' (D-Los Angeles) opposition to federal funding for the people mover linking Inglewood's major venues to the K Line is a long-term consequential blunder by a public official. Thanks to Inglewood Mayor James T. Butts for supporting this important transportation project.

LEE MEISTER
San Pedro

Let the professional sports teams that play at SoFi Stadium and the Intuit Dome pay for the Inglewood people mover.

They will lose revenue from their outrageous parking fees, but it will help the public not just for the 2028 Olympics, but also for the future events at SoFi and Intuit.

Laurie Kelson
Encino

::

I will not go to Inglewood unless passing through on the way to LAX.

There are events I would like to attend at the Kia Forum, SoFi Stadium and the Intuit Dome, but the traffic and parking situation is so horrendous and so expensive that I'm OK missing one more Rolling Stones concert or even the 2028 Summer Olympic events in Inglewood. I was hoping the Metro system would eventually have a direct link to these venues.

Waters is worried that the "last mile" link will not help residents. What about the money those of us from the rest of Southern California spend when we want dinner or shopping before or after an event?

A closed-off system will eventually rot and die. Please don't kill off Inglewood, Rep. Waters.

William Turner
Sherman Oaks

When crowds kill the charm

Re "Tourists are a plague. I was part of the problem," Opinion, July 27

I too was a part of the overtourism problem.

For 45 years I produced travelogue movies. Like Rick Steves, my message was to just get on the plane and go. But I never could have imagined the explosion of travel.

In 1985, I made a film on an Alaska cruise that two ships with 600 passengers apiece made each week. Today, at least 20 ships make the journey weekly, many with passenger capacities of 3,000. The charm has vanished.

In 1974, I spent eight

weeks in Venice, Italy, making a film. To say it was magical is an understatement. Today, St. Mark's Square is more like Times Square.

But the saddest thing is nobody is looking at what they came to see. On my first trip to Paris in 1968, I stood in front of the Mona Lisa and reveled in the moment. Today nobody looks at the Mona Lisa — they are too busy taking selfies, never spending a moment looking at the painting itself.

Yes, the Mona Lisa is Instagram ready. But what did you see? What did you learn? How were you moved?

DOUG JONES
Los Angeles

::

We are octogenarians who have traveled internationally, as tourists, for most of our lives. Last month we were on a tour of Scandinavia, a place where neither of us had been.

We started in Bergen, Norway, and arrived two days before the tour began. We like to explore destinations by ourselves for a few days and get over jet lag, so we walked all over Bergen.

We like to see how people live in whatever cities we visit. We ate at local restaurants, talked with the locals and wandered around, discovering what life is like "off the grid."

The rest of our trip, an organized tour that included Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Estonia, gave us a great exposure to life and culture in that part of the world. Yes, there were lots of tourists in the usual places, but going out by ourselves on foot gave us marvelous experiences in places we never knew.

When we can no longer do these faraway trips, we will always adventure to learn something new — even in our own wonderful city.

FRIMA AND MICHAEL
TELERANT
Westwood

HOW TO WRITE TO US

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OP-ED



VICE PRESIDENT Kamala Harris and former President Barack Obama at the White House in 2022.

Obama symbolized hope. Harris has to be an avatar of give-'em-hell

The Democrats' leading presidential candidate faces enormous pressure to take her party across the finish line

By Erin Aubry Kaplan

OBJECTIVELY, IT IS AN amazing progression in a short window of time. In 2008, Barack Obama, a Democrat, became the nation's first Black president. Sixteen years later, Kamala Harris is poised to become the first Black woman chosen by the party to be its candidate for president.

But much has changed in 16 years.

The defining significance of Obama's historic candidacy, its brand, was hope. Just the symbolism of a Black man in the White House moved millions of us to think differently about ourselves. Harris' ascension is no such symbol. She becomes the Democratic candidate because as vice president, she's been handed the baton by an aging white man forced to step aside because of worries about his ability to get the job done.

In other words, Harris' color is not nearly as important as her ability to do that job, not just to take President Biden's place on the ticket but to take Democrats across the finish line. She must salvage the desperate, dwindling hope that the whole nation can regain its moral footing in the onslaught of MAGA recklessness and self-righteousness that's eroding America's shaky democratic foundations.

That's a much bigger task than Obama had. During his candidacy the country also faced a crisis, the housing meltdown that led to the Great Recession. Certainly that shifted votes in Obama's favor, though the hope that was at the core of his campaign retained its power. When he won, the joy and optimism that erupted around the country was about the triumph

of "better angels," not "it's the economy, stupid."

What Harris is facing is an existential crisis that may paralyze as much as it motivates. This election proceeds not from joy or hope, but from an anxious question: Can we ever again assume that whoever is in charge — not just Democrats — will be people of good will? There's growing cynicism that Republican tricks, from voter suppression laws to a stacked Supreme Court that carves out criminal immunity for Trump, will just keep coming, regardless of the vote. Elections simply won't matter.

Harris seems well-matched to this fraught moment. She wants to fight. Trump has made fighting central to his campaign, especially after the assassination attempt, although MAGA has always been belligerent, in-your-face, sneeringly dismissive of "wokeism." Harris, a former prosecutor, is already in battle mode. She knows Trump's type, as she's been telling rally audiences, because she took on predators, fraudsters and abusers. She's offering what the Democrats have badly needed: an avatar not of hope, but of give-em-hell.

Harris seems to relish the prospect. All of her past missteps and public struggles to convey a core ideology, as vice president and before that in her failed 2020 presidential campaign effort, may be forgiven if

she leads with an obligation to punch back.

That it would be a Black woman punching back will be that much more satisfying. Trump is a racist who holds Black women in contempt, especially those who have dared to criticize or hold him accountable — Fulton County Dist. Atty. Fani Willis, federal Judge Tanya Chutkan, U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters.

Harris would have a platform like no other. As a presidential candidate she would be on equal footing with Trump, his counterpart. And as a Black woman she would ably carry the legitimate anger of so many Americans — women, gay and trans people, poor people and immigrants — all of whom find themselves caught in the MAGA crosshairs.

For all the grimness and high stakes of the moment, there is undeniable magic. Harris had a golden career in California, rising from D.A. of San Francisco to state attorney general to U.S. senator with relative ease. She branded herself as a progressive, and while critics have taken issue with that, especially because of her actions as a prosecutor, she is, at the very least, a solid Democrat.

Her 2020 primary campaign stalled her ambition only briefly; Biden chose her as his running mate, the first Black and South Asian woman to be on the presidential ticket of a major party.

Having broken that barrier, she is set to break another in a sudden twist of fate.

That drama of it all does excite certain segments of the party, especially Black women, a key constituency that must turn out in order for the Democrats to have any chance at winning in November. The "Black woman phone call" that happened right after Biden's withdrawal announcement catalyzed Harris' unprecedented groundswell of financial support. The Zoom gathering, hosted by the organization Win with Black Women, raised \$1 million in an hour, harking back to the infectious racial pride of Obama's first campaign. A friend of mine who was on the call, which grew to include thousands more women than expected, described it as "truly something to behold."

I have no doubt that it was. But I can't forget that Harris is being rapidly embraced not so much for who and what she is, but for who and what she is not: Trump, and in a different way for different reasons, Biden. She is the likely Democratic nominee who will become a lifeline for us all, for progress itself, and if being of color makes her a better lifeline, that's a plus.

But of course we don't know if it will be. What hasn't changed over the last 16 years, what has only gotten uglier, is that race and gender divide.

There's a lot of onslaught coming. Whether we beat it back depends less on Harris than on the "we" that is democracy's real foundation.

ERIN AUBRY KAPLAN is a contributing writer to Opinion and a columnist at Capital & Main.

With Supreme Court reform ideas, Biden is playing the long game

HARRY LITMAN

THE FIRST and easiest question to answer with respect to the package of Supreme Court reform measures that President Biden announced Monday is whether there is any hope of their passage or enactment by the current Congress.

There is not. With Congress hopelessly polarized and the Supreme Court hopelessly politicized, there is no chance of action on Biden's proposals in the coming months, and the administration well understands that point.

Indeed, before Biden even unveiled them in a speech at the LBJ Presidential Library in Texas, Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson pronounced them "dead on arrival."

Why then choose now to introduce them? After all, Biden has steadfastly resisted pleas from progressives to try to reform the court — and he has been under pressure since he took office, because President Trump had just tilted the court to the right by appointing three justices.

The straightforward explanation for the timing is to make the Supreme Court, now quite possibly the most unpopular of all federal governmental institutions, a focus of the election, which would presumably nudge voters toward Vice President

Kamala Harris.

It was no surprise (and presumably exactly what Biden and Harris wished) when Trump came out with a strident defense of the court.

But the proposals shouldn't be dismissed as a mere political gesture. Biden and the Democrats are also playing the long game, looking in particular to make the court a campaign issue. Then if they win control of both chambers and the White House, they can portray their election as a mandate for substantial reforms.

Biden's proposals are in three basic areas. First, ethics, responding to the series of scandals involving eyebrow-raising or nakedly partisan conduct by Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito. Second, time of service and method of appointment, which Biden proposes be changed to 18 years per justice and a fixed allotment of two new justices per presidential term. And third, the court's recent, stunningly broad immunity opinion in the Jan. 6 Trump prosecution brought by the Justice Department.

Biden announced the reforms in a Washington Post op-ed that, interestingly, led with the immunity decision, which Biden wrote transgressed a bedrock principle of the nation: "No one is above the law."

Indeed it does, but Biden and Harris, who was quick to endorse the proposals, obvi-

ously have calculated that of all the court's recent unpopular moves, the immunity decision most offends the most American voters who might swing toward Harris.

The ethics provision of the Biden package probably has the strongest chance of passing. It is conspicuous that the Supreme Court justices — alone among government officials — get to make and apply their own rules on issues such as whether they can take or must disclose gifts from parties who may have an agenda with the court. Although the court adopted ethics rules for itself last fall, they have no teeth.

But in my view, the most important component of Biden's package is his proposal to change Supreme Court terms from lifetime to 18 years, and, with the consistent rhythm of that span, guarantee each president precisely two appointments.

The design of the reform is to obviate the Armageddon quality of current confirmation battles. Lifetime appointments create very high stakes, leading to carefully curated fairly young nominees who can serve 40 years or more and have enormous, longstanding influence, as with the relatively young cadre of Trump appointees.

Term limits would prevent the imbalance that results if one president makes many appointments and others make few.

Democrats are understandably frustrated at the bad luck — and GOP obstructionism — that allowed Republican presidents to choose six of the current nine justices, in a country in which more people identify as Democrats than as Republicans and in which Democratic presidential candidates have won the popular vote in seven of the last eight elections.

This proposal would do nothing to alleviate the current imbalance. Progressives had been pushing Biden to instead propose four additional seats on the court to undo the current uber-conservative hammerlock. The Constitution permits such an expansion, but the history of FDR's court packing plan and similar efforts obviously persuaded Biden that the approach would freight the package with political controversy and long odds that would diminish the clean appeal of the rest of the provisions.

As for the court, today's proposals only reinforce the grave loss of confidence it has brought on with its own overreaching. As a matter of raw power, it can continue on its path and remain oblivious to its many self-inflicted wounds. But Supreme Court history teaches that whatever its recognized authority in individual cases, it is untenable for it to operate indefinitely so against the grain of the American people.

As Alito said in an overheard comment, "one side or the other is going to win."

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Chatter about Josh Shapiro as a running mate displays antisemitism

LZ GRANDERSON

WE KNOW Vice President Kamala Harris, the likely Democratic nominee, has set an Aug. 7 deadline to announce a running mate. The question of whom she should pick dominates conversations among donors and political panels on TV. However, the starting point ought to be "what does she need to win?"



The very premise of this question points out the glaring difference between the two parties heading into November. While mocking Sen. J.D. Vance is entertaining, the reality is that he's a sideshow. If 34 felony convictions didn't hurt Trump in the polls, his vice presidential selection ultimately won't make a difference to voters either.

The stakes feel higher for Harris, as her selection will also reveal what the campaign believes she needs to do to win — to convince the movable middle to trust her.

As I've written in the past, I believe Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona should be the leading choice, primarily for his military experience. Sources have told me she is considering a governor, such as Kentucky's Andy Beshear, for their executive experience. And there are electoral college factors to consider: Pennsylvania's Gov. Josh Shapiro could potentially bring 19 electoral votes, if adding him to the ticket won over his home state — more than would presumably come with any other contender routinely mentioned.

What the Harris campaign believes she needs to win is a complicated question.

But one fight that the campaign *doesn't* need for victory is pretty clear, and it comes up in response to Shapiro's name.

"Every potential nominee for Vice President is pro-Israel," Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-N.Y.) posted on social media in response to a post that contained "#genocideJosh." "Yet only one, Josh Shapiro, has been singled out by a far-left smear campaign.... The reason he is treated differently from the rest? Antisemitism."

Torres is not wrong. When other contenders' names come up, their position on the war in Gaza is rarely the first topic discussed. And the fact that Shapiro is Jewish would seem to be a major reason his stance on the war is prominent in detractors' minds.

It's not as though the governor of Pennsylvania has had a big role in U.S. foreign policy, not even as much as any senator would have had. And yet the concerns over a "protest vote" mostly shadow him — the fear that a faction of Democratic voters would stay home on election day or would cast a symbolic vote for some write-in candidate, just to avoid endorsing a Harris-Shapiro ticket that is linked to the war in Gaza. Remember the Michigan Democratic primary? More than 100,000 voted "uncommitted" in response to the Biden administration's handling of the Gaza war.

For her part, Harris was not shy in calling out the atrocities directly to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel last week while also calling for a cease-fire. It is not radical to oppose the war or believe that Israel has largely been in the wrong as it has devastated Gaza. Yet there is an extremist wing of the party that goes further, pushing the notion that Shapiro should not be the vice president simply because he is Jewish. This is obviously nonsensical and antisemitic, and this kind of hateful thinking seems destined to smear Harris as well, because her husband, Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff, is Jewish.

For Trump, hurling disparaging remarks and slurs at an opponent is an essential messaging tool. When rioters chanted "Jews will not replace us" in the streets of Charlottesville, Va., back in 2017, he called the white supremacists "fine people." The incident inspired President Biden to run for the White House, and in 2020 he earned more votes than any other candidate in our nation's history.

However, four years later, some progressives are being called out for antisemitism — a reminder that Republicans haven't cornered the market on prejudice. You know, in case the flashes of antisemitism on our college campuses weren't enough of a hint.

Democratic leadership should not turn a blind eye to this. I'm glad Torres didn't. Wondering whether the Gaza war could affect voter turnout is a fair question, given the number of protest votes registered during the primary and how tight this race is expected to be. By all means, look closely at the records of vice presidential contenders (Jewish or not) to see where they stand on the Gaza war.

But singling out Shapiro because he is Jewish is not right and is not even good politics. It's simply acquiescing to antisemitism. Not unlike when the Senate decided to start having Judiciary Committee hearings for Supreme Court nominees after a Jewish man, Louis Brandeis, was nominated. Or when Marty Glickman and Sam Stoller, two Jewish American sprinters, were replaced on the U.S. 4x100-meter relay team at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin.

Harris' choice of a running mate will delight some supporters and bother others. Whomever she chooses, antisemitism has no place in the discussion.

@LZGranderson

Fentanyl's victims include the very young

[Fentanyl, from A1] number of fentanyl-related deaths, but public health experts say they are alarmed that more children below the age of 5 are dying or arriving in emergency rooms testing positive for the drug.

The number of drug overdoses nationwide has fallen for the first time in years, but the incidences of children overdosing has surged, doctors say, as they are exposed to opioids and drug paraphernalia at home or by accidental ingestion.

Although West Virginia has the highest fentanyl-related death rate, California has the most deaths overall, with 6,473 in 2022. Officials nationwide are struggling to come up with solutions to prevent young children from dying.

"If you have these children that are left in chaotic homes, in homes that have ... drugs around, that just increases the risk exponentially, particularly for these little vulnerable kids that explore their world by putting everything in their mouths," said Dr. Emily Rose, co-author of a study about recognizing and treating pediatric and adolescent opioid overdoses.

America's Poison Centers, which represents 55 accredited poison control centers in the U.S., reports a dramatic increase in fentanyl exposure in young children nationwide. In 2016, the centers received 10 reports of fentanyl exposure in children under age 6. That number was 539 in 2023.

Fentanyl can be prescribed by doctors in pill or patch form, though illegally it typically is smoked, injected or found laced in other drugs as a white powder.

Preliminary data from the California Department of Public Health show 11 fentanyl-related deaths occurred in the state in children younger than 5 during the first three quarters of 2023, the most recent statistics available. There were 10 deaths for all of 2022 and six fentanyl-related deaths in 2021.

In Kern County, where Ezekiel died, the rate of fentanyl-related deaths is higher than the 2022 state average: California had a rate of 0.77 deaths per 100,000 residents, while Kern County had 14 deaths, according to the county's annual child death report.

Brynn Carrigan, the county's public health director, said she expects the number of 5-year-olds getting sick or dying from fentanyl to be even higher in the coming report, which will be released in October.

"I have an idea that there's going to likely be some of our much younger children that are impacted by fentanyl in this next report," Carrigan said. "They're completely innocent victims. I mean, you can't educate a 2-year-old not to touch fentanyl that maybe their parent has left lying around. It becomes a very difficult issue to solve."

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Lora said she knew Ezekiel was going to be special from the moment he was born. As she drove herself to the hospital, he just couldn't wait. She gave birth alone in the car.

Ezekiel loved to play in the mud and spend time outdoors with his siblings. He wasn't old enough to play a sport, but she always pictured him in a baseball uniform. She called him her "little caveman." He had long brown hair and ran around naked because he didn't like wearing clothes. He loved the "Toy Story" movies and the character Buzz Lightyear.

Lora said she was with Rivera for seven years, and their relationship experienced tense moments. They finally separated and split time with their children by verbal agreement. Lora lived with her sister, and Rivera lived at his parents' home on a quiet street on the east side of Bakersfield.

It was a hot Saturday afternoon when Lora met Rivera in his driveway. She spotted a bulge in his sock and demanded to know what it was. He told her it was money, she said, but she saw a baggie of drugs fall out.

Lora became incensed and demanded that her sons go home with her. Rivera refused and went inside. Rivera's mother called the Kern County Sheriff's Department because of their loud



Photographs by JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

THE GRAVESTONE for 2-year-old Ezekiel Rivera, who died last month, is unveiled in a cemetery in Bakersfield this month.

'You can't educate a 2-year-old not to touch fentanyl.'

— BRYNN CARRIGAN, Kern County's public health director

arguing. Lora told the two deputies who responded that Rivera had drugs in his possession and that her boys were in the house. The deputies, Lora said, declined to search the home or get the children out for her.

"I felt like they just didn't want to hear me," she said.

Humberto Guizar, Lora's attorney, said authorities "had an obligation right there — whether they knew there was drugs or not — to let her take her child away. But by not letting her take her child away, they caused the death of Ezekiel."

The Sheriff's Department and county attorney declined to comment, citing pending litigation.

Ezekiel and Ermias remained at their father's until June 5, 2023, when authorities responded to a call of a toddler who had overdosed, according to a probable cause declaration in Rivera's

criminal case. It was first reported by the Bakersfield Californian.

The call came in about 11 p.m. By the time law enforcement arrived, Rivera was gone, Kern County detectives said.

A surveillance system inside the home captured the last moments of Ezekiel's life.

At 1:41 a.m., according to the probable cause declaration, the little boy was seen entering Rivera's room. At 3:50 p.m., Rivera came out of the room carrying Ezekiel's body, which appears lifeless, before returning him to the room.

Ezekiel's grandfather found the boy's body about seven hours later, according to the declaration.

Inside Rivera's room, Kern County detectives found two pipes used for smoking narcotics. They photographed residue on a "low standing piece of furni-

ture."

Rivera was arrested Aug. 3 on an unrelated warrant. He admitted to detectives that he had used fentanyl in the room where Ezekiel died, snorting it off the furniture. Rivera told detectives that he found Ezekiel unresponsive at least one or two hours before he carried the 2-year-old out of the room. He said he was scared and didn't believe calling for medical aid would have helped his son.

Rivera, 24, acknowledged that he was "aware of the dangers of fentanyl and the potential for overdose," according to the declaration.

Lora said she got a call from one of Rivera's neighbors and learned Ezekiel had overdosed. She raced over to the house.

Then she saw Ezekiel come out in a body bag.

She cradled Ermias — whose eyes, she said, were red and puffy. She eventually took him to the hospital, where he tested positive for fentanyl.

Lora is suing Kern County and its Sheriff's Department, saying they failed to protect Ezekiel when she begged to get her boys out of Rivera's home.

"If they would have just

sat there and listened to a crying mother ... I would still have my son," Lora said.

In January, the Kern County district attorney's office charged Rivera with one felony count of first-degree murder and one felony count of willful child cruelty. He has pleaded not guilty and is being held on \$1-million bail.

His family declined to comment. Rivera's lawyer did not return a request for comment.

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A study published in March in the Journal of the American College of Emergency Physicians Open acknowledged the recent increases in pediatric and adolescent opioid fatalities due to "accidental ingestions, prescription misuse, and household exposure."

"Historically, opioid overdose has been associated with adults, but trends show an increasing incidence among pediatric patients," the study says. "Opioids are the most common cause of fatal poisonings in young children and represent a significant public health challenge."

Rose is a co-author of the study and an associate professor of clinical emergency medicine at the USC Keck School of Medicine.

The drug decreases the ability to breathe, Rose said. An adult can become hypoxic in a matter of minutes, but for a child, it can happen in less than one. Naloxone, which can reverse an opioid overdose, must be administered quickly.

In the last five years, she said, she's seen more young children coming into the hospital with fentanyl overdoses. The youngest patient she treated who tested positive for fentanyl was 2 months old.

"It's our duty as a society to protect the most vulnerable group of us," she said. "It's absolutely shocking and horrifying."

A bill authored by state Sen. Dave Cortese (D-San Jose) asks the California Department of Public Health to monitor trends of fentanyl-related deaths among those ages 5 and younger and develop guidance to distribute information to local health departments on how to protect children from fentanyl exposure.

Senate Bill 908, Cortese said, would allow for a multi-agency approach — such as those charged with family services and child welfare — on how to navigate situations such as family reunification when a parent has a history of substance abuse. The bill has passed in the Senate and currently awaits a fiscal review.

Cortese said in an interview that the fentanyl overdose death of 3-month-old Phoenix Castro pushed him to introduce the bill.

Phoenix and her family lived in San Jose. She died May 13, 2023, from methamphetamine and fentanyl while in her father's care, according to the Santa Clara County district attorney's

office. In court, prosecutors said the crime lab found fentanyl on the infant's onesie, including on the snaps, according to the Bay Area News Group.

The home she lived in was "littered with opioids," the district attorney's office said. A baby bottle was found next to glass pipes.

Her father, David Anthony Castro, is facing a felony count of child endangerment with a special allegation of causing the infant's death and a misdemeanor count of possession of a controlled substance, said Deputy Dist. Atty. Maria Gershenovich. Castro has pleaded not guilty.

In November, the Santa Clara County district attorney's office charged two parents with murder after their 18-month-old daughter, Winter, died from ingesting fentanyl and methamphetamine. The county coroner's office found the toddler's "fentanyl blood concentration" to be more than 14 times the fatal amount.

More recently, 1-year-old Justin Bulley died in February from the "effects of fentanyl" while in custody of the Los Angeles County child welfare system, during an approved visit with his mother, according to Justin's father.

According to the medical examiner's investigation, there were "several versions" as to what happened, but Justin's mother said she'd been drinking alcohol, and Justin's grandfather had been smoking fentanyl. The grandfather told officials that the child had an "interaction with fentanyl at some point."

This month, twin 3-year-old boys died after being exposed to drugs laced with fentanyl in their Canoga Park home, according to Los Angeles County authorities. Prosecutors have charged their mother with murder and child abuse.

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On June 5, a year after his death, Ezekiel's family gathered at the Hillcrest Memorial Park cemetery in Bakersfield for the unveiling of his gravestone. He was buried beside his 37-year-old uncle, who died before he was born.

Paper pinwheels were unmoving in the hot, still afternoon. Photos of Ezekiel decorated a tower of white balloons. Family members and friends wore shirts memorializing the little boy. After her son's death, Lora had a portrait of him tattooed on her thigh.

She crouched beside EvaRose and Ermias as the two pulled away a blanket, revealing a black gravestone with Ezekiel's name and photo. Gasps and sobs rang out from the small crowd.

The image on the headstone is one of Lora's favorites. She remembers, she said, giving Ezekiel a simple instruction before snapping his picture: Blow me a kiss.

And there he is, etched in stone, pursing his lips to make his mother smile.



SOLUNA LORA held a gravestone-unveiling ceremony this month at the Hillcrest Memorial Park cemetery in Bakersfield for her son Ezekiel, who loved the "Toy Story" movies and one of the films' main characters, Buzz Lightyear.

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ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

FARM MANAGER Jose Pineda pauses while tending to young pistachio trees near Corcoran, Calif., in 2023.

Farmers fight efforts to reduce groundwater use

In the Tulare Lake subbasin, they are challenging a state crackdown on chronic overpumping. A judge gives growers a temporary reprieve.

By IAN JAMES

With long-term declines in groundwater levels putting thousands of domestic wells at risk and causing the ground to sink in parts of the San Joaquin Valley, state regulators are moving forward with efforts to force local agencies to take stronger steps to begin to rein in chronic overpumping by California's agriculture industry.

But these efforts have recently run into complications as growers in one area, the Tulare Lake subbasin, are suing to challenge state officials' decision to intervene by placing the area on probationary status — a step that's called for under California's groundwater law when local water managers fail to come up with adequate plans to curb declines in water levels.

The State Water Resources Control

Board's attempt to intervene was slowed this month when a judge in Kings County issued an order temporarily putting on hold the state's determination and delaying a requirement that farmers begin measuring and reporting how much groundwater they pump.

"We're fighting for everybody in Kings County, and we're fighting for everybody in the state of California," said Dusty Ference, executive director of the Kings County Farm Bureau, which sued the state in May over the board's decision.

Ference said his group aims to overturn the state's decision and reject measures that farmers view as unreasonable, damaging to the local economy and "overreaching" beyond the requirements of the state's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, or SGMA.

"We think that it will set precedent," Ference said. "We hope that the state more carefully considers whether or not to place a subbasin on probation, and understands that their decisions have real consequences up and down the state."

The extent to which the case might hinder state-led efforts to manage groundwater will depend on upcoming court hearings.

In the meantime, state officials took a step toward intervening in another part of the San Joaquin Valley, announcing Thursday that they are recommending the state water board also place the Kern County subbasin on probation. They said the area's local plans don't adequately address chronic lowering of groundwater levels, sinking land or impacts to water quality, and that a lack of coordination among 20 lo-

[See Groundwater, B2]

Origins of Flamin' Hot Cheetos is focus of suit

Former employee who says he invented the spicy snack is suing Frito-Lay for fraud.

By SANDRA McDONALD

The man who says he invented Flamin' Hot Cheetos is suing his former employers for fraud, defamation and other violations, saying he was harmed when Frito-Lay and PepsiCo denied his role in creating the popular hot snack.

The 62-page lawsuit by Richard Montañez references a 2021 Los Angeles Times article that challenged his claim to be the godfather of the spicy junk food. The article cited chronological inconsistencies in Montañez's story, archival proof of the release of test products, and comments by Frito-Lay executives.

"For decades, [Frito-Lay] recognized Mr. Montañez as the creator of Flamin' Hot Cheetos," the lawsuit says.

In the 2021 article, however, Frito-Lay said in a statement, "None of our records show that Richard was involved in any capacity in the Flamin' Hot test market." The company added, "That doesn't mean we don't celebrate Richard, but the facts do not support the urban legend."

The lawsuit lays out Montañez's version of the story, in which he took a batch of unflavored Cheetos back to his home kitchen to experiment with different seasonings. According to the lawsuit, he took inspiration from elote, a traditional Mexican street food.

"Armed with nothing but a \$3 tie, prototype and entrepreneurial spirit, he requested — and received — a meeting with none other than Frito-Lay/PepsiCo CEO himself, Roger Enrico," the lawsuit says. "They loved it."

Montañez met resistance working with the research and development team while creating a spicy seasoning for mass production, [See Flamin' Hot, B4]



RYAN MILLER Invision/Associated Press

RICHARD MONTAÑEZ alleges "deep-seated racism" in the company's denial of his role as creator.

9 ex-Rosemead High students sue, allege sex abuse by district employees

They are the second group to claim that the school district failed to protect them.

By NATHAN SOLIS

A second group of former Rosemead High School students has sued the El Monte Union High School District over the sexual abuse they allege they experienced as minors at the hands of their teachers, athletic coaches and other employees.

Nine women filed suit in Los Angeles County Superior Court, alleging abuse that



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

THE LATEST suit by former students accuses the El Monte Union High School District of negligence.

took place from 1992 to 2003, when the women were teenagers.

Their complaint last week comes two months after three other women sued the school district, alleging a culture that allowed and protected sexual abusers at the school between 2005 and 2011. These women alleged that teachers and district employees groomed their victims, and that administrators did not report the allegations to police when the students came forward with them, according to the lawsuit.

The nine women claim in the new lawsuit that their

[See Students, B5]

County proposal for ethics panel leaves some reformers cold

Measure would also expand the Board of Supervisors. A critic calls it 'half-baked.'

By DAVID ZAHNISER

For the last month, the big news out of Los Angeles County government has been the plan to expand the Board of Supervisors, which has divided political allies and produced heated debates at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration.

That proposal, planned for the Nov. 5 ballot along with several other changes to county government, has come under fire from some on the board, who warn that it still has an unknown price tag.

Critics say the proposal, which would expand the board from five to nine members, comes with a sweetener to make it irresistible to voters: a new ethics commission charged with rooting out wrongdoing.

Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, who was co-author of the proposal, described it as "once-in-a-century ethics reform." She also argued that, given the events of recent years, an ethics watchdog is long overdue.

Last year, former Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas was convicted on corruption charges involving votes he

cast at the county. (He has filed an appeal.) The year before that, real estate developer Arman Gabay was sentenced to four years in prison for giving bribes to Thomas M. Shepos, a high-level official in the county's real estate division. (Shepos was also convicted.)

Then, there are the many criminal cases targeting Los Angeles City Hall, which have resulted in the convictions of two former council members, a deputy mayor, a former city commissioner and several others.

Horvath said that better enforcement of laws regulating campaign fundraising, lobbying and conflicts of interest would help rebuild public confidence. She also pushed back on the idea that the new ethics commission is an enticement to get voters to expand the board.

The package of government changes, including the establishment of an elected countywide executive, is "not just individual improvements," Horvath said. "They collectively aim to disrupt the status quo and better serve all Angelenos," she said.

Some aren't quite as excited about the rollout of the new ethics commission — including groups that are generally supportive of these types of changes.

Sean Morris, who handles ethics and accountability [See Ethics, B4]

Carmel school let antisemitism fester, U.S. says

Probe finds instances of swastika drawings and Hitler references. District OKs 10 steps.

By VERONICA ROSEBOROUGH

Jewish students at a Carmel Unified School District campus were subjected to pervasive, antisemitic harassment over a three-year period, exposed to repeated swastika graffiti in bathrooms and on desks, a reference to Adolf Hitler and

a verbal threat targeting Jewish people, a federal civil rights investigation found.

The incidents "potentially exposed hundreds of students to antisemitic imagery," resulting in a "hostile environment" — one that the district failed to eliminate, investigators with the Department of Education wrote in a 13-page letter to the district Friday outlining the violations and remedies.

Although the district did not admit it violated the law, school officials entered into an agreement with the department's Office of Civil Rights to address campus

adherence to Title VI — a federal law that prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin, including shared ancestry. The district will take 10 actions, including revising policies for reporting and responding to harassment complaints and training administrators to investigate and document complaints.

"I am fully committed to creating a safe environment for all of our students, as a school needs to be a place for growth and learning, not trauma," Carmel Unified Supt. Sharon Ofek said in a statement. "As a Jewish-

American, I fully support this major step towards ensuring that antisemitism is completely eradicated from the classroom, culture, and overall learning environment. To the victims whose unfortunate experiences led to the OCR investigation, know that you are not alone, and I am always here to support you."

The Carmel Unified case is one of about 32 open investigations into discrimination based on national origin in California schools, according to the education department database.

[See Carmel, B5]

Farmers fight state's groundwater clampdown

[Groundwater, from B1] cal agencies has also been problematic.

The state water board plans to decide whether to intervene in Kern County at a Feb. 20 meeting, after considering whether to take similar measures in two other areas of the San Joaquin Valley, the Kaweah and Tule subbasins. They are among six areas where the state has declared local groundwater plans inadequate.

"All of these basins face urgent and irreversible harms occurring due to groundwater overdraft," said Natalie Stork, assistant director of the board's Office of Sustainable Groundwater Management.

A state analysis found that about 230 domestic wells could go dry during a drought, based on water level trends in the Kern subbasin, she said. The analysis also found that plans presented by local agencies could allow for water levels to decline so dramatically that more than 400 wells would go dry.

Land subsidence caused by groundwater depletion is also a major concern, with the ground having sunk as much as 2.4 feet in some areas since 2015, Stork said. Where the ground is sinking at such rates, it can damage canals, roads, levees and other infrastructure.

As water levels drop, harmful contaminants such as arsenic and nitrate can also become more concentrated in water pumped from wells, posing health hazards.

After state regulators determined in 2022 that the Kern groundwater plans were inadequate, the 14 so-called groundwater sustainability agencies in the area began splitting and forming new local agencies, Stork said. There are now 20 different groundwater agencies in the area, and they recently submitted seven separate revised plans.

"I think that is a reflection of the management challenges in this subbasin," Stork said.

She said some local agencies have also recently split in the Tulare Lake and Tule



CRAIG Branco owns an olive orchard and a rental home near Visalia, Calif., where two wells went dry in 2021.

regions over the last few months, "which is concerning since this will make coordination more challenging."

Stork noted, however, that although having a large number of separate agencies and plans may complicate coordination, it's allowed under the state's 2014 groundwater law.

"Coordination is critical to sustainable groundwater management," she said. "Otherwise actions or decisions in one area could adversely impact another."

In another region, the Delta-Mendota subbasin, 23 separate local agencies recently got together and submitted a single plan covering the entire area, which Stork said is expected to improve coordination.

The state groundwater law, which was signed nearly 10 years ago, requires local agencies in many areas to develop groundwater plans and curb overpumping by 2040.

In parts of the Central Valley, state officials have repeatedly disagreed with local water officials about the pace at which pumping reductions should occur and the adequacy of measures to

protect drinking water supplies and combat land subsidence.

As the law's limits on pumping gradually take effect in the coming years, the restrictions are expected to require taking some farmland out of production in the Central Valley, requiring major changes in a farming region that produces vast quantities of nuts, fruits and other crops, as well as cattle and dairy products.

When Stork was asked during a conference call with reporters about how the Kings County court case could affect state efforts elsewhere, she said: "It only applies to the Tulare Lake subbasin, so it doesn't impact our work in other basins."

Edward Ortiz, a spokesperson for the state water board, said the agency's officials disagree with the court's temporary order suspending the requirement for well owners to report how much water they are pumping. He said this requirement is an important part of the probationary process and "protects groundwater resources for the benefit of all Californians."

The lawsuit over the decision to place the Tulare Lake region on probation was widely expected after the board's vote following a contentious debate in April. Farmers and representatives of local groundwater agencies had urged the state water board to postpone the intervention and give them more time to improve their plans.

But the five-member board found local plans didn't include adequate measures to address declines in water levels or the problem of sinking ground, which has repeatedly damaged levees.

Last year, the long-dry Tulare Lake, which was drained generations ago to serve agriculture, reappeared on thousands of acres of farmland. The lake then receded, and growers have continued relying on groundwater.

The area's large landowners, among them J.G. Boswell Co., pump groundwater to irrigate tomatoes, cotton, pistachios and other crops.

Ference, a citrus farmer, said agriculture generates about \$2 billion in gross rev-

enues each year in Kings County and provides 1 in 4 jobs.

"Agriculture funds this county and this community. And without it, Kings County becomes a ghost town very quickly," Ference said. "What's at risk is our ability to pump groundwater. And without the ability, then we lose our entire foundation."

He said growers agree that changes will need to be made to achieve sustainability and meet the requirements of the groundwater law.

"But we have to make those changes in a way that doesn't decimate not only the agriculture industry but the community," Ference said.

The Kings County Farm Bureau is asking Superior Court Judge Kathy Ciuffini to issue a preliminary injunction that would put state intervention on hold while the case is heard.

Ference said the state water board's approach is "arbitrary and capricious."

"They've arbitrarily moved the compliance date from 2040 to today," he said. "We've not been given the

opportunity to implement a plan and even see if it's going to work."

He said the state plan to impose pumping fees of \$300 per well and \$20 per acre-foot of water pumped would be far too costly and would go toward "funding a police force with unmitigated authority."

Instead, those funds would be better used locally to build infrastructure to help recharge the aquifer, he said.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act "is designed for local control, and that's where it needs to stay," Ference said.

The state water board, he said, should "allow the process to work, allow us the time to work through implementing plans."

Others argue the state water board was right to put the area on probation.

"Locals have had years now to get their groundwater management plans correct," said Nataly Escobedo Garcia, water policy coordinator for the group Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability.

The lawsuit is concerning because it could impede efforts to move toward solutions, Escobedo Garcia said.

"I think unfortunately this could really slow down a lot of the progress we've been making as a state," she said.

Researchers have warned that plans prepared by local agencies would allow water levels to decline significantly between now and 2040, potentially putting thousands of wells at risk of going dry.

Scientists have also found that crops' water demands are growing because of rising temperatures driven by climate change, which is contributing to declines in aquifer levels.

"Our aquifers are still critically overdrafted. And while 2040 sounds really far away, there is a lot of work that has to go into aquifer recovery," Escobedo Garcia said.

She said further delays could put in jeopardy the region's ability to truly move toward sustainability by 2040, as the law requires.

Los Angeles Times

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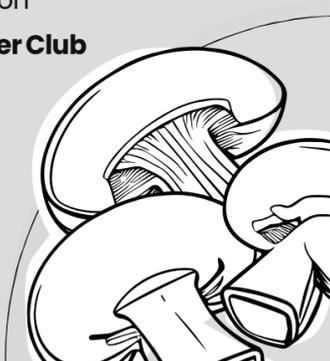
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THE LAWSUIT alleges that since 2017, the plan pays for smoke damage only if it is detectable to the unaided eye or nose of an average person rather than requiring lab testing. Above, a wildfire in Napa, Calif., in 2017.

State home insurer accused of inadequate fire coverage

Suit against FAIR Plan seeks to represent more than 365,000 policyholders.

By RUBEN VIVES

A class-action lawsuit against the California FAIR Plan Assn. accuses the state's insurance program of last resort of unlawfully selling policies with subpar coverage for fire and smoke damage.

The lawsuit was filed last week in Alameda County Superior Court on behalf of four California residents who seek to represent more than 365,000 FAIR Plan policyholders.

Funded by a pool of private insurers that write policies in the state, the FAIR Plan serves as backup insurance for people unable to obtain coverage from private sources, especially those in high-risk areas where companies are reluctant to provide coverage.

Over the last few years, the state insurer has seen a wave of new policyholders amid extreme and destruc-

tive wildfires that have caused insurance companies to leave the state or to stop renewing policies.

As of March, the FAIR Plan was exposed to \$340 billion in liabilities because of the high number of policies it had issued.

The Department of Insurance requires fire insurance policies to cover "direct physical loss" caused by fire and smoke.

But since 2017, the lawsuit alleges, the FAIR Plan began limiting coverage after state officials approved a standard policy that, among other provisions, paid for smoke damage only if it was detectable to the unaided eye or nose of an average person rather than requiring laboratory testing.

Dylan L. Schaffer, the attorney for the plaintiffs, said the changes created a policy that is unlawful and fails to provide mandatory minimum coverage for losses caused by a fire. It also places residents at risk to contaminants that may not be visible to the human eye.

"The illegal policy gives FAIR Plan and its member companies like State Farm

and Nationwide license to refuse to properly investigate and pay wildfire smoke damage claims," Schaffer said.

A spokesman for the California FAIR Plan Assn. said it does not comment on pending litigation.

Because of those changes, Schaffer said, thousands of wildfire claims have been improperly denied.

But the lawsuit also serves as an attempt to hold the Department of Insurance accountable for failing to enforce its own policies.

The lawsuit alleges that the department wrote a letter to the FAIR Plan in January 2021 saying the amended fire insurance policy was unlawful because it failed to provide "the mandatory minimum coverage required by California law."

The letter also told the FAIR Plan that it had obtained approval for its policy based on "misrepresentations" and "concealment of material facts," according to the lawsuit.

The letter directed the FAIR Plan to reform its policies, the lawsuit says, and

review claims it had rejected.

The lawsuit alleges that the results of the department's findings were once again confirmed in a May 2022 report on the FAIR Plan's handling of wildfire claims.

A spokesperson for the Insurance Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Schaffer, who is also litigating a separate suit on behalf of more than 1,000 homeowners in Los Angeles who say the FAIR Plan wrongly denied their claims, said the plan continues to sell the same policies despite the department's findings.

The lawsuit asks the court to order the association to comply with the law and increase the scope of wildfire coverage in all of its California policies.

"We're not asking for any money, we're just asking the California FAIR Plan to come into the light, to come in where all its member carriers are," Schaffer said. "They all investigate smoke damage, they determine smoke damage and they pay for reasonable amounts for remediation."

Thefts of circuit breakers surge; suspect arrested

Thousands of units were seized from reseller, Riverside County officials say.

By SANDRA McDONALD

Circuit breakers appear to have joined the list of potential targets for thieves across the state who prey on metals and infrastructure.

Riverside County sheriff's deputies started investigating an increase in circuit breaker thefts in February, the department said in a news release Wednesday. Deputies arrested 65-year-old Eugene Popa of Perris and seized thousands of allegedly stolen circuit breakers stacked in large storage bins across two locations.

Deputies allege that Popa purchased stolen circuit breakers from thieves who took them from new home construction sites or retail stores. He then sought to resell them online, deputies say.

In recent years, thieves have taken a growing amount of copper, bronze and other metals from streets, buildings and construction sites, hoping to sell the goods for scrap. The thefts have left some streets and bridges, such as Los Angeles' rebuilt 6th Street Viaduct, in the dark.

A Carson cemetery had more than 100 plaques stolen. Fire hydrants, with their brass innards, became such popular targets that utility companies changed their design so thieves could not access

their bolts as easily. Nearly a dozen century-old light poles in Pasadena have been ripped from the ground.

Now, circuit breakers appear to be drawing thieves' attention. The idea of buying a breaker that isn't new in its packaging, though, troubles Ronnie Gor, a licensed contractor and developer.

Secondhand circuit breakers like the ones Popa is accused of selling online can be dangerous. If repairing a circuit breaker in your home, you should stick to a new breaker and call a licensed electrician, Gor said.

"If something goes wrong, your life could be in danger," she said.

As a protection against theft during construction, circuit breakers typically go into homes that are almost finished and have locks or other forms of security already in place, Gor said. She's had tools and other equipment stolen from job sites, she said, but never circuit breakers.

Individual circuit breakers can cost \$7 to more than \$60, depending on amperage and model.

Paul Dashevsky of GreatBuildz, a site that helps connect consumers with contractors, said circuit breakers were stolen out of a home he was renovating for sale about 10 years ago, but none since then. "One day you have your electrical panel," he said, "and the next day you have no switches."

The cost to replace them was about \$400, he said. "Certainly it's frustrating," he said, but the loss didn't break the bank.



KEN TANNENBAUM Getty Images/iStockphoto

BUYERS should avoid secondhand circuit breakers, including stolen ones, a licensed electrician says: "If something goes wrong, your life could be in danger."

Men robbed stores, bragged on Instagram, officials say

Four L.A. County residents are arrested in connection with the armed incidents.

By CORINNE PURTILL

Four Los Angeles County men have been arrested in connection with a series of armed robberies of 7-Eleven stores and a CVS last year that they later allegedly posted about on Instagram.

In an indictment unsealed this month, federal prosecutors said Charles Christopher, 24, of Compton; D'Angelo Spencer, 26, of South Los Angeles; Jordan Leonard, 25, of Torrance; and Tazjar Rouse, 22, of Hollywood committed multiple armed robberies between Nov. 4 and Dec. 24.

Christopher and Leonard pleaded not guilty in U.S. District Court in downtown Los Angeles and were ordered jailed without bond. Their trial is scheduled for Sept. 17.

Rouse appeared last week in federal court in Kansas City, Mo., and Spencer was expected to be arraigned in federal court in Los Angeles. The indictment details the alleged robberies.

While at least one of the group would remain outside as a lookout or getaway driver, the indictment says, the others entered the stores during business hours, leaped over counters and took money from the cash registers that they stuffed into a black Nike

bag.

During the robberies, prosecutors allege, one defendant, usually Christopher or Leonard, pointed a gun at a store employee or customer and demanded their cellphones or wallets.

The indictment also alleges that the men made multiple Instagram posts after the robberies that depicted cash or goods matching those taken from the stores, and that showed them wearing clothes and with a gun apparently identical to those seen in surveillance video during the crimes.

On Nov. 4, the indictment says, Spencer, Christopher and two other men traveled to a South Los Angeles 7-Eleven in a blue BMW and fled with \$2,495.

Spencer's Instagram account, hours later, showed him next to a stack of cash, wearing black clothes and a black ski mask that matched the description of the clothing worn by a suspect during the robbery.

On Nov. 28, the indictment alleges, Christopher, Spencer and at least one other person stole cash and an employee's cellphone from a 7-Eleven store in South Los Angeles.

Later that day, Spencer's Instagram showed multiple shots of stacks of cash. Leonard's account also featured a photo of cash along with the caption "love my bros we go hit every time," while tagging the Instagram accounts of Christopher and Spencer, according to the indictment.

Two nights later, Leon-

ard posted a video on Instagram of a man's hand holding cash next to a Smith & Wesson semiautomatic pistol.

The gun in the video appeared to be the same model and finish and from the same manufacturer as the one captured in surveillance video in 7-Eleven robberies on Nov. 28, Dec. 11 and Dec. 24, according to an affidavit made public with the indictment.

On Dec. 11, the indictment says, Christopher, Leonard and Rouse entered a CVS in Hollywood, leaped over the counters and stole cash and prescription medication off the shelves.

The next day, Rouse allegedly made several Instagram posts advertising medication for sale and sent a direct message to another user stating, "I got syrup."

On Dec. 19, Spencer posted an Instagram video that showed a group of men standing near a cluster of prescription bottles and a black plastic trash bag.

"The prescription medication bottles were identical to the property taken during the CVS robbery; the black trash bag matched the one used to store the stolen medication during the CVS robbery; and the clothing worn by the depicted persons was identical to that worn by suspects during the crime," LAPD Officer James A. Douglas wrote in an affidavit.

All told, the men are alleged to have stolen \$7,617 in cash, the U.S. attorney's office said in a statement.

Man carried out fatal shooting from back of bus in S.F., prosecutors say

Jose Adrian Flores Garcia is accused of killing Alex Fernando Torres on June 18.

By NATHAN SOLIS

A 28-year-old man has been charged with murder in connection with a deadly drive-by shooting from the back of a city bus in San Francisco.

According to the San Francisco district attorney's office, the man, Jose Adrian Flores Garcia of San Francisco, was riding a Muni bus around 11 p.m. June 18 when his victim and two of their friends got on the bus.

The trio later got off at Mission Street and Silver Avenue and Flores Garcia remained aboard the bus, the district attorney's office said in a news release last week.

After the trio got off the bus, prosecutors allege, Flores Garcia opened a bus window, stuck his arm out and shot at the victim. He then allegedly yelled at the bus driver to drive away from the scene.

When San Francisco police arrived, they found the unarmed victim, who later died from his injuries, according to the D.A.'s office. The San Francisco medical examiner's office identified the victim as 23-year-old San Francisco resident Alex Fernando Torres.

Authorities have not revealed a motive behind the shooting.

Flores Garcia was arrested July 18 after an investigation by San Francisco police, according to the district attorney's office. He was charged with murder and discharging a firearm from a moving vehicle, with the allegations that he committed a drive-by murder

and personally and intentionally discharged a firearm, according to prosecutors.

"I would like to offer my condolences to the victim's family and friends," San Francisco Dist. Atty. Brooke Jenkins said in a statement. "The cold-blooded killing and use of public transportation to flee the scene in this case is chilling. Although nothing we do can bring the victim back, my office will do everything in our power to fight for justice in this case."

Flores Garcia is scheduled to appear in court Tuesday. Although charges have been filed against a suspect, prosecutors want members of the public to come forward with any tips about the shooting or the case. Contact the San Francisco Police Department Tip Line at (415) 575-4444 or text a tip to TIP411 and begin the text message with SFPD.



JEFF CHIU Associated Press

"THE COLD-BLOODED killing and use of public transportation to flee the scene in this case is chilling," Dist. Atty. Brooke Jenkins said. Above, a Muni bus.

County ethics proposal called 'half-baked'

[Ethics, from B1] ity issues for the advocacy group California Common Cause, sent the supervisors a letter warning that the ballot proposal lacks the necessary specifics, and safeguards, to ensure the new ethics commission is truly independent.

Some of the details surrounding the ethics proposal—which calls not just for a new commission but also an office of ethics compliance and the creation of an ethics compliance officer—would be worked out after the ballot measure is approved by voters.

Horvath has said she is committed to making the new ethics commission truly independent. At the same time, she has repeatedly reminded her colleagues that she is not interested in letting “the perfect be the enemy of the good.”

That argument has not swayed Rob Quan, an organizer with Unrig LA, which has pushed for anti-corruption measures at the city and county. Quan said the ballot language leaves open the possibility that members of the ethics commission could be removed by the supervisors for political reasons.

Quan told the supervisors that the ethics proposal “feels like cheap sweetener thrown in to punch up the other reforms.”

“To say these are half-

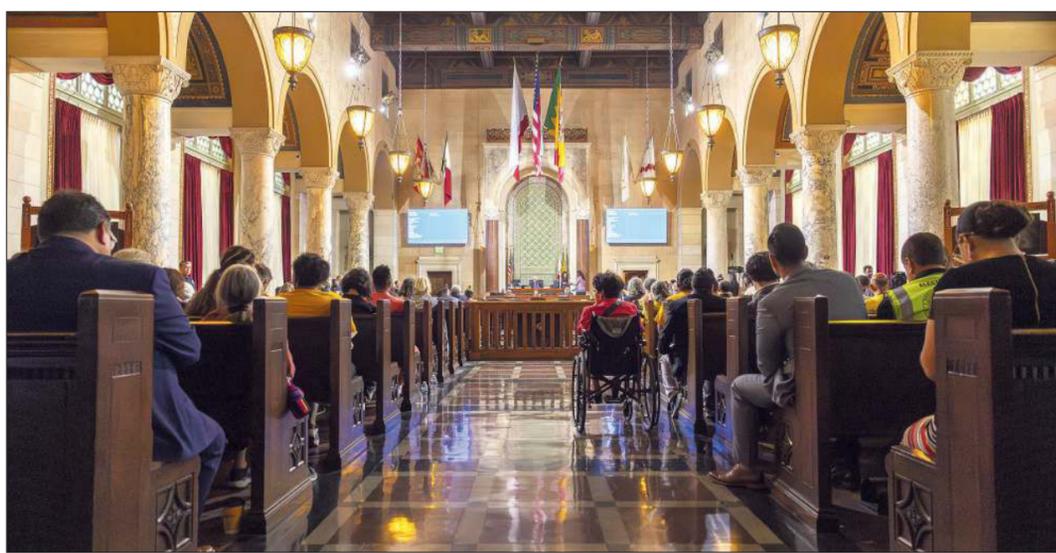
baked reforms is actually a gross overstatement,” he said. “This might be the least independent ethics commission ever imagined. Telling voters otherwise would be deeply misleading.”

Horvath’s proposal, which was co-authored with Supervisor Janice Hahn, has drawn opposition from someone keenly familiar with the formation of ethics agencies.

Former Los Angeles City Councilmember Ruth Galanter, who held office from 1987 to 2003, said she thinks a new county ethics commission would be a waste of money. Galanter signed the ballot argument opposing Charter Amendment H, which created the city’s ethics commission.

That measure, which was approved by voters in 1990, ushered in an array of changes, including public funding for political campaigns. It also delivered a major pay increase to L.A. City Council members, which Galanter opposed.

Galanter believes a new county ethics commission would simply duplicate the work of the Fair Political Practices Commission, which is charged with enforcing campaign finance and conflict-of-interest laws up and down the state. She said the FBI and the L.A. County district attorney, not



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

THE CITY of L.A. has had an ethics panel for years. Now, one is pitched as part of a county ballot measure.

the city Ethics Commission, have been responsible for uncovering major corruption at City Hall in recent years.

“We have the evidence,” she said. “They’ve had a city ethics commission for 30 years. And does it make anybody more ethical? It doesn’t appear to. It doesn’t work.”

Galanter has expressed interest in writing the ballot argument against the proposal for board expansion and the new ethics office.

Horvath, for her part, has been working to rebut the critics, pointing out that the work of the ethics office would go well beyond rooting out misconduct, taking on tasks such as educating voters and making election information more easily available.

Once the new office is up and running, Horvath said, it would ensure online access to an array of campaign material. For the county,



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

FORMER L.A. County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas was convicted on corruption charges involving votes he cast while in office. He has filed an appeal.

that would be a sea change.

The city’s ethics agency, which has dozens of employees and a budget of more than \$6 million, has made a huge amount of election ma-

terial — campaign mailers, radio ads, television commercials — accessible to the public on its website. Those aren’t available on the county’s site.

The proposal still needs one final board vote before heading to the ballot. Even if voters reject it this fall, the county could still create a new ethics office.

A defamation suit over origins of Flamin’ Hot Cheetos

[Flamin’ Hot, from B1] according to the lawsuit. “Dissatisfied that Mr. Montañez — a poor, uneducated Mexican plant worker and janitor — had successfully developed a new product, Frito-Lay’s R&D personnel completely shut out Mr. Montañez from the development process,” the lawsuit says.

Separately, a similar but unrelated Flamin’ Hot Cheet-

tos test product went out around 1990 in Detroit, Chicago and other markets in the central United States, managed by a separate division within Frito-Lay, the lawsuit says. Montañez was unaware of those test products, according to the complaint.

“Only recently has it become clear that the discriminatory and hostile treatment that Mr. Montañez en-

dured from Frito-Lay’s R&D group was intended to discourage or disadvantage the development of Mr. Montañez’s spicy Cheetos in order to heavily favor the Midwest division’s formulation, spearheaded by more traditional R&D employees,” the lawsuit alleges.

The lawsuit claims that Frito-Lay changed the way it talked about Montañez’s role in creating Flamin’ Hot Cheetos, “which can only be explained by some combination of a regime change, spite, and deep-seated racism.” The shift caused potential documentaries about Montañez’s life to be abandoned, the lawsuit says.

His version of the story was told in the 2023 film “Flamin’ Hot,” directed by Eva Longoria, and in two memoirs.

The Times article, which included 20 interviews of former Frito-Lay product development employees, said no one could recall Montañez’s story of a janitor pitching to the chief executive a new spicy snack that



SCOTT OLSON Getty Images

THE SUIT says Frito-Lay changed how it described Montañez’s role in creating Flamin’ Hot Cheetos.

would cater to the Latino community.

Montañez, who worked his way up the ranks to become a vice president of multicultural marketing and sales at PepsiCo, claims in the lawsuit that the company pushed him to make company-approved speeches telling his story to large audiences across the country while he worked there.

After he retired in 2019, he continued on to a second career as a motivational speaker and consultant.

Prior to publication of Frito-Lay’s remarks in The Times, the lawsuit says, Montañez booked 35 engagements per year at \$10,000 to \$50,000 per speech. “Since the article’s publication, and Defendants’ continued and relentless cam-

paigned to spread misinformation about him, Mr. Montañez has lost numerous partnerships, and seen a significant decrease in bookings, having booked just four speaking engagements this year,” the lawsuit alleges.

A Frito-Lay spokesperson said the company would not comment on pending litigation.

Shortly after the initial publication of The Times’ article in 2021, Montañez posted a video to his Instagram account, addressed to “all you young leaders.”

“I don’t care what room you’re in, there’s always somebody in the room that’s going to try to steal your destiny. They may even say you never existed,” Montañez says to the camera. “I want you to do this: Write down your history, because if you don’t, somebody else will. Remember that. And also remember this, the best way to destroy a positive message is to destroy the messenger. Never allow that to happen to you. I’m certainly not going to allow it to happen to me.”

Obituaries

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David Scott EATON
March 16, 1940 -
July 22, 2024

David Scott Eaton, 84, passed away peacefully at home on Monday, July 22, 2024. David was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, and settled in Los Angeles after completing his Navy service (mainly in Asia) in 1961.

After 27 years with the U.S. Postal Service, David retired in 2003 to “oversee” the remodeling of his Glendale home; scour book stores, swap meets, and toy soldier shops for must-have items; fish with his sons as often as they could; and, when Sheila retired, travel internationally to enjoy local food, drink and sites of interest in Japan, London, Spain and Portugal, and domestically to cruise the Mississippi River and visit nearby Civil War sites, enjoy opera in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and cheer for the UCLA football team at away games.

David is survived by Sheila, his wife of 47 years; three sons, Mike (Selina), Dave (Kristen), and Aaron (Shannon); sister Gloria Bean; brother J.C. (Cheryl) Eaton; his extended family, including in-laws, nieces and nephews; and many supportive friends and long-time neighbors. David was predeceased by his brother Bill.

No memorial services are planned, but we ask those who knew David to celebrate in ways unique to each, recall the times they shared and raise a glass, or many, of their favorite beverages to toast a life well lived. If you wish, donations in David’s memory may be made to the Pasadena Humane Society, 361 S. Raymond Ave., Pasadena CA 91105.

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Los Angeles Times

Hip-hop classic ‘The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)’ travels at the speed of light on its journey.

BY TYRONE BEASON

Temperatures on Venus hover around 870 degrees, but the second-closest planet to the sun got a little bit cooler recently when NASA showered it with Missy Elliott’s hit song “The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly).”

The feat took place at 10:05 a.m. July 12, when NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in La Cañada Flintridge beamed the song via a 112-foot-wide radio dish antenna near Barstow, Calif.

The signal crossed the solar system at the speed of light, covering a distance of about 158 million miles in just 14 minutes.

The transmitter, which is coincidentally also named Venus, is part of the Deep Space Network, or DSN. The network is an array of radio antennas that’s used to track, send commands and receive scientific data from spacecraft headed to the moon and elsewhere in the solar system.

NASA catapulted Elliott, who released the song on July 15, 1997, into the record



TYRONE BEASON Los Angeles Times

MISSY ELLIOTT performs during her space-themed Out of This World tour on July 12 at Crypto.com Arena, where she dressed as an astronaut.

books. It was the first hip-hop track, and only the second song ever, that NASA has radioed into space. The Beatles’ “Across the Universe” was the first.

The “Evening Star” — which is also known as the “Morning Star” when visible at sunrise — is the artist’s favorite planet.

“I still can’t believe I’m going out of this world with NASA through the Deep Space Network when ‘The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)’ becomes the first ever hip-hop song to transmit to space!” Elliott said in a NASA statement ahead of the event. “I chose Venus because it symbolizes strength, beauty, and empowerment and I am

so humbled to have the opportunity to share my art and my message with the universe!”

NASA’s collaboration with the futuristic artist arises as the agency prepares for two upcoming, uncrewed Venus missions aimed at gathering data about the mysterious planet, where an atmosphere made up mostly of carbon dioxide and clouds of sulfuric acid create unlivable conditions for Earthlings.

The partnership is fitting because “both space exploration and Missy Elliott’s art have been about pushing boundaries,” said NASA spokeswoman Brittany Brown, who initially reached

out to Elliott’s team.

The interplanetary music drop took place on the second night of Elliott’s swing through Los Angeles on her space-themed Out of This World tour at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, the first headlining tour of her three-decade career. And it came days after the famous Cancer treated fans to a free party in downtown L.A. to celebrate her birthday — complete with an air show in which choreographed drones took the shape of her face as well as a flying saucer.

Opening the concert for Elliott were longtime producing partner Timbaland, the rapper Busta Rhymes and singer Ciara.

The “Get Ur Freak On” singer wowed fans again with dancers in glow-in-the-dark costumes, projections of spaceships and an animation of Elliott dressed as an astronaut and grinning as she glides through the cosmos.

Fans were given wristbands with remote-controlled lights that flickered like stars to the beat.

At the close of the show, Elliott was lifted by a hydraulic riser with jets of smoke streaming around her, as if she were ascending to the heavens in the mother ship.

9 more allege sex abuse while at Rosemead High School

[Students, from B1] complaints were ignored or that school administrators conducted internal investigations that ultimately went nowhere.

One woman said she was targeted in the 1990s by multiple employees who made inappropriate actions toward her, but she couldn't find help from people she trusted at her school.

"It was my mentor that I turned to, and my mentor became my rapist," the woman said during a news conference last week at Carrillo Law Firm, which is representing the women in their lawsuit.

"Our voices should have mattered," she said.

She was surprised to see that the other women named in the lawsuit were younger than her, meaning that the alleged abuse did not end with her class and continued for years.

The women are identified as Jane Does in the complaint, and they asked to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation from any supporters of the men whose names appear in the complaint.

The Times' policy is not to name victims of sexual assault who do not want to be identified.

For years, some of the women did not realize that they were victims of sexual abuse until a startling arti-



SIX WOMEN, photographed in a way to protect their identities, appear at a news conference this month.

cle brought them back to what they had endured, they said.

The lawsuit cites "The Predator's Playground" by Business Insider journalist Matt Drange, a Rosemead High School alumnus, who initially reported on sexual abuse allegations made against his former journalism advisor. Drange's article described a culture of inappropriate actions openly

carried out by teachers and school employees — an environment in which teachers sent inappropriate text messages to their students and administrators ignored complaints for years.

Teachers told students that they should wear revealing clothes or that they had "bedroom eyes," according to the complaint.

The women accused the district of negligence, alleg-

ing it allowed the perpetrators to continue to abuse their victims. These men were "cloaked within the facade of normalcy" at the school district, according to the complaint.

The lawsuit seeks damages from only the school district, although it identifies a number of the teachers and staffers whom the women accused of abusing them. The El Monte Union High

School District did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

A lawsuit filed in May on behalf of three women named Rosemead High tennis coach Wing Chan, former teacher Alex Rai and former cross-country coach Eduardo Escobar as defendants, along with the school district.

Attorney Luis Carrillo said that the statute of limi-

tations for bringing criminal charges related to the alleged abuse has lapsed.

The district continues to contest the allegations, according to an internal email that was shared by the law firm during the news conference.

During the news conference, the women tearfully relayed how the abuse they say they experienced as students has affected their lives in a multitude of ways that they cannot fully describe.

As students, they said, they were worried about becoming pregnant by their teachers and mentors. They lived with fear and anxiety about calling unwanted attention to themselves. One of their abusers claimed that if they revealed what was happening, it would ruin his career and family life, according to the women.

The consequences of the school's grooming culture, the women said, have rippled through their lives for years.

One of the women added that there was "nothing more terrifying" than knowing that some of the men who target young girls are still employed at the school district.

Speaking to any current students at Rosemead High School who may be victims and not know it themselves, she said, "Please know that you're not alone."

Antisemitism led to 'hostile' climate at school, U.S. says

[Carmel, from B1]

The database shows the investigation opened in 2022, when a female student, who was not identified, alleged that the district discriminated against Jewish students by failing to "promptly and effectively" respond to reports of swastika drawings at an unidentified school. The student also said that the district retaliated against her after she alleged discrimination, though investigators did not find sufficient evidence to substantiate this claim.

Investigators found nine instances involving swastikas and one instance of the N-word in 2021 and 2022. During the 2023-24 school year, six more incidents of harassment were reported. Due to high staff turnover, the district said, no records could be found for the 2022-23 school year.

Although district officials investigated several of the incidents and sought disciplinary measures, they failed to prevent them from happening again. They also did not recognize and try to eliminate the hostile environment the incidents created for Jewish students, according to the letter.

In repeated instances of swastika graffiti in the bathrooms, staff reviewed handwriting samples and campus security recordings and monitored the bathrooms before and after class, but were unable to find the person responsible.

Swastikas were also found on desks, on rulers and on a student's skin, the investigators found. One student was suspended.

Though administrators visited classrooms to discuss hate speech, graffiti and the consequences for such actions, they did not discuss swastikas or the meaning behind them, the federal report said. The school also could not prove that it offered counseling to those who witnessed or were victimized by the harassment.

"All we received was an unhelpful five-minute spiel

in ... class," a student said during public comments at a 2022 Board of Education meeting. "The five-minute spiel just said that hate speech was happening and that the consequences would be suspension and possibly expulsion."

By that point, the school had formed an Anti-Hate Speech Task Force made up of students, staff and administrators. They held at least 10 meetings, set goals toward improving the school climate and sent out a race relations survey, which found that 40.5% of respondents were "upset" when they learned about the "racially motivated hate graffiti in bathrooms, on backpacks, and elsewhere."

However, the Office of Civil Rights found no evidence that tangible steps were taken to meet those goals or change the campus climate.

The incidents continued in the 2023-24 school year. The Office of Civil Rights received reports of more swastika graffiti and a Hitler reference, destruction of a movie poster and a verbal threat by a student targeting Jewish people that was not investigated, according to the letter.

As part of its agreement with the Department of Education, the district will address incidents of alleged harassment dating back to 2021, revise and disseminate its harassment policies and procedures, and develop a new way to track complaints. District officials have also agreed to educate students and parents on the types of discrimination that Title VI prohibits and how to report alleged violations, conduct a school climate survey with an eye toward antisemitism and come up with a plan to address the results.

On the administrative side, the district must train those responsible for investigating and resolving complaints on how to do so, and relay those responses to the Office of Civil Rights for the next two years.



OFFICIALS with the Carmel Unified School District agreed to take 10 actions to address Jewish students' complaints of antisemitic harassment on campus.

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Legal Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION (CEC) invites public comments on the Initial Study and Proposed Negative Declaration for amendments to the statewide 2025 Building Energy Efficiency Standards (codified in California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Parts 1 and 6), referred to as the "Proposed 2025 Amendments." These documents were prepared in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.

Project Description

The CEC is considering revisions to the statewide California Building Energy Efficiency Standards (also known as the Energy Code). The Energy Code establishes minimum energy efficiency levels for new buildings and for additions and alterations to existing buildings.

The Proposed 2025 Amendments focus on residential and nonresidential building enclosures, multifamily domestic hot water heating, and heat pumps for space heating and water heating. Additional topics include requirements for new pool and spa water heating systems, updated battery energy storage system requirements for specified buildings, industrial pipe insulation requirements, and additional electric-ready requirements. The amendments aim to improve clarity, consistency, and alignment with national standards and other parts of the California Building Standards Code.

Environmental Impact

CEC staff have determined that the proposed project does not have a significant effect on the environment.

Public Hearing

The public hearing to discuss and possibly adopt will be scheduled on September 11, 2024.

Document Availability

The documents will be available on July 29, 2024 at <https://www.energy.ca.gov/programs-and-topics/programs/building-energy-efficiency-standards/2025-building-energy-efficiency>. Submit comments by 5 p.m. on August 29, 2024.

Commenting

Comments can be submitted online, via email, or by mail.

Electronic commenting system:

<https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=24-BSTD-01>

Email: docket@energy.ca.gov (include docket number 24-BSTD-01 in the subject line)

Mailing Address: California Energy Commission, Docket Unit, Docket No. 24-BSTD-01, 715 P Street, MS-4, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Copies of the Initial Study and Proposed Negative Declaration and all documents incorporated by reference are available for review during business hours at California Energy Commission, 715 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

Public Participation

To receive notice of any updates to this proceeding, including notice of the public meeting when this topic will be discussed, please subscribe at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CNRA/signup/31895>.

The CEC's Office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs provides assistance with public participation. Contact the Public Advisor's Office at (916) 957-7910 or publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov.

Media Inquiries

Contact CEC's Media Office at (916) 654-4989 or mediaoffice@energy.ca.gov.

Legal Notices

SUMMONS (CITACION JUDICIAL)

Case Number (Numero del Caso): 23STFL11933

NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: (AVISO AL DEMANDADO):
Lori Ann Rosene

YOU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFF: (LO ESTA DEMANDANDO EL DEMANDANTE):
Daniel Joseph King

NOTICE! You have been sued. The court may decide against you without your being heard unless you respond within 30 days. Read the information below.

You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after this summons and legal papers are served on you to file a written response at this court and have a copy served on the plaintiff. A letter or phone call will not protect you. Your written response must be in proper legal form if you want the court to hear your case. There may be a court form that you can use for your response. You can find these court forms and more information at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), your county law library, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the filing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning from the court.

There are other legal requirements. You may want to call an attorney right away. If you do not know an attorney, you may want to call an attorney referral service. If you cannot afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services from a nonprofit legal services program. You can locate these nonprofit groups at the California Legal Services Web Site (www.lawhelpcalifornia.org), the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), or by contacting your local court or county bar association. NOTE: The court has a statutory lien for waived fees and costs on any settlement or arbitration award of \$10,000 or more in a civil case. The court's lien must be paid before the court will dismiss the case.

¡AVISO! Lo han demandado. Si no responde dentro de 30 días, la corte puede decidir en su contra sin escuchar su versión. Lea la información a continuación.

Tiene 30 DIAS DE CALENDARIO después de que le entreguen esta citación y papeles legales para presentar una respuesta por escrito en esta corte y hacer que se entregue una copia al demandante. Una carta o una llamada telefónica no lo protegen. Su respuesta por escrito tiene que estar en formato legal correcto si desea que procesen su caso en la corte. Es posible que haya un formulario que usted pueda usar para su respuesta. Puede encontrar estos formularios de la corte y más información en el Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California (www.sucorte.ca.gov), en la biblioteca de leyes de su condado o en la corte que le quede más cerca. Si no puede pagar la cuota de presentación, pida al secretario de la corte que le de un formulario de exención de pago de cuotas. Si no presenta su respuesta a tiempo, puede perder el caso por incumplimiento y la corte le podrá quitar su sueldo, dinero y bienes sin más advertencia.

The name and address of the court is: (El nombre y dirección de la corte es):
Stanley Mosk Courthouse
111 N. Hill Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney, or plaintiff without an attorney, is: (El nombre, la dirección y el número de teléfono del abogado del demandante, o del demandante que no tiene abogado, es):
Michael L. Whitmarsh
1900 Avenue of The Stars, Suite 1850
Los Angeles, CA 90067
310-552-3505

Date: (Fecha) November 11, 2023

David W. Slayton Clerk (Secretario)
L. Murillo Deputy (Adjunto)

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JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NAXNE

TURET

TBGOEL

SIMITF

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(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: RUNNY GLOAT BASKET WINDOW
Answer: The skunk Olympic gymnast was doing well until she — "STUNK" THE LANDING



THE WEATHER

Today in Southern California

A warmup on the way: High temperatures near the historical average are expected again across much of the region as a dome of heat remains in the east across the southern plains. Morning low clouds are expected but will be confined primarily within a few miles of the coast. Another stretch of heat will return, especially in interior areas, as temperatures begin to tick up Wednesday.

5-day forecasts

High/low temperatures are average forecasts for entire zone.

	L.A. Basin	Valleys	Beaches	Mountains	Deserts
Today	83 61 Sunny	88 61 Sunshine	72 59 Mostly sunny	80 49 Lots of sunshine	109 81 Very warm
Wednesday	Partly sunny 84/63	Mostly sunny 90/62	Partly sunny 72/60	Sunny 82/53	Sunny; warm 112/85
Thursday	Mostly sunny 83/63	Sunny 95/65	Mostly sunny 75/61	Mostly sunny 78/52	Very warm 108/83
Friday	Partly sunny 88/67	Sun; hot 97/69	Partly sunny 77/62	T-storm 75/53	Very warm 110/88
Saturday	Lots of sun 86/68	Sunny; warm 95/67	Mostly sunny 76/62	T-storm 84/58	Hot 115/88

Air quality



Surf and sea

POINT CONCEPTION TO MEXICO
Inner waters: Light and variable winds in the morning increase to 10-15 knots from the west in the afternoon Tuesday. Wind waves generally 1-3 feet.

Surf zone: The risk of strong rip currents will be moderate at L.A. and Ventura county beaches Tuesday and low at other county beaches.

County	Height	Period	Direction	Temp
Santa Barbara	1-3'	7 sec	W	62
Ventura	2-4'	7 sec	SW	62
Los Angeles	2-4'	14 sec	SW	67
Orange	1-3'	14 sec	SW	67
San Diego	1-3'	14 sec	WSW	71

Tides

L.A. Outer Harbor, in feet.

Time	7:50a	3:3 Hi	1:00a	0.1 Lo
Today	6:11p	6.0 Hi	11:32a	2.7 Lo
Wed.	8:47a	3.6 Hi	1:55a	-0.4 Lo
	7:06p	6.2 Hi	12:44p	2.8 Lo

UV index

Minutes to burn for sensitive people
Las Vegas, 10 Phoenix, 10
Los Angeles, 10 San Francisco, 25

California cities*

City	Mon.*			Today			Wed.		
	Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Hi	Lo		Hi	Lo	
Anaheim	83	60	--	83	61	84	62		
Avalon/Catalina	74	62	--	78	61	75	62		
Bakersfield	97	69	--	97	69	99	71		
Barstow	105	72	--	104	72	107	76		
Big Bear Lake	77	48	--	80	49	82	53		
Bishop	100	57	--	98	55	101	57		
Burbank	86	59	--	86	61	88	62		
Camarillo	79	57	--	77	59	78	59		
Chatsworth	89	59	--	89	61	90	64		
Chino	94	59	--	93	58	93	60		
Chino Hills	81	61	--	81	62	82	63		
Dana Point	71	62	--	72	61	74	63		
Death Valley	115	84	--	113	95	118	97		
Del Mar	74	63	--	69	63	71	63		
Escondido	86	57	--	85	57	85	58		
Eureka	66	58	--	65	54	62	55		
Fallbrook	83	55	--	84	54	85	57		
Fresno	97	66	--	98	68	100	71		
Fullerton	84	62	--	83	63	84	64		
Hemet	95	56	--	97	56	100	59		
Hesperia	92	60	--	94	61	96	63		
Huntington Beach	73	62	--	72	63	74	64		
Idyllwild	81	64	--	84	65	90	70		
Irvine	78	60	--	79	61	81	63		

Sun and moon



Almanac

Monday Downtown readings

Temperature	Los Angeles	Fullerton	Ventura*
High/low	83/59	84/61	67/54
Normal high/low	83/65	85/67	75/58
High/low a year ago	92/70	89/68	74/62
Record high/date	100/1995	97/2018	88/1995
Record low/date	53/1909	59/2010	53/2010

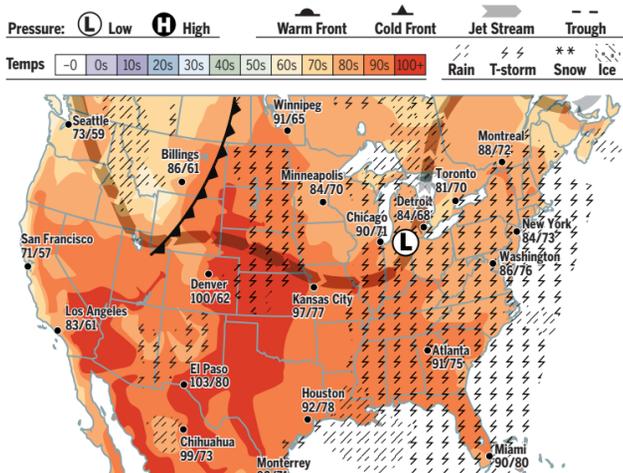
Precipitation Los Angeles Fullerton Ventura*

City	24-hour total (as of 2 p.m.)	Season total (since Oct. 1)	Last season (Oct. 1 to date)	Season norm (Oct. 1 to date)	Humidity (high/low)
Los Angeles	0.00	22.15	28.03	14.27	93/61
Fullerton	0.00	16.59	21.35	11.82	89/32
Ventura*	0.00	24.79	27.06	16.11	96/63

City	Mon.*			Today			Wed.		
	Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Hi	Lo		Hi	Lo	
San Diego	75	65	--	75	65	73	64		
San Francisco	68	59	--	71	57	72	56		
San Gabriel	87	60	--	87	61	90	64		
San Jose	78	62	--	80	60	84	60		
San Luis Obispo	78	55	--	78	56	77	56		
Santa Ana	77	62	--	76	62	79	64		
Santa Barbara	72	56	--	72	58	72	59		
Santa Clarita	92	57	--	93	60	96	59		
Santa Monica Pier	72	58	--	72	59	72	60		
Santa Rosa	80	54	--	81	55	83	57		
Simi Valley	86	55	--	87	57	88	60		
Tahoe Valley	77	38	--	79	44	83	49		
Temecula	90	55	--	90	55	90	60		
Thousand Oaks	79	54	--	81	56	83	57		
Torrance	73	61	--	74	62	74	63		
UCLA	75	58	--	77	59	80	61		
Van Nuys	90	61	--	90	62	93	65		
Ventura	66	56	--	68	57	69	57		
Whittier Hills	85	60	--	85	61	86	64		
Woodland Hills	89	58	--	88	59	88	60		
Wrightwood	80	62	--	81	63	82	62		
Yorba Linda	85	59	--	85	60	86	61		
Yosemite Valley	80	54	--	87	59	89	58		

Today in North America

Stormy northern Plains: The northern Plains and western Midwest will continue to feel the effects as severe weather trudges through the region. This time around, large hail will be one of the main threats in addition to isolated tornadoes and strong winds.



U.S. cities

MONDAY'S EXTREMES AS OF 2 P.M. FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES
High 110 in El Centro, Calif. Low 32 in Mammoth Lakes, Calif.

City	Monday*			Today		
	Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Hi	Lo	Sky
Albany	82	69	.03	89	74	Ts
Albuquerque	96	74	Tr	97	71	Ts
Anchorage	63	54	.34	59	51	R
Aspen	83	44	--	85	45	Su
Atlanta	86	73	.24	91	75	Ts
Austin	94	77	--	95	77	Pc
Baltimore	93	72	.10	86	74	Ts
Boise	95	66	--	86	62	Pc
Boston	73	66	.05	85	72	Ts
Buffalo	88	67	--	84	70	Ts
Burlington, Vt.	86	67	.01	89	73	Ts
Charleston, S.C.	86	70	Tr	92	74	Ts
Charlotte	86	73	.97	90	72	Ts
Chicago	83	72	.22	90	71	Pc
Cincinnati	82	71	.11	88	71	Ts
Cleveland	84	69	1.12	80	70	Ts
Columbia, S.C.	87	75	.27	93	74	Ts
Columbus	86	73	.14	87	70	Ts
Dallas/Ft.Worth	97	79	--	98	79	Su
Denver	99	58	--	100	62	Su
Detroit	84	73	Tr	84	68	Ts
El Paso	103	76	.01	103	80	Cy
Eugene	77	58	.04	83	58	Pc
Fort Myers	94	78	.54	90	77	Ts
Hartford	74	67	.91	88	73	Ts
Honolulu	88	75	.04	87	76	Sh
Houston	96	79	.12	92	78	Pc
Indianapolis	82	67	1.27	90	72	Ts
Jacksonville, Fla.	91	74	.04	93	75	Ts
Kansas City	92	76	--	97	77	Su
Knoxville	85	71	.20	89	72	Ts
Las Vegas	106	84	--	107	81	Su
Louisville	90	74	.07	94	75	Ts
Medford	90	60	--	92	62	Pc
Memphis	92	76	--	94	77	Ts
Miami	93	75	2.81	90	80	Ts
Milwaukee	77	71	.44	87	71	Pc
Minneapolis	90	70	.36	84	70	Ts
Nashville	86	73	1.14	96	77	Ts
New Orleans	92	78	.04	93	78	Pc
New York	84	68	.07	84	73	Ts
Norfolk	89	69	--	87	75	Ts
Oklahoma City	100	74	--	100	77	Su
Omaha	94	72	--	99	75	Ts
Orlando	92	76	.13	94	76	Ts
Philadelphia	86	72	.10	83	74	Ts
Phoenix	109	88	--	109	90	Su
Pittsburgh	86	65	.05	80	69	Ts
Portland, Ore.	70	63	.14	80	62	Sh
Providence	69	62	1.00	82	72	Ts
Raleigh/Durham	77	70	.03	88	73	Ts
Reno	93	57	--	93	61	Su
Richmond	87	70	--	85	73	Ts
St. Louis	92	71	.60	100	79	Ts
Salt Lake City	98	70	--	94	67	Su

City	Monday*			Today		
	Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Hi	Lo	Sky
Seattle	73/59					
Billings	86/61					
Minneapolis	84/70					
Chicago	90/71					
Denver	100/62					
Kansas City	97/77					
El Paso	103/80					
Chihuahua	99/73					
Monterrey	92/71					
Winnipeg	91/65					
Montreal	88/72					
Toronto	81/70					
Detroit	84/68					
Washington	86/76					
New York	84/73					
Atlanta	91/75					
Houston	92/78					
Los Angeles	83/61					
San Francisco	71/57					
San Diego	75/65					
San Jose	78/62					
San Francisco	68/59					



WEDNESDAY'S TV LISTINGS

Live TV broadcasts unless noted (subject to change). All events stream live on NBCOlympics.com or Peacock with a streaming or cable login. Paris 1 Extra and Paris 2 Extra are temporary channels available on most cable and satellite packages. All times Pacific.

MULTIPLE SPORTS
1 a.m.-7 a.m.: Basketball, handball, field hockey, table tennis and more | Paris Extra 1
1 a.m.-9:20 a.m.: Judo, boxing, shooting and more | Paris Extra 2
6:50 a.m.-8 a.m.: Fencing and archery | USA
7 a.m.-2 p.m.: Soccer, handball, water polo and more | Paris Extra 1
8:15 a.m.-9:30 a.m.: Basketball and 3x3 basketball | E!
9:20 a.m.-2 p.m.: Archery, fencing, boxing, badminton and more | Paris Extra 2
8 p.m.-11 p.m.: "Primetime in Paris": Swimming, men's gymnastics, diving and more | NBC

3X3 BASKETBALL
Pool play
3:30 a.m.: Men's pool play (delay) | USA
Noon: Women: France vs. Spain
12:30 p.m.: Women: **United States** vs. Azerbaijan | E!
1:05 p.m.: Men: Lithuania vs. France | E!
1:30 p.m.: Men: **United States** vs. Poland | NBC

ARCHERY
5 a.m.: Men's and women's individual eliminations | USA
5:45 a.m.: Men's and women's Round of 32 | E!

BADMINTON
Group play
1:15 a.m.: Men's and women's singles and doubles | USA

BASKETBALL
Men's group play
2:30 a.m.: Australia vs. Spain | CNBC
8:15 a.m.: France vs. Brazil | CNBC, Telemundo
12:15 p.m.: Greece vs. Canada | CNBC
5 p.m.: Germany vs. Japan (delay) | USA

BEACH VOLLEYBALL
Pool play
1 a.m.: Women: Huberli/Brunner (Switzerland) vs. Ludwig/Lippmann (Germany) | E!
6 a.m.: Women: Hughes/Cheng (**United States**) vs. Vieira/Chamereau (France) | NBC
1:45 p.m.: Women: Melissa/Brandie (Canada) vs. Esmee/Zoe (Switzerland) (delay) | USA

CANOE SLALOM
10:45 a.m.: Women's single final (delay) | USA

CYCLING BMX
4:10 a.m.: Women's freestyle park final | USA
5:45 a.m.: Men's freestyle park final | USA

DIVING
2 a.m.: Women's synchronized 10-meter platform final | E!

EQUESTRIAN
7 a.m.: Dressage individual grand prix, Day 2 (delay) | E!

FENCING
6:50 a.m.: Men's sabre team classifications, eliminations | USA
1:30 p.m.: Men's team sabre team bronze/gold finals (delay) | E!

FIELD HOCKEY
Women's pool play
4:15 a.m.: Australia vs. United States | E!

GYMNASTICS
8:30 a.m.: Men's all-around final | NBC
8 p.m.: "Primetime in Paris": Men's all-around final (replay) | NBC

HANDBALL
Men's group play
3 p.m.: France vs. Egypt (delay) | USA

ROWING
2:50 a.m.: Men's and women's double sculls semifinals; men's and women's quad sculls finals | E!

SOCCER
Women's group play
10 a.m.: Australia vs. **United States** | E!, Universo
Noon: Colombia vs. Canada | Universo

SWIMMING
2 a.m.: Qualifying heats | USA

MEDALS TABLE

THE LEADERS

UNITED STATES
 **20** G: 3 S: 8 B: 9

FRANCE
 **16** G: 5 S: 8 B: 3

JAPAN
 **12** G: 6 S: 2 B: 4

CHINA
 **12** G: 5 S: 5 B: 2

GREAT BRITAIN
 **10** G: 2 S: 5 B: 3

AUSTRALIA
 **9** G: 5 S: 4 B: 0

REPUBLIC OF KOREA
 **9** G: 5 S: 3 B: 1

THE OTHERS

Country	G	S	B	Tot.
Italy	2	3	3	8
Canada	2	1	2	5
Hong Kong	2	0	1	3
Kazakhstan	1	0	2	3
South Africa	1	0	2	3
Brazil	0	1	2	3
Sweden	0	1	2	3
Germany	2	0	0	2
Belgium	1	0	1	2
Moldova	0	0	2	2
Azerbaijan	1	0	0	1
Romania	1	0	0	1
Uzbekistan	1	0	0	1
Fiji	0	1	0	1
Kosovo	0	1	0	1
Mongolia	0	1	0	1
Poland	0	1	0	1
Tunisia	0	1	0	1
Croatia	0	0	1	1
Egypt	0	0	1	1
Spain	0	0	1	1
Hungary	0	0	1	1
India	0	0	1	1
Ireland	0	0	1	1
Mexico	0	0	1	1
Slovakia	0	0	1	1
Switzerland	0	0	1	1
Turkey	0	0	1	1
Ukraine	0	0	1	1

7 a.m.: Qualifying heats | NBC
11:15 a.m.: Women's 100-meter freestyle final; men's 200 butterfly final; women's 200 butterfly semifinals; women's 1,500 freestyle final; men's 200 backstroke semifinals; women's 200 breaststroke semifinals; men's 200 breaststroke final; men's 100-meter freestyle final
8 p.m.: "Primetime in Paris": Swimming finals and semifinals (replay) | NBC

TABLE TENNIS
3:45 a.m.: Men's and women's singles, Round of 32 | E!

TRIATHLON
11 p.m. (Tues.): Women's individual final | USA
7:45 a.m.: Women's individual final (replay) | NBC

VOLLEYBALL
Pool play
4 a.m.: Men: Japan vs. Argentina | Universo
8 a.m.: Women: **United States** vs. Serbia | USA
2 p.m.: Women: **United States** vs. Serbia (replay) | NBC
5 p.m.: Men: Poland vs. Brazil (delay) | USA

WATER POLO
Group play
10 a.m.: Women: Italy vs. **United States** | USA



MATTHIAS SCHRADER Associated Press

AMERICAN Ryan Murphy, who took bronze in the 100-meter backstroke, takes a selfie on the podium with Thomas Ceccon of Italy, center, who won the gold in 52 seconds flat, and silver medalist Xu Jiayu of China.

Murphy's backstroke bronze is second-best news of the night

After medaling in his third consecutive Olympics, he learns he has a baby girl.

By KEVIN BAXTER

PARIS — Ryan Murphy did something Monday that hasn't been done for half a century, swimming to a medal in the men's 100-meter backstroke during a third consecutive Olympics.

But that was only the second-best news he got on the third night of competition at the Paris Games. Because as he was standing near the medal stand, he spotted his wife in the stands. And she had a message for him.

"I saw Bridget holding up a sign that said 'Ryan, It's a Girl,'" he said. "That was a great way to find out. That really lit me up and brought this night to another level."

East Germany's Roland Matthes, in 1976, was the last man to win a 100-meter backstroke medal in three straight Olympics. And for most of Monday's race it looked as if Murphy would match that by making his third medal a gold one. But after leading until the final meters, he watched world record-holder Thomas Cec-

con of Italy sweep by to win in 52 seconds flat. China's Xu Jiayu was second in 52.32, 0.07 seconds ahead of Murphy, who has a chance at an eighth Olympic medal when he faces Ceccon and Xu again in the 200-meter backstroke heats Wednesday.

However, Murphy, 29, wasn't counting medals Monday; he was counting daughters.

"It's really exciting to learn that I'm going to be a girl dad," he said. "Up to this point swimming has been the most important thing in my life. Every major decision in my life has been made with swimming in mind. That's going to change."

"Everything is going to be dedicated to that little girl."

In the women's 100-meter breaststroke, an event Lilly King used to own, the American missed a medal by 0.01 seconds. South Africa's Tatjana Smith claimed the gold in 1:05.28, with China's Tang Qianting second and Ireland's Mona McSharry just out-touching King for third.

King, 27, who has said these are her last Olympics, will have a chance at her sixth Olympic medal in Thursday's 200-meter breaststroke, the weaker of her two races.

In the evening's other featured event, the women's 200-meter freestyle, Austral-

ia's Mollie Callaghan upset teammate Ariarne Titmus — and she needed to break Titmus' Olympic record to do it, winning in 1:53.27.

Titmus, who beat American Katie Ledecky to win the 400-meter free on Saturday, was second in 1:53.81 while Siobhan Bernadette Haughey of Hong Kong was third in 1:54.55.

The Tasmanian-born Titmus, known as the Tasmanian Terminator, won four medals, including two golds in Tokyo, but she wasn't sure she'd even be in Paris, much less making two trips to the podium, after undergoing surgery to remove a large growth on her right ovary last September.

Her swimming career suddenly seemed a minor thing compared to the prospect she might have cancer or be unable to have a child. But the two tumors doctors cut out proved benign, and after a few weeks' recovery Titmus resumed training.

Her race Monday brought her to tears.

"These are happy tears," she said. "Honestly, it's really hard to hold your emotions in in these situations. I know what it's like to be Olympic champion. I had nothing to lose tonight. I'm Olympic champion forever in the 200 and the 400 and I

gave it everything.

"I don't actually know why I'm crying. I'm really happy with silver. It's hard to hold it in and so it's just coming out now."

In the first race of the night session, Canadian teenager Summer McIntosh cruised to her second medal of these Games, winning the women's 400-meter individual medley in 4:27.71, nearly six seconds ahead of Katie Grimes of the U.S., who also cried briefly as she received her medal.

American Emma Weyant, who was second in Tokyo, closed fast to nip Great Britain's Freya Constance Colbert for the bronze in 4:34.93.

In a razor-tight men's 200-meter freestyle, Romanian's David Popovici touched the wall 0.02 seconds ahead of Great Britain's Matthew Richards to win gold in 1:44.72. American Luke Hobson was .005 seconds back of Richards in third.

"I couldn't be happier," Hobson said. "It was a really close race and I gave it everything I had in the last 50 meters."

The U.S. has medaled in nine of the 12 finals in Paris, winning two golds and 11 medals overall, nearly double the total of second-place Australia, which has six.

Skateboarder adds a medal to resume

[Huston, from B10] moments, no massive fails, on the way to the podium. It helped that, by all accounts, Monday's competition ranked among the greatest in the sport's history.

The defending Olympic champion, Yuto Horigome of Japan, needed a massive 270 nollie bluntside on his final attempt to leapfrog over Huston and silver medalist Eaton.

"Nyah and Jagger were keeping such good scores," Horigome said through a translator. "I stopped focusing on the medal and just tried the best trick I could."

Both Americans led at some point during the competition and had one more shot at gold, but they missed on their last attempts. Eaton, who upgraded from bronze three years ago, was asked about the roller-coaster final.

"The roller coaster was that I thought I won," he said. "Then I got off the ride."

Huston had similarly mixed emotions about sur-rendering an early lead but, given the challenges he faced this time around, it was hard to be too upset.

His rise to stardom began more than two decades ago. Growing up at his family's skate park in Davis, Calif., Huston signed his first endorsement contract at age 7 and won his first big amateur contest a few years later.

His pro career took off with the debut of Street League Skateboarding in 2010. He won the inaugural season, paving the way to those world championships and a record 23 overall skating medals at the X Games.

Prize money and endorsements allowed him to

start his own skateboard company and made him a millionaire several times over.

But when the Olympics added skateboarding for the Tokyo Games, his failure to add that accolade to his résumé rankled him.

"I'm sorry," he said after the competition. "I know I definitely let some people down."

There was no need for apologies on Monday.

After his early stumble, Huston seemed to gain confidence with each attempt, pumping his fists and smiling broadly.

At the start of the finals, which consisted of two runs and five individual tricks, Huston stood first with Eaton close behind and Horigome in fourth. His lead grew as the evening wore on, but he was hardly feeling cocky.

"Being in that first-place spot and seeing everyone have a couple more tries," he said, "it's like nerves."

Eaton jumped into first with a score of 95.25 on his fourth trick. Horigome needed every bit of a 97.08 in the final round to win by a tenth of a point.

For his final try, Huston summoned one of his toughest concoctions: A switch heel crooked grind.

"It's a trick I've been working on for a long time now," he said. "I've landed it in a couple other contests on smaller obstacles."

This time, he did not.

But talking to reporters afterward, Huston couldn't seem to let go of that medal. He seemed at ease, so different from three years ago in Tokyo. It seemed as if he got what he wanted.

"A little bit of redemption," he said, "you know?"

U.S. men's gymnastics wins its first medal since 2008

[Gymnastics, from B10] more than two points.

Frederick Richard, Brody Malone, Paul Juda and Asher Hong stood shoulder to shoulder with their arms draped across one another's backs as Nedoroscik mounted the pommel horse to clinch the medal. When the 2021 pommel horse world champion's feet hit the ground on his dismount, they burst into a euphoric celebration.

McClure tried to hold his emotions, figuring he wanted to wait for the official results. Tears soon flowed as he watched the athletes celebrate under a U.S. flag he handed to Malone, the team captain.

"Just the progress that we've made over the last few years building his team culture, team belief and accountability and expectations and all these things that you preach on a daily

basis," said McClure, who won a team silver medal for the United States in 2004, "to step back and watch them do this on their own and take control of this is like I did my job."

When he left the Tokyo Olympics three years ago, McClure knew the program had to change to challenge for an Olympic medal. The Americans were already knocked off the podium before they entered the arena. Their difficulty score during the team final was seven points behind the top team Japan, a chasm even perfect execution could not close.

More than straighter legs or stronger arms, the program needed to tip the math in its favor.

In an effort to boost the team's difficulty score, USA Gymnastics used a complicated bonus system that encouraged athletes to demonstrate upgraded skills. Typi-

'We ended the drought. Sixteen years in the making and couldn't be happier for everybody.'

— PAUL JUDA, U.S. men's gymnast

cally, a fall while attempting a difficult element would decide an athlete's standing on the national team and the financial and marketing opportunities that come with the designation. But the bonus system, which began in 2022, offered a safety net of additional points at domestic competitions for more difficult skills that would have offset a fall.

It was a bold strategy. It was rough at first, coach Sam Mikulak said, as athletes and coaches tried to buy into the process to learn

more daring skills. But as the three-time Olympian wrapped Nedoroscik in a hug and lifted him off the ground after his clinching routine, Mikulak knew it paid off.

"All of the sudden, you do that hard stuff long enough and sure enough, here we are," said Mikulak, who coaches at EVO, the Florida gym where Malone and Nedoroscik train. "We're just gonna stay on this trajectory and we're gonna be even hungrier going in the future."

The United States trailed Japan and China by four and 3.3 points, respectively, in difficultly Sunday.

After a shaky qualification round that landed the team in the dreaded fifth place, the United States hit all 18 routines in the final. Nedoroscik's effort was the exclamation point.

The 25-year-old had waited two hours to perform his lone routine of the night. When he stuck his dismount, he punched the air with both fists.

"It was just the greatest moment of my life," Nedoroscik said with the bronze medal draped around his neck.

For the United States, the third-place award felt as good as gold.

"We ended the drought," said Juda, whose stuck vault to lead off the second rotation helped turn momentum toward the United States.

"Sixteen years in the making and couldn't be happier for everybody."

Juda, Hong and Richard were part of the 2023 team that won the program's first world championship medal since 2014, winning bronze. All are still in their early 20s with Juda being the oldest at 23.

With a home-country Olympics looming, this could just be the beginning of a golden age of American men's gymnastics under McClure, whom Richard credited with "really raising the standard of who we are: not just to be Olympians, but to bring medals home."

"I think going forward to L.A., we're gonna put new strategies in place for us to compete, pushing the next level, pushing that standard," the 20-year-old Michigan star continued. "So once we compete in L.A., we'll really be the top dogs."

STANDINGS

Table showing National League and American League standings with columns for West, Central, East divisions and Win-Loss-Pct-GB-L10.

Table showing American League standings with columns for West, Central, East divisions and Win-Loss-Pct-GB-L10.

Table titled 'Today's games' listing matchups between teams like Dodgers at San Diego, Angels vs Colorado, etc., with start times.

Edman, Kopech give Dodgers depth

[Dodgers, from B10] the deal, the Cardinals acquired starting pitcher Erick Fedde and outfielder Tommy Pham from Chicago.

The Dodgers also acquired minor league right-handed pitcher Oliver Gonzalez from St. Louis in the deal.

Edman is the bigger get for the Dodgers, who've long had the 29-year-old utility man on their radar, according to a person with knowledge of the situation but not authorized to speak publicly.

For the Dodgers, he could fill myriad roles.

The team's third base plan is unclear, as Max Muncy remains sidelined by an oblique strain. The Dodgers are currently without either of their primary shortstops, Miguel Rojas and Mookie Betts, who are both on the injured list.

The question with Edman is health. After being dogged by wrist issues in 2023, when he batted a career-low .248, Edman underwent surgery last October that forced him to sit out the start of this season.

His return was further delayed by a sprained ankle he suffered in late June while fielding ground balls.

Edman has spent much of this month on a rehabilitation assignment with the Cardinals' double-A affiliate, batting .207 in eight games. But he has not appeared in the field in that stretch, serving as a designated hitter in each game.

Kopech will offer more immediate assistance to an overworked Dodgers bullpen.

The right-hander hasn't been lights out this season, mostly because of his 12.6% walk rate (seventh highest among MLB relievers with at least 40 innings pitched). Of



PAUL SANCYA Associated Press

MICHAEL KOPECH has an effective 98-99-mph fastball, but his high walk rate has been an issue.

his 14 save opportunities for the last-place White Sox, he has blown five.

The 28-year-old does throw a 98 to 99-mph fastball. He has a stellar 30.9% strikeout rate (15th best among MLB relievers). And he will give the Dodgers another late-inning option, a welcome addition to a relief unit that has combined for 93 2/3 innings this month, third most in the majors.

Vargas was the centerpiece of the Dodgers' three-player package to the White Sox.

A former top prospect who had struggled to find a place in the lineup the last two years, Vargas' career .201 batting average in the

leagues belies the natural talent many evaluators see in his bat.

At 24 years old, his relative youth also increased his value. And despite a recent slump, this season had still been his best at the plate in the majors, with a .239 batting average and .735 OPS.

Perez and Albertus were mid-tier prospects in the Dodgers organization, ranked 17th and 23rd in their farm system, respectively, by MLB Pipeline. The two infielders were both with Class-A Rancho Cucamonga.

As news of the trade leaked Monday, there were conflicting reports that another Dodgers prospect, infielder Noah Miller,

would be going to the White Sox in the deal as well.

Miller is the club's 26th-ranked prospect, and was acquired this spring in a trade that sent Manuel Margot to Minnesota.

But Miller's name was not included in the final package — one that industry observers saw as good value for the Dodgers, even if they've yet to land a true impact player ahead of Tuesday's deadline.

Earlier Monday, the Dodgers traded right-hander Ricky Vanasco to the Detroit Tigers for cash considerations. Vanasco had been designated for assignment last week.

BASEBALL: SUNDAY FLASHBACK

DODGERS 6, HOUSTON 2

Box score for Dodgers vs Houston game, including batting and pitching stats.

Walks—Los Angeles 7; Ohtani 1, Toro 3, Outman 1, Barnes 1, Ahmed 1. Houston 3; Altuve 1, Bregman 1, Carotini 1. Strikeouts—Los Angeles 11; Ohtani 2, T.Hernandez 2, Heyward 1, K.Hernandez 2, Biggio 2, Outman 1, Barnes 1, Houston 11; Bregman 1, Alvarez 1, Peña 3, Singleton 1, Carotini 2, Lopez 3. LOB—Los Angeles 4, Houston 4. 2B—Singleton (7), Altuve 2.

Los Angeles: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Ryan, W, 1-0.....5% 2 1 1 3 8 50 91.082 Vesia, H, 8.....1% 1 1 0 1 1 18 1.930 Kelly, H, 11.....1 0 0 0 1 13 0.000 Honeywell.....1 0 0 0 1 13 0.000 Houston: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Arriaguieta, L, 4-9.....6 4 3 3 2 8 97 5.58 Martinez.....% 0 0 1 0 1 5 15.996 King.....% 2 2 2 1 1 12 3.118

Toronto 7, TEXAS 3. Texas: AB R H BI Avg. Toronto: AB R H BI Avg. Semien 2b 5 0 1 0 2.246 Houston 2b 3 1 0 0 2.291 Seager ss 5 1 3 0 2.166 Clement 3b 4 1 1 0 2.282 Smith 3b 4 1 1 2 2.282 Guerrero 1b 3 1 1 2 3.051 Langford lf 4 1 1 0 2.244 Turner dh 4 1 1 0 2.204 Garcia dh 4 0 1 0 2.124 Varsho lf-rf 4 2 1 2 2.022 Lowe 1b 4 0 2 1 2.269 Kirk c 3 1 1 0 2.229 Gross rf 4 0 1 0 2.259 Berger rf 4 0 2 2 1.669 Heim c 4 0 0 0 2.231 Kiermaier cf 2 0 1 0 2.255 Taveras cf 4 0 0 0 2.255 Jarames ss 2 0 0 1 2.500 Totals 38 3 10 3 Jimenez ss 2 0 0 1 2.500

PITTSBURGH 6, ARIZONA 5. Pittsburgh: AB R H BI Avg. Arizona: AB R H BI Avg. McCutch dh 4 0 1 0 2.224 Carroll rf 5 0 1 0 2.211 Cruz ss 3 2 1 1 2.533 Pederson ss 5 0 0 0 2.446 Joe lb 3 0 1 0 2.239 Perdomo dh 2 1 0 0 2.277 Bell 1b 1 0 1 0 2.251 G.Marte dh 0 0 0 2.296 Tulo 2b 4 0 2 0 2.140 Walker lf 4 0 0 0 2.140 Pateles lf-rf 5 0 0 0 2.237 McCarty lf 4 2 1 1 2.284 Hayes 3b 5 0 1 2 2.241 Suarez 3b 2 1 1 3 2.118 Swinson lf 2 0 0 0 2.182 Thomas cf 4 0 0 0 1.94 A-Taylor cf 1 0 0 0 2.01 Newman 2b 2 0 0 0 2.268 C-Butt c 1 0 0 1 1.05 Mjoberg c 2 0 0 0 2.280 Lonzetta lf 1 0 0 0 2.181 Herrera c 2 0 0 2.280 Grae cf-rf 3 1 1 0 2.000 Gburriel lf 1 1 1 1 2.671 Ben-Chen 2b 2 1 0 0 1.82 Totals 35 6 7 5

ST. LOUIS 4, WASHINGTON 3. Washington: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Lopez.....5 3 2 2 1 8 79 4.79 Law, H, 10.....1 1 0 0 1 18 3.474 Herz, H, 10.....% 2 1 1 0 18 4.344 Flor, L, 3-3.....1% 1 1 1 0 15 2.066 St. Louis: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Mikolas.....6 7 3 0 3 89 4.999 King.....1 1 0 0 1 10 2.663 Kirtledge.....1 0 0 0 1 11 3.119 Hestley, W, 4-3.....1 1 0 0 1 21 2.37

ANGELS 8, OAKLAND 6

Box score for Angels vs Oakland game.

Walks—Oakland 3; Bleday 1, Toro 3, Schumann 1, Angeles 7, Schauer 2, Renfelo 2, O'Hoppe 1, Neto 2. Strikeouts—Oakland 11; Butler 2, Rooker 2, O'McCann 1, Nevin 2, Schuemann 2, Angeles 8; Renfelo 1, Ward 2, Pillar 1, O'Hoppe 2, Drury 1, Adell 1. E—Drury (4), LOB—Oakland 4, Angeles 10. 2B—Nevin (7), Rooker (20), McCann (4), Pillar (10), HR—Ward (16), off Bido.

Oakland: AB R H BI Avg. Angeles: AB R H BI Avg. Butler lf 5 1 0 0 2.255 Schan lb 2 2 2 1 2.251 Andujar lf 4 1 0 1 2.286 Renfelo 3b 3 1 0 1 3.000 Bleday cf 3 1 1 0 2.234 Ward lf 5 1 2 4 2.227 Rooker dh 4 1 2 3 2.966 Calhoun dh 5 0 1 2 2.254 Brown 1b 4 0 0 0 2.218 Pillar cf 5 1 3 0 3.038 Toro 2b 3 1 1 2 2.54 O'Hoppe c 4 0 1 0 2.278 McCann c 4 0 1 2.284 Drury 2b 4 0 0 0 1.160 Nevin 3b 4 1 1 0 2.281 Palacios cf 2 0 0 1 2.296 Schue ss 3 0 0 0 2.256 Adell rf 3 1 0 0 1.192 Totals 34 6 7 6

ATLANTA 9, N.Y. METS 2. Atlanta: AB R H BI Avg. New York: AB R H BI Avg. Oltis lf 4 1 0 0 2.191 Lindor 3b 3 0 1 0 2.256 Riley 3b 4 2 2 2 2.254 B-Walker lf 1 0 0 0 2.000 Ozuna dh 5 1 1 0 3.066 Jlgies 2b-ss 4 0 0 0 3.243 Olson 1b 4 1 1 3 2.227 Nimmo dh 3 1 0 0 3.032 d'Araud c 3 2 1 2 2.259 Alonso 1b 4 1 2 2 2.444 Laureano cf 4 1 1 2 2.425 Vientos 3b 4 0 1 0 2.285 N.Avarez 2b 4 0 1 0 2.243 Vladek lf-rf 3 0 0 0 2.230 Arcia ss 3 1 1 2 2.220 Alvarez cf 4 0 0 0 2.266 Williams lf 2 0 0 0 2.083 Taylor cf 3 0 0 2 3.232 a-Rosario lf 2 0 0 0 1.64 Gabel lf-rf 2 0 0 1 1.82 Totals 35 9 8 8

MINNESOTA 5, DETROIT 0. Minnesota: AB R H BI Avg. Detroit: AB R H BI Avg. E-2b-3b-2b 4 2 3 0 2.253 Schmitt 2b 3 1 1 2 2.444 Miranda 3b 0 0 0 0 3.224 Keith 2b 3 0 0 0 2.256 1-Mar 2b lf 3 1 1 2 2.242 d-Blazek 0f 0 0 0 2.284 Walker lf 4 0 2 1 2.254 Perez rf 4 0 0 0 2.248 C-Lewis 3b 3 0 0 0 2.296 Canha dh 3 0 0 0 2.231 Jeffers dh 5 0 1 2 2.230 Madris 1b 3 0 0 0 3.000 Greene 1b 4 0 1 1 2.243 Vladek lf-rf 3 0 0 0 2.230 Margot lf 5 1 3 0 2.423 McKin 3b 3 0 0 0 1.182 Kepler rf 5 0 1 0 2.261 A-Malloy lf 1 0 0 0 2.122 Lee ss 3 0 0 1 2.500 Rogers c 2 0 0 0 2.202 Vazquez c 4 1 1 0 2.208 B-Kelly c 1 0 0 0 2.240 Totals 37 5 12 5

MINNESOTA 5, DETROIT 0. Minnesota: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Schreiber.....% 0 0 1 1 20 8.40 Miller, H, 6.....% 0 0 0 0 15 14.223 Leiter, H, 13.....1% 0 0 0 0 16 2.121 Neris.....1 0 0 0 1 16 3.578 Kansas City: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Ragans, L, 7-7.....5% 8 4 4 1 7 102 3.71 Schreiber.....% 0 0 1 0 1 4.114 Harvey.....% 0 0 2 0 2 22 3.38 Zepa.....1% 1 0 0 0 1 12 3.000 McArthur.....1 3 3 3 0 20 5.44

SAN FRANCISCO 5, COLORADO 4. Colorado: AB R H BI Avg. San Fran.: AB R H BI Avg. Black dh 4 0 1 0 2.256 Schmitt 2b 3 1 1 2 2.444 Doyle cf 4 0 0 0 2.274 Wisely 2b 1 0 0 0 2.619 Godyne lf 3 0 2 1 1.716 Fitzg ss 5 0 1 0 3.249 McMa 3b 3 0 0 0 2.611 Chap 3b 4 0 0 3 2.242 Rodgers 2b 4 0 0 0 2.263 Bailey c 5 0 0 0 2.268 Faelo, L, 5-2.....1 2 1 1 0 3 29 3.58 Lucas.....1 1 1 1 0 20 8.40 Maeda.....5 5 1 1 0 4 83 6.72 Miller.....1 0 0 0 0 13 5.44 Foley.....2 2 2 2 0 10 3.72 Chafin.....1 1 0 1 1 3 17 3.16

SAN FRANCISCO 5, COLORADO 4. Colorado: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Gonder, L, 2-7.....3% 6 3 3 1 6 85 4.79 Davis.....2 2 2 1 3 50 3.24 Kinley.....1 2 0 0 1 1 20 7.20 Vodnik.....1 2 0 0 1 18 3.90 San Francisco: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Rodriguez, W, 3-1.....3 2 1 0 3 45 4.11 G.Rogers, H, 7.....2 0 0 0 3 11 2.116 Hicks, H, 1.....2 2 2 0 1 35 4.111 Bivens, H, 1.....1 2 0 1 1 21 2.37 Dowal, S, 20-24.....1 2 1 1 0 1 21 2.37

ST. LOUIS 4, WASHINGTON 3. Washington: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Lopez.....5 3 2 2 1 8 79 4.79 Law, H, 10.....1 1 0 0 1 18 3.474 Herz, H, 10.....% 2 1 1 0 18 4.344 Flor, L, 3-3.....1% 1 1 1 0 15 2.066 St. Louis: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Mikolas.....6 7 3 0 3 89 4.999 King.....1 1 0 0 1 10 2.663 Kirtledge.....1 0 0 0 1 11 3.119 Hestley, W, 4-3.....1 1 0 0 1 21 2.37

TAMPA BAY 2, CINCINNATI 1

Box score for Tampa Bay vs Cincinnati game.

Cincinnati: AB R H BI Avg. Tampa Bay: AB R H BI Avg. India 2b 4 1 0 0 2.263 Schan lb 2 2 2 1 2.251 DL Cruz ss 4 0 3 0 2.263 1-Catal 3b 0 1 0 0 2.236 Stepe dh 4 0 0 0 2.234 Blowe 2b 4 1 2 0 2.262 Steer lf 4 0 0 0 2.237 Pare 3b-1b 2 0 0 0 2.245 Candel lf 4 0 0 0 2.228 J.Lowe rf 4 0 0 0 2.192 Fairchild cf 2 1 0 0 2.300 Sim cf 4 0 0 0 2.232 a-Friedt cf 2 0 0 0 2.209 Rosano dh 4 0 0 0 1.307 Espinal 3b 4 0 0 0 2.221 Palacios cf 2 0 0 1 2.296 B-Frley 1 0 1 0 2.278 DeLuca lf-rf 3 0 1 0 1.767 Slater rf 2 0 0 0 1.191 Rotvedt c 3 0 0 2 2.588 c-Benson 1 0 0 0 1.133 Walls ss 3 0 0 0 1.444 Wynns c 2 0 1 1 3.688 Totals 28 2 3 1

CINCINNATI 1, RAMIREZ 1. Ramirez: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Cantillo.....3% 4 3 3 3 3 75 18.00 Smith.....1% 0 0 0 0 3 24 1.919 Swanson ss 4 0 1 1 2.220 Fermín c 4 1 1 1 2.294 Herrin, W, 4-0.....4% 0 0 0 0 2 1.30 Gaddis, H, 23.....1% 0 0 2 0 18 1.08 Barlow, H, 19.....1 0 0 0 0 13 3.16

MINNESOTA 5, DETROIT 0. Minnesota: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Schreiber.....% 0 0 1 1 20 8.40 Miller, H, 6.....% 0 0 0 0 15 14.223 Leiter, H, 13.....1% 0 0 0 0 16 2.121 Neris.....1 0 0 0 1 16 3.578 Kansas City: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Ragans, L, 7-7.....5% 8 4 4 1 7 102 3.71 Schreiber.....% 0 0 1 0 1 4.114 Harvey.....% 0 0 2 0 2 22 3.38 Zepa.....1% 1 0 0 0 1 12 3.000 McArthur.....1 3 3 3 0 20 5.44

CLEVELAND 4, PHILADELPHIA 3. Cleveland: AB R H BI Avg. Philadelphia: AB R H BI Avg. Kwan dh 4 1 2 1 3.42 Schwar dh 4 2 2 3 2.428 Martinez lf 4 0 1 0 2.244 Turner ss 5 0 0 0 3.226 Ramirez 3b 3 1 1 0 2.271 Harper 1b 3 0 0 0 2.285 Fry lf 4 1 1 0 2.290 Bohm 3b 2 0 0 0 2.295 Noel lf 4 1 3 3 2.500 Castell lf 4 0 0 0 2.421 Gimenez 2b 4 0 1 0 2.249 Hays lf 4 0 0 0 1.225 Freeman cf 4 0 0 0 2.219 Sosa 2b 3 0 1 0 2.276 Roach ss 4 0 0 0 2.204 a-Steer 2b 1 0 0 0 2.239 B.Naylor c 4 0 0 0 2.022 Marsh cf 4 0 1 0 2.151 Totals 35 4 9 4

MINNESOTA 5, DETROIT 0. Minnesota: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Schreiber.....% 0 0 1 1 20 8.40 Miller, H, 6.....% 0 0 0 0 15 14.223 Leiter, H, 13.....1% 0 0 0 0 16 2.121 Neris.....1 0 0 0 1 16 3.578 Kansas City: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Ragans, L, 7-7.....5% 8 4 4 1 7 102 3.71 Schreiber.....% 0 0 1 0 1 4.114 Harvey.....% 0 0 2 0 2 22 3.38 Zepa.....1% 1 0 0 0 1 12 3.000 McArthur.....1 3 3 3 0 20 5.44

CLEVELAND 4, PHILADELPHIA 3. Cleveland: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Assard, W, 5-3.....4% 5 3 3 1 5 63 6.72 Miller, H, 8.....% 0 0 0 0 15 14.223 Leiter, H, 13.....1% 0 0 0 0 16 2.121 Neris.....1 0 0 0 1 16 3.578 Kansas City: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Ragans, L, 7-7.....5% 8 4 4 1 7 102 3.71 Schreiber.....% 0 0 1 0 1 4.114 Harvey.....% 0 0 2 0 2 22 3.38 Zepa.....1% 1 0 0 0 1 12 3.000 McArthur.....1 3 3 3 0 20 5.44

MILWAUKEE 6, MIAMI 2. Miami: AB R H BI Avg. Milwaukee: AB R H BI Avg. DL Cruz lf-rf 4 2 1 3 3.79 Turang 2b 4 1 2 1 2.266 Ed.Schwartz ss 4 0 2 1 2.245 Contreras dh 3 0 0 0 2.286 Bell 1b 4 0 1 0 2.239 Chourio lf-rf 4 1 1 1 2.259 Burger dh 2 0 0 0 2.233 Bauers lf 3 2 2 2 2.262 J.Sanchez rf 3 0 0 0 2.243 Perkins cf 4 0 0 0 2.253 a-Rivera 3b 1 0 0 0 2.233 Adams ss 4 0 0 0 2.244 Lopez 2b-rf 4 0 0 0 2.233 Hoskins lf 1 1 1 2 3.181 Bride 3b-2b 4 0 0 0 2.229 Mitchell cf rf 2 1 2 0 2.275 Gordon cf 3 0 0 0 2.231 B-G.Sanchez lf 1 0 0 0 2.173 A.Sanchez c 3 0 0 0 1.84 Frellick rf 0 0 0 0 2.264 C-Wall 1 0 0 0 1.000 Ortiz 3b 4 0 1 1 2.428 Totals 33 2 7 2

MILWAUKEE 6, MIAMI 2. Milwaukee: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Myers.....4 3 1 1 5 75 3.100 Junis, W, 4-0.....2 2 0 0 1 27 2.422 Pajares.....1 1 1 1 1 22 2.26 Milner.....1 0 0 0 1 11 4.41 Williams.....1 1 0 0 1 24 0.00

CLEVELAND 4, PHILADELPHIA 3

Box score for Cleveland vs Philadelphia game.

Cleveland: AB R H BI Avg. Philadelphia: AB R H BI Avg. Kwan dh 4 1 2 1 3.42 Schwar dh 4 2 2 3 2.428 Martinez lf 4 0 1 0 2.244 Turner ss 5 0 0 0 3.226 Ramirez 3b 3 1 1 0 2.271 Harper 1b 3 0 0 0 2.285 Fry lf 4 1 1 0 2.290 Bohm 3b 2 0 0 0 2.295 Noel lf 4 1 3 3 2.500 Castell lf 4 0 0 0 2.421 Gimenez 2b 4 0 1 0 2.249 Hays lf 4 0 0 0 1.225 Freeman cf 4 0 0 0 2.219 Sosa 2b 3 0 1 0 2.276 Roach ss 4 0 0 0 2.204 a-Steer 2b 1 0 0 0 2.239 B.Naylor c 4 0 0 0 2.022 Marsh cf 4 0 1 0 2.151 Totals 35 4 9 4

CLEVELAND 4, PHILADELPHIA 3. Cleveland: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Cantillo.....3% 4 3 3 3 3 75 18.00 Smith.....1% 0 0 0 0 3 24 1.919 Swanson ss 4 0 1 1 2.220 Fermín c 4 1 1 1 2.294 Herrin, W, 4-0.....4% 0 0 0 0 2 1.30 Gaddis, H, 23.....1% 0 0 2 0 18 1.08 Barlow, H, 19.....1 0 0 0 0 13 3.16

CHICAGO CUBS 7, KANSAS CITY 3. Chicago: AB R H BI Avg. Kansas City: AB R H BI Avg. Houston 2b 5 0 1 1 2.250 Murray 2b 3 1 1 0 2.256 Widom 1b 5 1 1 0 2.210 Witt ss 3 1 0 1 3.241 Suzuki lf 3 1 0 0 2.268 Pasqua 1b 3 0 1 0 2.259 Happ lf 4 1 1 0 2.232 Perez dh 4 0 0 2 2.274 Morel dh 1 0 0 0 0.199 Renfroe rf 4 0 1 2 2.234 a-Busch dh 4 1 2 1 2.262 Melendez lf 4 0 0 0 1.933 Swanson ss 4 0 1 1 2.220 Fermín c 4 1 1 1 2.294 Botz lf 4 1 1 0 3.333 Isbel cf 2 0 0 0 2.233 C-Armstr cf 4 1 3 1 3.966 Garcia 3b 3 0 1 0 2.235 Bethan c 4 1 2 0 2.190 Totals 38 7 12 7

CHICAGO CUBS 7, KANSAS CITY 3. Chicago: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Assard, W, 5-3.....4% 5 3 3 1 5 63 6.72 Miller, H, 8.....% 0 0 0 0 15 14.223 Leiter, H, 13.....1% 0 0 0 0 16 2.121 Neris.....1 0 0 0 1 16 3.578 Kansas City: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Ragans, L, 7-7.....5% 8 4 4 1 7 102 3.71 Schreiber.....% 0 0 1 0 1 4.114 Harvey.....% 0 0 2 0 2 22 3.38 Zepa.....1% 1 0 0 0 1 12 3.000 McArthur.....1 3 3 3 0 20 5.44

CHICAGO CUBS 7, KANSAS CITY 3. Chicago: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Assard, W, 5-3.....4% 5 3 3 1 5 63 6.72 Miller, H, 8.....% 0 0 0 0 15 14.223 Leiter, H, 13.....1% 0 0 0 0 16 2.121 Neris.....1 0 0 0 1 16 3.578 Kansas City: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Ragans, L, 7-7.....5% 8 4 4 1 7 102 3.71 Schreiber.....% 0 0 1 0 1 4.114 Harvey.....% 0 0 2 0 2 22 3.38 Zepa.....1% 1 0 0 0 1 12 3.000 McArthur.....1 3 3 3 0 20 5.44

MILWAUKEE 6, MIAMI 2. Miami: AB R H BI Avg. Milwaukee: AB R H BI Avg. DL Cruz lf-rf 4 2 1 3 3.79 Turang 2b 4 1 2 1 2.266 Ed.Schwartz ss 4 0 2 1 2.245 Contreras dh 3 0 0 0 2.286 Bell 1b 4 0 1 0 2.239 Chourio lf-rf 4 1 1 1 2.259 Burger dh 2 0 0 0 2.233 Bauers lf 3 2 2 2 2.262 J.Sanchez rf 3 0 0 0 2.243 Perkins cf 4 0 0 0 2.253 a-Rivera 3b 1 0 0 0 2.233 Adams ss 4 0 0 0 2.244 Lopez 2b-rf 4 0 0 0 2.233 Hoskins lf 1 1 1 2 3.181 Bride 3b-2b 4 0 0 0 2.229 Mitchell cf rf 2 1 2 0 2.275 Gordon cf 3 0 0 0 2.231 B-G.Sanchez lf 1 0 0 0 2.173 A.Sanchez c 3 0 0 0 1.84 Frellick rf 0 0 0 0 2.264 C-Wall 1 0 0 0 1.000 Ortiz 3b 4 0 1 1 2.428 Totals 33 2 7 2

MILWAUKEE 6, MIAMI 2. Milwaukee: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Myers.....4 3 1 1 5 75 3.100 Junis, W, 4-0.....2 2 0 0 1 27 2.422 Pajares.....1 1 1 1 1 22 2.26 Milner.....1 0 0 0 1 11 4.41 Williams.....1 1 0 0 1 24 0.00

BALTIMORE 8, SAN DIEGO 6

Box score for Baltimore vs San Diego game.

San Diego: AB R H BI Avg. Baltimore: AB R H BI Avg. Arnez 1b 5 0 2 0 3.314 Cower lf 5 1 1 0 2.235 I-Wade 0 0 0 0 2.238 Santander lf 3 2 0 0 2.240 Profar lf 3 0 0 1 2.301 Hendri ss 4 1 1 1 2.283 2-Johnson 0 0 0 0 1.128 O'Heam dh 3 1 2 1 2.799 Cronen 2b 4 0 0 0 2.248 B-Ruts dh 0 1 0 0 2.266 Mach 3b 4 1 1 0 2.248 Mount 1b 5 1 2 4 2.700 Boggs dh 4 1 1 2 2.72 Westby 3b-2b 5 0 1 0 1.269 Rosell cf 4 1 1 0 2.284 Mullins cf 2 0 1 2 2.219 Peralta rf 4 2 2 0 2.243 Norby 2b 3 0 0 0 1.779 Kim ss 3 1 2 1 2.32 a-Kjerstad 1 0 0 0 2.277 Higas c 4 0 1 1 2.228 Urias 3b 0 0 0 0 2.336 Totals 35 6 10 5

BALTIMORE 8, SAN DIEGO 6. Baltimore: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA McCann c 2 1 1 0 2.126 Totals 33 8 9

SEATTLE 6, CHICAGO WHITE SOX 3. Seattle: IP H R ER BB SO NP ERA Miller, W, 8-7.....6% 7 3 3 0 6 88 3.46 Voth, H, 10.....% 0 0 0 0 1 9 3.35 Garcia, H, 2.....1 0 0 0 0 7 0.000 Muñoz, S, 18-21.....1 0 0 0 1 20 1.228 Crochet, L, 6-8.....3 6 5 3 1 3 64 3.223 Kuhl.....5 2 1 2 4 75 3.822 Brebbia.....1 0 0 1 2 18 5.09

SEATTLE 6, CHICAGO WHITE SOX 3. Seattle: IP H R ER BB SO

Time for talk over, Bruins ready to let the actions speak for them

BY BEN BOLCH

Mercifully, for DeShaun Foster, the time for talk is over.

His brutal opening monologue at Big Ten media days — was saying “We’re in L.A.” supposed to be a joke? — became the talk of the event, even if the criticism might have been a bit unfair.

After fumbling over his words and making jaws drop to the Lucas Oil Stadium turf during several excruciatingly long pauses, UCLA’s new football coach went on to deliver amusing, insightful takes on his team while meeting with smaller groups of broadcasters and reporters.

Asked what he knew about Iowa football, Foster praised the Hawkeyes’ tradition and recalled being impressed by former star running back Tavian Banks. The coach then wryly decided he would be the one asking questions.

“What do you guys know about the Bruins?” Foster asked the handful of reporters gathered around him, prompting laughter.

Responded one reporter: “In L.A.”

Said Foster: “There you go.”

Later, Foster explained his struggles on the big stage by saying he felt more comfortable answering questions than speaking extemporaneously. So here are five questions facing the Bruins as they prepare to open fall training camp Wednesday on campus:

What will make a successful debut season for Foster?

Foster smartly said he wouldn’t furnish a number of wins that would make him happy, preferring to focus on competing in every game while exhibiting his pillars of discipline, respect and enthusiasm.

Declining to provide a tangible win-loss threshold leaves a lot more wiggle room for the rookie coach to declare his first season a success, but there should be some baseline expectations.

Six wins and above — resulting in a bowl game — should be universally hailed as a wild achievement given Foster’s whirlwind hiring in mid-February and the heavy personnel losses on defense.

Four or five wins while showing promise amid a strong finish to the season — including a victory over USC on Nov. 23 at the Rose Bowl — should satisfy fans and the recruits that Foster will need to compete at a high level in the Big Ten.

Three wins or fewer, well, yikes. While some might consider this a write-off season for Foster given the circumstances and UCLA’s most challenging schedule since predecessor Chip Kelly’s debut in 2018, it’s going to be hard to generate any buzz with victories over, say, Hawaii, Indiana and Minnesota offset by three



MEG OLIPHANT Los Angeles Times

FIRST-YEAR coach DeShaun Foster and UCLA look to make a splash in their Big Ten debut. But can the Bruins win more than a couple of conference games?

times as many losses.

Can UCLA make a quick transition to the Big Ten?

Defensive lineman Jay Toia has already started studying his new, beefier counterparts.

“The Big Ten has a lot of great O-linemen — you know, you look at Nebraska, Iowa, Ohio State, just, everybody,” Toia said last week. “Just the competitiveness and the amount of O-linemen that have been drafted [into the NFL] from the Big Ten Conference, it’s just insane.”

What has Toia done to prepare for the bigger bodies? He’s actually slimmed down into the best shape of his career, shedding pounds to increase mobility. Toia said the Bruins won’t be intimidated given they’re used to playing physical teams such as Utah and Oregon State.

There will also be some new fans headed to the Rose Bowl. Indiana has not played in the stadium since 1968, absorbing a 14-3 loss to USC in its only appearance in the Rose Bowl game. Iowa has worked with Delta Airlines to add a nonstop flight from Cedar Rapids to Los Angeles on Nov. 7 for fans seeking a more convenient route to Southern California ahead of the game the following day.

Foster said the biggest adjustment could be the wow factor of his players walking into Beaver Stadium on Oct. 5 and seeing more than 100,000 fans dressed in white before playing Penn State.

“Just to get out there and play in a huge stadium and play a really good football team,” Foster said. “I don’t think they’ve been in that hostile of an environment before.”

How will Bruins handle all those extra travel miles?

Using Google Earth to measure the distance between each team’s home stadium and its respective game sites, Bookies.com calculated that UCLA will travel the most miles — a whopping 22,048 — of any Big Ten team this season.

(Yes, we know the Bruins are an outlier among conference teams considering they play home games so far away from campus, but the point remains.)

That a decent chunk of those miles will be logged making nonconference trips to Hawaii and Louisiana State won’t lessen the Bruins’ chances of qualifying for elite status on multiple airlines.

What might be more significant than the miles flown is the number of time zones traveled — 26, also a high among Big Ten teams.

The Bruins are tailoring their departure times to best keep their players performing at an optimal level — and providing some much-needed rest and relaxation on the back end of each trip whenever possible. After playing Hawaii in its season opener Aug. 30, UCLA will remain in Honolulu for an extra day instead of flying back to Los Angeles immediately after the game.

Can Ethan Garbers make the offense elite?

It depends on how many games the redshirt senior quarterback can play.

If he is able to avoid the injury issues that sidelined him for parts of last season — remember those dreadful home losses to Arizona State and California? — then there’s no reason to think that Garbers can’t emerge as one of the Big Ten’s top quarterbacks in his final college season.

It’s an issue that Garbers listed playing in every game as his top personal goal. It will be up to a reconstructed offensive line to keep him from sustaining too many hits. Transfer Reuben Unije (Louisville) projects as a possible starter at left tackle alongside fellow newcomer Alani Makihele (Nevada Las Vegas) at right guard. They will probably be joined by Josh Carlin at center, Spencer Holstege at left guard and Garrett Di-Giorgio at right tackle as part of a unit that wants to at least cut in half last season’s 42 sacks given up, which ranked No. 113 out of 130 major college teams.

Garbers has been riding a massive high since coming off the bench to complete nine of 12 passes for 152 yards and two touchdowns during UCLA’s comeback victory over Boise State in the Los Angeles Bowl. He closed spring practice in strong fashion after mastering Eric Bieniemy’s West Coast offense.

How big of a drop-off will the defense experience?

There’s no sugarcoating the loss of linebacker Darius Muasau and edge rushers Laiatu Latu, Carl Jones Jr. and twins Grayson and Gabriel Murphy, who last season combined for 32 of the team’s 43 sacks.

But the Bruins possess enough playmakers to forge an above-average defense in their new conference.

“It’s going to be more of a collective [effort] than just one guy coming out and replacing Latu,” Foster said, referencing the Bruins’ only first-round NFL draft pick.

Toia is the literal and figurative centerpiece, an interior defensive lineman capable of stopping the run and pressuring the quarterback. Linebacker Ale Kaho is set to return after missing most of the last two seasons with foot injuries and will be joined at the position by the talented Kain Medrano and Oluwafemi Oladejo.

Transfer safeties Ramon Henderson (Notre Dame) and Bryan Addison (Oregon) should complement returning cornerbacks Jaylin Davies and Devin Kirkwood as part of one of the better secondaries on the West Coast.

The question is how much of a pass rush the Bruins can generate. If they can sustain pressure on the quarterback, then they will likely go bowling in Foster’s first season. If not, then the Cleveland.com preseason media poll that picked UCLA to finish 15th in the 18-team Big Ten might be spot on, and the Bruins’ new coach might have some explaining to do.

“Actions,” Foster said, alluding to his verbal stumbles, “speak louder than words to me.”

PRO CALENDAR

	TUE 30	WED 31	THU 1	FRI 2	SAT 3
DODGERS	at San Diego 6:30 SNLA	at San Diego 5:30 SNLA		at Oakland 6:30 SNLA	at Oakland 6 SNLA
ANGELS	COLORADO 6:30 BSW	COLORADO 6:30 BSW	COLORADO 6:30 BSW	N.Y. METS 6:30 BSW	N.Y. METS 6:30 BSW
SPARKS	NEXT: AUG. 15 VS. NEW YORK, 6, ESPN				
GALAXY		at San José** 7:30 Apple TV			
LAFC	VANC.** 7:30 Apple TV+				
ANGEL CITY			SAN DIEGO* 7		

Shade denotes home game. *NWSL Summer Cup (at Fullerton) **Leagues Cup

TODAY ON THE AIR

TIME	EVENT	ON THE AIR
BASEBALL		
3:30 p.m.	New York Yankees at Philadelphia	TV: TBS
6:30 p.m.	Dodgers at San Diego	TV: SNLA R: 570, 1020
6:30 p.m.	Colorado at Angels	TV: BSW R: 830, 1330
6:30 p.m.	Washington at Arizona	TV: MLB, ESPN+
BASKETBALL: THE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT		
4 p.m.	Quarterfinal, Happy Valley Hoopers vs. Eberlein Drive	TV: FS1
6 p.m.	Quarterfinal, Team Colorado vs. Forever Coogs	TV: FS2
SOCCER		
9:45 a.m.	Friendly, Deportivo Alavés vs. Tenerife	TV: ESPN+, ESPND
11:45 a.m.	Friendly, Coventry City vs. Everton	TV: ESPN+, ESPND
2 p.m.	CONCACAF U20 Championship, quarterfinals, U.S. vs. Guatemala	TV: FS2
4 p.m.	Friendly, Manchester City vs. FC Barcelona	TV: ESPN, ESPND
5 p.m.	Friendly, Louisville City vs. Eintracht Frankfurt	TV: ESPN+
6 p.m.	Leagues Cup, Monterrey vs. Austin FC	TV: FS1, TUDN
7:30 p.m.	Leagues Cup, LAFC vs. Vancouver	TV: Apple TV+
4 a.m. (Wed.)	Friendly, K-League All-Stars vs. Tottenham	TV: CBSN
TENNIS		
8 a.m.	Washington (ATP/WTA), early rounds	TV: Tennis
10 a.m.	Washington (ATP/WTA), early rounds	TV: BSW

■ Olympics TV listings. B7

THE DAY IN SPORTS

Ex-Dodger, Angel Moronta dies at 31

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Former major league relief pitcher **Reyes Moronta**, a standout for the San Francisco Giants whose career included stints with the Dodgers and Angels, died Sunday. He was 31.

Moronta reportedly died in a vehicle crash in his home country of the Dominican Republic.

The Mexican Baseball League and Bravos de León, one of Moronta’s former teams in the league, confirmed his death in separate social media posts Sunday night.

In 2022, Moronta pitched 22 games for the Dodgers, with a 4.18 ERA, before being designated for assignment in August. After being claimed off waivers by Arizona, Moronta appeared in 17 games and had a 2-2 record with two saves and a 4.50 ERA. He signed with the Angels the following spring and had a 6.75 ERA in two appearances.

—CHUCK SCHILKEN

The playoff-contending Kansas City Royals acquired veteran right-hander **Michael Lorenzen** from the Texas Rangers in exchange for minor league left-hander **Walter Pennington**. ... The Cincinnati Reds picked up veteran first baseman **Ty France** and cash from Seattle in exchange for minor league catcher **Andrew Salcedo**. ... Boston acquired right-handed pitcher **Quinn Priester** from the Pittsburgh Pirates for minor league infielder/outfielder **Nick Yorke** in an exchange of former first-round draft picks. ... Texas acquired catcher **Carson Kelly** from the Detroit Tigers in exchange for two minor leaguers. Kelly will likely back up Gold Glove winner **Jonah Heim**. ... Brewers closer **Trevor Megill** was put on the 15-day injured list, retroactive to Friday, because of a lower back strain.

Lauren Coughlin won the CPKC Women’s Open on Sunday for her first LPGA Tour title, pulling away from **Haeran Ryu** with a two-stroke swing on the par-three 17th. Tied for the lead after Ryu three-putted for bogey on the par-four 16th, Coughlin hit a six-iron to 8 feet and birdied the 195-yard 17th. Ryu then missed a 3-foot par try to fall two shots back.

The Carolina Hurricanes agreed to a two-year, \$13-million deal with forward **Martin Necas**. ... Minnesota Wild GM **Bill Guerin** saw more than enough potential in former King **Brock Faber**’s rookie season to sign the defenseman to an eight-year, \$68-million contract extension. The deal doesn’t start until the 2025-26 season once Faber’s rookie contract expires.

Novak Djokovic withdrew from next week’s U.S. Open tuneup tournament in Montreal after his victory over **Rafael Nadal** at the Paris Olympics.

Dallas Cowboys defensive end **Sam Williams** suffered torn ligaments in his left knee while taking part in special teams drills Sunday night, and will need season-ending surgery. Williams was hurt during

Santa Cruz makes most of every day

Two years after his life-threatening injury, the Venice senior is ‘pushing to get better.’

ERIC SONDHEIMER ON HIGH SCHOOLS

On the first official day of high school football practice Monday, senior Nathan Santa Cruz of Venice needed no one to remind him what it means to be on the field again.

“I think I have a little bit more maturity because I know every single day you could be wide awake and in a second you could be in a coma. I never take any day for granted,” he said.

It was two seasons ago, in Venice’s season’s opener on Aug. 19, 2022, when Santa Cruz sustained a head injury that threatened not only his football career but also his life.

Fast action by medical and athletic training personnel saved him.

He made a memorable return to sports competition in spring 2023 by running track.

Then played his junior



ERIC SONDHEIMER Los Angeles Times

NATHAN SANTA CRUZ’S injury gave him a new outlook. “I have a little bit more maturity,” he says.

season of football last fall with no complications and finished second in the 400 meters at the City Section track finals.

He’s a receiver with speed, determination and an outlook on life rare for someone who doesn’t turn 17 until next month.

“I’m really excited to see where the season takes me and excited to go to college and keep pushing to get better throughout life,” he said.

City Section schools began practice Monday with conditioning workouts. Players need three days before being allowed to put

on pads and helmets. Scrimmages are scheduled for the week of Aug. 15, with Week 0 games the following week. Southern Section schools with Week 0 games also began practices Monday.

Four-time defending City champion Birmingham, which hasn’t lost a game to a City Section school since 2017, is facing its toughest challenge in years, with Marine League schools San Pedro, Banning, Carson, Narbonne and Gardena the ones to watch.

Venice coach Angelo Gasca is entering his 42nd

year of coaching. He’s been at Venice for 35 years and head coach for 25. Only Crenshaw’s Robert Garrett, in his 37th season, has been around longer than Gasca at the same school.

Gasca missed the first day of practice after feeling ill over the weekend but has confidence in his team with the improvement of sophomore quarterback Jaiden Noel.

Santa Cruz serves as an inspiring example for Gasca why he coaches and for teammates to understand what they love about competing in football.

“Obviously he’s been through a lot and came through it and is really developing into a great receiver. We’re expecting him to have a great season,” Gasca said in a phone call from his home.

Santa Cruz understands how quickly life can change, so he’s focused on making the most of every day.

“I think people mature a lot when they have a life-threatening moment,” he said.

He reminds everyone that he has no limitations.

“I’m just having fun like a normal kid,” he said.

SPORTS

TUESDAY, JULY 30, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/SPORTS

PARIS  OLYMPICS



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

NYJAH HUSTON warms up before the men's street skateboard competition. After placing seventh in Tokyo, the six-time world champion was happy to win bronze.

For Huston, this bronze is no bust

Three years after his disappointment in Tokyo, U.S. skateboarder gets a measure of redemption.

BY DAVID WHARTON

PARIS — It took Nyjah Huston all of three seconds to fall on his first run at these 2024 Summer Olympics. Scrambling to his feet, he landed a couple of tricks, then fell again. The look on his face said it all.

No. Not again.

As one of the iconic figures in competitive skateboarding, the six-time world champion had faltered at the Tokyo Games three years ago, missing the same trick over and over to finish seventh.

Nearing 30 and no longer the best skater on the U.S. team — that honor arguably goes to Jagger Eaton — Huston came to Paris looking for some measure of redemption in the men's street competition.

But after that shaky start in the preliminary round, it looked like Tokyo all over again.

"Of course thoughts like that come through my mind," he said. "All you can do is try to pick yourself up and land the next one."

There would be no Hollywood ending for Huston, no golden moment at the Place de la Concorde. But the way he kept glancing at the bronze medal around his neck, rubbing it between his fingers, suggested he was fine with the way things ended.

There were a few highlight-reel [See **HUSTON**, B7]



ABBIE PARR Associated Press

U.S. GYMNASTS, from left, Brody Malone, Asher Hong, Fred Richard, Paul Juda and Stephen Nedoroscik, challenged themselves to raise their difficulty levels and it resulted in a team medal.

U.S. men's gymnastics revels in its medal feat

BY THUC NHI NGUYEN

PARIS — He didn't need official results. All Brett McClure needed was the sight of Stephen Nedoroscik's feet hitting the mat on another clean routine to know.

His scheme worked.

The U.S. high performance director's three-year plan to end the country's 16-year Olympic medal drought paid off Monday as the Americans won the bronze in the team final at Bercy Arena. After three consecutive fifth-place Olympic finishes, the United States has now won world and Olympic medals in consecutive years for the first time since 2003 and 2004.

Japan overcame a shocking fall from reigning Olympic all-around champion Daiki Hashimoto on pommel horse to take gold over China, which suffered three falls on high bar in the final rotation. Japan, which doubled down on its 2023 world championship, won with 259.594 points, 0.532 points ahead of China. The United States finished with 257.793 points, clearing fourth-place Great Britain by [See **Gymnastics**, B7]

Bronze medal is just the second-best news

Ryan Murphy places in his third straight Olympics, then learns he has a baby girl. **B7**

Canada's fast rise in soccer is questioned

After Olympic spying scandal, it's fair to wonder if success came from cheating. **B6**

Fencer's historic bronze is a 'blur'

American Nick Itkin adds to the team medal he won in Tokyo in 2020. **B6**



GREGORY BULL Associated Press

TOMMY EDMAN, long a target of the Dodgers, has not played this season because of multiple injuries.

Dodgers flash a dose of depth moves

Utilityman Edman, reliever Kopech acquired in trade with Cardinals, White Sox.

BY JACK HARRIS

After waiting until the eve of this year's MLB trade deadline to make their first big move, the Dodgers executed a complex maneuver Monday — landing utilityman Tommy Edman and relief pitcher Michael Kopech in a three-team trade with the St. Louis Cardinals and the Chicago White Sox, according to multiple people with knowledge of the situation who weren't authorized to speak publicly.

Who's new in blue?

A statistical look at the two players the Dodgers acquired in a three-way trade Monday:

2B | TOMMY EDMAN >>>

	Avg.	OB%	SLG%	R	RBI	HR	SB
2023	.248	.307	.399	69	47	13	27
Career	.265	.319	.408	343	222	53	106

RHP | MICHAEL KOPECH >>>

	W-L-S	IP	H	BB	SO	ERA	WHIP
2024	2-8-9	43 ² / ₃	35	24	59	4.74	1.35
Career	17-33-9	376	309	198	416	4.38	1.35

It was far from a blockbuster deal for the first-place but injury-plagued Dodgers. Edman is a career .265 hitter who has yet to play this season because of an offseason wrist surgery and an ankle sprain. Kopech

is a hard-throwing, yet walk-prone, right-hander with a 4.74 ERA and nine saves this season.

But, both players come with upside — Edman as a switch-hitter and versatile defensive option in both the

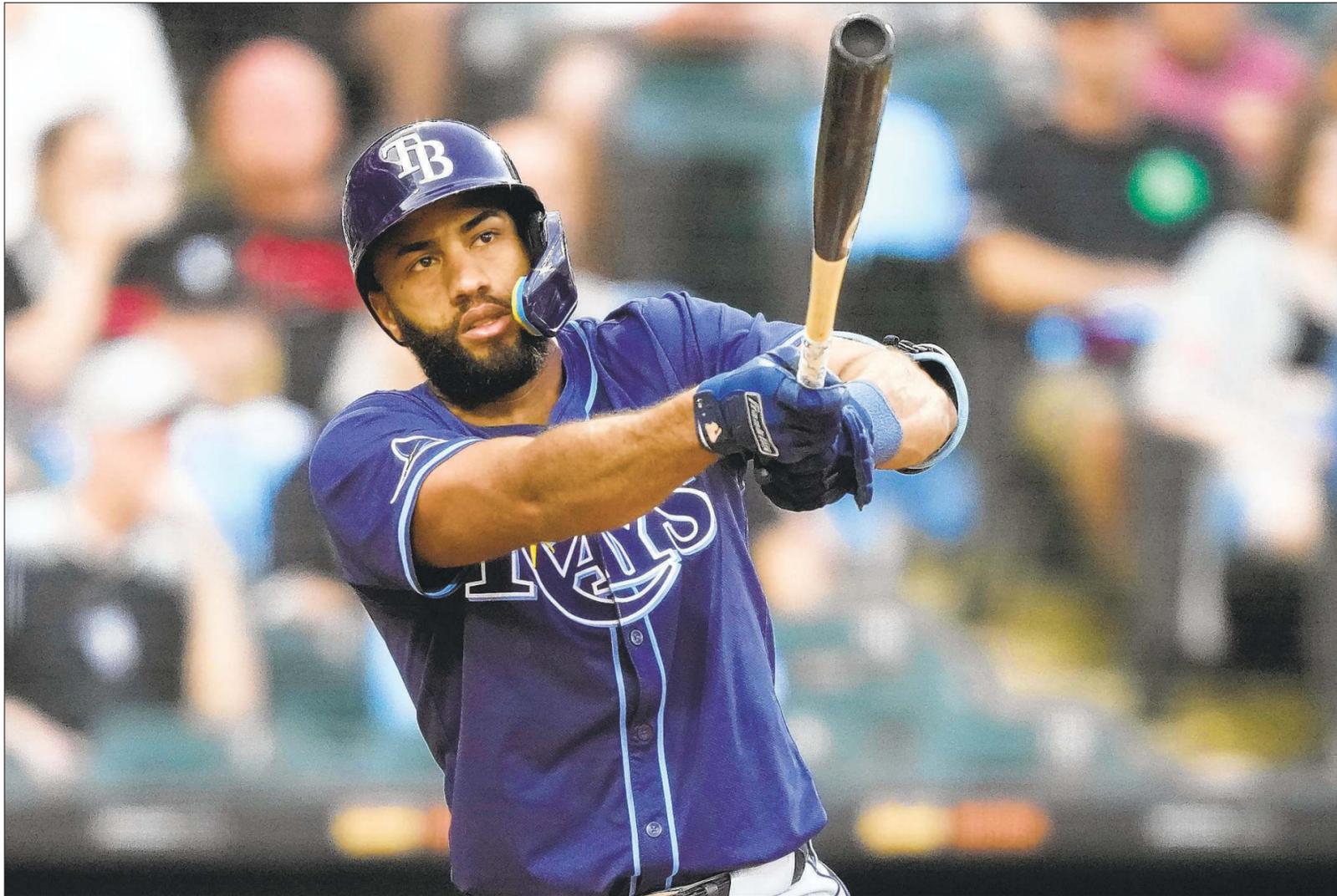
infield and outfield; Kopech as a talented former first-round pick who moved to the bullpen this year after being a starter in 2022 and 2023.

Both will fill holes on the Dodgers' roster — providing added depth in the bullpen and at the bottom of the lineup.

Both are under team control through the end of next season.

In return, the Dodgers sent outfielder Miguel Vargas and two minor league prospects, Jeral Perez and Alexander Albertus, to the White Sox. In addition, the Dodgers are sending a player to be named later or cash to the Cardinals and the White Sox.

In the other portion of [See **Dodgers**, B8]



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST Associated Press

AMED ROSARIO batted a career-best .307 in 76 games with Tampa Bay this season after signing as a free agent. Last year, he was not on the Dodgers' playoff roster.

Dodgers acquire Rosario at deadline again

BY JACK HARRIS

The Dodgers' second move of the trade deadline was a rather familiar one.

Just as it did last year, the team acquired utility infielder Amed Rosario in a trade with the Tampa Bay Rays on Monday in exchange for minor league pitcher Michael Flynn. Long reliever Ryan Yarbrough was designated for assignment to make room on the 40-man roster.

The move came hours after the team added another utility player, Tommy Edman, to its roster in a three-way trade with the St. Louis Cardinals and the Chicago White Sox (the Dodgers also picked up reliever Michael Kopech in the deal). Rosario's return will further bolster the Dodgers' infield depth and bottom-of-the-order options.

A 28-year-old veteran who finished last season with the Dodgers

(though missed the cut for their postseason roster) after being acquired from the Cleveland Guardians, Rosario signed with the Rays as a free agent this offseason and batted .307 in 76 games.

For the Dodgers, Rosario will provide a right-handed infield bat, something the club is currently missing with Chris Taylor, Miguel Rojas and Mookie Betts on the injured list. Rosario also provides versatility, having made starts at second base, third base, shortstop and right field this season.

The Dodgers acquired Rosario at the deadline last year from the Cleveland Guardians, trading him for then-struggling pitcher Noah Syndergaard. But Rosario batted only .256 with a .709 OPS over the remainder of the season. And after missing out on the Dodgers' National League Division Series roster, it was no surprise he signed elsewhere last winter.

As a member of the Rays, Rosa-

rio was putting together one of his best big league seasons. Though he wasn't playing on an everyday basis, Rosario's batting average was a career high, while his 17 doubles ranked fourth on the team. His .748 OPS is the second-highest mark he has had in a season. And his 114 OPS+ (an all-encompassing offensive stat in which 100 is considered league average) was the best of any of his eight MLB seasons.

Rosario gives the Dodgers added coverage at third base, where Max Muncy has been absent for more than two months because of an oblique strain. It gives the club another shortstop option, with Rojas and Betts currently on the injured list. Most importantly, he represents a potential upgrade over the team's other bottom-half hitters, an area of concern the Dodgers wanted to address at the deadline.

Yarbrough, a fellow 2023 deadline acquisition who had a 3.74 ERA

this season, was the odd man out from Monday's moves, creating room on the 40-man roster for Rosario and in the bullpen for Kopech.

The Dodgers could still look to trade Yarbrough before Tuesday's deadline similar to how they dealt starting pitcher James Paxton last week after designating him for assignment.

With less than 24 hours to go until the deadline, and lineup and bullpen additions now secured, the Dodgers' main focus will probably shift to starting pitching, where the team remains in play for Garrett Crochet and Jack Flaherty, according to people with knowledge of the situation who weren't authorized to speak publicly.

Ex-Dodger Turner traded to Mariners

The Seattle Mariners acquired veteran Justin Turner from the To-

ronto Blue Jays in exchange for minor league outfielder RJ Schreck and cash considerations.

Turner is expected, for now, to get the bulk of playing time at first base for Seattle, but he can also play third base and was the designated hitter for 71 of the 89 games he appeared in for Toronto. The 39-year-old is hitting .254 with six homers and 31 RBIs but since June 1 has batted .301 with an .800 OPS.

Turner played in nine consecutive postseasons with the Dodgers, hitting .270 with 13 home runs and 42 RBIs in 86 games.

"Justin has been one of the most productive corner infield bats in the league for over a decade," Mariners general manager Justin Hollander said. "With his track record at the plate and extensive experience in the postseason, he is a valuable addition."

Associated Press contributed to this report.

Stafford's planned off day lets Rams feature Garoppolo, Bennett

STAFF REPORTS

No elbow problem. No money-related hold-in.

Just a scheduled day off.

Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford did not practice Monday — the team's first in pads — but coach Sean McVay shut down speculation quicker than a Stafford-delivered pass during a two-minute drill.

"This was part of the plan all along," McVay said, adding, "There's nothing wrong with him. He's good."

Jimmy Garoppolo took Stafford's place with the first-team offense and Stetson Bennett worked with the second team.

Although both excelled at times, there is no replacing Stafford. The 16th-year pro is the key player for a team that will enter the season with far greater expectations than the 2023 version that finished with a better-than-anticipated 10-7 record and made the playoffs.

So managing Stafford's workload, and keeping the 36-year-old injury free, remains paramount.

In 2022, after the Rams' victory in Super Bowl LVI, Stafford did not throw passes during the offseason and was limited in training camp because of right elbow tendinitis. Midway through a lost season, he

sustained a concussion that forced him to sit out a game and then a spinal injury that sidelined him the last seven games.

Last season, Stafford returned to an elite level. After sitting out one midseason game because of a thumb injury, he led the Rams' second-half surge to the postseason.

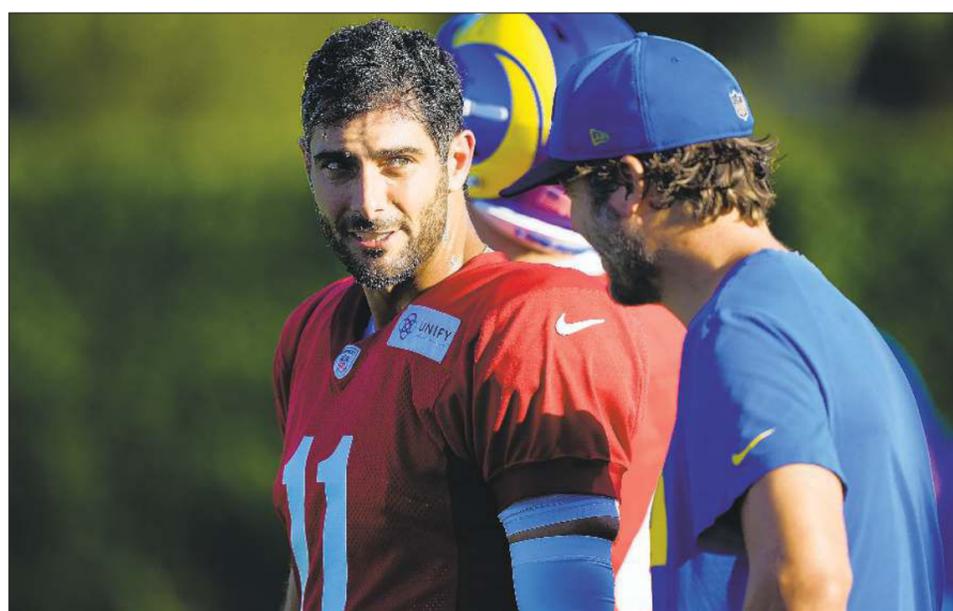
During the offseason, Stafford surprised the Rams by asking for a contract adjustment. The Rams finally gave in last week and resolved the situation as players were reporting for training camp.

Stafford looked sharp throughout the first week of workouts, delivering passes from all angles to Cooper Kupp, Puka Nacua and other Rams receivers. But after a day off Sunday, he was not in his jersey Monday.

McVay said the decision to sit Stafford was made because of the amount of throws he made and because Monday's practice would be heavy on running plays. Stafford will practice Tuesday, McVay said.

"We have a much better grasp of ... just where he's at in this part in his career," McVay said. "You don't ever want to have any of those elbow issues creep up again."

Garoppolo, 32, has a history of injuries, but the 11th-year pro — who signed a one-year contract with the Rams — got through off-season workouts unscathed and passed well in the first week of



RYAN SUN Associated Press

JIMMY GAROPPOLO, left, talking to Matthew Stafford, took first-team reps with the offense Monday. Said Rams coach Sean McVay: "He's got great command. You can see he's played a lot."

camp. On Monday, his experience and increasing comfort in the offense showed. A touchdown pass to tight end Hunter Long in the back of the end zone harked to throws Garoppolo made with the San Francisco 49ers against the Rams while forging an 8-0 record in regular-season games.

"He's got great command," McVay said. "You can see he's played a lot."

Bennett, a second-year pro, spent all of last season on the non-football injury/illness list. Monday marked his first extended work in team drills since the summer of 2023.

Bennett made several out-

standing passes, one on a sideline route to receiver Xavier Smith and another on a touchdown pass to receiver Tyler Johnson. He also made some mistakes.

"He had some really good reps; some things where we can be a little bit cleaner," McVay said, "But what you do see from Stetson is the athleticism. The ability ... if we lose contain up front, he can break it and make plays with his legs."

Bennett enjoyed his first opportunity in full-team drills.

"It went pretty well," he said. "There were some mistakes, but made some good plays too. Just learn from it."

—GARY KLEIN

Slater returns to Chargers' practice

After Rashawn Slater left practice early Friday and sat out the Saturday session because of an undisclosed injury, the starting left tackle returned in full pads Monday. Taking Slater out Friday was "out of an abundance of caution," according to Chargers coach Jim Harbaugh.

Although Slater did not participate in the first 11-on-11 session, he was back in for the second. He also had some one-on-one reps later, including one against star edge rusher Khalil Mack.

—MARISSA KRAUS

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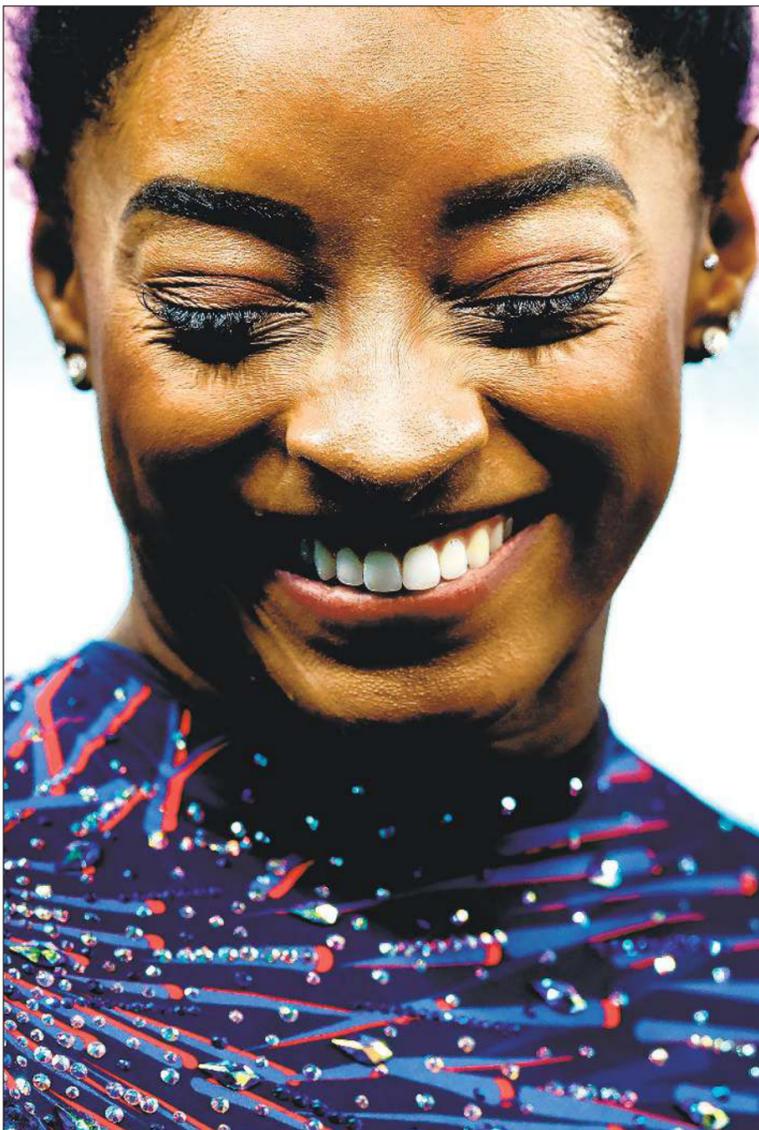


THE UNITED STATES has won a gold, a silver and a bronze in individual foil fencing.



ITALY'S Alice D'Amato soars on the uneven bars during qualifying for women's team gymnastics. She also represented her country at the Summer Games in Tokyo. Photographs by WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

Hitting the competitive heights



U.S. GYMNAST Simone Biles smiles during a training session. Despite a calf injury, she will compete in four events in the team finals on Tuesday night.



HANDS collide during a women's water polo match between the U.S. and Greece. The Americans, seeking a fourth consecutive gold medal, won 15-6.



EGYPT'S Mohamed El-Sayed celebrates his bronze medal in men's epee fencing. The 21-year-old from Cairo defeated Neisser Loyola of Belgium 9-8.

ENTERTAINMENT

TUESDAY, JULY 30, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/ENTERTAINMENT



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

X HAS kept its original lineup — DJ Bonebrake, from left, John Doe, Exene Cervenka and Billy Zoom — for most of its years.

In front of a handful of Alex's Bar employees hustling to prep for a sold-out club show on a recent hot summer night in Long Beach, the members of X are busy warming up at soundcheck for the first of two local gigs last month to kick off the cycle for the album that the iconic L.A. punk band says will be its last. John Doe is holding his bass and tackling vocal duties, while his longtime tag team partner, the band's sparkplug Exene Cervenka, is also testing the mic with her vocals. Billy Zoom swaps between his guitar and saxophone while D.J. Bonebrake keeps the beat moving.

Unlike other local underplay kickoffs, this show in support of their final album, "Smoke & Fiction," carries an extra bit of urgency. The lengthy tour extends into 2025, with no true end in sight, but this evening, it's business as usual. New songs, like the title track and "Flipside," pack a punch, while the band's classics, "Water & Wine" and "Come Back to Me," retain their urgency.

Once Zoom and Bonebrake leave the stage, Doe and Cervenka soundcheck a cover of the

X marks the end after almost 50 years

The longtime L.A. punk band is touring for one final album, 'Smoke & Fiction.'

By DANIEL KOHN

Blasters' "4th of July." As they trade vocals, the pair lock eyes, their onstage connection as strong as ever.

"We know where each other is going, even if it's a new place or phrasing," Doe says backstage as he nurses a ginger beer. "So we do share a brain in that way. In a lot of respects, I think Exene is one of the best writers ever."

"We're just a band," Cervenka says a few days later at the band's rehearsal space in Orange. "People have so much attached to bands. It's just people playing music. It's not a big deal."

Depending on which member you ask, there will be a different answer as to how and when the decision came for X to hang up its gear. But, specifics aside, it was a mutual decision in which all the members agreed that the time was right to call it a career. "It really is our last record," Bonebrake insists backstage at Alex's Bar. "Sometimes you just have to say, 'OK, this is it.' But we had to have one last hurrah."

Unlike 2020's "Alphabetland," the band's first album in 27 years and first with Zoom since 1985 — [See X, E6]

ALBUM REVIEW

How about a group shrug?

True to form, Ice Spice is the picture of indifference in debut album 'Y2K!'

MIKAEL WOOD
POP MUSIC CRITIC

Two years after crashing into pop stardom with an all-timer of a kiss-off in "Munch (Feelin' U)," Ice Spice has finally delivered her debut album — the young Bronx rapper's long-awaited opportunity, we're meant to understand, to prove she's more than just a viral hitmaker.

Eh, why bother? That's the nonchalant vibe — and the not-inconsiderable appeal — of "Y2K!," on which Ice Spice spends all of 23 minutes shrugging through 10 songs about sex, competition and the cold calculus of infidelity: "If he's cheating I'm doing him worse," she reasons. "I don't care 'cause he did it first."

An instant addition to the long line of great New York City voices, Ice Spice arrived in 2022 with a blasé attitude perfectly suited to TikTok's bite-sized presentation. Since then she's reached the top five with PinkPantheress, gone to "Barbie World" with Nicki Minaj, scooped up four Grammy nods and made a bestie of no less than Taylor Swift. (She even shot a Dunkin' Donuts commercial with Ben Affleck.) Yet she still sounds entirely unimpressed on "Y2K!," as though global celebrity has turned out to be — *sigh* — one more irritation.

"Everybody be knowing my name," she notes in "BB Belt." "Just want the money, I don't want the fame."

What makes this approach work is the way she plays her low, talky flow against her producer Riot-USA's beats, which can be icy and menacing (as in "Oh [See Ice Spice, E2]

Celebrating a directing duo

A documentary hails the collaboration of filmmakers Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. **E3**

Founder of the Chills dies at 61

Martin Phillipps led the influential New Zealand indie-rock band across four decades. **E3**

Comics **E4-5**
Puzzles **E5**

Rockers cap Off! run with shows, film

Hardcore group's final concerts coincide with release of feature film 'Free LSD.'

By STEVE APPLEFORD

On a recent Sunday morning on the I34 Freeway, singer and punk rock icon Keith Morris was behind the wheel of his Honda, rolling toward a final rehearsal with his band Off! in a Pomona studio. Blasting on his car stereo were songs from "Free LSD," the quartet's latest album, so Morris could reacquaint himself with the record's far-out lyrics of alien invasions and mind control.

As he drove, the recording of nervous guitar riffs and Morris' panicked vocals roared ominously from the [See Off!, E2]



STEVE APPLEFORD

THE BAND'S members — singer Keith Morris, left, drummer Mario Rubalcaba, bassist Aтры Fulbright II and guitarist Dimitri Coats — met about 20 years ago.

COMIC-CON

Marvel hits the reset button fantastically

Kevin Feige delivers a panel full of surprises and nostalgia after a rocky few years.

By TRACY BROWN

It was a big weekend for Marvel Studios.

Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige returned to San Diego Comic-Con's hallowed Hall H on Saturday to hype the studio's upcoming projects armed with exclusive footage, surprises and more. (Just a couple days earlier, the same hall in the Anaheim Convention Center was the site of revelry celebrating "Deadpool & Wolverine.")

The presentation highlighted upcoming releases that include "Captain America: Brave New World," "Thunderbolts," "Fantastic Four" and a couple of "Avengers" films.

Marvel's biggest surprise was the reveal that Robert Downey Jr. will be making his return to the MCU as Doctor Doom in the next "Avengers" film. After helping kick off the franchise in 2008's "Iron Man," Downey portrayed the billionaire playboy Tony Stark, one of the leaders of the Avengers, in more than nine films over the course of his 11-year tenure. He last appeared in 2019's "Avengers: Endgame," in which Stark died to save the universe. [See Comic-Con, E6]

Satisfying end for 'buddies' turned bandmates

[Off!, from E1] speakers: "Disappeared without a trace / Another world beyond the realm / The flying lights, not of this Earth ... The hour of reckoning's here!"

The song was "War Above Los Angeles," a raging highlight from the 2022 album, written by Morris and Off!'s co-founder and guitarist Dimitri Coats. But after months of touring with his other band, the reunited Circle Jerks, Morris needed to clear his head of one band's set list and replace it with the other. He would study up on Off! lyrics for another few days before leaving for a final run of shows in Chicago, New York and L.A. before the band officially disbands.

"Those guys, they're all going to be good," Morris says confidently of his bandmates in Off!. At 68, bearded and with dreadlocks stretching past his knees, the singer has never been busier. "Once we start rehearsing, that'll help me cough up a lot of that stuff in my head."

Off! is now on indefinite hiatus after its farewell performance Friday at the Belasco in downtown Los Angeles, but this punk rock swan song comes at a moment of celebration for the hardcore supergroup. That's because the final shows coincided with the hard-won release of the band's feature film, also called "Free LSD," a rock 'n' roll science fiction comedy in the tradition of 1984's "Repo Man."

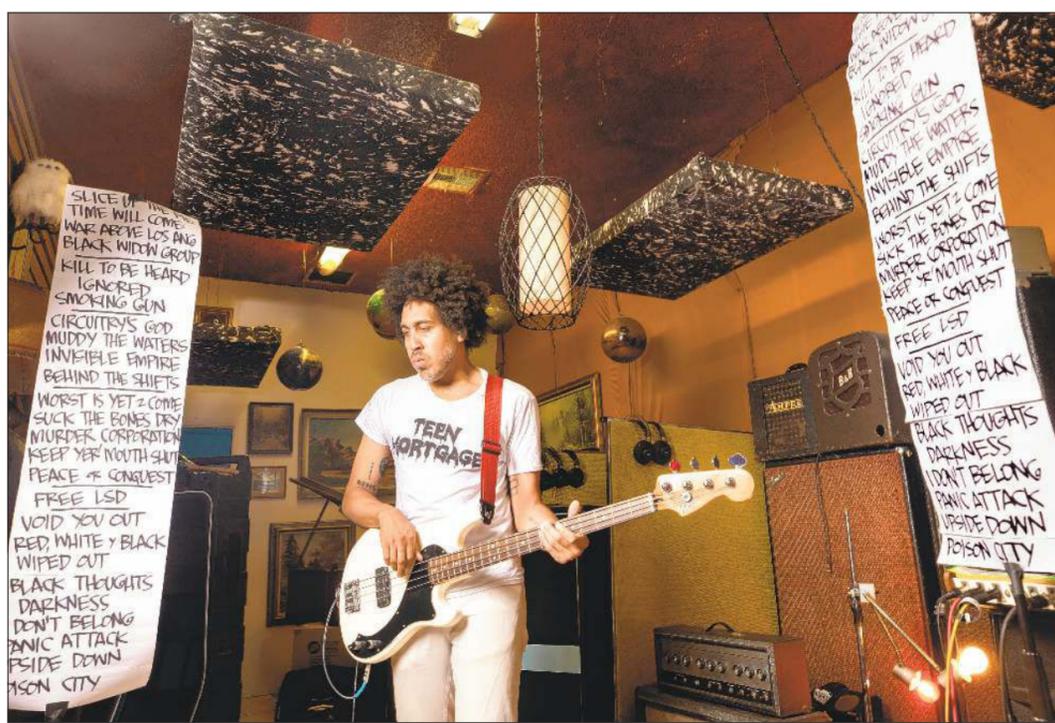
Morris stars as the unfulfilled owner of an adult specialty shop, who spends his free time hosting a conspiracy-themed podcast on UFOs, pyramids and Sasquatch. When he falls for a younger woman but can't perform sexually, he turns to a mysterious doctor who prescribes a drug that not only cures erectile dysfunction but opens his mind to other dimensions. He discovers an alternate plane of existence where he's the singer in a band at the center of a battle between good and evil extraterrestrials.

The film was written and directed by Coats, and features the band alongside a cast that includes Jack Black and underground music figures David Yow from the Jesus Lizard, Davey Havok from AFI, Chris D. from the Flesh Eaters, Don Bolles from the Germs, late Dead Kennedys drummer DH Peligro, Zander Schloss from the Circle Jerks and Angelo Moore from Fishbone.

"It's a real hodgepodge of punk rock royalty," says Coats, who studied acting at Juilliard before turning to music. "Look, we didn't make 'Citizen Kane' here. It's a midnight movie. It's also an expression coming from our scene. It's from the streets. We prided ourselves using as many of our friends in the music world who had a little bit of acting chops."

The "Free LSD" film will have its local premiere at the Nuart Theatre in Santa Monica on Friday, followed by several other screenings across Southern California, all with live Q&As with Coats and Morris. The film is released to major streamers on Aug. 9, with a Blu-ray loaded with bonus features planned for later this year.

"The bottom line for me is that this movie is the great-



BASSIST Autry Fulbright II, above; singer Keith Morris, below; and drummer Mario Rubalcaba, bottom, rehearse for Off!'s final concerts. The punk supergroup's feature film, "Free LSD," which shares its title with Off!'s acclaimed last album, will have its local premiere Friday at the Nuart Theatre in Santa Monica.

est artistic, creative adventure that I've ever been a part of," says Morris, speaking in his distinctive rasp. "Honestly, it is my proudest achievement."

It also marks the end of Off! after a 14-year run, at least in the foreseeable future. The band's Econoline van has already been sold, and Morris will focus on performing with the Circle Jerks. That first-wave SoCal punk band is more in demand now than at any time since the 1980s, playing bigger rooms and traveling overseas regularly for the first time.

"Dimitri's idea was that if we're going out, we might as well go out on a high note," Morris says of Off!, but adds, "We are going to be open to whatever comes our way. We gotta shut this down for the time being."

At the rehearsal, Morris unfurls long rolls of paper where he's written the band's set list in big block letters with a marker, and hangs them up in a studio filled with vintage sound equipment. Coats stands with his guitar beside a table covered with his electronic gear, providing a new noisy element to the band's sound on "Free LSD."

They're joined by drummer Mario Rubalcaba and bassist Autry Fulbright II as they rip through the "Free LSD" songs, followed by material from the band's first three releases. It's an intense repertoire and they attack the set list without interruption.

The new album is still rooted in the band's snarling core sound, which began as a throwback to Morris' days as the founding singer in Black Flag. But the new songs have an added layer of electronics, psychedelic noise and jazzy improvisation to accompany lyrics less self-obsessed than paranoid about alien forces, as Morris warns: "There is another side / We are not alone!"

The plan was to stretch out in new ways and break the usual boundaries of hardcore. "It felt like the future and the past coming together at the same time," says Coats, who has pro-



duced all of Off!'s albums. "I said, 'Come on, dude. Let's go way outside of our comfort zone for this. Let's risk making fools of ourselves for the sake of maybe breaking completely new ground. Not only for ourselves, but for this genre that you come from.'"

The album is the band's first collection of new material since 2014's "Wasted Years," and was declared "a frenetic masterpiece" by Mojo magazine, while the online AllMusic guide called it "a gloriously weird triumph."

The members of Off! met about 20 years ago when Coats' first band, the Burn-

ing Brides, was signed to V2 Records, where Morris then worked in the A&R department. Coats wasn't from the punk rock world and didn't know who Morris was. But the singer was immediately drawn to the Burning Brides song "Glass Slipper," a driving minimalist rocker that sounded to him like something from his Black Flag days. They became close friends.

"This band in general is a beautiful accident because it started out for years just us hitting it off as friends and going to get meals together, going to record stores," says Coats. "He's been in the hospital when my kids have

Photographs by STEVE APPLEFORD

reached out with an invitation to record one of its songs for a high-profile tribute album, "The Metallica Blacklist," which marked the 30th anniversary of the metal juggernaut's "Black Album." Off! chose to record a cover of "Holier Than Thou" and brought on Fulbright (formerly of ...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead) and drummer Justin Brown, an accomplished jazz player whose resume included Thundercat and Herbie Hancock.

"He came in not knowing anything about punk rock except Bad Brains, and he had that swing that we loved about Mario," says Coats. "But he just took the material to a completely different place." (After Brown was pulled away to other projects last year, Rubalcaba returned to Off!)

Even as the movie plans foundered, Coats recognized that Off! had written an album of songs that promised to push the band into adventurous new territory. And in a meeting with Morris, he suggested that might be enough. They could leave the movie dreams behind.

"And Keith's eyes welled up with tears, and his voice got real shaky, and he said, 'Dimitri, we have to make the movie,'" Coats recalls. "And I got chills, and goosebumps, because that's when I realized that it was just as important to him as it was for me."

After they completed the album, financing for the film came together. And with a short window available between Circle Jerks tours, "Free LSD" began shooting in the summer of 2022 at locations around Los Angeles with a budget under \$1 million. A rough early cut of the film was chosen as the closing movie of last year's Slamdance Film Festival.

After a final screening Aug. 7 at the Los Feliz 3, Morris will be back on the road with the Circle Jerks, and there are plans for a new album. There may also be future activity with Flag, his band featuring former Black Flag members Chuck Dukowski, Dez Cadena and Bill Stevenson (with Descendents guitarist Stephen Egerton).

For Coats, he's learned some things about making and financing independent films and wants to make more. He is starting a film production company with Kurt Kittleson, a veteran film producer who helped him make "Free LSD." He's also planning to turn down the volume and record a solo acoustic album.

"I'm really into singer-songwriters who fingerpick on acoustic guitar and write sad songs," says Coats.

Morris turns to him and says, "So you go home and you're depressed with all of your sad songs. Just don't be a sad sack."

If there are any mixed feelings about ending Off!, they insist it comes with real satisfaction of what the band has accomplished for its final act.

"It just feels like it's time. Everybody has bigger and better things to do," says Coats. "I personally just want to go back to being buddies, the way we started out. That's always been what's been most important to me."

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JULY RHAPSODY NR 1:20 7:20	WIDOW CLICQUOT R 12:50 3:00 5:10 7:30	CROSSING 1:30 4:20 7:20	THE FABULOUS FOUR R 1:20 4:20 7:30
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Refreshing in era of lavishness

[Ice Spice, from E1] Shhh..." and "BB Belt") or chipper and sprightly (as in "Thank U the S— [Fart]" and "Did It First"). His vivid production is rooted in drill but pulls in traces of trap and Jersey club. Together he and Ice Spice know how to turn an offhand phrase — "Fat butt, pull my pants up" is one of them — into a deviously catchy hook, then how to turn that hook into a kind of low-boil mantra.

In addition to Central Cee, Travis Scott and Gunna put in guest appearances on "Y2K!," whose title nods to Ice Spice's birth date of Jan. 1, 2000. They're both fine, though each rapper's bleary mumbling tends to fade into the background behind Ice Spice's crisp displeasure.

Does "Y2K!" ultimately feel a bit slight for how long it's taken to materialize? Sure. Yet the album's throwaway quality is actually pretty refreshing in a year long on elaborately conceived pop extravaganzas

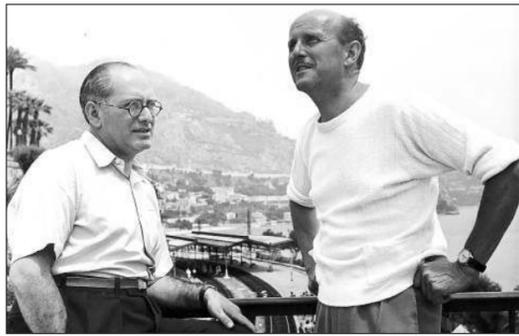


IN "Y2K!" Ice Spice stays appealingly nonchalant.

such as Beyoncé's "Cowboy Carter" and Swift's "The Tortured Poets Department." Unlike her pal with the

long trail of vexing exes, Ice Spice bears no discernible burden in these sneering little ditties. She's floating on indifference.

MOVIE REVIEW



EMERIC PRESSBURGER, left, and Michael Powell on the set of their masterpiece "The Red Shoes."

Scorsese revives film duo's timeless, subversive magic

BY ROBERT ABELE

Those who believe that filmmaking is inherently collaborative know that the movies written, produced and directed by the Englishman Michael Powell and the Hungarian Emeric Pressburger prove as much, brilliantly. Their 1940s classics — a wartime-to-peace-time stretch of visionary teamwork that includes "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp," "Black Narcissus" and "The Red Shoes" — are timeless enchantments that cracked open the art form in ways that were deeply human, subversive and undeniably magical.

One rapt convert was Martin Scorsese, an asthmatic child glued to the family's TV, especially spellbound by the opera fantasia "Tales of Hoffman." Since becoming a director himself (and befriending Powell in the 1970s), Scorsese has made championing their films a lifelong mission, in recognition of their subconscious inspiration on his own work.

Clearly there's no better narrator than an obsessive like Scorsese for an archival dive into the duo's unusual and extraordinary oeuvre. It's his heartfelt analysis as host of filmmaker David Hinton's documentary "Made in England: The Films of Powell and Pressburger" that puts this rewarding, personalized master class above most movies about movies.

Both Powell and Pressburger apprenticed in foreign lands, the former in France under MGM silents stalwart Rex Ingram, the latter as a screenwriter in Berlin at the legendary UFA studios. Later they met, through producer Alexander Korda, in mid-'30s England. (Pressburger called his emigration "being born at 33.") In an interview clip from later years, Powell charmingly recounts his initial awe at the Hungarian's storytelling talent, calling him "a beautiful mind."

Their pioneering creative partnership — eventually known as The Archers, with its distinctive bull's-eye logo — was forged amid the U.K.'s need for wartime propaganda and cemented in the thematic seriousness and ingenious craft gracing films such as "Colonel Blimp," their slyly patriotic satire of British war leadership, and "A Matter of Life and Death," the fantastical trial-in-heaven romance. But the duo also bewitchingly fused ro-

'Made in England: The Films of Powell and Pressburger'

Not rated
Running time: 2 hours, 13 minutes
Playing: In limited release

mantic comedy and spiritual fable ("I Know Where I'm Going!"), brought a soundstage-built Himalayan convent to feverish Technicolor life ("Black Narcissus") and, perhaps most fittingly for these fierce protectors of the artistic life, turned a ballerina's professional dilemma into "The Red Shoes," a masterpiece of dreamlike passion. Of that film's avant-garde, rapturous 15-minute ballet sequence, Scorsese says, "You got the sense that anything could happen."

The partnership couldn't last, a sadly familiar story beginning with their loss of total control, and when Powell (without Pressburger) made 1960's "Peeping Tom," about a psychopathic filmmaker, it seemed nobody wanted whatever strange dream he was conjuring anymore. Powell and Pressburger's friendship remained, but their reputations — unlike those of U.K. giants David Lean, Carol Reed and Alfred Hitchcock — seemed to go the way of a burned-off highland mist. That changed with the attention of people like Scorsese, the stewardship of Scorsese's longtime editor Thelma Schoonmaker (who became Powell's wife and widow) and the rise of a cineaste culture more accepting of uncompromising artistry.

As enlightening an overview as "Made in England" is, with Adrian Johnston's original score playing like a theme from a lost work of theirs, it's also a beautiful reminder that love for our favorite movies is an evolving relationship. The films may be locked in place, but the feelings they evoke can seem boundless. Scorsese is particularly moving about this, citing "Colonel Blimp" and its wise, witty and melancholy tale of old ways, as an ever-deeper companion of his over the years. Great art will always have that hold, and with any luck, "Made in England" will not only spur a rewatching frenzy for Powell and Pressburger fans but give birth to new ones.

MARTIN PHILLIPPS, 1963 – 2024

Founder of influential New Zealand band the Chills sang with poetic flair

MIKAEL WOOD
POP MUSIC CRITIC

Martin Phillipps, whose band the Chills was a mainstay of the 1980s New Zealand indie-rock scene that served as a formative influence on the likes of R.E.M. and Pavement, has died. He was 61.

His death was announced in a statement posted Sunday on the Chills' social media accounts. The statement didn't say when or where Phillipps died or specify a cause but noted that he'd died "unexpectedly." A 2019 documentary about Phillipps and the Chills chronicled the musician's struggles with hepatitis C; New Zealand's Otago Daily Times reported that Phillipps had been admitted recently to Dunedin Hospital with liver problems.

A proponent of the so-called Dunedin sound associated with New Zealand's Flying Nun record label, the Chills played jangly yet propulsive guitar pop that set wistful melodies against arrangements drawing on punk and psychedelia. Phillipps, who wrote with a poetic flair about art, death and romance, was the band's only constant member in a career that attracted a devoted cult following across four decades.

In a statement Sunday, Neil Finn of Crowded House — a fellow New Zealander whose early band Split Enz once enlisted the Chills as an opening act — called Phillipps "one of NZ's greatest songwriters" and described him as having been "fascinated by and devoted to the magic and mystery of music."

After playing in a short-lived group called the Same, Phillipps formed the Chills in 1980 with a lineup that included his sister Rachel; in 1982, the band signed to Fly-



JORDI VIDAL Redferns

MAINSTAY ONSTAGE
Martin Phillipps performs during a music festival in Barcelona, Spain, in 2016. The Chills were known as a formative indie-rock band that influenced R.E.M.

ing Nun — whose other other tightly connected acts were the Clean, the Bats and the Verlaines — and proceeded to make a string of scrappy yet tuneful singles including the stomping "I Love My Leather Jacket" and "Pink Frost," which became perhaps the band's best-known song. "I want to stop my crying / But she's lying there dying," Phillipps sang over an oddly buoyant bass line — a striking juxtaposition that led Spin magazine to advise readers to "imagine Paul McCartney attempting Joy Division."

Having already cycled through more than half a dozen lineups, the Chills dropped their first studio LP, "Brave Words," in 1987; for their follow-up, 1990's "Submarine Bells," they signed in the U.S. to Warner Bros. subsidiary Slash Records, which helped drive the knowingly titled "Heavenly Pop Hit" to No. 17 on Billboard's modern rock

chart.

Eager to capitalize on that success, Slash brought the Chills to Los Angeles to record the band's next album, 1992's "Soft Bomb." Peter Holsapple, who'd played with R.E.M. on its smash "Out of Time" LP, contributed keyboards in the studio, while Van Dyke Parks devised a characteristically whimsical orchestral arrangement for the song "Water Wolves."

Parks, the veteran pop eccentric known for his work in the 1960s with Randy Newman and the Beach Boys, invited the Chills to Capitol Studios to watch him oversee the recording session, Phillipps told KCRW in 2022. Yet the band showed up late: "We took a wrong turn, so we missed the speech that Van Dyke gave the orchestra about what they were doing," Phillipps said. "But it was beautiful being there and hearing it come to life."

The Chills broke up after touring "Soft Bomb" but later reunited (with yet another lineup); the band's most recent album, "Scatterbrain," came out in 2021.

Information about Phillipps' survivors wasn't immediately available.

Phillipps spoke candidly about the challenges of surviving the music industry, as in a 1992 interview with The Times in which he admitted that the "single biggest problem so far has been just trying to keep bands together when we can't afford to pay ourselves anything."

Yet the Chills' music put across an abiding belief in the power of a great song.

"So I stand and the sound goes straight through my body / I'm so bloated up, happy, I can throw things around me," Phillipps sang in "Heavenly Pop Hit." "I'm growing in stages and have been for ages / Just singing and floating and free."

Yuval Sharon extends Detroit contract

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT — Yuval Sharon, founder and co-artistic director of the acclaimed L.A. opera company the Industry, has extended his contract as artistic director of the Detroit Opera for three years through the 2027-28 season.

Sharon said he will shift the company toward themed seasons: "America" for 2025-26, "Faith" for 2026-27 and "Sustainability" for 2027-28. He said he wanted to get away from seasons that have unconnected presentations where "the programming is something like a smorgasbord."

"Whenever I go to a smorgasbord, I have an upset stomach," he said.

Sharon started with the company in 2020. The first of the seasons under his new deal will mark the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the second will address religious figures and stories, and the third will focus on environmental



ERIN BAIANO

SHARON, founder of L.A.'s the Industry, will stay as artistic director of the Detroit Opera for three years.

justice and climate change. Four productions are being scheduled for each season.

"I wanted to experiment with a format that could actually fully unify the organi-

zation, so meaning everything that's happening on stage and everything that's happening off stage can feel like one piece," Sharon said. "I thought, 'What are the

topics that could open up a dialog with other institutions or other organizations in Detroit that could facilitate a yearlong engagement?'"

A 44-year-old known for innovation, Sharon's initial 2020-21 season in Detroit included "Twilight: Gods," a version of Wagner's "Götterdämmerung" trimmed to just over an hour and presented in a parking lot outside the Detroit Opera House because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

His 2022 version of Puccini's "La Bohème" presented the four acts in reverse order, allowing Mimi's health to improve rather than deteriorate. His new staging of Mozart's "Così fan tutte" next April explores artificial intelligence with the lovers as robotic inventions.

Sharon in 2018 became the first American to direct at Bayreuth with "Lohengrin" in a production that will be revived in 2025 as conductor Christian Thielemann returns to the Richard Wagner Opera Festival.

MOVIE REVIEW

'Fabulous Four' takes an oft-traveled road

BY KATIE WALSH

In "The Fabulous Four," a quartet of female friends in their golden years — played by a powerhouse group of beloved and lauded actors — head out on a vacation, where their longtime relationships and ingrained patterns will be challenged, resulting in cathartic personal growth. Wait a minute, didn't I review this film two months ago? A year ago? Twice?

It was while reviewing "Summer Camp" back in May that I questioned the robust proliferation of these oh-so-familiar films (four older actresses, one vacation). The concept must be a lucrative one, but the formula isn't just familiar — it's cloned. How can they keep getting away with this?

"The Fabulous Four" is

only surprising in that Diane Keaton is not in it. Susan Sarandon steps into the Keaton role as Lou, an uptight, career-driven surgeon with a penchant for pantsuits. She's tricked into a trip by her old pals, the wacky, randy singer Alice (Megan Mullally) and cananbis farmer Kitty (Sheryl Lee Ralph). They want to repair a decades-long rift between Lou and Marilyn (Bette Midler), who used to be best friends until Marilyn snaked Lou's boyfriend John and married him. Naturally, things have not been the same since then — for good reason, one would argue.

Marilyn is now widowed and has moved to Key West, where she intends to marry her new beau. With promises of six-toed Hemingway cats, Alice and Kitty lure Lou to the Floridian island and then suddenly spring it on



SUSAN Sarandon, left, Bette Midler, Sheryl Lee Ralph and Megan Mullally in "The Fabulous Four."

her that the trip is in celebration of Marilyn's wedding. Let the misunderstandings, mishaps and male strippers ensue.

There are also shroom trips, parasailing fiascos and TikTok interludes galore, cluttering up what could have been a rather pathos-rich tale about interpersonal betrayal. Sarandon beautifully sells Lou's hurt with a palpable sorrow (this is an Oscar-winning actor, after all), but every time the film settles into

this core conflict, it scuttles away to something silly, like Lou using a personal pleasure device as a slingshot on the street, or a series of profoundly irritating social media-style interstitials.

There's also this group of younger, drunken revelers who latch onto the women during the plane ride. They're there to be the wild, inebriated foil to the straight-laced Lou (a woman wound so tight she never takes off her complex crossbody purse, not even for the

'The Fabulous Four'

Rated: R, for some sexual material, drug use and language
Running time: 1 hour, 39 minutes
Playing: In wide release

closing choreographed dance number), but they also prove to be the only functioning moral compass in the whole film. They blanch in horror at the story of Marilyn stealing Lou's boyfriend — as they should, but as none of Lou's friends do. "The Fabulous Four" never justifies why Lou and Marilyn should repair their friendship, just that they used to be friends. Sometimes friendships stay in the past for a reason.

Ralph proves to be a steady supporting presence, despite a confounding subplot concerning her devout Christian daughter and gay grandson. Mullally's Alice is just there to be a good-time gal and stoner, gobbling

gummies and whisking every comely waiter into a closet for a liaison. Midler is game for what her outlandish — and somewhat odious — character gets up to. Bruce Greenwood and Timothy V. Murphy report for duty as the age-appropriate hotties.

Director Jocelyn Moorhouse ("The Dressmaker") has a long resume, but she shoots this in the style in which every other one of these films has been filmed: flat, bright and colorful. Savannah, Ga., subs in for Key West, with the island itself captured only in b-roll, so the film doesn't express the essence of the place.

There's a version of this film, about this conflict, with the twists and turns along the way, that could be compelling, and Sarandon's performance shows us what could be. Which is why it's so frustrating when it constantly swerves away from anything real. This four-some may be appealing, but the film is beyond formulaic, and far from fabulous.

Walsh is a Tribune News Service film critic.

COMICS

LA CUCARACHA By Lalo Alcaraz



PICKLES By Brian Crane



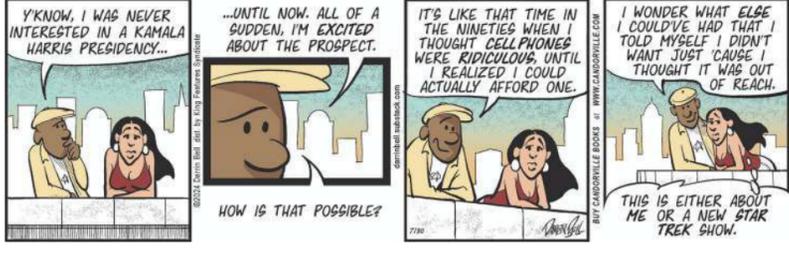
CRABGRASS By Tauhid Bondia



BABY BLUES By Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman



CANDORVILLE By Darrin Bell



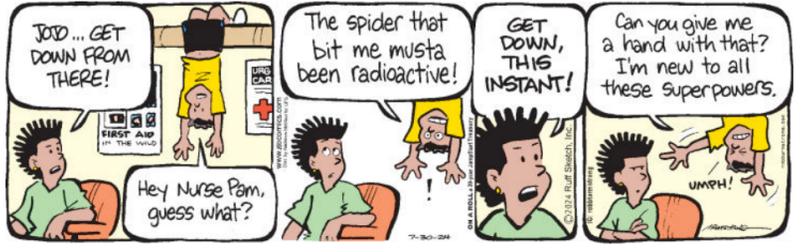
CRANKSHAFT By Tom Batiuk & Chuck Ayers



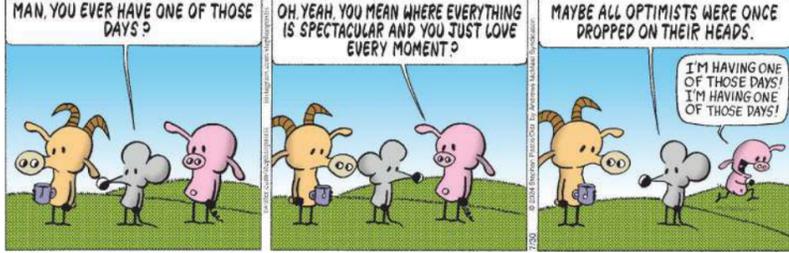
LOOSE PARTS By Dave Blazek



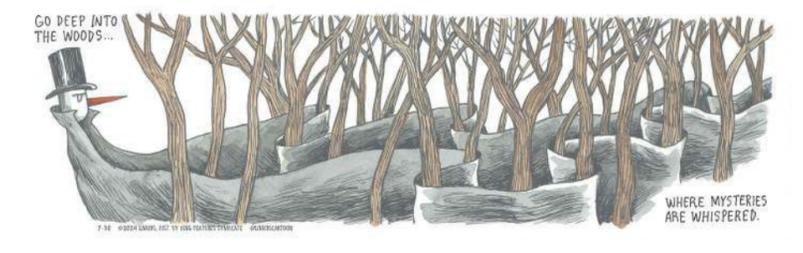
JUMP START By Robb Armstrong



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE By Stephan Pastis



MACANUDO By Liniers



LIO By Mark Tatulli



BLONDIE By Dean Young & John Marshall



ZITS By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



BETWEEN FRIENDS By Sandra Bell-Lundy



TUNDRA By Chad Carpenter



BIZARRO By Wayno and Piraro



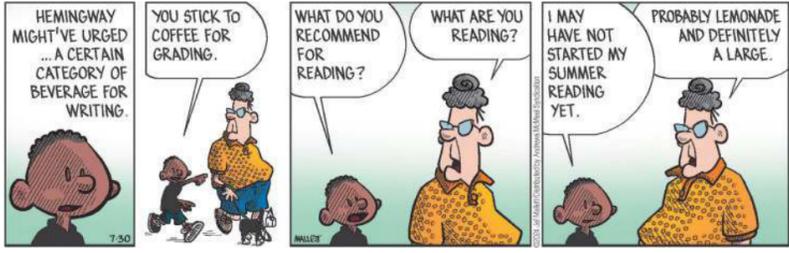
SIX CHIX By Bianca Xunise



DRABBLE By Kevin Fagan



FRAZZ By Jef Mallett



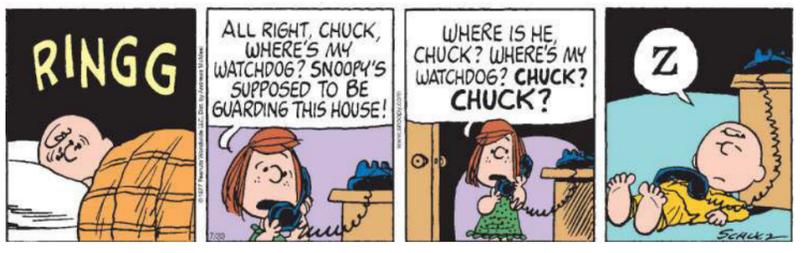
MUTTS By Patrick McDonnell



NON SEQUITUR By Wiley



PEANUTS By Charles M. Schulz



COMICS

SUDOKU

9 5 1 8 3 4 6 5 8 9 6 6 9 5 6 7 9 2 9 4 1 3 4 9 8 4 2 5 9 5 6 7 2 9 1 9 4

3 6 4 4 3 3 1 6 5 9 6 8 4 7 1 3 5 2 7 2 1 6 3 5 8 9 4 4 5 3 8 2 9 6 1 7 3 4 5 1 8 2 7 6 9 1 7 2 9 6 3 5 4 8 6 8 9 7 5 4 1 2 3 5 3 6 2 4 8 9 7 1 8 1 4 5 9 7 2 3 6 2 9 7 3 1 6 4 8 5

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KENKEN

Every box will contain a number; numbers depend on the size of the grid. For a 6x6 puzzle, use Nos. 1-6. Do not repeat a number in any row or column. The numbers in each heavily outlined set of squares must combine to produce the target number found in the top left corner of the cage using the mathematical operation indicated.

EASY 2- 3 12x 2- 4+ 3- 2 1- 2- 1- 2-

CHALLENGING 2- 5- 60x 5+ 7+ 1- 4 10x 5- 24x 2- 14+ 8+ 1- 1 2-

PREVIOUS ANSWERS 2 3 4 1 3 4 1 2 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 2 6 3 4 1 5 4 2 1 5 3 6 1 5 4 6 2 3 6 3 2 1 5 4 5 1 6 3 4 2 3 4 5 2 6 1

HOROSCOPE

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

Aries (March 21-April 19): You feel like you're playing a small part, but glue also feels that way. In the end, time ensures it's the thing keeping everything else together. Taurus (April 20-May 20): There's a growing sense of contentment creeping up on you. Today, you're happy because you decided to be. Gemini (May 21-June 21): You feel like your main job is a moral support position, and you're not wrong. By helping others, you figure out what your best gifts are. Cancer (June 22-July 22): Even if you set out to do things on your own, people will be drawn to you. To get time to yourself is a struggle that may not be worth it. Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): Words mean something different than their definition. What you come to understand is deeper than words.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You'll make key judgments today. You'll pose questions, gather information and go with your gut. Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): To recognize a boundary and make sure it's honored is an act of respect that makes relationships better, especially if it's your boundary. Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): It's your move. Again. Nothing will happen until you act, so it's your turn until the next thing happens. If it's still unclear if the other person is your opponent or teammate, they're both. Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You can't make them see it your way, but try. The exercise teaches you what's important to you. Those who get it join you. Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Every time a feeling comes up, it has its own flavor. The best feelings are so complex, to try to describe them would only take away from the joy of tasting.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Compliments help you identify strengths, but don't let that be your only indicator for making decisions for your work. Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): You'll be organized in your efforts to make things happen. To plan before you recognize the true nature of things would be in vain. Observe well first. Today's birthday (July 30): You'll fulfill a vision for a life-changing project. People will seek and apply your wisdom. More highlights: You'll be drawn to people who are compassionate, gentle and loving because these qualities are so strong in you. You'll attend coveted events. You'll enjoy a gift of status. Gemini and Scorpio adore you. Lucky numbers: 10, 3, 33, 28 and 15. Mathis writes her column for Creators Syndicate Inc. The horoscope should be read for entertainment.

CROSSWORD

Edited By Patti Varol By Joe Deeney

- ACROSS 1 Roadie's cargo 5 Barrel wood 8 A flat equivalent 14 Bus route, often 15 Bid the most, say 16 Grows tired 17 Spa combo 19 In an overly curious way 20 Fix up, as hair 21 Gee preceder 23 Room under the roof 24 Technique for closing a seam 27 Knightley of "Atonement" 29 Painter's prop 30 Like many consignment store items 33 Not imaginary 36 Fur baby 37 Happy Valley sch. 38 Author info 39 Schedule opening 41 North Carolina college town 45 Hawaii Senator Hirono 47 Farm animals with horns 48 Metaphor for a repetitive person 52 Jobs 53 Pipe bend shape 54 Ramen soup broth 58 Suspects 60 Hamburger franchise, and what can be found at the starts of 17-, 24-, 30-, 41-, and 48-Across 62 NCAA group that will add four new members in 2024 63 " _ been wondering ... " 64 Verdi opera 65 Dolorous donkey 66 Barclays Center baller 67 Seethe, as over a slight

© 2024 Tribune Content Agency 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67

- 9 Weasel cousins 10 More hurried 11 Slightly 12 Shrine centerpiece 13 Course where one might study Jung, familiarly 18 June birthstone 22 Make available 25 Tomorrow, for one 26 Texting :-), perhaps 27 Ship stabilizer 28 Study of bugs 30 Tech that might repeat "Make a U-turn" 31 Call from the 23-Across, perhaps 32 Org. with a Popular Baby Names page 34 Comes down with something 35 "ur so funny!" 40 Become smitten with 41 Bengals, on scoreboards 42 Brand of battery-powered lawn equipment 43 "Royals" singer 44 Enjoyed oneself immensely 46 Gadget scraped on a peel 48 Corrupt kickback 49 Perez of "Do the Right Thing" 50 Petite and playful 51 "Closer" actor Owen 55 Wedding dress, perhaps 56 Jekyll's counterpart 57 "It didn't escape my notice" 59 Small square 61 Nov. honoree

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE COBRA AFAR RANG AVAIL BREA ELAL FALSE ALARM BADE ELLE LAM CUMIN SNOOZEFACTORS POE OUST EATME ART AHOY CLOUD CUCKOO LAND OPEN TIRE MS DOIS CLAD SPA WASH YOUR HANDS AWAKE EEL ELIO DALI ON THE CLOCK ERIN FARE OTTER REDS THOR OSHEA

BRIDGE

BY FRANK STEWART

"The weatherman sometimes makes a mistake and guesses right," a player observed when it rained despite a sunny forecast. At today's four spades, South took the ace of hearts and cashed the A-K of trumps. When West discarded, declarer led his deuce of diamonds to dummy's jack to pick up East's trumps. South next led the king of diamonds. Had East-West followed, South would have made an overtrick. But when East discarded, the suit was blocked. South cashed the queen, but when he led a club to dummy's king next, he lost three clubs and a heart. I've heard a weatherman

called yet another person who doesn't learn from his mistakes, but maybe South learned something here. At Trick Four he must lead the king of diamonds and overtake with the ace. East's nine falls. So after South draws trumps, he can cash the queen of diamonds, lead to dummy's eight and take the jack and the fifth diamond. You hold: ♠ J982 ♥ Q973 2 ♦ 9 ♣ A Q J. Your partner opens one club, you respond one heart and he bids one spade. What do you say? Answer: You have enough strength to invite game, especially since your club honors will fill out partner's suit. Jump to three spades. If your jack of spades were the ace, you would bid four spades. With a hand such as J 9 8 2,

Q 9 7 3 2, 9, A 3 2, you would raise to two spades in case partner's hand was strong. South dealer N-S vulnerable NORTH ♠ 763 ♥ A5 ♦ AJ853 ♣ K84 WEST ♠ 5 ♥ KJ106 ♦ 10764 ♣ 9652 EAST ♠ J982 ♥ Q9732 ♦ 9 ♣ AQJ SOUTH ♠ AKQ104 ♥ 84 ♦ KQ2 ♣ 1073 WEST Pass NORTH Pass SOUTH 1♠ Pass 3♣ Pass 4♠ All Pass EAST Pass EAST Pass Opening lead - ♥ J

Tribune Content Agency

ASKING ERIC

Dear Eric: Throughout my childhood, my cousin always had to have her friend join family events. Fast-forward 40 years and my cousin has moved back home after widowhood. Guess who's back at everything? The friend is a lovely person. I have no issue with her. It's just that sometimes we want it to be only family. How do I broach this? PERPLEXED COUSIN

One lives too far away to see more than twice a year. The other lives close enough for me to have dinner with once a week. I try not to be needy and give them space, but I'm lonely and sad they don't call me more often. I think they're just living their lives and not thinking about me, which I probably did to my parents when I was their age. Am I expecting too much? Would I be wrong to tell them I'm lonely and would like to hear from them more often? For the record, I am trying to expand my social circle and do things I'm interested in, but I'm growing tired of doing things alone and it takes a long time to make new close friends. LONELY MOM

Dear Eric: My brother's son, "Dan," has chosen to totally delete his dad from his life. My brother has no idea why Dan has disengaged without explanation. My brother continues to attempt contact via our usual forms of communication but to no avail. How does a family approach this conundrum? What message is Dan sending to his two sons: my brother's grandsons? DISMAYED AUNT

Dear Cousin: Where I'm from, people used to talk about having "play cousins" — people who weren't really related to you but with whom you were often expected to hang out because your parents were friends, or what have you. I think you have a play cousin. And your blood relative, your actual cousin, may see her friend as part of the family. She may care about her as if they were related. It's also possible that they have a deeper relationship. Ask your cousin in a non-judgmental way to tell you about the friendship. Ask her if the friend feels more like family. Depending on what your cousin says, you may just need to set another place at the table.

Dear Mom: Please tell your sons how you feel! Healthy communication can be such a gift. Please tell them what they can do to help you. They may have busy lives, but you're a part of those lives as well. Sometimes, in relationships, it's hard to carry the burden of advocating for ourselves. But I believe that your sons would be saddened to find out that you had this ache and didn't ask for help. Try setting up a regular phone date with each of them, it will give you all something to look forward to.

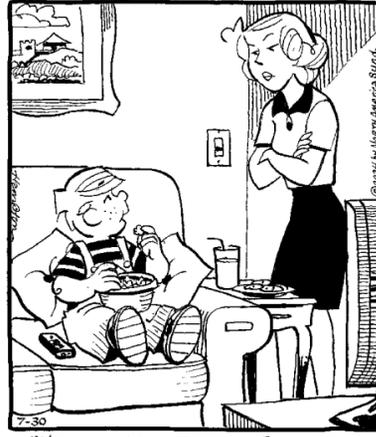
Dear Aunt: I'm sorry that you're going through this. Estrangement is jarring. And for an extended family it can feel hopelessly confusing. I know that your brother says this came out of nowhere, but I wish that we had more information from him about what exactly that "nowhere" looked like before Dan cut off all contact. Often, estranged parents are willfully or accidentally blind to the events that precipitated the divide. It's hard to say what a healthy path forward is without knowing more about Dan and your brother's relationship. If Dan will speak to you, you should reach out to him. Don't try to lobby on your brother's behalf, simply ask Dan to share his perspective with you. See if he's open to an outstretched hand and a listening ear.

Email questions to eric@askingeric.com.

FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



DENNIS THE MENACE By Hank Ketcham



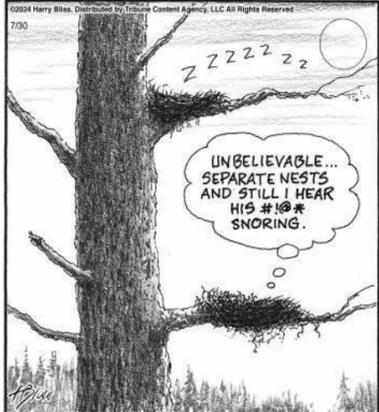
FREE RANGE By Bill Whitehead



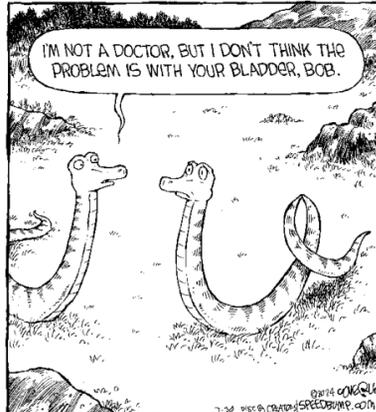
MARMADUKE By Brad & Paul Anderson



BLISS By Harry Bliss



SPEED BUMP By Dave Coverly



[X, from E1] recorded the year before and completed just before the pandemic — “Smoke & Fiction” came together quickly. Doe started writing in November 2022 and as the songs developed, X tested them out on last year’s tour. Cervenka says “Alphabetland” and “Smoke & Fiction” are companion albums thematically.

By the time they went into Sunset Sound to record in January, they knew what they wanted to do. There, along with producer Rob Schnapf (at whose studio they completed the album), X decided to keep things lean and punk rock, spending just three days in the studio to lay down the basic tracks paying for the sessions themselves.

“It’s like a military campaign to write the songs to get them in shape to figure out how you want the whole thing to hold together,” Doe says.

“We’ve been talking about this for a couple of years,” Bonebrake says. “We were prepared when we went in, and from there, it was easy.”

“We probably won’t make another record because we probably don’t have it in us,” Cervenka recalls thinking at the time. “So, let’s just do this one and make it great.”

The album’s emotional centerpiece is “Big Black X.” Throughout the song, with Zoom’s buzz-saw riffs leading the way, Cervenka references moments from X’s career.

The title of the song is a reference to the visual of the band’s name lit up on a white marquee. Additionally, lyrics like “Cherokee alley/something about a basement” refer to the long-gone Masque. The song isn’t sentimental, but rather looking back on what happened.

“If I could sum up our career in a song, I would say there it is,” Doe says of “Big Black X.”

“It’s a funny song,” Cervenka adds. She compares it to “In This House That I Call Home” and “The Unheard Music.” “It was just a lot of freedom [in the band’s early days] and wildness that kids might not have as much of now.”

The band says despite plenty of references to punk’s bygone era, the spirit of the album makes an effort to push past plain old nostalgia.

“It just became clear to me that lyrically, this is a good way to wrap up,” Doe says. “But we may record a song or two here and there, but you never know.”

“When we moved here in ’76, there were still a lot of remnants of the real Hollywood,” Cervenka says. “I like to remember that and put it back in the world. It’s not nostalgia, it’s appreciation.”

Cervenka says themes of love and love lost, and exploring place and time, are present throughout the album.

The best thing that can be said about “Smoke & Fiction,” which clocks in under 30 minutes, is that it has all



X PERFORMS at the Troubadour last month. Its busy touring schedule for “Smoke & Fiction” is expected to continue into 2025.

L.A. punk institution X calls it a day

of the traits of a late-era X album: the heavy punk mixed with elements of roots rock, contemplative lyrics and roaring riffs. “It’s not in our nature to reinvent things,” Doe says. “We have a clear idea of who we are.”

X’s members say that despite the busy touring schedule that will take them into 2025, they plan on retiring from the road, though Doe says that doesn’t preclude them from playing one-off shows in bigger theaters and a select number of dates. “If you want to see X in a sweaty club, do it now,” he says.

A few days later at the band’s rehearsal space in Orange County, Cervenka and Zoom say they’re happy with how the past handful of years have gone for the band. Zoom cites his age (at 76, he’s the band’s oldest member) as a reason to slow down, while Cervenka says the van rides between shows have become physically challenging. Since 1998, X has played over 1,800 shows and over 4,000 throughout their career. By comparison, the Ramones played a little more than 2,600.

“Every show is hard work,” Zoom says. “And a big anxiety trip to get over with. It’s hard to get up in front of people and perform. I enjoy it and it’s a good job, but when people ask me what’s my favorite song to play live, I always say the last one.”

“You never know when the end will be,” Cervenka says. “Here’s the thing: making two records in the last six years is pretty amazing. We did that. And I’m happy



THE BAND, Billy Zoom, from left, Exene Cervenka, John Doe and DJ Bonebrake at the Troubadour. Retiring from music was an amicable decision, they say.

about that. But what is a tour? We’ve been playing for the past 45 years and we’ll play until people stop wanting to see us. Or, until one of us says, ‘You know what, this is too hard. I don’t want to do it anymore.’ And I don’t know if that’s next week or next year. It’s a good wake-up call for people because we’re not doing this forever.”

Remarkably, when X hangs it up, a part of L.A. rock history will disappear with it. Formed in 1977 by Doe (who’d bring in Cervenka) and Zoom, X became the standard-bearer of the punk scene. It conquered now-defunct clubs like the Starwood, Madame Wong’s and Hong Kong Cafe, and its 1980 debut, “Los Angeles,” is

considered a punk classic.

X is the last remaining link to the nascent days of ’60s L.A. rock, with its direct connection to the Doors’ Ray Manzarek, who produced the band’s first four albums. His production influence ensured that X stayed true to the members and didn’t fall into recording traps that would make their sound of a certain time.

Though they won’t admit it, X’s time at the top of the L.A. rock food chain directly influenced many bands after them. In particular, Cervenka’s poetic lyrics, her and Doe’s vocal harmonies, and their willingness to fuse elements of rockabilly into their sound brought American roots music, along with

the Blasters, and later, Social Distortion, back into prominence.

“I think we inspired people by example, by being ourselves or being somewhat eclectic,” Doe says. “Billy, I, DJ, and Exene all have a very rich vocabulary of American music.”

Growing up on a steady diet of roots music, Zoom seamlessly added that element to the band’s sound (he played with early rock legends like Gene Vincent) — so much so that Doe says that the intro “Sweet Til the Bitter End” has elements of Bo Diddley’s guitar style in it. Album nine may be its last, but the band is giving the people what they want.

“I’m in the business of

making people happy. Giving people a gift of the X record is all I want to do,” Cervenka says. “If they’re happy with it. I’m happy with it.”

Following the Alex’s Bar show, X returned to familiar territory with a sold-out show at the Troubadour. There, before the encore, it was presented with a proclamation by Dwight Yoakam on behalf of West Hollywood declaring it “X Day,” something that wasn’t lost on the members as they accepted the honor.

For 40 of its 47 years, X’s lineup contained its original four members. Few, if any, bands can boast that level of longevity, even if album releases were few and far between for nearly three decades. The members have always remained true to their sonic vision and evolved instead of stagnating (nevertheless surviving), as the first wave of L.A. punk peers could not and did not do.

“Looking back, I thought we were going to change the world,” Cervenka says of the early punk movement. “And all those bands were going to do great. We were all going to tour and be on the radio, and it was going to be great. It was gonna be this great punk rock thing, like rock in the ’50s and ’60s.”

Influencing a generation of bands in L.A. and beyond will have to be a sufficient consolation prize.

“Being authentic is seeing the truth,” Doe says. “You can look back through rose-colored glasses, but it’s false. Things were difficult. But we’re still reaping some of those rewards.”

Marvel welcomes back Downey

[Comic-Con, from E1]

But “Avengers 5” marks not only the return of Downey — it also sees Anthony and Joe Russo back in the Marvel fold. The Russo Brothers have previously helmed four MCU films: “Captain America: The Winter Soldier” (2014), “Captain America: Civil War” (2016), “Avengers: Infinity War” (2018) and “Avengers: Endgame” (2019). It’s almost as if Marvel Studios is hitting a bit of a reset after a rocky few years.

Here are the biggest takeaways from Marvel’s presentation.

Marvel is forging its future by mining its past

By bringing Downey and the Russos back into the fold, Marvel Studios is signaling that it sees its path forward in the halcyon days of its past. The Russos helmed two of the MCU’s biggest box office hits — “Avengers: Endgame” has grossed more than \$2.7 billion worldwide in its lifetime — and Downey was the face of the franchise for more than a decade.

It’s no secret that Marvel has struggled to find its footing since “Endgame.” Both Phases 4 and 5 have been lackluster, with some on-lookers dubbing it Marvel’s “flop era” after a few underwhelming releases. To break

out of the slump, the MCU is changing course.

The audience response to “Deadpool & Wolverine,” which opened to \$205 million at the domestic box office and more than \$438 million worldwide, signals that this could be a winning strategy, at least in the short term. “Deadpool & Wolverine,” like “Spider-Man: No Way Home” (2021) before it, wielded nostalgia as a superpower and was packed to the brim with cameos and callbacks to superhero comic book movies past.

Kang, dynasty no more

“Avengers 5,” previously known as “Avengers: Kang Dynasty,” has officially been renamed to “Avengers: Doomsday.” It is expected to hit theaters in 2026.

There had been questions about how the film would move forward after Marvel fired Jonathan Majors last year following his conviction on assault and harassment charges. Would the role be recast or the entire film (and MCU trajectory) be overhauled?

The new title indicates that the MCU is shifting its focus to a new big bad: Doctor Doom. In the comics, Victor von Doom is an evil genius best known for his clashes with the Fantastic Four, but he’s also faced off



MARVEL Studios President Kevin Feige, from left, with Joe Russo, Robert Downey Jr. and Anthony Russo on Saturday in Hall H at San Diego Comic-Con. Downey is set to return to the MCU, this time as Doctor Doom.

against the Avengers and the X-Men in his quests to take over the world.

The MCU is leaving Kang in its rearview mirror, at least for now.

Focus on the First Family

Pedro Pascal, Vanessa Kirby, Joseph Quinn and Ebon Moss-Bachrach were on hand in Hall H to tease their upcoming movie, “The Fantastic Four: First Steps,” slated for a 2025 release. The film, which officially begins

production this week, will be set in 1960s New York, though its exact place in the Marvel multiverse remains unknown.

It was also confirmed that Marvel comics’ first ever superhero team will be seen in “Avengers: Doomsday” and “Avengers: Secret Wars,” meaning the MCU is going all in on the Fantastic Four now that they’ve regained the film rights to the characters. Considering the official Avengers roster for

the upcoming films remains a mystery, building excitement around the team that will launch the MCU’s Phase 6 makes sense.

Silence speaks volumes?

One of the glaring omissions in Feige’s presentation was “Blade,” which was part of a big Marvel Studios surprise in a past Hall H presentation. The film, which will star Mahershala Ali as the eponymous daywalker, at one point was attached to a

2025 release date but has experienced some creative shake-ups since. Yann Demange, the second director attached to the project, departed the film last month.

Also absent in the presentation were Marvel’s upcoming television shows such as “Agatha All Along,” “Daredevil: Born Again” and “Iron Heart.” Perhaps Feige is saving some news for Disney’s own convention, D23 Expo, which will be held in August.